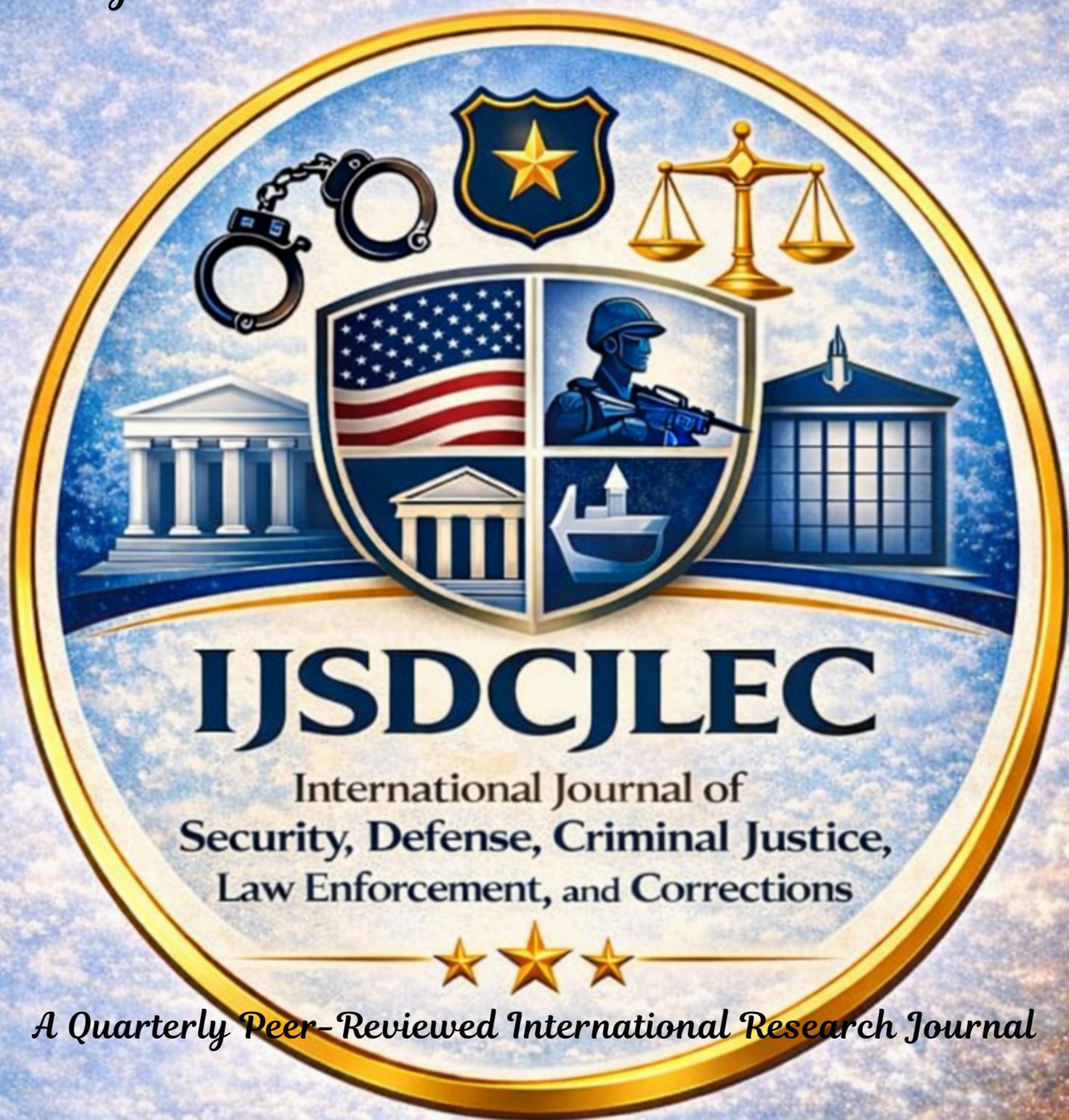


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IJSDCJLEC

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Security, Defense, Criminal Justice,
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A Quarterly Peer-Reviewed International Research Journal

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**International Journal of
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The **International Journal of Security, Defense, Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement, and Corrections (IJSDCJLEC)** is a scholarly, open-access, quarterly, peer-reviewed, international print and online research journal dedicated to the advancement of knowledge in security studies, defense and strategic studies, criminal justice, policing, corrections, and justice system governance. The journal responds to the growing need for rigorous, ethical, and interdisciplinary research addressing complex challenges related to crime, public safety, national security, justice administration, and correctional systems in both national and global contexts. IJSDCJLEC serves as a global platform for security analysts, defense researchers, criminologists, law enforcement professionals, corrections administrators, legal scholars, policymakers, and interdisciplinary researchers to disseminate high-quality empirical, theoretical, and policy-oriented research that informs crime prevention, justice reform, institutional accountability, and public safety governance. The journal is committed to maintaining rigorous scholarly standards, ethical research practices, and global visibility through international indexing, Crossref DOI registration, and print and electronic ISSN accreditation.

Aims and Scope

Aims

IJSDCJLEC aims to:

1. Promote high-quality research in security, defense, criminal justice, law enforcement, and corrections
2. Advance theoretical and empirical understanding of crime, security, and justice systems
3. Encourage interdisciplinary and comparative studies in public safety, defense, and justice administration
4. Provide a venue for evidence-based, policy-relevant, and reform-oriented scholarship
5. Support research that informs crime prevention, justice system reform, and institutional accountability

Scope



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- Criminology and criminal justice systems
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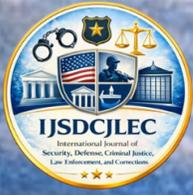
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- 1. Academic Significance, Contribution to Discipline or Community, Technical Novelty**
The paper should demonstrate importance to the academic community or to research in general. It must offer a material contribution to its discipline and present novel or unique ideas that may be useful to the community. Clearly show the research gap, why there was a need to investigate the present study, and how it is different from previous works.
- 2. English Usage (or Filipino, as may be applicable)**
The manuscript must adhere to the rules of grammar and language usage, whether in English or Filipino.
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The abstract should follow the journal’s prescribed format and accurately reflect the study’s major components. Ensure that it correctly presents the **aim, methodology, key findings or results, and conclusion** in a concise and logical manner.
- 4. Introduction / Background of the Study**
The introduction must:
 - Present a clear rationale or background from the **global to Philippine/local contexts**.
 - Show the **trends and issues** related to the study, supported with recent and relevant citations (2021–2026 preferred).
 - Identify and explain the **research gap/s**, highlighting why the present study is necessary and how it differs from prior works.
- 5. Statement of the Problem, Research Objectives and Research Questions**
The Statement of the Problem, Research Objectives and Research Questions must be clearly, explicitly, and logically stated.
 - The **statement of the problem** is a detailed explanation of the issue, gap, or challenge that the study seeks to address. It frames the context and justifies why the study is necessary, usually written in declarative form as a narrative or paragraph. Its purpose is to highlight the significance, scope, and urgency of the study, providing a broad and contextual background of the issue at hand. For example, a study may state: *“Despite government programs, many senior citizens in rural*



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areas experience delays in receiving social pensions, raising concerns about accessibility and efficiency.”

- The **research objectives** represent the specific aims or intentions of the study, focusing on what the researcher seeks to accomplish. These are written in infinitive form such as “To determine...” or “To examine...,” ensuring that the targets are clear, measurable, and achievable. Unlike the broad statement of the problem, objectives are narrower and centered on actionable outcomes. For instance, a general objective could be “*To assess the implementation of the Social Pension Program in Balbalan, Kalinga.*” This may be broken down into specific objectives, such as: (1) To determine the accessibility of the program, (2) To examine its impact on beneficiaries, and (3) To identify challenges faced in its implementation.
 - The **research questions** are the interrogative form of the objectives, expressed as direct questions the study seeks to answer. They are usually written in formats such as “What is...?” or “How does...?” and serve the purpose of guiding data collection and analysis by pointing to specific inquiries. Research questions are even more specific than objectives, as they operationalize the study’s goals into answerable items. Using the same example, the research questions could include: *RQ1: How accessible is the Social Pension Program to senior citizens in Balbalan? RQ2: What impact does the program have on the beneficiaries’ quality of life? RQ3: What challenges hinder the effective implementation of the program?*
6. **Review of Related Literature and Studies**
This section must include sufficient, relevant, and **up-to-date references** to support the rationale and conduct of the research.
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 - Do not use sources with “no date (n.d.)”
 - Ensure citations are aligned with the arguments and logically linked to the study.
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7. **Theoretical and/or Conceptual Framework**
An appropriate theoretical and/or conceptual framework must be presented to anchor the study.
8. **Research Methodology (Research Design, Population and Sampling, Instrument, Data Collection, Treatment of Data, Ethics in Research)**
The methodology section should be well-structured, detailed, and properly organized. Each subsection should only contain content appropriate to it:
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- **Data Collection:** Focus on *how, when, and where* the data was collected. Do not include ethics approval here.
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- **Ethical Considerations:** Include ethical approval, informed consent, and permissions here, not in other subsections.

Important Reminders:

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- If the study used a **mixed-method approach**, discuss both parts separately (quantitative and qualitative)—design, participants, instruments, data collection, treatment of data, ethical considerations—and explain how the two sets of data were integrated.
- Use plural (“researchers”) consistently if the paper has co-authors.

9. Results and Discussion

- Present results clearly, logically, and aligned with the research questions.
- Support findings with **relevant and recent literature**.
- Integrate discussion immediately after each result to enhance coherence.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

- Conclusions must be logically drawn from the study’s findings.
- Recommendations should be **specific, actionable, and relevant** to the results. Avoid generic statements.

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References must strictly adhere to APA 7th edition. Authors must review their entire manuscript carefully:

- Ensure proper formatting (e.g., italicizing journal names, use of “&” vs. “and,” correct application of *et al.*, punctuation, spacing, quotation marks).
- All in-text citations must appear in the References list and vice versa. **No mismatches allowed.**
- Avoid old references; prioritize recent ones.
- If a citation was included but missing in the References, update it properly (do not erase it without explanation). Similarly, remove unused entries from the References list.
- The paper will not be published if even one citation/reference entry is non-compliant.

APA 7th requires:

- All sources listed in the References Section must match 100% with the actual sources used in the entire manuscript, and all sources cited in the entire manuscript are reflected in the list of sources in the References section.
- Author/s should provide a link to every research article or literature/document, where we can find the journal or document, or best, where we can find the specific research

V



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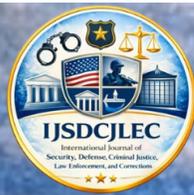
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Editor's Note

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The maiden issue of IJSDCJLEC marks ETCOR's commitment to advancing rigorous, ethical, and policy-relevant research in security, defense, and justice studies. In an era marked by evolving security threats, complex criminal behavior, and justice system challenges, scholarly research plays a critical role in informing evidence-based decision-making.

Security and justice institutions operate at the intersection of public safety, human rights, and governance. This journal provides a platform for research that critically examines these intersections while promoting accountability, professionalism, and reform.

IJSDCJLEC bridges theory and practice by welcoming contributions from scholars and practitioners engaged in policing, defense, corrections, and justice administration. Through interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives, the journal seeks to enhance understanding of crime, security, and institutional responses across diverse contexts.

As a peer-reviewed international journal, IJSDCJLEC upholds the highest standards of academic integrity, methodological rigor, and ethical research conduct.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, we invite researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and security professionals worldwide to contribute to future issues as we collectively advance knowledge, justice, and public safety.

Dr. Paolo T. Lumanlan, Editor-in-Chief

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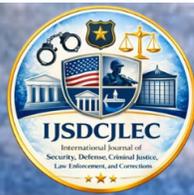
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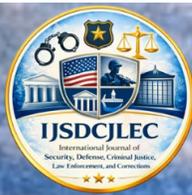
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Cybercrime Trends, Motivations, and Challenges in Puerto Princesa City, Philippines

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Abstract

Aim: This study examined the cybercrime trends, motivations, and challenges in Puerto Princesa City.

Methodology: Using a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, quantitative surveys were conducted with 90 respondents, followed by qualitative interviews with three cybercrime offenders and three law enforcement officers.

Results: Findings revealed that technology, while beneficial for communication and productivity, also enables cybercrime through anonymity, rapid information flow, and weak enforcement. Offender motives centered on personal, financial, and behavioral factors, while law enforcers identified technical and resource constraints. Although limited to a small sample, the study provides key insights into the interaction between technology, human behavior, and institutional capacity.

Conclusion: The study concludes that strengthening public awareness, improving inter-agency coordination, and enhancing local enforcement capacity are critical to addressing cybercrime in Puerto Princesa City. These findings serve as a basis for future research and localized policy development.

Keywords: *Cybercrime trends, motivations, law enforcement, cybercrime challenges, Puerto Princesa City*

INTRODUCTION

Cybercrime is broadly defined as criminal activity that involves the use of computers, digital devices, or networks—either as the tool to commit the offense, the target of the crime, or both (Payne, 2020). As societies grow increasingly dependent on digital systems, cybercrime has emerged as one of the most pressing global security concerns. What distinguishes cybercrime from conventional crime is its ability to occur without physical contact, transcend geographical boundaries, and often remain undetected by victims until significant damage has been done (Caneppele & Da Silva, 2022). These characteristics make cybercrime uniquely complex to define, investigate, and prosecute.

Scholars and legal experts have developed various classifications to better understand the nature of cybercrime. One widely accepted framework divides cybercrime into two main categories: cyber-dependent and cyber-enabled crimes (Leppänen, 2024). Cyber-dependent crimes are offenses that exist only in digital spaces, such as hacking, malware deployment, distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, or illegal access to databases (Loggen et al., 2024). On the other hand, cyber-enabled crimes are traditional offenses that have been amplified through technology, such as fraud, identity theft, cyberbullying, extortion, and child exploitation (Akdemir & Lawless, 2020). These crimes, though rooted in pre-digital forms, have expanded dramatically with the advent of the internet, which provides broader reach, greater efficiency, and increased anonymity.

Increasingly, researchers view cybercrime as a sociotechnical phenomenon that cannot be understood solely through technological or legal perspectives. Kastner and Mégret (2021) argue that cultural practices, digital behaviors, and the inherent affordances of technology significantly shape the landscape of cybercrime. This perspective highlights how interactions on social media, the management of digital information, and everyday online habits influence both vulnerability to and participation in cybercriminal activities. Hallahan (2020) further emphasizes that cyberspace fosters new forms of social interaction and identity construction while blurring the boundaries between public and private spaces (DeNardis, 2020). These conditions create an environment where deviant behaviors can thrive, requiring an analysis that accounts for both human and technological factors (Wall, 2024).

The evolution of cybercrime has closely followed the rapid advancements in information and communication technology. What began as isolated incidents of email fraud and basic hacking has grown into a complex array of attacks, including ransomware campaigns that cripple critical infrastructures and massive data breaches affecting millions of individuals (Riggs et al., 2023). As Ali (2024) and Amoo et al. (2024) observe, each technological innovation not only creates new opportunities for legitimate use but also introduces vulnerabilities that cybercriminals are quick to exploit, often staying ahead of legal and regulatory mechanisms.

The shift from physical to virtual crime spaces has fundamentally altered public safety and law enforcement paradigms. Crimes that once required physical presence, such as bank robbery or blackmail, can now be perpetrated



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remotely, often from entirely different jurisdictions. Wall (2021) notes that this transnational nature of cybercrime reduces the likelihood of apprehension for offenders while significantly amplifying their reach and impact. Such conditions demand international cooperation, but global responses often lag behind, hampered by jurisdictional complexities and inconsistent legal frameworks.

As digital systems become more integral to personal, business, and governmental operations, the stakes have grown exponentially (Iordache, 2024). Cloud services, mobile banking, telemedicine, and remote work platforms have created vast repositories of sensitive data that are prime targets for exploitation. Ali and Kollwitz (2025) highlight how these assets attract not only financially motivated criminals but also politically and ideologically driven actors. Consequently, cybercrime now extends beyond individual harm to threaten institutions, economies, and even national security.

Understanding the breadth of cybercrime requires not only functional classifications but also typologies based on actors and platforms. Offenders may range from lone individuals with limited technical skills to organized groups operating like transnational corporations, complete with hierarchical structures and specialized roles (Stoddart, 2022). Cybercriminal activities also differ by platform. On the surface web, scams, phishing, and social engineering schemes target the general public (Chaganti et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the dark web hosts more covert operations, including illegal markets for drugs, weapons, and stolen data, often enabled by cryptocurrency transactions that obscure financial trails (Kaur & Randhawa, 2020; Boyko et al., 2022).

Motivations for cybercrime are equally diverse. Financial incentives remain the most common driver, with schemes like credit card fraud, ransomware, and account takeovers dominating the landscape (Peersman et al., 2022). However, ideological motivations, often termed hacktivism, have also gained prominence, where actors seek to advance political or social causes by defacing websites or leaking sensitive information (Holt et al., 2021). State-sponsored cybercrimes represent another dimension, where digital tools are leveraged for espionage, sabotage, or disinformation campaigns, blurring the lines between crime, politics, and warfare (Baranovska et al., 2024).

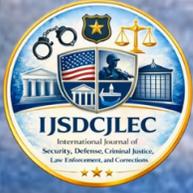
Although there is no singular, unified "cybercrime theory," several traditional criminological theories have been widely applied and adapted to explain cyber-offending behavior. Among the most influential is the Routine Activity Theory, which posits that crime is likely to occur when three elements converge: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian (Schaefer, 2021). In cyberspace, these conditions are easily met. Offenders can access vast pools of vulnerable targets such as unprotected devices, poorly informed users, and unregulated digital environments. This theory is highly relevant to the context of Puerto Princesa City, where digital access is expanding, yet many individuals and institutions remain unaware of basic cybersecurity practices. Empirical studies, such as those by Yar and Steinmetz (2023), support the applicability of Routine Activity Theory in explaining online victimization and cybercrime proliferation.

Not all cybercriminals exhibit the same level of technical sophistication. As Grispos (2021) and Cohen et al. (2025) note, many offenders rely on ready-made malicious tools such as ransomware kits, phishing templates, and botnet rentals, which lower the barrier to entry for cyber offenses. This democratization of cyber tools has expanded the population of potential offenders, making prevention and enforcement more complex (Ganguli, 2024). Socio-demographic factors such as age, education, and employment also influence offender profiles, with research indicating a prevalence of young males possessing moderate to advanced technical skills and limited economic opportunities (Songsrirote, 2025; Dodel et al., 2020).

Emerging studies provide deeper insight into the structural and psychological aspects of cybercrime. Alkhalil et al. (2021) dissect the anatomy of phishing attacks, revealing how attackers exploit both technical vulnerabilities and human psychology. Similarly, Aslan et al. (2023) discuss critical system weaknesses and emphasize the need for layered defenses, including zero-trust architectures and AI-driven threat monitoring. Azubuike (2023) underscores the geopolitical dimensions of cybercrime, framing state-sponsored attacks as instruments of power in modern conflicts and advocating for stronger international legal frameworks.

Legal responses and policing strategies are evolving to meet these challenges. Chimchiuri (2024) documents the global efforts to legislate against cybercrime but warns that laws often lag behind the rapid pace of technological change, creating enforcement gaps. Collier et al. (2022) recommend a market-focused approach to cybercrime policing, emphasizing adaptive strategies such as infiltrating illicit forums and fostering public-private collaboration to dismantle digital criminal infrastructures. These insights highlight the need for innovation, coordination, and sustained investment in digital forensics and intelligence-sharing mechanisms.

Finally, the human element remains a critical factor in both vulnerability and resilience. Proulx (2022) argues that anonymity fosters a sense of impunity, encouraging deviant behaviors, while Nobles (2022) highlights human error—such as cloud misconfigurations—as a primary source of data breaches. Tetteh (2024) draws attention to the vulnerabilities of small and medium-sized enterprises with limited resources, while Udoh (2024) examines how weak



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cybersecurity infrastructures undermine e-governance in developing nations. Together, these findings reinforce the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates technology, human behavior, governance, and education to effectively mitigate the escalating risks of cybercrime in an increasingly interconnected world.

Cybercrime in the Philippines reflects a complex interplay of technology, culture, and governance. Scholars note that trust, privacy, and social cohesion are being challenged by digital risks. Calatin and Pajo (2025) emphasize that data misuse and digital surveillance erode public confidence, heightening anxiety and disengagement from online platforms. Panalangin et al. (2025) highlight institutional gaps in cybersecurity preparedness but also point to opportunities for building resilient, localized systems such as regional CERTs. Cultural factors also play a role, as Regaro (2023) illustrates through the linguistic dynamics of "bardagulan," where multilingual hate speech and digital violence thrive. Similarly, San Miguel et al. (2020) show how widespread social media use among youth increases exposure to threats like identity theft and harassment, underscoring the need for proactive cybercrime education at schools and community levels. Toledano (2024) adds a national security lens, stressing that lapses in cybersecurity for critical infrastructure demand urgent institutional investments in risk management and awareness programs.

