
Effects of Police Visibility as Crime Reduction Measure

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the effects of police visibility and the problems encountered on its implementation based on the perspective of the citizens of Lipa. Descriptive type of research method was utilized in the study with 357 randomly selected participants from different barangay household in Lipa City, Batangas. Results showed that crime reduction as one of the major purposes of police visibility is viewed with higher effect than police public relations. The respondents believed that there are possible problems encountered on its implementation which include: having alleged inefficient officers, lack of personnel, not updated equipment, unhealthy officers, and lack of budget. The groups of respondents from aged brackets 26-35 and 36-45 have significantly higher problems observed in the constant police visibility compared to groups with age brackets 18-25 and 56-above. Meanwhile, sex has nothing to do with their perception on the effects and problems encountered. Likewise, there are respondents from specific barangays have significantly higher response on the effects of police visibility where they find it very essential in their area. Furthermore, those surveyed barangay residents with higher response regarding the effects of police –public relations are also those respondents with higher perceived problems. An action plan was proposed to enhance the police visibility in the densely populated areas and barangays in the City of Lipa as law enforcement strategy to fight against crime and maintain the peace and order of the barangays.

Keywords: Police Visibility; Crime Reduction; Police-Public Relations; Lipa City

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the plausible reasons why circumstances that revolve around crimes go from bad to the worst possible scenario is due to the lack of police visibility. Offenders are confident in going the extra mile to accomplish the crime because the possibility of being caught in the area is close to zero. The lack of police visibility could also cause the delay in reporting crimes causing the failure of apprehension of offenders. Unfortunately, the system of the local police isn't to blame in this problem. The standard of the Philippine National Police dictates that for every five hundred (500) individuals in a given area, there should be one police man [1]. However, in Lipa City alone, a policeman in a given area must look 1,473 people which are just less than thrice the given standard.

These are the instances where the general public loses their confidence in the police. Their fear of being a victim of a crime could greatly affect their lifestyles. The loss of confidence could also lead to their dissatisfaction considering that they have to partially sacrifice their own resources and freedom to the government so that they (government) could provide security.

This study focuses on the effects of police visibility as a crime reduction measure and the problems encountered as perceived by the citizens of Lipa. Police Visibility is a means of facilitating a much more accessible engagement and intervention of the police which could enhance quality of life in general by reducing fear and incidences of crime [2]. It aims to provide authorities with innovation in maintaining constant police visibility. The success of this paper could significantly decrease crime rates in the city of Lipa

Police visibility is not necessarily exclusive to the physical presence of police officers in a given area. Although the study of Reiss [3] suggest that the presence of a law enforcer in a given area reduce victimization significantly, Adams et al. [4] claim that presence alone is not enough. They claimed that awareness of the programs implemented by the police increase the public's confidence on the police force.

Competence also plays an important role in reducing crime rate and fear of crime. Cordner [5] showed that the public responded positively in the improvement of the police's problem solving skills. However, the Cordner [5] thinks that there would be no public observation on the police's competence without them being visible to the public. This would only mean that most of the people's assessment on the police would rely on police visibility.

Unfortunately for the City of Lipa, the local Police's Program for Police Visibility is only limited to its On-foot and vehicle patrol programs. This issue may be attributed to the lack of fiscal and man power. The local police force is stretched thin due to the huge population of the city and its vast land area.

The City of Lipa is home to more than three hundred thousand individuals. What makes it a popular choice of residence is its strategic location. Lipa City is surrounded by two towering mountains that provide an ideal settlement for those who wish to be protected from the elements. Also, Lipa City is one of the highest settlements in the Province making its climate cool and comfortable to the average person. The area is also rich in healthy and thick vegetation filled with different species of flora making the air clean and fresh; most especially at the rural parts of the city.