Legally, Republic Act No. 10175, the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, provides a framework for addressing offenses ranging from system breaches to content-related crimes such as cyber libel, cybersex, and child exploitation (Brucal et al., 2025; Li, 2021). However, implementation challenges persist due to resource constraints and uneven internet access (Official Gazette, 2012). Critics, including Guison and Macalintal (2023), argue that the cyber libel provision threatens free expression, while Blancaflor et al. (2024) and Usman and Haryanto (2024) highlight the alarming prevalence of OSAEC crimes. Rising hacking incidents targeting government, private, and academic sectors (De Ramos & Il, 2022) have intensified calls for stronger infrastructure and coordinated responses. UNICEF Philippines (2021) reports that nearly half of adolescents experience online violence, linking it to adverse psychological and academic outcomes, while Ong and Tapsell (2022) reveal how fake news and digital manipulation shape public discourse. Experts agree that bridging gaps in awareness, literacy, and enforcement will require a collaborative, multi-sectoral approach to build sustainable resilience against cyber threats (Omorog & Medina, 2020).

Despite the growing body of literature on cybercrime in the Philippines, there is a significant research gap in the localized context of Puerto Princesa. Existing studies largely provide national or regional overviews (Calatin & Pajo, 2025; Panalangin et al., 2025; Regaro, 2023; San Miguel et al., 2020; Toledano, 2024), focusing on broader institutional, cultural, and legal dimensions of cybercrime. However, there is limited empirical data on the specific patterns, drivers, and impacts of cybercrime in Puerto Princesa, particularly regarding how local socio-cultural dynamics, digital literacy levels, law enforcement capacity, and community awareness influence cybercrime incidence and response. This lack of localized evidence hinders the development of targeted prevention and intervention strategies that reflect the city's unique technological landscape, governance structures, and community behaviors. Addressing this gap is critical for crafting context-sensitive policies and programs that not only enhance cyber resilience but also align with national efforts to strengthen cybersecurity under Republic Act No. 10175 (Brucal et al., 2025; Li, 2021).

Objectives

The researcher aimed to investigate the cybercrime trends, motivation, and challenges in Puerto Princesa City. Specifically, this sought:

1. To describe the historical trends and patterns in the reported cases of cybercrime in Puerto Princesa City from 2021 to 2024.
2. To describe the role of technology in increasing cybercrime risks in Puerto Princesa City in the following:
 - a. People,
 - b. Businesses, and
 - c. Government.
3. To examine the motivations and methods of cybercriminals in Puerto Princesa City.
4. To identify the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in combating cybercrime in Puerto Princesa City.

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized an Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design, a two-phase approach in which quantitative data collection and analysis preceded qualitative inquiry to provide deeper context and explanation of initial results. This design was chosen for its strength in integrating numerical trends with rich narrative insights,



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ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The sequential process enabled the systematic identification of patterns through quantitative measures, which then informed the development of the qualitative phase to explore underlying meanings, perspectives, and experiences. The integration of methods enhanced the rigor and depth of the study, ensuring that the findings were both empirically grounded and contextually nuanced (Amihan et al., 2023).

Population and Sampling

The study engaged a total of 96 participants representing five key sectors to capture a comprehensive view of the role of technology in increasing cybercrime risks. These included respondents from the community (n = 30), business sector (n = 30), government agencies (n = 30), identified cybercrime offenders (n = 3), and law enforcement officers (n = 3) from the Philippine National Police in Puerto Princesa City. Clear inclusion criteria ensured relevance and consistency across groups: community members were residents with basic familiarity with digital technology and internet use; business participants included small to medium enterprise owners, IT personnel, or staff managing online transactions and customer data; and government participants were employees or officials from agencies delivering digital public services. Cybercrime offenders were individuals who had committed technology-related offenses and voluntarily consented to participate, while law enforcers were officers directly involved in cybercrime investigations. Quota sampling was applied to the community, business, and government groups to ensure equal representation for comparative analysis, while volunteer sampling was used for offenders and law enforcement officers given the sensitivity of their roles and the ethical need for voluntary participation. This structured sampling approach ensured balanced, relevant, and diverse perspectives to support both the quantitative and qualitative components of the research (Pangilinan, 2025).

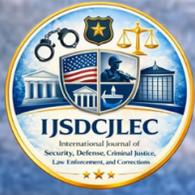
Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made instrument, grounded in existing literature and prior studies, to comprehensively assess the role of technology in increasing cybercrime risks across societal sectors in Puerto Princesa City. The tool, divided into five parts, combined quantitative and qualitative components to capture sector-specific insights. Part One focused on the community sector, using a 4-point Likert scale to measure perceptions of exposure to cyber threats via common digital platforms, while Part Two examined business-sector vulnerabilities, particularly among SMEs with limited cybersecurity resources. Part Three explored risks faced by government agencies as they increasingly relied on digital platforms, highlighting concerns about weak cybersecurity frameworks and their impact on public trust. Part Four consisted of open-ended questions for cybercrime offenders, aimed at uncovering motivations, targeting strategies, and exploitation of technological vulnerabilities, while Part Five gathered qualitative data from law enforcement personnel on challenges in detection, prevention, and prosecution of cybercrime. To ensure rigor, the tool underwent face and content validity testing, with expert validators from law enforcement, government, and academe yielding a perfect Content Validity Index (CVI) score of 1.00, confirming its relevance and appropriateness. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha produced a coefficient of 0.917, indicating high internal consistency and supporting the instrument's reliability for generating accurate, trustworthy, and actionable data for cybercrime risk assessment across sectors (Sanchez, 2025).

Data Collection

After securing the necessary approvals from the key institutions, data collection began with the distribution of the validated survey instrument to respondents across five sectors: community, business, government, cybercrime offenders, and law enforcement. To ensure accessibility, the survey was made available in two formats—online via Google Forms for participants with reliable internet access and printed copies for those in remote or underserved areas. Surveys were personally distributed to community members through local contacts, while links were shared via email and messaging platforms with government employees, business representatives, and professionals. Each respondent completed only the section relevant to their classification, ensuring accurate and sector-specific responses. Alongside the surveys, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three cybercrime offenders and three law enforcement officers to gather in-depth qualitative data. These interviews, conducted in focused sessions, explored offenders' methods and motivations as well as the operational challenges faced by investigators. All sessions were recorded, transcribed verbatim, anonymized, and prepared for thematic analysis. After completing the surveys and interviews, the researcher organized, encoded, and verified all responses, ensuring the data were ready for comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analyses (Pangilinan et al., 2025).

Treatment of Data



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This study applied an integrated approach to data analysis, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques for a comprehensive interpretation of the findings. Quantitative data from the survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and median scores, to summarize perceptions of technology-related cybercrime risks across the three sectors: community, business, and government. Qualitative data, derived from key informant interviews with cybercrime offenders and Philippine National Police personnel, were examined using a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis was conducted by transcribing the interviews, organizing the data, and systematically coding the responses to highlight significant statements. Patterns and categories were then identified, from which key themes were developed. This process enabled a deeper understanding of offender motivations and the operational challenges experienced by law enforcement in addressing cybercrime (Sanchez, 2025).

Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to established ethical standards to protect the rights, dignity, and welfare of all participants. Formal approval was obtained from the participating offices and institutions, including government agencies, law enforcement, business entities, and community organizations. All participants received an informed consent statement embedded in the preliminary part of the data-gathering tool, clearly explaining the study's purpose, scope, and procedures, as well as their voluntary right to participate or withdraw at any time. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), respondents were assured of strict confidentiality, with no personally identifiable information disclosed in any report or publication. For interview participants, including cybercrime offenders and PNP personnel, additional verbal and written consent was obtained, and they were informed that their responses would be recorded, transcribed, and anonymized for analysis. Special care was taken when engaging with vulnerable participants to avoid coercion or discomfort, with interviews conducted in a safe and respectful setting. Throughout the process, the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were consistently upheld. Lastly, no identifying information was reported in any part of the manuscript regarding the identity of the interview informants (Carvajal et al., 2025).

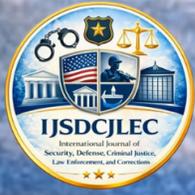
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Trends and Patterns in the Reported Cases of Cybercrime in Puerto Princesa City from 2021 to 2024

Table 1. Historical Trends and Patterns in the Reported Cases of Cybercrime in Puerto Princesa City from 2021 to 2024

Types of Cybercrime	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Online Scam		6	8	6	20
Phishing					0
Identity Theft		2	8	6	16
Libel	1	4	1	6	12
Threat Online		2	1		3
Illegal Access		1		7	8
Anti-Photo and Video Voyeurism			1		1
Overall	1	15	19	25	60

From 2021 to 2024, reported cybercrime cases showed a clear and consistent upward trajectory, reflecting the growing prevalence of digital offenses within the community. Cases rose sharply from a single report in 2021 to 15 in 2022, 19 in 2023, and 25 in 2024. This steady increase not only signals greater reliance on digital platforms but may also indicate improved awareness and reporting mechanisms, highlighting cybercrime as an increasingly urgent local concern. Among the various types of cybercrime, online scams, identity theft, and cyber libel emerged as the most prevalent. Online scams were reported consistently from 2022 onward, accumulating the highest number of cases at 20, underscoring their persistent threat. Identity theft spiked in 2023 with eight cases and remained significant in 2024 with six, reflecting rising vulnerabilities in the protection of personal and financial data. Cyber libel, though fluctuating in frequency, also saw an uptick in 2024, pointing to the ongoing issue of online defamation and abuse on social media platforms. Other cybercrimes, though less frequent, displayed notable patterns. Illegal access surged to seven reported cases in 2024, up from a single case in 2022, highlighting escalating concerns over



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unauthorized system intrusions. Conversely, anti-photo and video voyeurism and online threats were reported only sporadically, suggesting these offenses may be underreported or harder to detect. Interestingly, phishing had no recorded cases throughout the period, possibly due to underreporting, misclassification under broader categories, or limited victim awareness. Over time, the range of reported cybercrimes expanded: while only a single cyber libel case was recorded in 2021, by 2024, nearly all categories—except phishing—had been reported, reflecting a broader understanding and recognition of cybercrime as awareness spreads (Yar & Steinmetz, 2023). The consistent rise in financially driven and data-centric offenses, particularly online scams and identity theft, underscores the urgent need for stronger digital security measures, enhanced public digital literacy, and more robust law enforcement strategies to address evolving cyber threats (Gulyamov & Raimberdiyev, 2023).

The qualitative findings on offender motivations complement the crime trend data, providing deeper insights into the behavioral and emotional factors driving local cyber offenses. Themes of cyber retaliation and emotional impulsivity help explain the persistence and escalation of cases such as cyber libel and identity theft, both of which saw significant increases between 2023 and 2024. Offenders often acted out of personal grievances or heightened emotional states, leveraging the anonymity and immediacy of digital platforms to retaliate or shame their targets, consistent with Wall's (2021) and Herman et al.'s (2024) observations on digitally mediated conflicts. The practice of public shaming as a form of digital vigilantism, tied to local online cultures like "bardagulan" (Regaro, 2023), also aligns with the surge of cyber libel cases, where reputational harm and humiliation are central to the offense. Coupled with the quantitative data showing rising reports of illegal access and identity theft, these findings indicate a dual dynamic of emotionally driven offenses and financially or data-centric crimes (Yar & Steinmetz, 2023; Gulyamov & Raimberdiyev, 2023). Together, they highlight the urgent need for interventions that not only enhance digital literacy and cybersecurity awareness but also address the socio-emotional and cultural dimensions of cybercrime in Puerto Princesa.

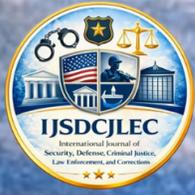
Role of Technology in Increasing Cybercrim Risks

Table 2. Role of Technology in Increasing Cybercrime Risks Among People, Businesses, and Government

Indicators	Median	Description
People	4	Very High Role
Businesses	4	Very High Role
Government	4	Very High Role

The overall results strongly emphasize the critical role of technology in increasing cybercrime risks across community members, businesses, and government agencies, reflecting how digital transformation has expanded opportunities for cybercriminal activities. Among community members, the rapid integration of technology into daily life—particularly the use of social media, smartphones, and online financial platforms—has created broader exposure to risks such as identity theft, fraud, cyberbullying, and misinformation. The rise of unregulated online engagement, especially among youth and elderly groups, has amplified vulnerabilities to both opportunistic and targeted attacks. These findings mirror the observations of Alkhalil et al. (2021), who noted that widespread reliance on digital platforms often makes individuals easy targets for phishing and identity-related crimes, and Aslan et al. (2023), who highlighted the dangers posed by increasing sophistication of attacks in the absence of user education and protective measures. San Miguel et al. (2020) similarly emphasized that in the Philippine context, high social media use coupled with low digital literacy magnifies the potential for cyber victimization, demonstrating how technology, while empowering, also escalates risks in everyday online interactions.

In the business sector, technology plays a significant role in expanding the threat landscape, particularly through the integration of digital operations, cloud computing, and online transactions. The results show that most businesses recognize that digital platforms, while improving operational efficiency and competitiveness, have made them more susceptible to data breaches, ransomware, phishing, and system exploitation. This aligns with Nobles (2022), who observed that cloud service vulnerabilities and human errors make businesses primary targets for cybercriminals. However, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) face a unique challenge: while they acknowledge these risks, limited budgets, outdated infrastructure, and lack of cybersecurity expertise leave them especially exposed. Tetteh (2024) highlights that SMEs are often prime targets due to weaker defenses, and Panalangin et al. (2025) similarly found that many Philippine businesses lack structured cybersecurity frameworks to manage evolving risks. These findings stress the urgent need for scalable and affordable security solutions, enhanced technical support, and collaborative industry-driven initiatives to reduce the widening risk gap between large corporations and smaller enterprises.



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For government agencies, the findings reveal that technology-driven initiatives, including e-governance, online transactions, and digital records management, have significantly expanded their exposure to cybercrime risks. The transition to digital systems has created a larger attack surface for malicious actors, exposing sensitive public data and critical infrastructures to potential exploitation. The results indicate that cyber risks in this sector are compounded by outdated systems, inconsistent security protocols, and limited inter-agency coordination. These findings are consistent with Azubuike (2023), who stressed that digitized government systems are increasingly attractive to cybercriminals and state-sponsored actors, and Udoh (2024), who pointed out that the benefits of digital governance are often undermined by inadequate cybersecurity readiness in developing countries. Locally, Toledano (2024) observed that Philippine agencies frequently operate without comprehensive cybersecurity policies, leaving them vulnerable to data breaches and operational disruptions. This underscores the urgent need for government institutions to adopt robust cybersecurity frameworks, allocate adequate resources, and implement continuous training programs to strengthen defenses and ensure the security of digital public services.

Motivations and Methods of Cybercriminals in Puerto Princesa

Theme 1: Cyber Retaliation Due to Personal Offense

Cybercrime offenders in Puerto Princesa City frequently described their actions as deliberate acts of retaliation rooted in personal grievances such as betrayal, humiliation, or disrespect. Many admitted that their offenses—such as hacking, doxing, or exposing private conversations—were committed to assert control or inflict emotional harm on individuals they felt had wronged them. Statements like, “He disrespected me, so I exposed his secret online” and “I wouldn’t have done it if he hadn’t hurt me first. What I did on social media was just revenge” illustrate this dynamic. These findings align with Wall’s (2021) observation that personal vendettas are increasingly driving digital offending, particularly in contexts where individuals feel marginalized or disempowered by formal justice systems. The anonymity, accessibility, and immediacy of digital platforms create a perceived sense of empowerment, enabling offenders to retaliate without immediate repercussions. Similarly, Whyte (2020) highlights the rise of “digitally mediated revenge,” where interpersonal conflicts are extended into digital spaces through harmful behaviors such as revenge pornography, cyberstalking, and harassment. Together, these perspectives underscore the emotional and relational underpinnings of cyber offending, highlighting the need for policies and educational interventions that address how technology amplifies interpersonal conflicts in the digital age.

Theme 2: Emotional Impulsivity Triggered by Betrayal or Conflict

Another recurring theme among offenders was the role of emotional impulsivity, where cyber offenses were committed in moments of intense anger, heartbreak, or humiliation. Many participants emphasized that their actions were unplanned, arising from overwhelming emotions triggered by personal betrayal or unresolved conflict. For example, one admitted, “I didn’t mean to do it at first, but I was triggered, so I hacked his account.” Another said, “I did it because I was deeply hurt by what he did to me.” Herman et al. (2024) argue that the immediacy and anonymity of online platforms amplify impulsive behaviors by reducing the social cues and accountability typically present in face-to-face interactions. In digital spaces, the lack of immediate consequences fosters environments where emotional triggers, coupled with low impulse control, can quickly escalate into cyber offenses. These findings point to the importance of interventions focused on emotional regulation, digital responsibility, and conflict resolution, as well as restorative approaches in the justice system that consider the emotional and cognitive drivers of impulsive online behaviors.

Theme 3: Public Shaming as a Means of Revenge

Public shaming also emerged as a prominent method of retaliation, where offenders deliberately exposed private conversations, images, or screenshots to humiliate their targets online. Such acts were often intended both as personal revenge and as public condemnation, with offenders stating, “I released screenshots so everyone would know how bad he is” and “I leaked information because I wanted him to feel the shame I went through.” Others admitted, “I embarrassed him online.” This reflects the concept of digital vigilantism described by Favarel-Garrigues et al. (2020), where individuals bypass formal legal systems and leverage digital platforms to exact informal justice. In the Philippine context, this aligns with the growing phenomenon of “online bardagulan”—a cultural practice characterized by confrontational, retaliatory exchanges on social media that often escalate into widespread public shaming (Regaro, 2023). While such actions may serve as outlets for emotional release or a means of asserting dominance, they contribute to significant harms, including reputational damage, psychological distress, and social polarization. The normalization of these practices underscores the urgent need for digital citizenship education that



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fosters empathy, respect for privacy, and responsible online conduct. Policy frameworks must also adapt to address the ethical and legal complexities of digital vigilantism, balancing accountability with the protection of individual rights in an increasingly connected society.

Challenges Faced by Law Enforcement Agencies in Combating Cybercrime in Puerto Princesa

The responses of law enforcement agencies in Puerto Princesa City reveal three key challenges in combating cybercrime: anonymity and technical evasion by offenders, limited public awareness and digital literacy, and enforcement gaps despite the existence of cybercrime laws. First, anonymity and technical evasion remain significant barriers to effective investigation and prosecution. Officers consistently highlighted the difficulty of identifying offenders who exploit fake profiles, aliases, VPNs, and encrypted platforms to mask their identities. As one officer explained, "Unlike street crimes, cybercriminals can hide behind fake accounts and anonymous profiles," while another noted, "It's hard to identify cybercriminals because they often use VPNs and fake names online." These experiences align with Proulx (2022), who emphasizes that anonymity tools such as VPNs and encryption technologies obscure digital footprints, complicating attribution and evidence collection. Heft (2023) adds that cyberspace, as a "disembodied" environment, disrupts traditional policing frameworks reliant on physical presence and localized jurisdiction, making transboundary offenses particularly difficult to address. This complex environment demands innovative investigative strategies, including investment in digital forensics, specialized cybercrime units, and cross-border collaborations. Without these advancements, law enforcement agencies remain at a disadvantage, unable to keep pace with offenders who increasingly view the digital space as a low-risk environment for illicit activities.

The second challenge involves limited public awareness and digital literacy, which exacerbate the community's vulnerability to cybercrime. Law enforcement personnel observed that many individuals remain unaware of basic cybersecurity practices, making them easy targets for phishing, scams, and other digital threats. As one officer stated, "Many people in the community still don't know the proper ways to stay safe online," while another remarked, "Because they don't understand the online risks, they become easy targets for cybercriminals." This reflects Guerrero's (2024) concept of "cyber risk naïveté," where users—especially those lacking formal digital education—underestimate the dangers of online spaces. Anderson and Agarwal further argue that such vulnerability stems from a critical knowledge gap rather than apathy. In the Philippine context, Calatin and Pajo (2025) note that cybersecurity campaigns are often concentrated in urban centers, leaving rural and marginalized communities with little access to accurate information or digital safety tools. This digital divide underscores the urgent need for inclusive, grassroots-level education tailored to local contexts, including community assemblies, radio broadcasts, and materials in local dialects. Partnerships with local leaders and schools can amplify these efforts, ensuring that awareness campaigns reach those most at risk. Addressing this knowledge gap requires a multi-faceted approach that integrates education, infrastructure, and policy support to foster digital resilience across all sectors of society.

Lastly, enforcement gaps persist despite the presence of cybercrime laws such as the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 (RA 10175). Law enforcers acknowledged that while the legal framework provides a foundation for prosecuting cyber offenses, practical implementation remains limited due to the inability to trace anonymous offenders and the complexities of handling digital evidence. As one officer explained, "Even if the law exists, it's hard to enforce it if you can't identify who's behind the crime," echoing Chimchiuri's (2024) argument that legislation often struggles to keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies. This mismatch between law and reality creates enforcement challenges and weakens deterrence, as offenders exploit legal loopholes and technical barriers. Collier et al. (2022) emphasize that meaningful cybercrime governance requires not just laws but also robust institutional capacity—especially in local enforcement units where technical expertise, advanced forensic tools, and standardized protocols are often lacking. These deficiencies result in delayed investigations, low conviction rates, and diminished public trust in the justice system. To close these gaps, a holistic approach is necessary: continuous capacity-building for law enforcement and the judiciary, regular updates to legal frameworks to match technological trends, and enhanced coordination across agencies and jurisdictions. By integrating modern digital infrastructure and fostering adaptive policies, authorities can better respond to the dynamic and complex landscape of cybercrime.

Globally, law enforcement agencies confront challenges similar to those in Puerto Princesa—namely, advancing cybercrime outpacing the capacity of existing legal and investigative structures. Europol's Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA) highlights how the rapid evolution of cybercrime, particularly organized ransomware and crime-as-a-service models, continues to strain law enforcement resources and cross-border response mechanisms (Europol, 2023; Torres, 2025). These international patterns underscore the critical role of



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integrated intelligence-sharing, multi-jurisdictional task forces, public-private partnerships, and legal adaptation to keep pace with the dynamic and borderless nature of cybercrime.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the upward trend of reported cybercrime cases in Puerto Princesa City from 2021 to 2024 highlights the deepening integration of technology in daily life and its role in amplifying cyber-related risks. Offender motivations—ranging from personal retaliation and emotional impulsivity to public shaming for revenge—reveal how emotional and relational factors drive harmful online behaviors, often intensified by the anonymity and immediacy of digital platforms. At the same time, law enforcement faces significant barriers, including technical evasion by offenders, limited digital literacy within the community, and gaps in the practical enforcement of RA 10175, which collectively hinder timely investigations and prosecutions. These findings underscore the urgent need for a multi-pronged strategy that enhances technical capabilities and training for law enforcement, strengthens digital literacy and awareness campaigns at the grassroots level, and aligns local initiatives with national and global efforts to build a more adaptive and resilient cybersecurity framework for the community.

Recommendations

To address the rising cybercrime risks in Puerto Princesa City, a phased, multi-faceted approach with clear timelines and responsibility markers is recommended. In the short term (0–6 months), the Puerto Princesa City Police Office (PPCPO) Cybercrime Unit, in coordination with the PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group (ACG), should prioritize the enhancement of technical capabilities through advanced digital forensics training and the procurement of updated investigative tools. At the same time, the City Information Office and local schools should initiate community-wide digital literacy campaigns, using barangay assemblies, social media infographics, and local radio programs to teach safe online practices. These should focus on critical topics such as password security, phishing awareness, and basic data protection to build immediate awareness across different community sectors. For the medium term (6–18 months), the City Council and Legal Affairs Office, working closely with national cybersecurity agencies and local stakeholders, should lead the review and updating of local ordinances to align with technological advancements and ensure that the practical enforcement of RA 10175 remains effective. During this phase, public-private partnerships should also be strengthened. Local businesses, internet service providers, and civic organizations can collaborate on incident reporting mechanisms, data protection protocols, and training programs to create a stronger, unified response to cyber threats. In the long term (18–36 months), the Mayor's Office, in partnership with academic institutions, NGOs, and law enforcement agencies, should focus on scaling up initiatives like Project CYBERSAGIP. This expansion should include the development of youth-led advocacy programs, the establishment of incident reporting hotlines, and regular community drills on cyber awareness and threat reporting. Collaborations with national agencies such as the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) and global organizations like INTERPOL and Europol should also be formalized to promote cross-border intelligence-sharing, joint operations, and continuous capacity-building. These sustained efforts will ensure Puerto Princesa develops a secure, adaptive, and resilient digital ecosystem that keeps pace with the rapidly evolving landscape of cybercrime.

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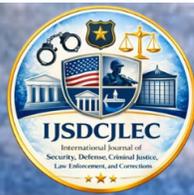
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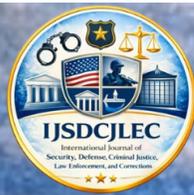
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Barangay Officials' Perceptions on the Proposed Profiling Activity of the Philippine National Police (PNP): Basis for Innovative Approach to Crime Deterrence

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Abstract

Aim: Household profiling, an innovative policing approach, has elicited diverse reactions, including concerns about racial discrimination, human rights violations, its role in identifying individuals involved in drug or other criminal activities, and potential violations of individual privacy, among others. This study determined the implications of profiling community household members and assessing their needs based on the responses of barangay officials of Nagcarlan and Liliw in Laguna that could lead to crime prevention and deterrence as well as improved community policing services and programs.

Methodology: This study employed the descriptive survey research method. A researcher-made questionnaire was administered to 270 barangay officials in two locales: Nagcarlan and Liliw, Laguna, who served as participants. The data gathered were tested through frequency, weighted mean and ranking, as well as sample t-test for significant difference.

Results: It was observed that there was a significant difference on community profiling to subject (0.000), community profiling to law enforcers (0.026) and community needs assessment to members of the community (0.004) since the obtained p-values were less than 0.05 alpha level. This implies that the responses vary significantly and based from the test conducted it was found out that Nagcarlan experienced greater implication on community profiling while Liliw has faced greater implication on community needs assessment to members of the community.

Conclusion: From [the] results, the following were the conclusions derived: (1) The implication of community profiling to the community was treated negative while on the law enforcers was positive; (2) Implication of community needs assessment to the members of the community and policing was considered high and positive; (3) Implication to community profiling was high in Nagcarlan while on community needs was greater in Liliw; and (4) A proposed plan of action was formulated to improve community profiling and enhance community needs.

Keywords: household profiling, needs assessment, implications to community, implications to police response, action plan.

INTRODUCTION

Collection of massive data to support organization is an innovative approach in modern policing in order to improve decision-making by merging together and effectively analyzing information. The collection of data in the context of policing and investigative processes could be an effective tool to determining what kind of community there is in terms of household members' personal profile and public safety needs. The information that will be derived from the conduct of household members profiling would enable decision-makers in law enforcement to effectively address law enforcement concerns and creation of programs and services that could best meet needs of the community being served.

In the context of policing, Giblin (2017) discussed some modern innovations that rely mostly on data gathering to support police operations. One of these innovations is the Focused Deterrence partnership, where collaboration is achieved by increasing the probability of arrest and sanctions for the most prolific offenders in the community; second is the "Comstat" or comparing statistics, an innovations that combines the technical capacity to provide up-to-date performance measures (e.g. crime statistics) with an organizational effort to hold managers accountable for results in their area of authority (e.g. precincts) and are defined by number of core features as: mission clarification, internal accountability, geographical organizational command, data-driven analysis and effective tactics; third, is Evidence-Based Policing (Research Use) which relies on scientific evidence as a decision-making tool, increasing the certainty about cause and effect or means and ends; and lastly, Predictive Policing (Analytics) an innovation in which agencies draw upon vast diverse and extremely timely data to help anticipate, prevent and respond more effectively to future crime.



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The decision to conduct a study on determining the implications of household profiling and assessing personal as well as public safety needs was influenced by practices like racial profiling in many countries, such as in the United States, criminal profiling used in labelling drug personalities, particularly in countries actively campaigning against illicit drug use. Additionally, China's decision to establish a database for all its citizens played a role. In the Philippines, for instance, the introduction of the "drug-free home sticker" was based on household profiling in some communities.

The adoption of the Drug Free Family Program in Quezon Police Provincial Office, and subsequently in the entire PRO CALABARZON, was prompted by the escalating numbers of illegal drug pushers/users, nefarious incidents, and crimes related to illegal drugs, leading to numerous arrests. The formal Launch of the "Drug Free Home" Project, a revised version of the "Drug Free Family," took place on June 12, 2017, in Liliw, Laguna. Recognizing the Filipino practice of extended families or multiple families residing in one household, ORPCRD recommended amending the title to PRO 4A Best Practice Board on May 25, 2017. The project also incorporated the PNP's anti-drug campaign projects, such as Project Double Barrel and its revisions Alpha and Reloaded. The board approved the amended implementation process, and on October 18, 2017, PRO 4A Memorandum Circular No. 2018-03 entitled "Drug Free Home Project" was officially signed.

Concurrently with improvements in the implementation process, said office also introduced a standardized sticker layout with a control number, which was adopted region-wide.

On April 30, 2017, Standard Operating Procedures No. 2017-001 entitled Revised Guidelines and Procedures in the Determination and Recognition of PNP Best Practices was implemented. With the new SOP, PROs were directed by higher headquarters to reclassify their approved Best Practices, hence, revision in Drug Free Home Project implementation were proposed and approved.

The Drug Free Home project is initiated with intelligence validation by the Unit involved in partnership with the Local Government Unit (LGU), Municipal Anti-Drug Abuse Council (MADAC), Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (BADAC), NGOs, DepEd., religious sectors and other stakeholders in the community. Upon the recommendation of the validation team, households in the barangays will be posted with a "Drug - Free Home" sticker as indication that individuals residing in the target domicile are not involved in any illegal drug activities.

Since the above programs globally and locally rely on data collection particularly on profiling the community, the researcher has decided to input the concept of community needs assessment which could be a proactive response to rising criminality in the country and not just solely profiling the household members. This is because assessment of community needs may lead to appropriate rendering of community services not only by the PNP community oriented policing but also by other community resources such as services from the national government, local government and non-governmental organizations and civic groups; as well as removing doubts in the minds of the community members that the government through the PNP is not only after zeroing on criminal activities but also about determining what best programs and services may be offered along crime prevention and deterrence.

However, since the conduct of household survey may not be welcomed due to some implications to the members of community households and the police officers who are doing the survey, an analysis of possible implications is seen in this study as important in order to propose some measures to clear doubts about the conduct of household members profiling and determining their needs.

Objectives

This study determined the implications of profiling community household members and assessing their needs based on the responses of barangay officials of Nagcarlan and Liliw in Laguna that could lead to crime prevention and deterrence as well as improved community policing services and programs.

Specifically, this study sought to achieve the following:

1. determine the implications of community household members profiling to household members and law enforcers;
2. determine the implications of assessing community needs to the household members and law enforcers;
3. test the significant difference on the implications when grouped according to location, and
4. propose plan of action to improve the delivery of community policing programs and services.

METHODS

Research Design



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This study used the descriptive research design because of its intention to describe the distribution of and the relationship among the variables and the difference of responses between the two groups of respondents (Bachman, Shutt & Plass 2015). In this method, data analysis relied primarily on the collection of numerical data as well as hypothesis testing.

Population and Sampling

The participants of this study were taken from two municipalities in Laguna: Nagcarlan with 33 barangay and Liliw with 27 barangays. Each barangay has 8 barangay officials. Using the proportional stratified sampling technique, an equal number of participants were included as sample (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). The participants were all barangay officials regardless of position in their respective barangay; however, the barangay chairmen were not included. A sample of 135 each for Nagcarlan and Liliw or 270 comprised the sample for this study. This study employed the convenience sampling technique which means that those available at the time of the floating of the questionnaire served as respondents.

Instrument

The primary tool for data gathering was a researcher-made questionnaire wherein variables were derived from the reviewed literature. The questionnaire is divided into four parts: Part 1 is on the implications of community profiling to subject community; part 2 is on the implications of profiling to law enforcers; part 3 is on the implications of community needs assessment to members of the community; and part 4 is on the implications of needs assessment to policing.

The instrument was subjected to face validation by a 3-member panel consisting of experts in research, statistics, and the topic. Relying on their expertise and experiences, the panelists critiqued and evaluated the questionnaire.

To establish the validity and reliability of the questionnaire items, the test-retest reliability measurement, such as Cronbach Analysis (Bachman & Schutt, 2011), was employed in the completed study.

A pretesting of the questionnaire was done. The questionnaire were pretested to 10 barangay officials, five each from Nagcarlan and Liliw with a Cronbach alpha of Implication of Community Profiling to Subject (community) is 0.757, Implication of Profiling to law Enforcers is 0.790, Implication of Community Needs Assessment to members of the community Implication of Community Needs Assessment to members of the community is 0.789 and Implication of Community Needs Assessment to Policing is 0.720. The responses were analyzed and the items that were found not reliable were modified and afterwards the revised instrument were administered again to the same set of respondents. The correlation between the scores obtained from the same set of respondents in two different times is called test-retest coefficient.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before floating the questionnaire to the research participants, respective approval from the Chiefs of Police of Nagcarlan and Liliw, respectively, was sought. The approval of the Dean of the Graduate School of Lyceum of the Philippines University was likewise sought. The participants were given informed consent form in order for them to know the extent of their participation, the goal of the study and the benefits they will get from their participation. After confirming the permissions and approvals and once formally certified, the researcher personally through the support of fellow police officers floated and retrieved the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

The data were tallied, encoded and interpreted using different statistical tools such as frequency distribution, weighted mean and Independent Sample t-test. These tools were used to answer the objectives of the study. In addition, all data were treated using statistical software, PASW version 18 to further analyze the result of the study.

The four point *Likert* Scale Anchors was used to examine the perception of the respondents on the relevance of community profiling and needs assessment towards the implications of community profiling and needs assessment. The scale used was: 3.50 – 4.00 (Highly Agree); 2.50 – 3.49 (Agree); 1.50 – 2.49 (Less Agree); and, 1.00 – 1.49 (Not at all).

Weighted mean was used to describe the perception on the relevance of community profiling and needs assessment; on the other hand, Independent Sample t-test was used to test the significant difference between the responses of the participants from two police stations and cities in Laguna.

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Ethical Considerations

All necessary permissions were sought prior to the conduct of survey and interview. This protocol includes informing the research participants of the general nature of the research, their role in terms of time and efforts, the observance of their anonymity, the benefit that they will get from participating in the study and the opportunity to receive feedback about the results of the study.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Table 1.1 Implication of Community Profiling to Subject (Community)

	Nagcarlan			Liliw			Over-all		
	WM	VI	R	WM	VI	R	WM	VI	R
1. could lead to violation of a person's privacy	1.43	SD	10	1.43	SD	10	1.43	SD	10
2. could promote positive behavior in the community	3.00	A	2	2.99	A	2	3.00	A	2
3. could lead to active engagement with policing	3.08	A	1	3.08	A	1	3.08	A	1
4. could lead to harassment by unprofessional police officers	2.09	D	5	1.81	D	4	1.95	D	6
5. could be subjected to constant monitoring	2.34	D	3	1.70	D	7	2.02	D	3
6. could affect social status of the member	1.95	D	8	1.69	D	8	1.82	D	8
7. could build feeling of security in the community	1.94	D	9	1.67	D	9	1.80	D	9
8. could pinpoint individuals with criminal potentials	2.18	D	4	1.79	D	5	1.99	D	4
9. could implicate others without criminal potentials	2.03	D	7	1.78	D	6	1.90	D	7
10. could lead to feeling of being controlled	2.08	D	6	1.86	D	3	1.97	D	5
Composite Mean	2.21	D		1.98	D		2.10	D	

Legend:

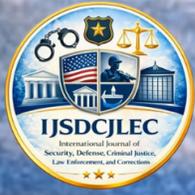
3.50 - 4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA);

2.50 - 3.49 = Agree (A);

1.50 - 2.49 = Disagree (D);

1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 1.1 presents the implication of community profiling to subject (community). The over-all composite mean of 2.10 indicates that the respondents did not agree on the above mentioned indicators. The top three results establish the possibility that community profiling could lead to the community members having an active engagement



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with the law enforcers (3.08), could promote positive behavior between community members and the police (3.00) ; however, imply also creation of fear among community members on being subjected to constant monitoring by law enforcers or police (2.02). This fear was of being monitored by police officers was confirmed by Sliwiski (2016) who said that for the United States profiling is important in order for the police to profile criminals, target individuals and subsequently catch criminal faster. Aside from the top three results, the result of disagreement in almost all variables except for the two items corresponding to Nagcarlan’s response could indicate that the practice of community profiling since it is a new approach to community policing has not made yet an impact or impression on the barangay official respondents. And since it is a new approach, the impact is yet to be discovered or experienced by the community.

The result of disagreement on other items could also indicate that community members in the two barangays have positive impression of the activities of the police; and this impression made them contradict the negative impact of community profiling in the community. Furthermore, the conduct of profiling could have been seen by the community members in the two sites as a mere statistical approach to determining the members of the community and a proactive approach to guaranteeing the safety or membership of the community members and nothing more.

The impression derived from the result of the top 3 responses and disagreement in all variables except for two is an indicator that the conduct of profiling could have been seen by the community members in the two sites as a mere statistical approach to determining the members of the community and a proactive approach to guaranteeing the safety or membership of the community members and nothing more was supported by Moodle (2014) who said that the purpose of developing a community profile is just to collect baseline data, identify the kind of population, identify problems and address those through appropriate programs and services. The trust afforded by the respondents to their law enforcers was supported by UK Post (2018) that the plan of China to conduct massive surveillance is just to establish a so-called trustworthy scores among its citizens.

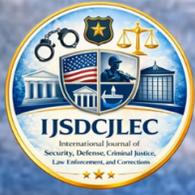
On the contrary three lowest ranks imply that community profiling is a violation of a personal privacy (1.43), could affect social status of the member (1.80); however could also build feeling of security among the members of the community (1.82). From these results, it could be gleaned that personal privacy, status and security are among the concerns of the community in relation to profiling.

The issue of violation of person’s privacy is justified in China that profiling is a way of establishing “trustworthy” scores of the government from the people is contrary to the United States’ position. Another rationale for community profiling was mentioned by Solove (2014), who said that profiling is a way to limit the power of groups or individuals since personal information once shared can or may be used to affect reputations of the sharers or may even cause harm. Second, is that if a person has a personal desire to keep information for himself and was forced or coerced to share can be viewed as not caring. Third, maintaining privacy helps people protect themselves from troublesome judgments. Still another is to maintain social boundaries, can lead to breaches of confidentiality, or even lost control over one’s life, more importantly is that privacy is the key to freedom of thought and speech.

The above contentions of Solove (2014) was supported by Islam (2018) that emphasized importance of maintaining personal information because it is rooted in each human identity; thus violation of which cause tension, violence, conflicts and mental and physical pains in the people’s personal and family lives and their social relations as well.

Table 1.2. Implication of Community Profiling to Law Enforcers

	Nagcarlan			Liliw			Over-all		
	WM	VI	R	WM	VI	R	WM	VI	R
1. could lead to being suspected of violations of human rights	3.96	SA	1	3.94	SA	1	3.95	SA	1
2. could support campaign for illicit drugs	3.94	SA	2	3.92	SA	2	3.93	SA	2
3. could promote	3.89	SA	4	3.80	SA	5	3.85	SA	4



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positive engagement with the community									
4. could lead to being suspected of harassing members of the community	3.25	A	9	3.24	A	9	3.25	A	9
5. could facilitate identification of suspicious members	3.09	A	10	3.17	A	10	3.13	A	10
6. could provide data set that will be useful for strategic planning	3.58	SA	8	3.43	A	8	3.50	SA	8
7. could lead to identification of hotspot (criminal activities)	3.72	SA	7	3.56	SA	7	3.64	SA	7
8. could promote distrust with the community of the intention on doing profiling	3.79	SA	6	3.78	SA	6	3.79	SA	6
9. could provide an avenue for innovative strategies for policing	3.84	SA	5	3.83	SA	4	3.83	SA	5
10. could support the government in addressing terrorism	3.91	SA	3	3.90	SA	3	3.90	SA	3
Composite Mean	3.70	SA		3.66	SA		3.68	SA	

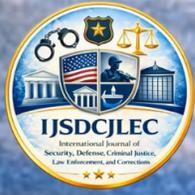
Legend:

- 3.50 - 4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA);
- 2.50 - 3.49 = Agree (A);
- 1.50 - 2.49 = Disagree (D);
- 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 1.2 presents the implication of profiling members of the community to law enforcers. The over-all composite mean of 3.68 indicates that the respondents strongly agreed on all variables except for the "Agree" result as "could lead to being suspected of harassing members of the community" and "could facilitate identification suspicious members". The top three results imply that profiling is a violation of human rights (3.95), a support in the campaign against illicit drugs and addressing terrorism (3.93). In this regard, the community respondents see community profiling as pro police rather than serving community concerns and being used as affront just to identify members of the community as probable crime suspects (3.90); and more so a violation of human rights.