With an area comprising of 20,666.66 hectares which is divided into seventy-two (72) barangays, and housing more than 300,000 individuals, with only a few policemen to watch over them, crime would surely sprout everywhere, especially in the urban areas [6]. Logically speaking, a person in his right mind would be discouraged in knowingly commit a crime while authorities are visibly present. With the lack of personnel, police visibility in all areas is quite impossible; reducing attempts of committing a crime. This study would play an important role in reducing crimes within the city of Lipa, Batangas, Philippines.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive research design in order to assess the effects of police visibility as a fear of crime reduction strategy. It is appropriate for this study to determine the perspective of the people on how a certain phenomenon of police visibility can be a useful strategy to reduce or prevent related crimes on the streets.

2.1 Participants of the Study

This study shall cover the top five most populated barangay of the Urban District of the City of Lipa. Specifically, (1) Barangay 1, (2) Barangay 2, (3) Barangay 3, (4) Barangay 4, and (5) Barangay 5. Names of barangays were not identified in the study for the purpose of confidentiality. The target participants are random households within these barangays to ensure a reliable set of data. Out of the 4,866 households of these barangays, 357 of them shall be randomly selected to be a part of this study; 104 of which will come from Barangay 4; 82 from Barangay 1; 70 from Barangay 2, 57 from Barangay 5; and 44 from barangay 3. The study is only limited to households. Members and officers of the Philippine National Police were not part of this study due to some confidentiality to secure information from their police operations as law enforcement strategy to fight against criminals.

2.2 Instrument

This questionnaire is inspired by a 2002 study of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary which focused on police visibility and public reassurance. Their questionnaire was modified fit the Philippine setting. It was designed to gather the participants' perception on the importance of police visibility in terms of crime reduction and police-public relations and the problems perceived by the respondents in maintaining constant police visibility. The questionnaire was underwent face-to-face content validation from the experts in research and public administration. Testing of reliability was also facilitated with computed cronbach's alpha value of 0.781 from which the questionnaire is considered acceptable and valid for use.

2.3 Procedure

The data were collected through survey questionnaire. The surveyor personally administered the questionnaires in the identified barangays. Selected participants answered the survey questionnaire. Interviews with random respondents as well as representatives from People's Law Enforcement Board (PLEB) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) was also conducted after the interpretation of the data gathered from the survey to ensure that the results of the survey are analysed by the implementers so that they can give their professional opinion regarding the results of the survey. The survey questionnaire includes the acknowledgement and agreement to participate in the survey duly signed by the participant. Unsigned acknowledgement was deemed invalid due to ethical reasons. Only respondents who are willing to participate in the study were given the questionnaire. They were not pressured to answer the questionnaire and ample time was given to them to complete the survey.

Identification of the problems perceived by the public in maintaining constant police visibility will help identify the source of the hindrances in the implementation of these programs.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey were interpreted using percentage to determine the level of importance of police visibility in terms of crime reduction and police-public relations of the public and the problems perceived by the respondents in maintaining constant police visibility. Statements from the questionnaire were interpreted based on the experience and observation relevant to public administration and the findings of other studies.

The given 4-point Likert scale was used to interpret the result of the data gathered from the survey regarding the importance of police visibility: 2.50-3.00: Very Important (VI); 1.50-2.49: Important (I); 1.0-1.49: Not Important (NI). Meanwhile, another 4-point Likert scale was used to interpret the result from the problem encountered: 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).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 demonstrates the demographic profile of the participants. The largest group within these barangays when grouped by age is group 2 (26-36 year olds) indicating that a large percentage of younger individuals bearing the responsibility of the households. Almost sixty percent (60%) of the population are males. Barangay 1 having the most households indicates largest number of respondents.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of the Respondents According to Profile (n=357)

Criteria	Profile	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18- 25	93	26.1
	26- 35	98	27.5
	36- 45	75	21
	46- 55	57	16
	56- above	34	9.5
Sex	Male	213	59.7
	Female	144	40.3
Barangay	Brgy. 1	104	29.1
	Brgy. 2	82	23
	Brgy. 3	70	19.6
	Brgy. 4	57	16
	Brgy. 5	44	12.3

Table 2 tabulated the result of effects of police visibility in terms of crime reduction. Majority of the respondents believed that the police visibility has very high effect in creating fear among potential criminals (2.71) on rank number 1 and the respondents do believed that it poses as a deterrent in consummating crimes (2.64) on rank number 2. This indicates that people tend to react more positively on the presence rather than competency of the police force as opposed to what Cordner [5] have observed during his study.