The literature reviewed in this study revealed the following impressions about profiling. For the United States profiling is important in order for the police to profile criminals, target individuals and subsequently catch criminal faster; it is a modern innovations that rely mostly on data gathering to support police operations and as a way for focused deterrence as well as increased the probability of making arrest for the most prolific offenders. (Sliwiski, 2016; Giblin, 2017). The UK according to Bigmani (2007) although has apprehensions on the use of profiling as a method of the police to single out probable crime suspects because of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Council of Europe's Convention on Data Protection is giving leeway for police operations in particular profiling as acceptable but only subject to secure warrants from judicial authorities.

The three lowest results have implications to identifying suspicious community leaders for crime commissions (3.13); to being suspected of harassing members of the community (3.25); and to providing data set



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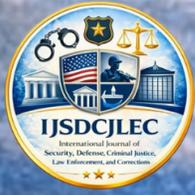
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that will be useful for strategic planning (3.50). If these implications are considered, it could suggest that for the community, the conduct of community profiling is a strategy at pinpointing suspected criminals and also to be used as reference if untoward behavior is manifested by the profiled members of the community.

Ocampo (2019) presented two contrasting points of view regarding profiling as a form of a witch hunt, as implied in the above that the data set will just serve the police for their strategic planning. He said that for the Administration, profiling is a peace framework; however, there was a contention from the Department of Education that the teachers who are being investigated and being profiled for suspicion of being radical should be protected by the Data Protection Act [RA 10173] and fear that giving out pieces of information may cause damage to the teachers. On the contrary Parocha (2018) said the profiling approach is a national task to end local communist as part of the government's continued efforts to achieve peace. Under Executive Order No. 70, signed by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea by authority of the President last Dec. 4, the task force is mandated to formulate a National Peace Framework which shall include, among others, a mechanism for local peace engagements or negotiations and interventions.

Table 2.1. Implication of Community Needs Assessment to Members of the Community

	Nagcarlan			Liliw			Over-all		
	WM	VI	R	WM	VI	R	WM	VI	R
1. could lead to building trust with the members of the community since their needs are being considered	3.78	SA	1	3.95	SA	1	3.87	SA	1
2. could create relevant community services based from the expressed community needs	3.64	SA	4	3.90	SA	2	3.77	SA	3
3. could make the community suspicious of the intention of identifying their needs	3.73	SA	2	3.90	SA	2	3.81	SA	2
4. could support the development of programs and services for community oriented policing	3.71	SA	3	3.48	A	4	3.60	SA	4
5. could lead to accumulation of data without sufficient intervention	3.41	A	5	3.15	A	9	3.28	A	5
6. could promote community growth and development if those needs are addressed	3.04	A	10	3.09	A	10	3.07	A	10
7. could lead other governmental agencies and non-governmental agencies to provide needed services	3.16	A	6	3.29	A	5	3.23	A	6
8. could make the people more dependent on the government for	3.14	A	7	3.28	A	6	3.21	A	7



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meeting their needs									
9. could lead the people to anticipate programs and services directed to their needs	3.12	A	9	3.21	A	7	3.16	A	8
10. could promote cooperation in the community particularly if they have common needs	3.13	A	8	3.18	A	8	3.15	A	9
Composite Mean	3.39	A		3.44	A		3.41	A	

Legend:

3.50 - 4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA);

2.50 – 3.49 = Agree (A);

1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree (D);

1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

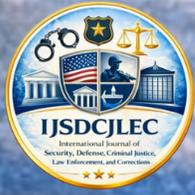
Table 2.1 presents the implication of needs assessment to members of the community. The over-all composite mean of 3.41 indicates that the respondents from the two sites “Agree” on the conduct of needs assessment of the community. This result imply that assessing needs of the community is a welcomed activity of the police by the community. The top three results reflect the following implications such as a way of building the trust of the community to the police (3.87); make the community suspicious of the intention of identifying their needs (3.81); leads to identifying relevant community services based from the expressed community needs (3.77). From these findings, two connote positive response since identifying needs lead to building trust in the government through police service that the welfare of the community is being considered and relevant services could emanate from the needs identified; however identifying needs has implication also to building mistrust on the real reason why the police is doing needs assessment.

Some importance of community needs assessment were enumerated by Murphy (2013) such as when community needs are identified operational planning becomes more feasible. This report further claimed that identifying local needs and resources can help change-makers understand how to improve their communities in the most logical and efficient ways possible. In support of the relevance of community needs assessment, Local government Academy (2018) said that despite the long years of giving service to the community, the Agency is still in the process of providing capacity development solutions to improve local governance in the Philippines. This could mean that there are gaps that are yet to be identified by the agency and these gaps could be addressed when timely and relevant needs of the community arose.

The last three results suggest that the conduct of community needs assessment lead to community growth and development most especially if those needs are addressed by the government (3.07); leads to cooperation in the community particularly if they have common needs (3.15); and lead the people to anticipate programs and services directed to their needs (3.16). The implications of the last three results connote suspicion since there are conditions that should be first be answered like, can the government really provide services to meet such needs? Can the community really work as one if found to have common needs? Can the community the anticipation of the community be given to them in terms of services relative to their needs?

These questions as reflected in the last three results was answered by President Rodrigo Duterte through his Executive Order no. 70 which states that the desired approach to solving issues in service delivery is through a “Whole-of-Nation approach which prioritizes the delivery of basic services and social development packages by the government, facilitates societal inclusivity, and ensures active participation of all sectors of the society in the pursuit of the country's peace agenda. In relation to this peace framework, the goal is to identify the root causes of insurgencies, internal disturbances and tensions (Parrocha (2018).

Table 2.2 Implication of Community Needs Assessment to Policing



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	Nagcarlan			Liliw			Over-all		
	WM	VI	R	WM	VI	R	WM	VI	R
1. could lead to addressing direct needs of the community thus not waste government funds for irrelevant programs and services	3.93	SA	3	3.97	SA	1	3.95	SA	2
2. could promote the creation of appropriate community policing programs and services	3.91	SA	5	3.97	SA	1	3.94	SA	3
3. could create an awareness in law enforcement on why the people are engaging in illegal activities	3.98	SA	2	3.89	SA	8	3.93	SA	4
4. could lead to the other innovations through strategic planning	3.83	SA	7	3.91	SA	5	3.87	SA	6
5. could provide insights on the working of the community members	3.79	SA	9	3.92	SA	4	3.85	SA	8
6. could lead to stronger community and police relationship	3.80	SA	8	3.90	SA	6	3.84	SA	9
7. could make the people dependent on law enforcement to provide them with actions to answer their needs	3.76	SA	10	3.65	SA	10	3.70	SA	10
8. could make the police more responsive and practice professionalism since they became aware that the people have needs that should be addressed by law enforcers	3.88	SA	6	3.83	SA	9	3.86	SA	7
9. could increase tie of the police with other service agents from the government and non-governmental agencies for a more collaborative relationship	3.92	SA	4	3.90	SA	6	3.91	SA	5
10. could lead to the realization of the present administration on its Peace Plan	3.98	SA	1	3.94	SA	3	3.96	SA	1
Composite Mean	3.88	SA		3.89	SA		3.88	SA	

Legend:

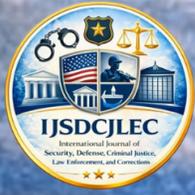
3.50 - 4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA);

2.50 - 3.49 = Agree (A);

1.50 - 2.49 = Disagree (D);

1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 2.2 presents the implication of needs assessment to policing. The over-all composite mean of 3.88 indicates respondents all "Strongly Agree" on the indicated items. This result imply that assessing community needs



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is important for police service for when needs are identified, appropriate programs and services for community policing could probably ensue. The top three answers have implications first, realization of the Administration peace plan through people consultation (3.96); second, could lead to addressing direct needs of the community thus not waste government funds for irrelevant programs and services in the government (3.95) ; and third, could promote the creation of appropriate community policing programs and services (3.94). The top three response point the following key areas as people consultation, address actual needs as express by the people; and programs and services should commensurate to what the people really needs.

The issue of data privacy based from Solove (2014) did not surfaced in either the top and lowest results. In this several contradictory implications around issues concerning community needs assessment by law enforcement agents are implicated as may contribute to tarnishing household member's reputation, may lead to false data reporting. This contentions by Solove was supported by Bignami (2007) presents and who analyzes data privacy as one of the oldest human rights policies in European Union and law enforcement and that information gathering activities can be perceived as a way of surveillance and not mere identification of community needs in order to come up with appropriate programs and services based from identified needs.

On the contrary the three lowest results have implications on dependency issue with law enforcement (3.70); stronger community and police relationship (3.84); and provide insights on the working of the community members (3.85). Although conducting community needs assessment may be viewed in the context of being dependent on police on provision and addressing community needs through expected programs and services, community needs assessment can build stronger tie up between police and the community as well as providing the needed ideas on what the people really need that will provide the guidelines for future planning by PNP leadership with its support agencies. In this regard appropriate programs and services could emanate.

Murphy (2013) said that before any plan is develop, identification of needs and resources of the community should first be done and this could help law makers to promote programs and services in most logical and efficient ways. When information about the needs of the community is lacking, efforts of the government to providing efficient and effective programs and service will be lacking (DILG, 2018). Furthermore, the move to identify needs of the community could help end local communist armed conflict and adopt a national peace framework in the Philippines (Parocha, 2018).

Table 3
Difference of Responses on Implication of Community Profiling and Implication of Community Needs Assessment Between the Two Groups of Respondents

	Group	Mean	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Implication of Community Profiling to Subject (Community)	Nagcarlan	2.21	10.105	0.000	Highly Significant
	Liliw	1.98			
Implication of Community Profiling to Law Enforcers	Nagcarlan	3.70	2.247	0.026	Significant
	Liliw	3.66			
Implication of Community Needs Assessment to Members of the Community	Nagcarlan	3.39	2.888	0.004	Significant
	Liliw	3.44			
Implication of Community Needs Assessment to Policing	Nagcarlan	3.88	0.574	0.566	Not Significant



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	Liliw	3.89			
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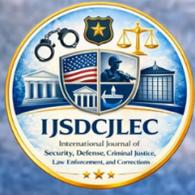
Legend: Significant at p -value < 0.05

Table 3 displays the comparison of responses on the implications of community profiling and community needs assessment. It was observed that there was a significant difference on community profiling to subject (0.000), community profiling to law enforcers (0.026) and community needs assessment to members of the community (0.004) since the obtained p -values were less than 0.05 alpha level. This implies that the responses vary significantly and based from the test conducted it was found out that Nagcarlan experienced greater implication on community profiling while Liliw have faced greater implication on community needs assessment to members of the community.

The above results point to possible differences of the way the respondents see community profiling and community needs assessment. The result could imply that the Nagcarlan group has more concern about the implications of community profiling to their community. As indicated in the items which got the highest result, this group perceives the conduct of community profiling could lead to being suspected of violations of human rights. On the other hand, for the Liliw group, faced with greater implications on community needs assessment to the members show that this group has more concern with their community receiving their much needed programs and services because their needs are being considered. The result of significant difference further shows, that the Nagcarlan group is more concern with their privacy; whereas for the Liliw group more on them receiving efficient and effective services from the government.

Table 4. Proposed Action Plan to Improve Community Profiling and Needs

Key Result Area	Objectives/Strategies	Person responsible	Resources needed	Time fame	Expected Outcome
Violation of Privacy, security and status	Address the fear of people regarding violation of privacy, status and security through the conduct of community dialogue by the PNP or designated officers in order to promote transparency and create awareness on the relevance of community profiling.	PNP and designated officers, COP of Liliw and Nagcarlan, head of Police community Relations and designated officers and formed interagency group members	As determined	2021	Regular dialogue with the people and community mobilization
Pointing suspicious household members for crime involvement	Address suspicion of the people regarding the police using community profiling through creation of guidelines with information dissemination and training of police enforcers who will	PNP and designated officers, COP of Liliw and Nagcarlan, head of Police community Relations and designated	as determined	2021	



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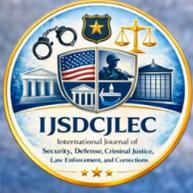
	conduct the profiling	officers and formed interagency group members			
Dependency syndrome of the community	Erase mendicant mentality of the people through harnessing community resources for collaborative and cooperative undertaking	PNP and designated officers, LGU head, barangay officials COP of Liliw and Nagcarlan, head of Police community Relations and designated officers and formed interagency group members	As determined	2021	People's self-esteem is elevated by being self-sufficient and self-reliant
Suspicion on Motive of PNP in needs assessment	Remove suspicion of the community on the real agenda of community needs assessment through the PNP and designated officers forming inter agencies collaboration and coordination in order to promote relevant programs and services to meet identified needs.	PNP and designated officers, LGU head, barangay officials COP of Liliw and Nagcarlan, head of Police community Relations and designated officers and formed interagency group members	As determined	2021	Inter-agencies with common and agreed upon direction in supporting people's needs

Conclusions

The conclusions derived from this study were culled from the findings, as follows:

1. The implication of community profiling to the community was treated negative while on the law enforcers was positive.
2. Implication of community needs assessment to the members of the community and policing was considered high and positive.
3. Implication to community profiling was high in Nagcarlan while on community needs was greater in Liliw.
4. A proposed plan of action was formulated to improved community profiling and enhance community needs.

Recommendations



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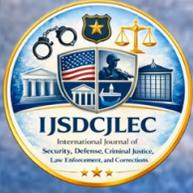
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The following recommendations center on the lowest results and arranged according to the findings and implications derived:

1. In order to address fear of violation of privacy, status and security of the community, PNP may conduct dialogue with the community in order to promote transparency and create awareness on the relevance of community profiling.
2. In order to address suspicion of the people regarding the police using community profiling as basis for pinpointing criminals and harassment, PNP may create guidelines for information dissemination as well as training to law enforcers who will conduct profiling of household members.
3. PNP may harness individual members' resources for collaborative and cooperative undertaking and identification of community resources for a more feasible framework for building solutions and community support in order to ease mendicant mentality of the people.
4. To remove suspicions of the people surrounding the real agenda of community needs assessment, PNP may form interagency group composing of concerned government agents, civic organizations and community organization for collaborative undertaking on community needs assessment and provision of community services.

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Exploring Viability of Compulsory Medical Evaluations for Admission in the College of Criminology for Higher Educational Institution in the Province of Albay: Basis for Criminology Medical Requirement

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Abstract

Aim: Mandatory medical exams for criminology students were deemed essential to ensure they were physically and mentally prepared for the demanding field of law enforcement. This study examined the feasibility of such evaluations for prospective Philippine National Police entrants in Albay, exploring current admission policies, potential benefits, and legal considerations.

Methodology: Utilizing a descriptive qualitative research design, the study involved semi-structured interviews with deans, program chairs, and a PNP medical doctor to assess the viability of mandatory medical exams. The research included interviews with participants from four CHED-accredited criminology schools, which were analyzed through document and thematic analysis.

Result: Findings showed varied admission requirements among criminology schools in Albay: some focused on basic documentation, while others, like College of Arts and Technology College, imposed more rigorous criteria, including medical exams and entrance tests. The absence of standardized medical assessments raised concerns about students' readiness for law enforcement careers, potentially affecting their health and performance.

Conclusion: Integrating uniform medical evaluations into the admission process could have improved student preparation, facilitated early intervention, and addressed legal and ethical considerations, ensuring candidates met the physical and mental demands of the profession and enhancing overall readiness for law enforcement careers.

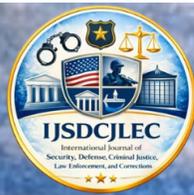
Keywords: *Mandatory, Medical Evaluation, Viability, Admission, Medical Requirement*

INTRODUCTION

Medical exams assess the health risks associated with a job and ensure that candidates are capable of meeting the physical and mental demands of the role. This is essential for long-term safety and health in many sectors. For example, the transportation sector has the highest rate of workplace fatalities, as noted by Safe Work Australia, due to fatigue, long hours, and the need for constant alertness. A pre-employment medical exam can help reduce these risks by assessing if a candidate is fit for the job (Injury.net, 2023).

Similarly, in law enforcement, medical and psychological exams help ensure applicants are physically and mentally fit for the demands of the profession. Careers in criminology require rigorous health checks to ensure candidates are prepared for potential physical and psychological challenges. Mandatory medical exams for criminology students can prevent future issues and provide peace of mind for both the students and their families. Legislative frameworks like Republic Act No. 11131 and CHED policies support this by requiring health assessments to prepare students for future roles in law enforcement. CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 42, Series of 2017, This order outlines the policies, standards, and guidelines for the Bachelor of Criminology program. It emphasizes that educational institutions should ensure the physical and mental fitness of students pursuing careers in criminology. CMO No. 42 supports the implementation of health assessments as part of the admission process to ensure that candidates meet the necessary health criteria for demanding roles in law enforcement.

The implementation of mandatory medical evaluations of students for admission to criminology programs in higher education institutions (HEIs) can be legally supported by key legislative and policy frameworks. Republic Act No. 11131, known as the "Act Strengthening the Professionalization of the PNP," emphasizes the importance of physical and psychological fitness for police personnel, thereby requiring similar evaluations for criminology students to ensure they are prepared for future challenges in law enforcement (RA No. 11131, 2018).



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Furthermore, CHED Memorandum Order No. 21, Series of 2005, outlines the Revised Policies and Standards for Criminology Education, which include provisions for medical evaluations to ensure students are physically and mentally prepared for the rigorous demands of the program (CHED, 2005). CHED Memorandum Order No. 5, Series of 2018, further solidifies policies on student health services within HEIs, ensuring comprehensive health evaluations are conducted to confirm students can meet the academic and professional requirements of their programs (CHED, 2018). Together, these legislative and policy measures provide a robust legal framework justifying compulsory medical evaluations for criminology students to ensure they are fully prepared for both academic and professional endeavors.

Under CHED Memorandum Order No. 21, Series of 2005, the Revised Policies and Standards for Criminology Education point out that there should be the conduct of thorough health assessments aimed at establishing whether or not a student satisfies the actual physical and mental components of the criminology profession. This forms the foundation for the actual roll-out within the programs relevant to criminology being run within the HEIs. Likewise, CHED Memorandum Order No. 5, Series of 2018 requires HEIs to do the necessary steps to see to it that students undergo the necessary health examination, with the necessary steps referring to those which evaluate both the physical and mental conditions of students, the latter being a necessary ground in the determination of health evaluation policy for Criminology students (Commission on Higher Education, 2018). Moreover, the professional practice of criminology is governed by the provisions of PRC Resolution No. 1127, Series of 2018. Specifically, criminologist is urged to be physically fit and mentally prepared, subjected to physical and psychological tests prescribed by the Commission, and to observe health assessments as required for him to be admitted into the study of criminology (Professional Regulation Commission, 2018)

Republic Act No. 11131, known to be the Act Strengthening the Professionalization of the Philippine National Police, stated the importance of physical and mental fitness and further cemented why this health assessment is important to the criminology students (Republic of the Philippines, 2018). Lastly, the Philippine Criminologists Association of the Philippines (PCAP) Code of Ethics prioritizes health and wellness among criminology professionals; hence, it serves as a moral and ethical rationalization for students applying to the Criminology Program to undergo health appraisals during their admission process. In this respect, all these frameworks converge to support the implementation of compulsory medical evaluations for admission to the Criminology profession. They serve a holistic approach to making sure that students are well positioned for this call.

In this study, medical tests are not intended to discourage or discriminate against any students from enrolling in a criminology course. Instead, they serve to provide better guidance by evaluating students' health to ensure they are physically and psychologically prepared. This process allows for specific health management and therapy for those with underlying conditions, addressing medical issues as soon as they are identified. For incurable health issues, students may be advised to consider their options or select a more suitable course. Ensuring accessibility and convenience for medical examinations, such as through mobile medical clinics or partnerships with local hospitals, is also important. Students' medical information should be kept confidential, with strict policies in place to protect their privacy (CHED, 2018)

Medical exam as a prerequisite for criminology could lead to a better future as law enforcement. This prompts the researcher to investigate if a medical exam for criminology students should be made mandatory. This would have the benefit of monitoring and directing students with regard to their health status as they get ready for the future. Additionally, this would make the parents more at ease and comfortable about their children's health status as they pursue the course. Having qualified graduates and applicants would be beneficial to the school administration and law enforcement organizations.

Objectives

This study explored the viability of medical evaluations for prospective PNP entrants in the Province of Albay.

Specifically, this study aimed to address the following questions:

1. What is the current status on the admission policy in criminology schools in the province of Albay?
2. What are the potential benefits of a mandatory medical examination program for criminology schools?



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3. What are legal considerations in implementing a mandatory medical examination on issues related to privacy and informed consent?
4. What admission policy can be developed to mandate medical examinations for criminology students, ensuring their physical and mental readiness for the rigorous demands of the program and future careers in law enforcement?

METHODS

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive qualitative research method, primarily through interviews, to explore the viability of implementing mandatory medical evaluations for criminology students. This design was ideal for collecting in-depth insights from participants about the benefits, challenges, and ethical considerations of such evaluations. By using semi-structured interviews, the research allowed flexibility in probing responses, capturing diverse perspectives. This approach effectively addressed cultural, legal, and privacy concerns while examining the ethical implications of mandatory medical exams, providing a comprehensive understanding of factors that could influence the program's success.

Population and Sampling

The study involved deans from the College of Arts and Technological College, Amando Cope College, and PLT College of Guinobatan, along with the Program Chair at Bicol College, who also served as the Officer in Charge, and a medical doctor from the Philippine National Police. These participants were selected based on their expertise in criminology education and medical evaluations. The deans and the Officer in Charge at Bicol College provided valuable insights into the integration of mandatory medical evaluations into criminology curricula and the associated ethical considerations. Meanwhile, the medical doctor contributed specialized knowledge on the practical and health-related aspects of these evaluations.

Convenience sampling was used to select the deans and the Officer in Charge, as they were readily accessible and willing to participate. In contrast, purposive sampling was applied to select the medical doctor, ensuring that participants were chosen for their specific expertise, providing relevant and targeted insights.

Instrument

The research instrument for this study was a carefully designed interview guide, validated by a medical doctor from the City Health Office of Legazpi to ensure its relevance, accuracy, and ethical soundness. The guide consisted of two key sections: one focused on the potential benefits of mandatory medical evaluations for criminology students, exploring their physical and mental readiness, and the second addressing ethical and legal considerations such as privacy, informed consent, and compliance with regulations. A supplementary section on current admission policies was also included to assess the feasibility of incorporating mandatory evaluations. The semi-structured interview format allowed for in-depth discussions, and the data were thematically analyzed to identify insights related to the implementation of such evaluations.

Data Collection

The data gathering process commenced with obtaining approval from institutional bodies and PNP medical staff. The researcher then reached out to deans and program chairs from selected criminology schools to schedule interviews, following up with formal letters that outlined the study's purpose. Interviews were conducted in sequence, starting with the Dean of Amando Cope College, followed by the Dean of PLT College, the Dean of the College of Arts and Technology, and the Medical Doctor at Camp Sileon Ola. The final interview was held with the Program Chair of Bicol College, who also served as the Acting Officer in Charge, Dean. Each interview was scheduled to accommodate the participants' availability.



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Data Analysis

The study employed document and thematic analysis to examine the feasibility of mandatory medical examinations for criminology students. Document analysis reviewed enrollment policies and medical examination practices from selected criminology schools in Albay, utilizing existing documents provided to the researcher. Thematic analysis was applied to interview data, involving reading and coding transcripts to identify recurring themes, patterns, and differing viewpoints. This method allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, with the researcher actively engaging in interpreting the data to uncover key insights related to the implementation of mandatory medical evaluations (QuestionPro, 2023).

Ethical Consideration

The research complied with strict ethical guidelines by obtaining informed consent from each participant, making sure they were aware of the goals and methods of the study before consenting to take part. Data was anonymized and securely stored to preserve participant privacy and ensure confidentiality. Participants received information about their unrestricted ability to discontinue participation in the trial at any time. In order to assure adherence to established criteria, ethical approval was obtained from pertinent institutional organizations and medical staff. The research aimed to limit harm by developing respectful and sensitive interview questions. The study adhered to accuracy and integrity in the collection and analysis of data, and it also exhibited cultural sensitivity to respect the different backgrounds of its participants.

RESULT and DISCUSSION

1. Status on the Admission Policy in Criminology Schools in the Province of Albay.

The admission process for criminology courses is a critical aspect of shaping the future professionals in the field. However, the absence of medical evaluations as part of this process raises concerns regarding the holistic readiness of students for the demands of the profession. This discussion delves into the implications of omitting medical evaluations and explores the potential consequences for both students and educational institutions.

The admission processes of selected schools offering criminology courses in the 1st and 2nd districts, specifically Amando Cope College, Bicol College, and PLT College, revealed a significant lack of medical evaluations as part of their admission criteria. The only requirements for admission into their criminology programs were the submission of Form 137 and a birth certificate. However, it is noteworthy that the College of Arts and Technology (CAT) included a drug test as part of its admission requirements, differentiating it from the other institutions.

The admission policies for criminology schools in the Province of Albay exhibit both commonalities and unique requirements across various institutions. Bicol College and PLT College share identical requirements, which include a report card, PSA birth certificate, and two 2x2 pictures, all enclosed in a brown envelope, indicating a streamlined and straightforward admission process. In contrast, Amando Cope College demands more comprehensive documentation, including Form 138/Grade 12 report card, Form 137, PSA birth certificate, certificate of good moral character, and four 1x2 pictures, along with specific enclosures such as two long white folders and a long brown envelope, reflecting a more rigorous and detailed approach. College of Arts and Technology (CAT College) further distinguishes itself with additional prerequisites, including a certificate of good moral character, police clearance, a drug test, and successful completion of the College of Arts and Technology College entrance exam. These requirements show the college's emphasis on both academic and behavioral assessments, ensuring that students not only meet academic standards but also adhere to strict ethical and legal criteria. This variation in admission policies reflects the institution's commitment to maintaining a high level of scrutiny in its selection process, which in turn may influence the type and quality of students admitted into its criminology programs. By prioritizing these comprehensive assessments, College of Arts and Technology aims to cultivate a student body that is well-prepared for the challenges of the criminology field.



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Mandatory drug testing to be taken by admitted students within the Undergraduate Program in Criminology at CAT College has huge implications not only for the institution but also for its students. Setting up such an initiative will increase this commitment to educate future custodians of law and order on ethical and responsible behavior befitting their profession, so students may act in a manner consistent with the legal and ethical standards they will one day be held to. Moreover, such strict admission criteria with a drug test manage to improve the reputation of CAT College as an institution that does really care about the integrity and readiness of their students. This builds not only a better academic atmosphere inside the college, but also makes the institution a leader in regard to providing safety and legality in the campus environment.

Moreover, the drug test minimizes the incidences of drug-related problems among students, hence making the learning environment relatively safer and consequently in line with the college's mission to facilitate public safety and order. Though the drug test ensures a focused and law-abiding student population, the added impact on the institution may be realized through its reducing diversity impact by scaring applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds or those that have been stigmatized. It is, therefore, in this sense that College of Arts and Technology College prepares its graduates for future careers in criminology best by making its admission process like industries that expect drug testing to be part of the package, making them more competitive and ready for the demands of the applied field.

The diverse admission requirements for criminology schools in the Province of Albay imply significant differences in the selection criteria and standards of each institution, which could impact the overall quality and preparedness of the student body. Schools with more stringent requirements, such as Amando Cope College and CAT College, may attract students who are more academically qualified and demonstrate higher moral standards, potentially leading to a more disciplined and capable cohort. This could enhance the reputation of these institutions and produce graduates who are better prepared for the demands of criminology careers. Conversely, the simpler admission process at Bicol College and PLTD might enable greater accessibility for a broader range of students, though it may also lead to a more varied student population in terms of academic and moral preparedness. These differences could affect the institutions' educational environments, peer learning dynamics, and ultimately, the competencies of their graduates entering the criminology field. The variability in requirements underscores the need for prospective students to carefully consider which school's admission policy aligns best with their qualifications and career aspirations.

This presentation shows a systemic trend across the sampled institutions, where the emphasis remained primarily on entrance requirements while neglecting to consider the holistic readiness of students for the rigors of criminology careers. The absence of medical evaluations as a prerequisite for admission highlights a significant gap in ensuring the comprehensive preparedness of students for the demands of the profession. There are important and broad ramifications when medical exams are excluded from the admissions process. For students, it means they might go into a field without having had the time to prepare themselves, psychologically and physically. This might result in more stress, poorer performance, and worse health. It runs the risk of compromising the standard of instruction and support given to students by educational institutions. In the end, failing to evaluate students' health status affects both the school's reputation and students' overall achievement by making it more difficult for institutions to recognize and handle such problems early on.

Furthermore, the lack of medical examinations supports a reactive rather than proactive strategy for the wellbeing of students. Institutions lose out on early intervention and support opportunities when they fail to address potential health difficulties upfront, which may have a lasting impact on students' academic and career paths. The absence of medical examinations in criminology admissions can significantly impact students aiming to join the Philippine National Police (PNP), which demands strict physical and mental health standards. Without pre-admission medical exams, underlying health issues may go unnoticed, jeopardizing students' safety and their ability to handle the demands of a law enforcement career. If these issues are later detected during PNP evaluations, recruits may face disqualification or limitations in their roles within the force.

This compromises the efficacy and diversity of the police force in addition to having an adverse effect on the career opportunities of those impacted. Students who enroll in the PNP without a diagnosis may experience difficulties on a personal level in terms of managing their health and well-being in a rigorous and stressful setting. Furthermore, conditions that go unnoticed could make it more difficult for them to carry out their jobs efficiently, which could have an influence on public safety and the public's confidence in law enforcement. The lack of medical evaluations emphasizes how crucial it is to put preemptive health screening procedures in place.



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Medical exam as a prerequisite for criminology could lead to a better future as law enforcement. This prompts the researcher to investigate if a medical exam for criminology students should be made mandatory. This would have the benefit of monitoring and directing students with regard to their health status as they get ready for the future. Additionally, this would make the parents more at ease and comfortable about their children's health status as they pursue the course. Having qualified graduates and applicants would be beneficial to the school administration and law enforcement organizations.

2. Potential Benefits of a Mandatory Medical Examination Program for Criminology Schools

This section explores the potential benefits of mandating medical exams for criminology school admissions. Through a comprehensive review of literature and statistics, it evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating medical evaluations into the admissions process. The analysis highlights how such a requirement could improve student preparedness, well-being, and professional outcomes in criminology. It also considers the broader implications for students, educational institutions, and the field of criminology, emphasizing the importance of preventative measures in fostering overall success and health. The findings were presented thematically, based on the answers from participants coded as MD (Medical Doctor from the PNP), D1, D2, D3 (Deans), and PC (Program Chair in behalf of the Dean of Bicol College), providing a comprehensive view of the potential impact and effectiveness of implementing mandatory medical exams.

Theme 2.1

Crucial Role of Medical Examinations in Balancing Academic Demands and Student Well-being

Assessments are significant when it comes to striking a balance between educational needs and the health of a student, more so for a conscientious course such as criminology. This helps in identifying the health concerns early enough to allow for prompt medical attention and less effect on studies. In as much as the significance of these tests is understood, there are some institutions that do not insist on these tests being done before admission as some criminology schemes do.

According to MD 1 and D2, "Medical examination is very important for detecting underlying conditions in students. This allows for addressing any health issues that may affect their studies. If detected early, students can receive timely treatment. However, in criminology, as with other courses, we admit all students who pass the qualifying exam."

According to PC, "It's crucial to balance strict academic standards with student health, especially in criminology. Medical exams help identify health issues that could impact students' studies, thereby supporting their success and overall well-being."

D3 also mentioned, "If a student is in good health, they will generally be in better condition, which helps them stay motivated."

The statements from MD1, D2, D3, and D4 emphasized the significance of medical examinations for students, particularly those in criminology programs. MD1 and D2 stressed the importance of early detection of health issues to mitigate potential impacts on academic performance and advocated for timely treatment, although they noted that medical exams might not have been mandatory for admission. D4 highlighted the necessity of balancing student well-being with academic rigor, asserting that medical exams were essential for maintaining this balance and enhancing students' health and motivation. The consensus among stakeholders emphasized the critical need to integrate mandatory medical exams into admission processes to bolster student well-being and academic success."

Theme 2.2

Identifying Potential Health Risks and Enhancing Academic Success Through Preventive Health Measures

Including preventive health practices in the criminology admission procedures has been found to be advantageous, particularly in the prevention of possible instituting of health issues. Immigration medicine involves the



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assessment of patients' health for any underlying diseases that may otherwise remain undiagnosed until they pose health trouble. Identifying these health threats from the very beginning enables an appropriate course of action to be taken to enable the learners to deal with the health issues that would hinder their learning and working potential. Such an approach not only enables students to take better care of their health but also helps them in making the right decisions concerning their studies and courses without endangering their well-being, including adverse prognosis relocation to other courses.

According to D2, D3, and PC, "One of the main benefits of medical evaluations is identifying potential health risks. D2 mentioned, 'Most diseases are asymptomatic; you only discover them when symptoms appear. If implemented in criminology, it would help students address issues and receive proper attention. If a condition is incurable, the student might shift to another course or continue in criminology, with the consequences explained to the family.'

D3 also noted that having medical examinations would be beneficial as it could address any issues students might be experiencing. MD and D1 added that it would ensure both students and their parents are informed about the current health condition, allowing for prompt treatment or intervention of any health concerns."

Participants D2, D3, MD, and D1 highlighted the substantial advantages of requiring medical examinations for criminology students. According to D2, these assessments had the ability to identify health issues that did not show symptoms right away, which enabled prompt intervention and well-informed decisions regarding transferring to a different course or remaining in the program. To bolster this, D3 pointed out that early medical examinations could address any health issues that might have influenced a student's performance. MD and D1 emphasized that, in order to guarantee timely treatment and intervention, it was crucial to notify parents and students about health issues. These perspectives supported the inclusion of medical evaluations in the admissions process to strike a balance between academic rigor and student well-being, with the ultimate goal of improving both academic achievement and health.

Educating students and their relatives about the existing diseases makes it possible to provide assistance as fast as possible. Scheduled health checks take care of the health problem as it arises improving the students' health awareness and health management. In a scenario where compulsory medical checks are integrated within the education system, institutions are devoted to the cause of students' health and performance. Improvements win always come only on the basis of change and in a transparent as well as supportive environment and to bring in better results in schooling and even lives.

This encourages taking on the responsibility of tracking health information including symptoms, food taken, changes in physical activity, and the scheduling of appointments with health professionals. This approach assists students in keeping track of their schedules, understanding health issues better, and making appropriate decisions regarding their lifestyle and health conditions. They also help to encourage the learners in engaging in healthy lifestyles by watching and tracking their health so as to reduce in absolutely harmful behaviors helping society in a prolonged good health state. With these measures, students will create an environment that will not only focus on academic achievement but will also allow them to achieve a wholesome healthy life and late balance.

Theme 2.3

Keep Track of Health to Support Academic Success

Maintaining a detailed record of one's health is essential for fostering academic success. By tracking symptoms, diet, exercise, and medical appointments, students can ensure they address potential health issues promptly and effectively. This proactive approach not only supports better well-being but also enhances students' ability to focus and perform well academically.

MD1 stated, "Recording symptoms, diet and exercise changes, medications, and upcoming appointments helps students stay organized and provides valuable health insights. This proactive approach supports personalized care, improves well-being, and reduces the risk of engaging in harmful behaviors."



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Additionally, PC mentioned, "Students will become more conscious if we have a medical examination every year, like other schools with their courses. If they are aware, they can avoid actions that may harm their health."

MD emphasizes that keeping thorough records of symptoms, food, exercise, prescriptions, and visits aids in students' organization, provides them with insightful knowledge about their health, and helps them cut back on unhealthy habits. Likewise, PC notes that yearly physicals increase students' awareness of their health, following suit with other schools' policies, which promotes better health management and the avoidance of risky behaviors. Both stress that encouraging a healthier and more responsible student body requires proactive care and routine health monitoring. In addition to improving students' academic performance and overall well-being, encouraging students to track their health data also fosters a proactive healthcare management culture in educational settings, which will ultimately improve students' long-term health and help them build healthy lifelong habits.

Tracking health information and regular medical examinations play crucial roles in enhancing students' well-being and academic performance. Johnson and Hughes (2020) emphasize the direct link between health and academic achievement, showing that students who manage their health effectively tend to perform better academically. Similarly, Smith et al. (2019) discuss how regular health monitoring supports students' overall well-being and helps maintain academic engagement by identifying and addressing health issues early. Thompson and Morgan (2018) review preventive healthcare strategies and their positive impact on student success, noting that regular medical evaluations can prevent disruptions in learning and improve outcomes. Additionally, Perez and Watson (2021) conduct a systematic review that confirms the benefits of health tracking, illustrating that such practices enable students to stay organized and proactive about their health, which in turn enhances both their well-being and academic performance. These studies collectively underline the importance of integrating health management practices into educational settings to foster a healthier and more successful student population.

Theme 2.4 Promoting Safety in Ensuring Student Well-Being

Medical checkups that students must take are key to keeping them safe and healthy especially in tough fields like criminology. These exams help spot health problems allowing for quick help and support. This is vital to keep students healthy overall and stop issues that could get in the way of their studies. By taking care of their health through regular doctor visits, students can deal with any new health worries before these affect how well they do in school. This helps them grow as people and do better in their classes.

According to D3, "I agree to having mandatory medical examinations as they will promote proactive measures that can truly help maintain good health or address any health concerns that may arise."

Supporting this, PC1 notes, "Medical examinations for criminology students are beneficial as they inform teachers about students' health conditions. This prevents students with underlying health issues from engaging in strenuous activities, allowing for alternative options to meet requirements."

Additionally, MD1 and D1 state, "This may help not only the student but also the family. If any health issues are detected early, they can be promptly addressed, ensuring the child's safety is better maintained."

The statements from D3 and PC1 shows the importance of mandatory medical examinations for criminology students. D3 emphasizes the proactive nature of such measures in maintaining good health and addressing health concerns promptly, highlighting their role in promoting overall student well-being. Similarly, PC1, MD and D1, supports this notion by emphasizing how medical examinations enable teachers to be aware of physical activities that may be taxing for students, particularly those with underlying health conditions. This awareness allows for the prevention of strenuous activities that could exacerbate health issues and provides students with alternative options to fulfill requirements, thereby fostering a safer and more inclusive learning environment.



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Mandatory medical examinations in educational settings can significantly enhance student well-being and safety, as supported by research. Studies show that regular health assessments can help identify underlying conditions early, allowing for timely intervention and prevention of potential health issues (Henderson et al., 2022). This proactive approach not only addresses immediate health concerns but also supports overall academic success by ensuring that students are physically and mentally prepared for their educational activities (Smith, 2021). Furthermore, integrating health screenings into school programs helps educators tailor physical activities to students' specific health needs, reducing the risk of exacerbating any existing conditions and accommodating students with special requirements (Johnson & Lee, 2020). This approach shows the importance of proactive health management in promoting both academic and personal success.

Theme 2.5

Boost Lifespan and Well-Being Support Long-Term Academic and Personal Success

Adopting habits that boost lifespan and health is key to long-term success in school and life. Giving importance to exercise good food mental wellness, and friendships can help you live longer and better. Weaving these ideas into how we teach through health check-ups, can give students the know-how to make smarter health choices. Health check-ups can be a chance to push healthy living among criminology students. This means adding lessons about good eating, working out, and handling stress into the check-up process. This all-around approach helps students pick up healthier habits and boost their overall health.

According to PC Medical examination process can serve as a platform for promoting healthy lifestyles and behaviors among criminology students. Educational initiatives on nutrition, exercise, stress management, and overall wellness can be integrated into the examination program, empowering students with the knowledge and skills to make healthier choices and improve their well-being. This statement was also supported by MD that it empowers students in both physical and mental aspect.

Supporting PC's statement, D3 added "that educational programs on healthy living and medical check-ups can teach Criminology students lifelong wellness habits. Focusing on nutrition, exercise, stress management, and overall well-being, these programs equip students to maintain their health throughout their careers. This approach not only improves health but also promotes health awareness in the criminology community, laying the foundation for a healthier workforce in the field".

A few statements from D4 and D3 illustrate how a medical examination can be used to encourage healthy ways of living among criminology students. By including educational initiatives on different aspects of health in the examination programme, institutions may adopt an holistic approach towards student health. This way, it is realized that physical well-being isn't the only thing but also nutrition, physical exercise, stress management and general well-being. If medical examinations are used as a means of promoting good health among pupils, more students can be reached and empowered with appropriate information for making healthier choices in life.

Prioritizing health involves more than scheduling annual physical exams; it encompasses a range of lifestyle choices such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, stress management, good sleep hygiene, and consistent healthcare. These practices collectively contribute to improved sleep, weight management, increased energy, and enhanced mental clarity (freelancedmuccioli, 2023). Regular physical examinations serve as a proactive measure to assess overall health, allowing for early detection of potential issues and tailored interventions. These exams also cater to specific needs depending on age and activities, ensuring individuals are fit for roles like sports or employment (Rani Ambarasu, MD, 2020).