Table 2. Effects of Police Visibility in terms of Crime Reduction

Criteria	WM	VI	Rank
It creates fear among potential criminals	2.71	VH	1
It poses as a deterrent in consummating crimes	2.64	VH	2
It makes authorities more responsive thus solving or preventing more crimes	2.64	VH	3
Presence of Police in an area reduces crime incidence	2.37	H	9
It poses as an anti-terrorism strategy	2.16	H	10
It familiarizes Police personnel's knowledge of the geography of their locale	2.40	H	8
It reduces risk of victimization	2.64	VH	4
It reduces chances of a crime happening	2.59	VH	5
It increases criminals caught thus reducing crime rates	2.53	VH	6
It shows that the police are much	2.52	VH	7

more active in pursuit of crimes			
Composite Mean	2.52	VH	

Table 3 demonstrates the effects of Police Visibility in terms of Police Public Relations.

Majority of the respondents believed that promoting peace within an area is the most important contribution of police visibility within an area with the rank of number one among the given effects of police visibility in terms of Police-Public Relations. Reduction of fear of crime only comes second.

Increased public trust comes at rank number three. Seeing that the police can effectively maintain peace within a community, people would trust its police force more knowing that their presence makes them a lot safer. Also, constant police visibility would create familiarity which could shed light on the police force which in turn would lead to the understanding and acceptance in which people tend to overlook because they do not “see each other” [7, 8]. It is also consistent with the findings of HMIC 2001 [9] wherein police make an effort to build personal relationships with the public showed the greatest impact in reassuring the people.

Table 3. Effects of Police Visibility in terms of Police Public Relations

Criteria	WM	VI	Rank
Promotes familiarity with the public	2.55	VH	4
It reduces fear of crime within the community	2.56	VH	2
It promotes transparency of the police force	2.31	H	9
It increases the public's confidence in the police	2.38	H	8
It promotes peace within the area	2.56	VH	1
It builds strong relationship with the people	2.26	H	10
Lessens corruption among the police force	2.40	H	6
It builds public trust	2.55	VH	3
Creates a much deeper understanding between the two groups	2.40	H	7
It reduces fear of crime among the people	2.52	VH	5
Composite Mean	2.45	H	

Table 4 presents the perceived problems in the implementation of constant police visibility wherein majority of the respondents strongly believed that having corrupt officers is the number one (1) problem in the implementation. While, the data from Lipa's PLEB shows that there are no reported cases of anomalies of the police force for the year 2017. The lack of reported cases could, however, denote that the respondents are unaware of the PLEB which will, yet again, reflect to the failure of the PLEB in performing their duties. Another theory could be that the people are afraid of reporting police anomalies. People could be threatened by the corrupt officer who prevents people from reporting these activities to the appropriate authorities.

Meanwhile, many respondents believed that the lack of personnel comes in rank number 2 as another problem. The Police Force in Lipa has already stated that their people are always spread thin. Unfortunately, they cannot deploy everyone every time because there would be no personnel to man the station and that potential perpetrators may be able to discover the route patterns of the police. The lack of personnel may be attributed to the lack of recruits.

Unupdated modern equipment comes in third rank as many respondents believed this as problem encountered. The police cannot and should not rely on their own physical presence when it comes to maintaining police visibility because they are stretched thin due to the lack of personnel. The study of Cordner [5] shows that video clips from sources like CCTV camera are vital in keep constant Police Visibility. The Local Police of Lipa do not have their own set of CCTV cameras. They rely on the captured images of the CCTV of the City/Municipal Government of the Barangay which could be rationale behind the high rating of this problem.