The integration of medical evaluations into daily routines is crucial for identifying risks and necessary adjustments to support both student well-being and academic success. They provide essential insights for employers to determine job suitability and mitigate risks (Injurnet, 2023; Dr. S. Patel, Acuumed Center, 2024 Yearly exams play a significant role in preventing chronic illnesses by addressing health concerns early and incorporating self-care practices like exercise and a balanced diet, thus promoting long-term health (freelancedmuccioli, 2023).



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Advancements in health tracking technology have made it easier to monitor various health indicators over time, enhancing personal health management. This ongoing monitoring allows for customized lifestyle changes and continuous improvement in health and well-being (Hunt, 2023; Benavides, 2022). Regular medical exams also provide personalized feedback that helps individuals maintain good health, set goals, and stay motivated (WorkPro, 2023). Furthermore, these exams establish a baseline for health surveillance, identifying risks associated with specific jobs and protecting employers from liability for pre-existing conditions (Injurnet, 2024).

Conclusion

The admission policies of criminology schools in the Province of Albay reveal a significant gap in addressing the holistic readiness of prospective students, as some institutions lack essential medical evaluations. This raises concerns about the preparedness and health of future criminology professionals. Incorporating mandatory medical examinations can enhance student well-being and academic performance by detecting health issues early and allowing for timely support. Such evaluations also provide valuable health information for informed career decisions and promote long-term wellness. However, implementing this policy requires careful consideration of legal and ethical aspects, including privacy, informed consent, and non-discrimination. Students should be well-informed about the process, and an effective appeals process must be in place to ensure fairness and transparency. The proposed Admission Policy, aligning with RA 8551, integrates comprehensive physical, mental, and sensory evaluations to uphold high standards in criminology education and law enforcement, ensuring that future recruits are well-prepared and supported while maintaining public safety.

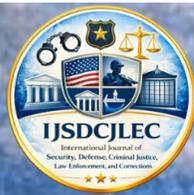
Recommendations

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) plays a critical role in guiding and monitoring the implementation of standard medical evaluation protocols in educational institutions, particularly for Criminology programs. CHED can integrate mandatory medical examinations into admission policies, ensuring that both the mental and physical readiness of students are assessed before they embark on their studies. This proactive measure addresses student welfare and helps prepare them for the demands of the criminology profession. Such protocols would not only benefit individual students by promoting their well-being but would also enhance their preparedness for future challenges, including careers in law enforcement, such as the Philippine National Police (PNP).

To ensure the effectiveness of these measures, CHED may collaborate with criminology schools and coordinate with agencies like the Department of Health (DOH) and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). These partnerships would help develop standardized medical assessment procedures for criminology students, ensuring that they are physically and mentally fit for the profession. The policy guidelines would prioritize health awareness, legal standards, and privacy concerns, while fostering trust in the recruitment process. Periodic review and updates of these policies will help maintain alignment with current laws and ensure that students' health and privacy are protected throughout their academic journey.

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Competency of Criminology Students in Forensic Science Subjects: Implications to Outcome-Based Education in Albay

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to evaluate the current state of forensic science education among criminology students in the Second District of Albay, Philippines. Specifically, it assessed their competency levels in various forensic science subjects and examined how institutional factors—such as the availability of laboratory equipment, instructor qualifications, and teaching methodologies—affect student preparedness for real-world applications. The study also sought to identify existing gaps in instruction and resources that may hinder the development of essential forensic skills.

Methodology: The study utilized a descriptive-correlational design with a quantitative approach. Participants included 247 fourth-year criminology students, 15 instructors, and 2 laboratory custodians from three selected institutions. Student competencies across six forensic science disciplines were assessed using a structured questionnaire, while institutional status was evaluated through a survey tool aligned with the standards of CMO No. 5, series of 2018. Descriptive statistics (mean and percentage) summarized the data, and Kendall's correlation and chi-square tests were used to analyze the relationship between institutional factors and student competencies.

Results: The findings revealed a significant relationship between the quality of institutional support (equipment, faculty, methodology) and students' competency in practical forensic science applications. Well-equipped institutions with qualified instructors and dynamic teaching strategies produce more competent students, reinforcing the core principle of Outcome-Based Education.

Conclusion: There is a strong positive correlation between institutional factors and the competency levels of criminology students in forensic science subjects, highlighting the need for improved resources and teaching methodologies to enhance educational outcomes.

Keywords: *Theoretical Application, Practical Application, Forensic Science, Competency of Criminology Students, Criminology, Forensic Science, Outcome-Based Education, Competency, Institutional Resources, Albay*

INTRODUCTION

The study of criminology has evolved significantly in recent years, placing increased emphasis on practical expertise and specialized knowledge, particularly in forensic science.

The recent publication of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2015 and ISO/International Electrochemical Commission (IEC) 17025:2017, along with the first book on quality management in forensic science, has prompted a global review of forensic education and practice. These publications introduce significant changes to the structure, content, and scope of forensic science standards, impacting forensic science education and practice worldwide. (Barradas & Sampaio, 2021) However, the disparity in resources and technological infrastructure between the Global North and Global South remains a pressing issue. The concept of a hierarchy is introduced as a means of classifying standards to better navigate the crowded landscape. The main body of the review identifies risks to the QSF and opportunities for improvement. (Doyle, 2019)

The concept of "frugal forensics" is introduced, demonstrating how resource-efficient approaches can be implemented for latent fingerprint detection in Global South contexts, while maintaining robust quality assurance systems to support these efforts. (Bouzin et al., 2023) The new pedagogical approach of teaching and learning provides better deliverables by the teachers and better understanding and student engagement. In this order, a course was designed on Forensic Science for undergrad students from interdisciplinary backgrounds. The suggested approach may be helpful in reducing the theoretical and practical gap in forensic science education. Besides, this teaching and learning approach may open a new avenue of forensic research and may result in a paradigm shift. (Shukla, 2021b)

In the Philippines, criminology students can pursue a Bachelor of Science in Criminology degree program, which includes subjects such as Police Photography, Ballistics, Forensic Science, Toxicology, Polygraphy, and Legal Medicine. The Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), through the Criminologist Licensure Examination, mandates that criminology graduates demonstrate proficiency in these areas, as outlined in Republic Act No. 11131



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and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) published in 2020. These regulations emphasize the need for accredited institutions to provide adequate training in both technical and scientific aspects of crime detection and investigation, reinforcing the importance of practical competencies in the field.

In Region V or Bicol Region, there are 31 higher education institutions offering Bachelor of Science in Criminology courses. The Criminologist Licensure Examination mandates that graduates demonstrate broad competencies in forensic science, yet many institutions in regions such as Albay struggle to meet the practical training requirements. Custodio (2023) examined training practices within law enforcement agencies in Albay and found that inadequate practical training and unsafe practices can contribute to issues such as abuse of authority and police misconduct. The criminology programs in Region V continue to provide students with a quality education and the skills they need to succeed in their chosen careers.

This study, conducted in the Second District of Albay—encompassing Guinobatan, Daraga, and the capital city of Legazpi—examines the competency levels of criminology students in forensic science subjects. Colleges emphasized the use of forensic tools like polygraph machines and microscopes, demonstrating the value of equipment utilization in enhancing forensic science education. (Malvar, 2024) This research aims to close the gap between theoretical learning and practical application, thereby improving the overall competency of students. The study addresses the following key issues: The current state of forensic science education in the Second District of Albay, focusing on laboratory equipment and instructional quality.

The study identified a significant gap in forensic science education in the Second District of Albay, where a lack of adequate resources and practical learning opportunities hampers criminology students' ability to develop essential forensic competencies. This gap affects the students' preparedness for real-world applications in law enforcement agencies, which rely heavily on forensic techniques. The research aimed to assess these competencies, examine the factors contributing to the gap, and propose solutions to enhance forensic science education in the region.

Objectives

The primary focus of this study is to assess the competency levels of criminology students in their forensic science courses, with a specific emphasis on aligning these levels with the outcome-based education strategy of the province of Albay. The research established a benchmark of proficiency that not only meets the educational goals of the province but also ensures that students are adequately prepared for practical application in the field of forensic science.

Specifically, the study has the following objectives:

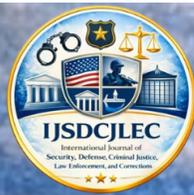
1. determine the status of the institution in terms
 - a. Laboratory Equipment/ facility
 - b. Instructors Qualification
 - c. Teaching Methodology
2. assess the competency of the criminology students in the six areas of forensic science in the criminology program along
 - a. Theoretical concept
 - b. Familiarization on Practical application
3. determine the significant relationship between the status of the institution and the competency of the students.
4. infer the significant agreement among the ranks on the competencies of Criminology Students on the above-mentioned variables.
5. formulate a standard Outcome Based Education Laboratory Manual in all areas of Forensic Science and proposed Action Plan.

Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the status of the institution and the competency of the students in forensic science subjects.

H_a : There is a significant relationship between the status of the institution and the competency of the students in forensic science subjects.

H_0 : There is no significant agreement among the ranks regarding the competencies of criminology students in forensic science subjects.



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H_a : There is a significant agreement among the ranks regarding the competencies of criminology students in forensic science subjects.

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to assess the competency levels of criminology students in forensic science subjects and their alignment with the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach. The descriptive aspect systematically analyzed institutional factors such as laboratory facilities, instructors' qualifications, and teaching methodologies, while the correlational aspect explored relationships between these factors and student competency levels.

Population and Sampling

The research was conducted in three selected institutions within District II of Albay Province, Philippines, involving a total of 264 participants. The respondents included 247 fourth-year criminology students, 15 instructors teaching forensic science subjects, and 2 laboratory custodians. Students were purposively selected based on their academic standing and completion of forensic science subjects, ensuring they were well-positioned to provide insights into competency outcomes.

Instrument

The study utilized a structured quantitative instrument consisting of two parts. The first part measured students' theoretical knowledge in six forensic science disciplines through a 30-item multiple-choice questionnaire. The second part assessed familiarization on practical competency using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from "Not Competent" to "Highly Competent." To evaluate the institutional status, including laboratory facilities, instructor qualifications, and teaching methodologies, a separate survey tool was developed for faculty members and laboratory custodians. This tool was crafted in alignment with the standards of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 5, series of 2018. The instruments underwent content validation by subject matter experts in forensic science and criminology education before distribution.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in December 2023 across three criminology schools in the province of Albay. The researcher began the process by formally coordinating with the school administrators and securing approval for the distribution of research instruments. Upon approval, the structured questionnaires were personally administered to fourth-year criminology students in their classrooms under the supervision of the researcher and faculty representatives to ensure consistency. The environment was controlled and conducive to answering, with ample time allotted for completion. Simultaneously, the institutional survey forms were distributed to instructors teaching forensic science subjects and to designated laboratory custodians. Completed forms were collected on the same day or within the agreed timeframe set by the institutions.

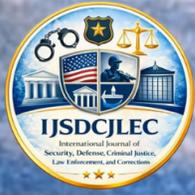
Treatment of Data

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize competency levels, while the Chi-Square Test for independence was applied to examine relationships between institutional factors and student competencies. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance was calculated to analyze agreement among ranks on student competencies across different schools.

Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to established ethical research protocols to ensure the integrity and credibility of the research process. Before data collection, participants were fully informed about the purpose, scope, and objectives of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, emphasizing their voluntary participation and right to withdraw at any time. Additionally, official permission was secured from the presidents and deans of the participating institutions, ensuring administrative compliance and institutional support. All responses were treated with the utmost confidentiality, and participants' identities were protected through anonymous data handling procedures.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION



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In this section, the results and discussion analyzed the competency levels of criminology students in forensic science subjects across three educational institutions—School A, School B and School C while maintaining confidentiality through coded designations, to draw important conclusions and insights about the forensic science education environment and the competency levels among these institutions.

The Status of the institution in Laboratory Equipment/facilities, Instructors qualifications and teaching methodology.

This study assessed the status of the institution in the delivery of forensic science education by evaluating three critical components: laboratory equipment and facilities, instructors' qualifications, and teaching methodology, guided by the standards set forth in CMO No. 5, Series of 2018.

a. The Status of the Institution in Laboratory Equipment and Facility.

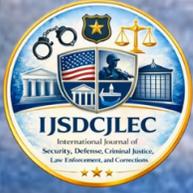
In Forensic Photography, all three schools are poorly equipped, limiting students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings and hindering their skill development. For Personal Identification Techniques, School B is fully equipped, while Schools A and C are moderately equipped, resulting in uneven opportunities for practical learning and skill acquisition across the schools. In Forensic Toxicology and Chemistry, School A is fully equipped, whereas Schools B and C are moderately equipped, highlighting the importance of resource availability for competency development. Lastly, in Lie Detection Techniques and Forensic Ballistics, Schools A and B are fully equipped, while School C is moderately equipped, leading to disparities in practical skill proficiency among students. The differing levels of laboratory equipment compliance among criminology schools in Albay mirror global research emphasizing the impact of infrastructure and qualified personnel on practical learning. Wekwe et al. (2024) revealed that 80% of public schools in Ubungo lacked qualified lab technicians, limiting students' hands-on experience and negatively affecting performance—a trend reflected in this study, where all schools were only moderately compliant in Forensic Photography. School B's superior equipment in several forensic areas correlates with increased student competency, supporting Wekwe et al.'s assertion that facility quality directly influences learning outcomes. Odhiambo et al. (2022) further emphasized the role of national accreditation systems like SLIPTA and SLMTA in enhancing lab standards and achieving ISO 15189 accreditation, highlighting the value of standardized, quality-assured criminology laboratories. Similarly, Basnet et al. (2022) found that poor infrastructure and inadequate training during COVID-19 in Nepal reduced staff effectiveness and satisfaction, reinforcing that both institutional support and resources are vital. Collectively, these findings advocate for improved laboratory facilities and personnel qualifications to strengthen Outcome-Based Education and promote equitable skill development in forensic science.

b. The Status of the Institution for Instructor Qualification.

The evaluation of instructors' qualifications across Schools A, B, and C indicates significant variations that directly influence the quality of education in forensic science. Instructors are categorized as highly qualified, moderately qualified, or less qualified, depending on their academic credentials and experience. The presence of highly qualified instructors in critical areas such as Forensic Photography and Lie Detection Techniques suggests a strong educational experience for students. However, the predominance of moderately qualified instructors in Personal Identification Techniques and Forensic Ballistics may limit students' depth of understanding and practical skills. Particularly concerning is School B, which has less qualified instructors in Forensic Toxicology and Chemistry, raising doubts about the adequacy of training in this essential area. This highlights the need for educational institutions to prioritize faculty development and recruitment to ensure that students are adequately prepared for careers in forensic science. The findings align with existing literature that emphasizes the impact of instructor qualifications on student outcomes. The analysis of instructor qualifications across the six major forensic science areas reveals critical gaps, particularly in Personal Identification Techniques and Forensic Ballistics, where no schools have subject specialists—raising concerns about the depth of technical instruction. This aligns with the Global Education Monitoring Report (2023), which warns that inadequate faculty preparation and institutional support can exacerbate student competency gaps.

c. Institutional Status in Teaching Methodology.

The examination of teaching methodologies reveals distinct patterns among the schools. School A relies heavily on traditional methods, particularly in Forensic Photography, Questioned Document Examination, and Forensic Ballistics, which may limit students' practical exposure. In contrast, School B employs a mixed approach, balancing theory and practice, particularly in subjects like Forensic Photography and Questioned Document Examination. School C's innovative methodology in Lie Detection Techniques and Forensic Ballistics suggests a progressive teaching strategy that leverages modern technology and simulations. This variation indicates that Schools



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B and C may offer more practical and diverse learning experiences, while School A's reliance on traditional methods could restrict hands-on exposure. The findings reflect contemporary educational theories that advocate for a mix of teaching methodologies. Research highlights the importance of practical training in developing competencies in forensic science.

The study highlights notable differences in teaching methodologies among the three criminology schools, with School A relying heavily on traditional lectures—potentially limiting practical exposure—while School B employs a mixed approach and School C adopts innovative strategies, particularly in Lie Detection Techniques and Ballistics, enhancing student engagement and skill development. These findings support Craig et al. (2020), who found that methods like Team-Based Learning improve critical thinking and retention, and Lattas et al. (2024), who emphasized the value of experiential learning in preparing students for real-world challenges. Additionally, research by Mensah et al. (2020) and Gabasa & Raqueño (2021) links instructional quality directly to student readiness for licensure and professional application, while Bautista et al. (2018) tie ineffective teaching methods to declining national exam performance. Collectively, the evidence underscores the importance of integrating innovative, practice-based pedagogies aligned with the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) framework to enhance competency and career readiness in criminology students.

Competencies of the three groups of Criminology Students in the six areas of Forensic Science.

In the evolving field of criminology, proficiency in forensic science is crucial for aspiring professionals by evaluating students' theoretical knowledge and practical skills, this research aims to identify strengths and areas for improvement, providing insights that can enhance educational outcomes and better prepare future criminologists for the challenges of their profession.

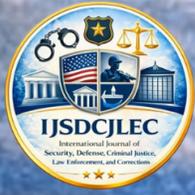
a. The Students' Competency in Theoretical Application in Forensic Science.

The theoretical application competency of criminology students across three schools—A, B, and C—in various forensic science areas is significantly influenced by institutional factors such as laboratory equipment, instructor qualifications, and teaching methodologies. While all schools demonstrate a promising understanding of lie detection techniques due to adequate resources and qualified instructors, challenges arise in forensic ballistics, where a lack of specialized training hampers theoretical mastery despite the use of innovative teaching methods. In forensic photography, the traditional approach in School A limits depth of comprehension compared to the mixed methodologies employed by Schools B and C, which promote engagement and active learning. Conversely, School A excels in forensic toxicology and chemistry, benefiting from modern resources and trained faculty. The analysis indicates that a holistic institutional support system—integrating qualified instructors, sufficient facilities, and updated teaching strategies—is essential for fostering strong theoretical competencies. The findings suggest a pressing need for enhanced teaching methodologies, particularly experiential learning opportunities, to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ultimately ensuring that criminology students are well-prepared for professional challenges in forensic science. Regular curriculum evaluations and collaborative efforts among educational institutions and industry partners are recommended to align educational practices with the evolving demands of the field.

The theoretical application competency of criminology students in forensic science is significantly influenced by institutional factors such as laboratory facilities, instructor qualifications, and teaching methodologies. A strong academic foundation in natural sciences is essential for forensic scientists, as highlighted by Sosa-Reyes et al. (2022) emphasize the need for interdisciplinary teaching strategies and clearly defined competencies, while Bryce et al. (2019) stress the importance of competency assessment schemes for real-world readiness. The current study supports these findings, showing that students achieve better theoretical understanding in well-supported environments, such as in Lie Detection Techniques, where adequate equipment and trained instructors lead to positive outcomes. Conversely, low theoretical mastery in Forensic Ballistics is attributed to a lack of qualified instructors despite available resources. School A excels in Forensic Toxicology and Chemistry due to aligned institutional components. These patterns indicate that a holistic educational approach maximizes competency, while deficiencies in any area can hinder understanding. Consistent evaluation of curricula, resources, and faculty development is essential for improving forensic science education to meet licensure and professional practice demands (Gabasa & Raqueño, 2021; Albina et al., 2021; Bautista et al., 2018).

b. The Students Competency in Familiarization on Practical Application in Forensic Science.

Familiarization with the practical application of forensic science is essential in bridging theoretical knowledge and real-world investigative procedures. This study evaluated the competencies of criminology students from three



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schools across six forensic science domains—Forensic Photography, Personal Identification Techniques, Forensic Toxicology and Chemistry, Questioned Document Examination, Lie Detection Techniques, and Forensic Ballistics. In *Forensic Photography*, all schools achieved a "Very Competent" rating, though competency varied by instructional approach. School B's highest score (3.71) was attributed to its use of real-case simulations and interdisciplinary learning, consistent with Morelato et al. (2023), who emphasized the effectiveness of experiential learning. School A, using only traditional lectures, scored lowest (3.14), especially in accident reconstruction tasks, affirming Teixeira et al. (2023) who stressed the importance of hands-on projects in building scientific thinking. In *Personal Identification Techniques*, all schools showed high competency, but School A led (3.866) due to methods like simulation and repetition, despite none having instructors with specialized training. This approach mirrors the success of challenge-based learning at Tecnológico de Monterrey (Eraña-Rojas et al., 2019) and supports (Nilendu, 2024) on the value of experiential, evidence-based instruction. Schools like DLSU-Dasmariñas and Lyceum of the Philippines University serve as benchmarks with their strong integration of theory and practice in forensic education.

The assessment continued with *Forensic Toxicology and Chemistry*, where School A again led (WM = 3.42) due to advanced lab facilities and dynamic teaching methods. Schools B (2.59) and C (2.69) underperformed, mainly due to traditional instruction and lack of specialized faculty. These findings align with Almond (2023) and programs like those of Jefferson and CFSRE, which integrate internships and courtroom simulations to improve applied skills. Similarly, the University of Reading and Southern California University of Health Sciences (2025) show that research-led teaching and modern pedagogy enhance employability. In *Questioned Document Examination*, School B excelled (WM = 3.93) due to mixed methods and faculty expertise, while Schools A and C showed weaknesses due to lack of specialization, supporting Lagumen (n.d.) and P & G (2025) on the need for qualified instructors. In *Lie Detection Techniques*, School A performed best, with School B trailing due to traditional methods and limited troubleshooting instruction—highlighting the significance of examiner training as emphasized by Test (2024) and elearncollege.com (2024). Finally, in *Forensic Ballistics*, Schools A and B showed strong foundational skills, but all schools struggled with GSR and toolmark analysis, with only School B achieving high technical proficiency due to superior facilities. These gaps emphasize the critique of OBE's competitiveness over substance (Kennedy & Birch, 2020) and the need for consistent quality management in forensic education, as stressed by Heavey et al. (2023).

Relationships Between Institutional Status and the Competency of Criminology Students.

A Chi-square test of independence was employed to analyze the correlation between institutional resources and student performance in areas such as forensic photography, personal identification techniques, and forensic toxicology.

Table 1. 1 Correlation between Familiarization in practical Competency and the Status of the Institution

Variable 1	Variable 2	Computed Value (X^2)	Critical Value (from Chi – Square Value)	Interpretation
Forensic Photography	Status of the Institution	38.25	12.592	Significant
Personal identification Techniques	Status of the Institution	25.65	12.592	Significant
Forensic chemistry and Toxicology	Status of the Institution	109.68	12.592	Highly Significant
Forensic Questioned Document Examination	Status of the Institution	112.14	12.592	Highly Significant
Lie Detection Techniques	Status of the Institution	14.84	12.592	Significant
Forensic ballistics	Status of the Institution	22.52	12.592	Significant



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The **practical competency** underscores a significant correlation between institutional status—specifically laboratory equipment, teaching methodologies, and instructor qualifications—and the practical application competencies of criminology students in forensic science, as confirmed through chi-square analysis. Well-equipped laboratories and highly trained instructors substantially boost students’ ability to translate theoretical concepts into real-world forensic applications, reinforcing the importance of experiential learning and continuous faculty development. These findings align with Gabasa and Raqueño (2021), who emphasized the impact of institutional quality on board exam performance and academic outcomes. Moreover, international benchmarks such as the National Autonomous University of Mexico’s forensic science program highlight the value of competency-based education, as also supported by Nilendu (2024) and Gallagher and Savage (2020) through Challenge-Based Learning frameworks. Consequently, Philippine HEIs and SUCs are urged to adopt a holistic, Outcome-Based Education (OBE) model that prioritizes resource adequacy and pedagogical innovation to produce graduates who are both theoretically knowledgeable and practically competent in forensic science.

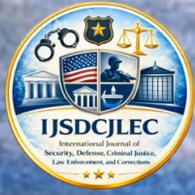
Table 1. 2 Correlation between Theoretical Competency and the Status of the Institution

<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>	<i>Computed Value (X²)</i>	<i>Critical Value (from Chi – Square Value)</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>Forensic Photography</i>	<i>Status of the Institution</i>	35.33	12.592	<i>Significant</i>
<i>Personal Identification Techniques</i>	<i>Status of the Institution</i>	16.26	12.592	<i>Significant</i>
<i>Forensic Chemistry and Toxicology</i>	<i>Status of the Institution</i>	38.59	12.592	<i>Significant</i>
<i>Forensic Questioned Document Examination</i>	<i>Status of the Institution</i>	77.26	12.592	<i>Highly Significant</i>
<i>Lie Detection Techniques</i>	<i>Status of the Institution</i>	83.97	12.592	<i>Highly Significant</i>
<i>Forensic ballistics</i>	<i>Status of the Institution</i>	17.32	12.592	<i>Significant</i>

The **theoretical competency** demonstrates a significant relationship between institutional factors—namely laboratory equipment, teaching methodology, and instructor qualifications—and the theoretical competency of criminology students in forensic science subjects, as confirmed through chi-square test results that exceeded the critical value of 12.592, particularly in Lie Detection Techniques and Questioned Document Examination. These findings suggest that investments in well-equipped laboratories, diverse pedagogical strategies, and faculty qualifications are crucial for fostering strong theoretical foundations. Aligning with Romanos (2022), who links educational access and public engagement to institutional support, and Lewis et al. (2020), who emphasizes the role of early exposure to practical learning in academic success, the study reinforces the value of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in bridging academic preparation with real-world forensic demands. It also addresses a research gap noted in (Wagner et al., 2021), which highlights a lack of comprehensive study in core forensic disciplines, thereby supporting the call for improved educational delivery mechanisms. This study affirms the necessity for holistic institutional strategies to elevate theoretical competency and ensure that criminology graduates are well-equipped for professional forensic practice.

The Significant Agreement Among the Ranks on the Competencies of Criminology Students. This study assessed the agreement among three institutions—School A, School B, and School C—regarding the competencies of Criminology students in six forensic science areas, utilizing Kendall’s Coefficient of Concordance (W) to measure the consistency of rankings related to laboratory equipment, instructor qualifications, and teaching methodologies

Table 2



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Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

Competency Area	School A			School B			School C			Sums of Ranks
	Moderately Complied Laboratory Equipment	With specialized training, Instructors	Traditional Method Technique	Complied Laboratory Equipment	Without specialized training, Instructors	Mixed Method Technique	Moderately Complied Laboratory Equipment	Without specialized training, Instructors	Mixed Method Technique	
Forensic Photography	5			2			2			9
Personal Identification Techniques	1			3			1			5
Forensic Toxicology and Chemistry	6			6			6			18
Document Questioned Examination	2			1			5			8
Lie Detection Technique	3			5			3			11
Forensic Ballistics	4			4			4			12
Total									63	

The computed Kendall's W value of 0.619 indicates a moderate to strong level of agreement among the institutions, suggesting that they share a relatively consistent perspective on student competencies despite differences in resources. This consensus highlights shared strengths and areas for improvement in forensic education, providing a foundation for collaborative efforts to standardize practices and enhance educational quality across institutions, while also informing policymakers about the need for unified standards in forensic education to ensure consistent training for students. The findings of this study align with Naz et al. (2023), who emphasized the necessity for consistency in teaching content and pedagogical approaches within criminal justice education, advocating for instructional practices that meet students' evolving needs. Similarly, the results indicate that institutions in Albay, despite variations in resource allocation, share a common vision regarding competency expectations, reinforcing the call for standardization in education. This agreement on competency rankings reflects a harmony in pedagogical approaches, as highlighted by Kkienerm (n.d.), where traditional and mixed teaching methods yield comparable student outcomes, and underscores the importance of well-equipped laboratories for effective forensic practice, as noted by Nilendu (2024). Furthermore, the study suggests that collaborative methods and resource pooling among institutions could enhance educational practices and bridge competency gaps, resonating with Towler et al. (2023) and the broader competencies highlighted by Alos et al. (2023), which emphasize the importance of cultural adaptability and holistic readiness for professional practice in criminology graduates.

Standard Outcome-Based Education Laboratory Manual in all areas of Forensic Science and proposed Action Plan

In the field of forensic science, a comprehensive educational framework is essential for equipping students with the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The Standard Outcome-Based Education (OBE) Laboratory Manual for Forensic Science aims to establish uniformity in forensic education across institutions, ensuring that aspiring professionals are well-prepared to meet industry demands.

The Standard Outcome-Based Education (OBE) Laboratory Manual for Forensic Science is designed to create a comprehensive framework that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical skills necessary for developing competent professionals in the field. This manual addresses the need for uniformity in forensic education across institutions, providing educators with a structured approach to teaching and assessment in critical areas such as forensic photography, personal identification techniques, forensic toxicology, questioned document examination, lie detection techniques, and forensic ballistics. By promoting student-centered learning and aligning with national and international standards, the manual includes essential components such as safety guidelines, detailed exercises, standardized documentation templates, and assessment rubrics, all aimed at fostering a structured and outcome-focused learning environment. The implementation of this initiative will involve forming a



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committee for needs assessment, drafting the manual, pilot testing, and organizing workshops for educators, ultimately enhancing the quality of forensic education and producing proficient practitioners.

The proposed action plan aims to align forensic science education with an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) framework, addressing significant gaps in laboratory equipment, faculty training, and instructional methods that currently hinder student competency. By focusing on structured interventions to improve institutional resources, instructor qualifications, and teaching methodologies, the plan seeks to prepare criminology students for successful careers in forensic science. Supporting this initiative, Guadamor (2020) emphasizes the importance of faculty development, while Orlanda-Ventayen (2020) highlights the need for rigorous academic policies to enhance board examination passing rates. Additionally, Albite (2020) underscores the significance of student-centered strategies for academic success, aligning with the OBE model's focus on measurable competencies. Overall, the action plan not only addresses existing educational gaps but also reinforces a systematic, competency-based approach to produce capable and competitive forensic practitioners, complementing broader strategies recommended in recent criminology research.

Conclusions

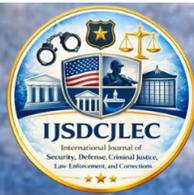
The study identified disparities in laboratory equipment, instructor qualifications, and teaching methodologies across the schools. Some areas, particularly Forensic Photography and Lie Detection, were under-resourced, which impacted students' hands-on learning opportunities. Student Competency demonstrated a higher competency in theoretical applications compared to practical skills, with School A showing the highest competency. The gap between theoretical and practical skills points to the need for more experiential learning opportunities. A significant relationship was found between the status of institutional resources (equipment, instructors, and teaching methods) and the competency of criminology students. Schools with better resources produced more competent students in both theoretical and practical aspects. There was moderate to strong agreement among the institutions on the competency levels of their students, indicating shared perspectives on the need for improvements in forensic science education. And the study concludes that the formulation of a standardized Outcome-Based Education Laboratory Manual and a comprehensive action plan is essential. These tools will help address the identified gaps in resources, teaching, and student competency, ultimately improving the quality of forensic science education.

Recommendations

Finally, the researcher offers the following recommendations, addressed to key stakeholders such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Philippine Association of Criminology Educators (PACE), Criminal Justice Education Council, and the respective academic institutions offering criminology programs, CHED and academic institutions should allocate funding to upgrade laboratory equipment in under-resourced areas, particularly in Forensic Photography and Lie Detection. Schools are encouraged to collaborate with local government units (LGUs), private donors, and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) to secure the necessary resources that will enhance students' practical learning experiences. Academic institutions must integrate more experiential learning methods, such as simulations, role-playing, and laboratory exercises, into the criminology curriculum to strengthen students' practical skills and bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and hands-on application. The Criminal Justice Education Council and CHED should invest in the professional development of criminology faculty by implementing continuous training programs, upgrading facilities, and adopting modern and innovative teaching methodologies that enhance student learning outcomes. CHED and the PCAP are encouraged to facilitate the establishment of a collaborative network among criminology schools to share best practices, organize joint training opportunities, and maximize the use of available resources. This inter-institutional network will promote collective growth in forensic science education. And CHED, in coordination with Criminology Educators, should spearhead the development and implementation of a standardized Outcome-Based Education (OBE) Laboratory Manual tailored specifically for forensic science instruction. This manual must include resource utilization guidelines, performance benchmarks, and competency-based assessment tools to ensure uniformity and academic excellence across institutions.

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Bridging the Gap: Assessing Readiness and Overcoming Barriers for Criminology Program Accreditation

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to assess the program accreditation readiness of higher education institutions in Bulacan offering BS Criminology.

Methodology: A descriptive qualitative research design was employed, with data gathered from 15 purposively selected informants—faculty members, administrators, non-teaching personnel, and students—through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes.

Results: Four themes emerged: the importance of faculty qualifications, curriculum alignment, and administrative support; persistent barriers such as inadequate laboratories, facilities, and funding; ongoing improvement efforts including faculty training and policy updates; and the value of stakeholder engagement and strategic quality assurance measures.

Conclusion: The study concluded that while institutions demonstrated readiness through internal motivation and improvement initiatives, systemic challenges in infrastructure, coordination, and resource allocation remain.

Keywords: Accreditation readiness, criminology education, institutional barriers, thematic analysis, quality assurance, higher education, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Accreditation serves as a vital mechanism for ensuring and promoting quality assurance in higher education (Makhoul, 2019). In the Philippines, although accreditation is voluntary, it is widely regarded as a benchmark of institutional credibility and program excellence. The Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP), recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), grants formal recognition to three major accrediting bodies: the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU), the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA), and the Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities—Accrediting Agency, Inc. (ACSCU-AAI) (Arcelo, 2003; Ching, 2013). These bodies set standards that evaluate program objectives, curriculum, faculty qualifications, student services, facilities, and linkages, ensuring alignment with both national and international benchmarks.

Accreditation in the Philippines plays a dual role. As Ordonez and Ordonez (2009) emphasized, it safeguards academic standards while also serving as a developmental tool that fosters continuous institutional improvement. Similarly, Ching (2013) and Janušauskienė and Dvorak (2021) noted that accreditation encourages evidence-based management and strategic quality assurance (QA) practices. This perspective resonates with global views that position accreditation as a driver of accountability, competitiveness, and international relevance in higher education (Dugarova et al., 2016). Recent studies also highlight that accreditation processes cultivate reflective practices among educators, which directly contribute to sustainable teaching and learning improvements (Bontuyan, 2025).

The relevance of accreditation is particularly pronounced in professional programs such as Criminology. Criminology education integrates theory and practice to prepare graduates for careers in law enforcement, corrections, forensic science, and community safety. According to CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 5, s. 2018, the Bachelor of Science in Criminology program must deliver not only strong academic instruction but also hands-on training through laboratories, simulation facilities, and linkages with justice institutions (CHED, 2018). Accreditation validates whether these expectations are met in areas such as curriculum delivery, faculty development, research productivity, and infrastructure (Shawer, 2013). This mirrors global calls for future-proofing teacher and professional education programs through systematic curriculum reframing to align with accreditation standards (Carvajal et al., 2025).

However, research highlights persistent challenges faced by many Criminology programs in achieving accreditation standards. Cruz et al. (2024) reported that shortcomings in research engagement, facilities, and faculty qualifications remain common obstacles. Benter (2020) further pointed out the inadequacy of forensic laboratories and crime simulation facilities in several institutions, which limits the applied competencies of students. Accreditation



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reviews consistently flag these deficiencies as barriers to achieving higher recognition levels (PAASCU, 2022). Thus, accreditation functions not only as a compliance measure but also as a developmental tool for raising professional and educational standards in Criminology.

Among the most critical areas identified for accreditation readiness is faculty development. Accreditation agencies place a high premium on faculty qualifications, including postgraduate education, licensure, research output, and professional training (Phillips & Kinser, 2018). Makhoul (2019) observed that institutions investing in faculty training and advanced degrees achieved stronger accreditation outcomes. In the Philippine context, however, the shortage of licensed criminologists and faculty with graduate-level qualifications has slowed accreditation progress (Cruz et al., 2024). Scholars such as Bihag and Allanic (2025) stress that mentorship, faculty retention policies, and systematic development programs are essential for sustaining quality. Similarly, Al-Worafi (2024) emphasized that building faculty capacity is crucial not only for accreditation but also for producing graduates who are well-prepared for licensure examinations and professional practice. This argument echoes the findings of Pangilinan (2025), who demonstrated that teacher commitment and sustained professional growth strongly determine institutional quality and readiness for accreditation.

Infrastructure and learning resources are another cornerstone of accreditation. Criminology programs are expected to provide specialized facilities such as forensic laboratories, firing ranges, and crime scene investigation kits. Yet, many institutions cite financial constraints as barriers to maintaining these standards (Ching, 2013). Accreditation reviews frequently identify inadequate equipment, limited library holdings, and outdated simulation facilities as areas requiring urgent improvement (PAASCU, 2022). International research supports this link, showing that institutions with well-equipped facilities consistently achieve better student outcomes and stronger accreditation ratings (Bihag & Allanic, 2025). This underscores the necessity of sustained investments in resources to strengthen accreditation readiness.

Beyond faculty and facilities, accreditation emphasizes institutional quality assurance (QA) mechanisms. These include program reviews, student feedback loops, and mock accreditation audits (Kaggwa et al., 2023). Institutions that embed QA practices into their governance systems demonstrate greater preparedness and adaptability (Jafarov, 2024; Singh et al., 2025). Joshua (2025) and Păunescu et al. (2012) further argue that QA must be institutionalized as a shared responsibility, not merely a compliance exercise. Accreditation is inherently participatory, requiring collaboration among administrators, faculty, staff, and students (Bohlens, 2025). Arcelo (2003) reinforced that collective responsibility fosters a culture of excellence, while PAASCU (2022) emphasized that student-centered approaches—such as remedial instruction, academic advising, and integrated board exam review classes—directly strengthen program outcomes and accreditation results.

Finally, stakeholder engagement and collective ownership emerge as critical success factors. Lagrosen (2017) argued that accreditation outcomes are strengthened when institutions ensure broad participation in decision-making and evaluation processes. For Criminology programs, partnerships with law enforcement agencies, forensic laboratories, and community organizations not only increase program relevance but also align academic standards with real-world professional expectations. Thus, accreditation is not simply an evaluative process but a collaborative journey toward building a culture of continuous quality improvement.

Despite the importance of accreditation in higher education, limited research has focused on the specific readiness and barriers faced by criminology programs in the Philippines. This gap highlights the need for an in-depth examination of how institutions can strengthen faculty development, facilities, and QA practices to meet accreditation standards. The present study is significant as it addresses this research gap by providing a focused examination of criminology programs, offering insights that are both contextually grounded and globally informed. Unlike existing studies, which often adopt a generalized or single-framework approach, this research integrates global accreditation principles with local accreditation standards. In response, this study aims to assess the readiness and challenges faced by criminology programs in pursuing accreditation, with the goal of offering actionable insights for quality assurance and institutional development.

Objectives

The general aim of the study was to assess the program accreditation readiness of higher education institutions in the province of Bulacan offering BS Criminology. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Examine how informants assessed their Criminology program's readiness for accreditation;
2. Identify the significant barriers perceived by informants that prevented their Criminology program from achieving accreditation;
3. Determine the specific actions that had been taken, or were still needed, to address gaps in the accreditation process; and



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4. Analyze the factors that informants believed would support the Criminology program in achieving accreditation.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, which was most appropriate for capturing the perspectives, experiences, and insights of participants in their natural context. A descriptive qualitative design was chosen to allow for a comprehensive and detailed understanding of informants' views regarding their Criminology program's readiness for accreditation, the barriers that hinder the process, the actions undertaken or required to address gaps, and the enabling factors that could facilitate accreditation. Through this approach, the study did not attempt to test hypotheses or quantify relationships but rather to generate rich, descriptive accounts that illuminate the lived realities and contextual factors influencing accreditation readiness. The use of a descriptive qualitative design also ensured that participants' voices were central to the analysis, thereby providing authentic and nuanced insights that can inform program development, accreditation preparation, and policy considerations (Bontuyan, 2025; Sanchez, 2023).

Population and Sampling

The study employed purposive sampling to identify participants who could provide rich, diverse, and contextually relevant insights in relation to the objectives of the research. This sampling approach was deemed appropriate because it allowed the researcher to deliberately select informants who were directly involved in, or knowledgeable about, the Criminology program and its accreditation readiness. A total of fifteen (15) informants participated in the study, drawn equally from three non-accredited higher education institutions in the province of Bulacan, in consideration of the principle of data saturation in qualitative research. Within each institution, the composition of participants was designed to represent multiple stakeholders in the Criminology program. Specifically, the group included one Criminology administrator—either a dean, program head, or coordinator—two faculty members, one staff member, and one student. The institutions involved in the study were located in the municipalities of Sta. Maria, Pulilan, and Baliwag, which provided varied institutional contexts while maintaining a consistent regional focus. This deliberate inclusion of administrators, faculty, staff, and students ensured that the study reflected a comprehensive view of accreditation readiness, barriers, and enabling factors (Amihan et al., 2023).

Instrument

The primary instrument of this study was the researcher, who served as the key facilitator in gathering and interpreting the data. In addition, a semi-structured interview guide was employed to ensure consistency and focus during the data collection process. This guide was carefully developed to align with the study's objectives and consisted of broad, open-ended topics that encouraged informants to share their experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding their Criminology program's readiness for accreditation. Rather than following a rigid sequence of questions, the interview guide served as a flexible framework that encouraged dialogue. Follow-up questions were asked based on the actual responses of the informants to probe deeper into emerging themes, clarify meanings, and capture nuanced perspectives. The interview guide was validated by two experts in Criminology education and one expert in qualitative research methodology, ensuring alignment with accreditation standards and methodological rigor. This flexible approach allowed the researcher to explore issues that arose spontaneously during the interviews while ensuring that the discussions remained focused on the study's aims. The use of a semi-structured interview guide was deemed appropriate for this qualitative descriptive study because it balanced consistency across interviews with the ability to adapt to the unique viewpoints of each informant. This ensured that the data collected was both systematic and reflective of the diverse voices of administrators, faculty, staff, and students (Colasito, 2025).

Data Collection

Data were gathered primarily through semi-structured interview sessions with the informants using an interview guide to provide direction, while flexibility was allowed so that probing questions could be asked when deeper clarification or elaboration was needed. Each interview session was conducted in a natural and non-coercive conversational manner, allowing participants to freely express their thoughts and feelings while ensuring that the core research questions were addressed. All interviews were audio-recorded, with the consent of the participants, to guarantee accuracy in transcription and analysis. Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues and



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contextual details. Each session lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted at a time and place convenient and comfortable for the participants.

Treatment of Data

This study was guided by qualitative research principles, specifically the use of bracketing and intuiting, to ensure that the perceptions, experiences, and insights of the informants were explored with authenticity and depth. Bracketing was observed at the onset of the study, wherein the researcher consciously set aside personal biases, preconceived notions, and prior knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation—accreditation. A reflective journal was maintained to document the researcher’s assumptions and potential influences, ensuring that these did not interfere with the process of understanding the participants’ perspectives. Next, intuiting was applied during the interaction with informants, wherein the researcher immersed in the accounts with openness and receptivity. This allowed the researcher to focus entirely on the meaning of the participants’ narratives, capturing the essence of their perceptions, experiences, and insights without imposing external interpretations.

The study employed thematic analysis to systematically examine and interpret the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen as it provides a flexible yet rigorous approach in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. The analysis began with familiarization, wherein the researcher transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim and repeatedly read the transcripts while listening to the recordings to ensure accuracy and immersion in the data. Field notes and memos were also reviewed to deepen the contextual understanding of the participants’ narratives. Afterward, line-by-line and segment-by-segment coding was conducted. Codes were generated inductively, staying close to the participants’ words to capture the essence of their experiences. During this stage, the researcher engaged in reflexive bracketing to minimize the intrusion of personal assumptions. Once the initial coding was completed, the codes were examined for similarities, differences, and patterns, and related codes were clustered into potential categories that served as the foundation for emerging themes.

The preliminary themes were then reviewed against the entire dataset to ensure coherence, consistency, and distinctiveness. Weak or irrelevant themes were discarded, overlapping ones were merged, and refinements were made to ensure each theme authentically represented the participants’ perspectives. Each finalized theme was then defined and described, highlighting its central organizing concept. Sub-themes were also identified when necessary to provide a more nuanced understanding of the data. The final stage involved weaving together the themes into a coherent narrative. Verbatim quotations from the participants were integrated into the analysis to substantiate the findings and preserve the authenticity of their lived experiences. Throughout the process, the researcher engaged in intuiting—remaining open and receptive to the meanings conveyed by the participants—and maintained a reflexive journal to ensure transparency and rigor in the interpretation of the data (Carvajal et al., 2023).

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered strictly to ethical standards by obtaining process consent from all respondents, with clear guidelines that emphasized confidentiality and voluntary participation. The consent form provided a comprehensive summary of the study’s goals, procedures, possible risks, and anticipated benefits, ensuring that participants fully understood the extent of their engagement and their right to withdraw at any point without consequences. Anticipated concerns were directly addressed to foster trust and transparency. Throughout the process, integrity was upheld by maintaining strict confidentiality of data, ensuring that only truthful findings were reported, and strictly avoiding plagiarism. Ethical research practices were further demonstrated through honest reporting, respect for publishing standards, and the researcher’s commitment to safeguarding the rights and dignity of the participants. Although formal ethics board approval was not required, ethical protocols consistent with CHED and institutional guidelines were followed (Sanchez, 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: From Roots to Recognition

This theme illustrates the evolving journey of institutions as they strengthen foundational capacities and engage in structured quality assurance (QA) practices. Accreditation readiness is presented as both a goal and a process, requiring alignment between internal strengths and external benchmarks. Participants acknowledged the growing momentum toward readiness, anchored in administrative commitment, curriculum alignment, and stakeholder optimism, but tempered by faculty inexperience and infrastructure gaps. These findings support Magri

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and Martin's (2021) argument that readiness entails both compliance and self-assessment, while affirming Iqbal et al.'s (2024) position that accreditation functions as a developmental tool fostering continuous improvement.

Participants consistently described their institutions as only partially ready for accreditation, reflecting a mix of optimism and pragmatism. One admitted, "For me if I score it from 1 to 10... probably it will be range 6 to 7" (Participant 1), while another expressed confidence, "I think we will be ready... we are implementing OBE" (Participant 4). These responses suggest that frameworks such as Outcome-Based Education (OBE) have been adopted to align with accreditation standards, though implementation remains incomplete. Administrative leadership emerged as a consistent strength: "We are ready in terms of the administration, especially our Dean who is already qualified" (Participant 1). Yet, capacity constraints among faculty highlighted a readiness gap: "Most of the faculty members are fresh graduates and have just recently passed the board exam" (Participant 2). Such accounts diverge from Hénard and Roseveare's (2012) notion of readiness as linear progression, instead portraying an uneven pathway where institutional enthusiasm collides with human and structural limitations.

Facility limitations also emerged as significant barriers, reinforcing Padua and Dizon's (2020) findings on the critical role of infrastructure in achieving accreditation. For instance, participants emphasized: "Our laboratory is not complete" (Participant 5) and "There is one thing that hinders it... lack of classrooms" (Participant 13). Nevertheless, optimism persisted, with one affirming, "If it's from 1 to 10, I'll say 10/10... I can really say everything is good" (Participant 14). This duality—acknowledging barriers while maintaining hope—mirrors Hénard and Roseveare's (2012) description of institutions "in transition," balancing present realities against aspirational goals.

Institutional strengths, described as "capital," were recognized as crucial to shaping readiness. Faculty qualifications were repeatedly highlighted: "All of us, aside from being licensed, are eligible to teach... one of the strengths of the institution" (Participant 3) and "The program is aligned with the current curriculum and also the faculty are engaged and qualified to teach" (Participant 14). These accounts reinforce Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley's (2009) view that faculty competence underpins institutional reputation. Leadership quality also surfaced as a key factor: "It's the administration... we have qualified dean" (Participant 2). Beyond faculty, student quality and licensure performance reinforced credibility: "The number of students and the passing percentage in the board exam" (Participant 11). Institutions further leveraged longevity and partnerships: "Being founded in 1993... the experience we have gathered throughout the years enabled the department to formulate programs that could help the accreditation process" (Participant 6), as well as linkages with PNP, BJMP, and BFP (Participants 10, 13, 14). These insights align with Middlehurst's (2001) observation that leadership and external collaborations foster a quality culture. The mention of affordability—"Our tuition fee is low" (Participant 5)—underscores the role of accessibility in shaping institutional value (Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007).

Participants also reframed accreditation as more than compliance, portraying it as a transformative process that enhances reputation, elevates standards, and drives improvement. As one noted, "It plays a crucial role in enhancing quality of education. It sets a benchmark" (Participant 1), while another emphasized, "Accreditation... check and balance all areas—curriculum, facilities, research, administration" (Participant 2). Accreditation was also explicitly linked to student success: "It would be difficult to send students out if they are not ready... accreditation really plays a big part" (Participant 3), supporting Harvey and Green's (1993) assertion that quality assurance enhances student readiness. Faculty credibility was tied to institutional reputation: "Having qualified teachers allows us to produce excellent students" (Participant 9). Beyond local improvements, participants highlighted reputation-building and global competitiveness: "Once accredited... the school will become more recognized" (Participant 11) and "So that it's not just nationwide but also globalized" (Participant 10), echoing van Damme's (2001) view of accreditation as a driver of global competitiveness. Accreditation was further seen as fueling innovation: "It develops improvements, it suggests things to rectify" (Participant 7), reinforcing Venkatraman's (2007) assertion of accreditation as cyclical institutional development.

Overall, this theme demonstrates that readiness is dynamic and multi-layered, shaped by leadership, faculty competence, partnerships, and stakeholder optimism, yet constrained by infrastructure and faculty inexperience. Readiness emerges not as a fixed state but as an ongoing journey that requires sustained investment in human, physical, and organizational resources. For criminology programs, this underscores the need for strategic balancing of current capacities with aspirational goals.

Theme 2: Gaps, Grinds, and Growing Pains

This theme captures the operational and systemic challenges shaping institutions' journeys toward accreditation readiness. While participants expressed strong aspirations for quality improvement, they were candid about persistent deficiencies in infrastructure, financial resources, and institutional coordination. These findings suggest that readiness is not only about aligning curricula and policies but also about ensuring robust systems and

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resources. This aligns with Gawor et al. (2021) and Kayyali (2024), who emphasize that readiness requires a balanced integration of facilities, financial planning, and stakeholder collaboration.

Participants frequently cited inadequate laboratories, outdated instructional equipment, and limited classroom space as pressing barriers. For example: "The possible barrier... is the laboratory... it really needs to be fixed" (Participant 1); "There are really many deficiencies in the laboratory" (Participant 5); and "The equipment is lacking... students cannot properly accomplish what they need" (Participant 9). These findings reinforce Salas and Cordova's (2020) view that facilities are central to accreditation. The high costs of upgrades—"Regarding the laboratory, the equipment is very expensive" (Participant 4)—highlight the financial strain of sustaining industry-aligned facilities in resource-limited contexts. Classroom shortages further constrained program delivery: "The number of rooms available... the students are increasing... we are experiencing problems with room assignments" (Participant 13). Unlike prior studies focused mainly on administrative systems, these accounts underscore how physical deficits directly hinder teaching and learning.

Research productivity and digital support also surfaced as barriers. One participant admitted, "Every program has limited research output... accrediting bodies really focus on scholarly contributions" (Participant 2), supporting Salas and Cordova's (2020) view of research as a quality benchmark. Weak IT systems also emerged: "School services are somewhat lacking... compliance requires internet... IT support is slow" (Participant 10). This highlights digital infrastructure as a new determinant of readiness in post-pandemic higher education.

Financial constraints were another dominant theme. One participant explained, "If financial support is available and sufficient, we could add more classrooms" (Participant 13), while another noted, "There are financial constraints... the intention is to go beyond the minimum requirements" (Participant 6). These perspectives align with Ruiz and Junio-Sabio's (2012) findings that budgetary limitations are systemic impediments in Philippine higher education.

Institutional coordination—or its absence—was also a challenge. One participant lamented, "There is a lack of teamwork... two or three people are the only ones doing accreditation" (Participant 2), supporting Martin and Stella's (2007) assertion that collective institutional responsibility is essential. Administrative bottlenecks were another frustration: "The registrar's office is still lacking... we need to line up for a very long time because there are only two payment counters" (Participant 8). Others, however, noted supportive administration: "They are very much willing... purchasing of equipment... training... seminars" (Participant 10). This divergence indicates that leadership willingness requires consistent institutional coordination to translate into progress.

Participants highlighted how deficiencies ripple down to students, affecting engagement and preparedness. For example: "Laboratory... it affects the students when it comes to inadequate facilities" (Participant 1) and "Sometimes it's crowded... maximum of 40 per classroom... that's where the problem starts" (Participant 11). These findings align with Archambault et al. (2022) and Rapanta et al. (2020), who emphasize that learning environments shape teaching quality and student outcomes. Shortages of textbooks ("We are not up to date with current issues and knowledge" —Participant 2), challenges in hybrid modalities ("Teaching time is divided... students cannot focus" —Participant 13), and socioeconomic barriers such as transport costs (Participant 10) further highlight how systemic inequities intersect with accreditation readiness.

In summary, Theme 2 underscores that readiness is tempered by operational and systemic challenges. Facilities, finances, and coordinated institutional effort remain indispensable, while emerging issues such as digital infrastructure and modality disruptions add new layers of complexity. Readiness, therefore, requires strategic resource investments, cohesive collaboration, and institutional culture shifts toward inclusivity and planning.

Theme 3: Paving the Path

This theme reflects institutions' forward momentum through deliberate—but sometimes uneven—efforts to meet accreditation requirements. Participants emphasized actions such as faculty development, curriculum revision, facility upgrades, and administrative reforms. One explained, "We are slowly sending instructors to various training programs" (Participant 1), while another shared, "The school is undergoing renovations... laboratory concerns are being addressed" (Participant 1). These findings suggest that institutions are actively bridging gaps, though progress remains inconsistent, aligning with Lal et al. (2024), who stress that faculty competence, curriculum relevance, and infrastructure coherence are critical to accreditation.

Faculty development consistently emerged as a pillar of readiness. As participants stated: "Teachers are improving... they are pursuing master's degrees" (Participant 7) and "Every semestral break, faculty development activities are conducted... supported by the school" (Participant 10). These insights support Asmare's (2025) view that continuous professional development enhances accreditation preparedness. Yet, curriculum revision appeared



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less robust, with participants noting only minor updates (Participants 8, 10). This divergence suggests that while faculty investment is prioritized, curriculum modernization lags behind industry standards.

Facility upgrades were more visible. Participants described renovations and improved classroom conditions (Participants 1, 14). Perceptions of effectiveness varied: some affirmed positive impacts (Participant 10), while others noted the absence of systematic evaluation (Participant 2). This reflects Lal et al.'s (2024) warning that progress without assessment risks fragmented improvements.

Strategic investments also reinforced momentum. Faculty support included scholarships and funding for advanced degrees (Participants 3, 6). Infrastructure efforts included constructing additional classrooms and dedicating campuses to criminology programs (Participants 2, 6). Smart classrooms and laboratory upgrades demonstrated responsiveness to accreditation requirements (Participant 14). These findings align with Barrett et al. (2019) and Kayyali (2024), who emphasize that financial commitment signals institutional seriousness.

Administrative reforms, including OBE integration (Participant 6), faculty credentialing policies (Participant 4), ISO-inspired systems (Participant 7), and accreditation committees (Participant 13), showed institutionalizing of QA mechanisms. These measures align with CHED's CMO No. 46 (2012) and Vorobyova et al. (2022), which stress embedding compliance frameworks into institutional culture. Yet, gaps remained—such as the absence of a retention policy (Participant 1)—suggesting reforms are still partial.

Theme 3 highlights a trajectory of intentional yet uneven progress. Faculty development and infrastructure demonstrate commitment, while policy reforms suggest a systemic shift. However, curriculum lags and limited evaluation mechanisms constrain coherence. Accreditation readiness, therefore, remains evolving, requiring integration across faculty, facilities, curriculum, and quality assurance to sustain long-term success.

Theme 4: Systems that Work

This theme reflects a strategic shift toward system-building that emphasizes planning, collaboration, and performance-driven practices as the foundation of accreditation readiness. Participants consistently viewed accreditation not as mere compliance but as an opportunity to institutionalize quality. This supports Cagape and Prado (2025), who stress that resource allocation and systemic coordination drive readiness, and resonates with Maqhubela's (2025) argument that stakeholder collaboration ensures responsiveness to industry and accreditation demands.

Financial investment was widely regarded as essential. One administrator emphasized, "Financial support is really the best thing the institution can provide" (Participant 4), while another noted, "The administration is very willing" (Participant 7). This finding converges with Gaston's (2023) view that financial capacity, physical resources, and faculty competence form the triad of accreditation success. Modernized facilities (Participants 5, 12) and external partnerships (Participant 2) reinforced responsiveness to stakeholder needs, aligning with Adewolu Ogwo's (2024) conclusion that linkages strengthen credibility and employability.

The integration of licensure-style practices was another systemic approach. Institutions implemented mock board exams (Participants 4, 6) and curriculum-integrated reviews. These initiatives support Santangelo et al. (2021), who emphasize early exam exposure as boosting performance and competitiveness. Experiential strategies, such as industry consultants and community engagement (Participants 2, 3), deepened relevance and mirrored Mohzana et al.'s (2024) view that mock audits and documentation sustain readiness.

Collaboration was also highlighted: "Everyone truly needs to be involved" (Participant 2). This echoes Kayyali (2024), who emphasizes shared ownership. Collaboration extended to facility maintenance (Participant 1), faculty seminars (Participant 4), student feedback systems (Participant 13), and scholarship support. Calls for a dedicated research department (Participant 11) illustrated aspirations for sustained innovation.

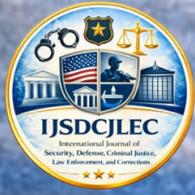
While some expressed satisfaction with current efforts (Participant 5), others highlighted systemic gaps in scaling collaboration and coordination. This reflects Ahmad's (2021) assertion that discipline-specific facilities and structured accountability are indispensable for quality outcomes.

In sum, Theme 4 demonstrates that readiness is best advanced through systemic strategies combining financial investment, faculty support, linkages, and collaboration. While progress remains uneven, institutions that sustain systemic coordination, foster stakeholder ownership, and institutionalize performance-oriented practices are more likely to achieve accreditation success aligned with both local standards and global expectations.

Conclusion

This study advances the discourse on quality assurance in higher education by presenting a contextually grounded framework for accreditation readiness in provincial criminology programs in the Philippines. Rather than viewing readiness as a static checklist, the findings reframe it as a dynamic, systems-oriented process requiring the

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integration of institutional vision, strategic resource allocation, capacity-building for faculty and students, and proactive stakeholder engagement. By bridging local realities with global quality assurance imperatives, this study offers a practical and adaptable model for institutions seeking to strengthen their accreditation trajectory.

Addressing the research gap on the limited scholarship surrounding criminology program accreditation in Bulacan and similar provincial contexts, the study captures the nuanced experiences, challenges, and strategies of stakeholders. These localized, discipline-specific insights enrich the broader body of literature, which has largely overlooked such perspectives. The framework developed highlights that readiness is iterative and developmental, requiring sustained alignment of infrastructure, governance, and instructional quality with established standards. This supports contemporary scholarship, which emphasizes that accreditation success is less about episodic compliance and more about fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Moreover, the study demonstrates that progress toward accreditation is most sustainable when administrators, faculty, staff, students, and external partners are engaged in collective and coordinated efforts. For policymakers, accrediting agencies, and institutional leaders, the findings provide evidence-based guidance for shaping capacity-building strategies and policy interventions that address the unique operational and resource constraints of provincial institutions. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader scholarship on educational quality and institutional resilience, underscoring how localized, discipline-specific models can transform accreditation from a compliance exercise into a strategic driver of institutional excellence and global competitiveness.

Recommendations

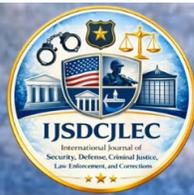
Grounded in the four emergent themes of this study, the following recommendations highlight the need for a holistic, systems-based approach to strengthening accreditation readiness in provincial criminology programs:

1. Strategic Infrastructure and Resource Development. Institutions must prioritize investments in classrooms, laboratories, and technology resources to eliminate persistent barriers to readiness. Modernized facilities directly support effective teaching, research, and student engagement.
2. Institutionalization of Quality Assurance Practices. Administrators should strengthen internal systems through regular documentation audits, peer evaluations, and mock accreditation visits. Such measures cultivate a culture of accountability, preparedness, and continuous improvement.
3. Collaborative Governance and Stakeholder Engagement. Decision-making processes should actively involve faculty, students, and external partners to foster shared ownership of accreditation goals and collective responsibility for institutional success.
4. Faculty Development and Instructional Quality. Continuous professional development—through advanced studies, specialized training, and industry-linked workshops—should be encouraged to ensure curriculum relevance and teaching competence. Peer mentoring systems can further enhance instructional quality, while faculty should also integrate licensure-driven and experiential strategies, including mock board exams, industry immersion, and community engagement.
5. Strengthening Research Productivity. Institutions must provide incentives and foster industry partnerships to encourage faculty and student research. Increased scholarly output will not only raise the program's academic profile but also reinforce its credibility during accreditation evaluations.
6. Policy and Accrediting Agency Support. Policymakers and accrediting bodies should provide targeted funding, scholarships, and technology support to bridge resource disparities in provincial institutions. Accrediting agencies can further aid readiness by delivering capacity-building programs that promote evidence-based quality assurance practices.
7. Academia-Industry Linkages. Stronger collaborations with industry should be fostered through research partnerships, internships, and graduate employability programs, ensuring criminology curricula remain responsive to evolving labor market and societal demands.

Collectively, these recommendations underscore that accreditation readiness is best achieved through sustained investments, collaborative governance, and shared commitment among stakeholders, supported by enabling policies and responsive accrediting practices.

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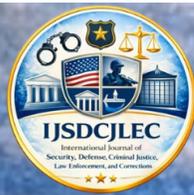
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