Table 4. Perceived Problems Encountered in the implementation of Constant Police Visibility

Criteria	WM	VI	Rank
Lack of Personnel	3.48	A	2
Lack of Budget	3.25	A	5
Lack of Vehicle	3.20	A	6
Inappropriate Police Attire	3.08	A	9
Incompetent Personnel	3.13	A	8
Tardy Personnel	3.13	A	7
Low Local Government Support	2.76	A	15
Too Beaureaucratic System	2.90	A	12
Corrupt Officers	3.52	SA	1
Unhealthy Officers	3.28	A	4
Unupdated Modern Equipment	3.31	A	3
Lack of Empathy	2.81	A	14
Lack of Coordination	2.98	A	11
Lack of Courage	2.84	A	13
Lack of Initiative	2.98	A	10
Composite Mean	3.11	A	

Data revealed in Table 5 that there is a significant difference on the importance of police visibility in terms of police-public relations as denoted by the computed p-value of 0.025 which is less than 0.05 alpha level. Obtained data shows that the group of respondents belongs to 46-55 has significantly lower response regarding the importance of police-public relations compared to the groups of respondents belong to 26-35 years old and 56-above. This may denote that respondents with the age range of 46-55 years old are much more responsive to the importance of police visibility in terms of crime reduction. This may be because of priorities. It is much more important for the police to be able to do their job effectively rather than maintain a good image.

Table 5. Significant Difference on the Effects of Police Visibility and Problems Encountered when the Respondents are grouped according to Age

Criteria	F	Sig.	Interpretation
Crime Reduction	0.587	.673	Not Significant
Police-Public Relations	2.813	.025	Significant
Problems encountered	2.717	.030	Significant

*Significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.05$

In Table 6, there is no significant difference on the importance of police visibility and the perceived problems when the respondent are grouped according to sex as denoted by the computed p-values which are greater than 0.05 alpha level. This signifies that both male and female have either high or low response on the importance of and perceived problems on the constant police visibility. They have different views that are not exclusive in any group of respondents.

Table 6. Significant Difference on the Effects of Police Visibility and Problems Encountered when the Respondents are grouped according to Sex

Criteria	t-val.	p-val.	Interpretation
Crime Reduction	.250	.803	Not Significant
Police-Public Relations	.284	.777	Not Significant
Problems encountered	1.857	.064	Not Significant

*Significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.05$

In Table 7, there is a significant difference on the importance of police visibility in terms of crime reduction, police-public relation and perceived problems when grouped according to barangay as denoted by the computed p-values which are less than 0.05 alpha level. Upon interviewing a few residents from barangay 4, they stated that every item

from the instrument was very important. All are factors that reduce crime and improve police-public relations. However, they preferred that the police rank these factors by priority and focus on the number one priority which was instilling fear among potential criminals. Fear is what keeps them at bay. Fear of being caught makes them rethink their decisions for the better.

Table 7. Significant Difference on the Effects of Police Visibility and Problems Encountered when the Respondents are grouped according to Barangay

Criteria	F	Sig.	Interpretation
Crime Reduction	5.500**	.000	Significant
Police-Public Relations	7.676**	.000	Significant
Perceived Problems	3.165*	.014	Significant

*Significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.05$; **Significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.01$

In Table 8, there is no significant relationship between importance of police visibility in terms of crime reduction and the problem encountered as denoted by the computed p-value of .130 which is greater than 0.05 alpha level. Meanwhile, there is a significant relationship between the importance of police –public relations and its perceived problems as indicated by the computed p-value of 0.020 which is less than 0.05 alpha level. This signifies that those surveyed barangay residents with higher response regarding the importance of police –public relations are also those respondents with higher perceived problems at the same time while those who give lower importance have also those with lower perceived problems.

This may be because crime reduction is expected of the police. Police-Public relations are just an extra factor that enhances the image of the police force. Crime reduction is a task that the Philippine National Police (PNP) should execute no matter what circumstance. Police-Public relations should be just a determinant of how efficiently they perform their duties to serve the public. A study shows that the level of safety or fear of crime determined the public's perception towards the police. Though there are studies that provide evidence that the level of safety or fear of crime do not affect the relationship with the police force [10].

The resulting relationship between the perceived importance of police visibility in terms of police-public relations to the perceived problems are quite understandable considering that the police cannot fully perform their duties without the support and confidence of the people [11].

Table 8. Significant relationship Between the Effects of Police Visibility and the Problems Encountered

Criteria	r-val.	p-val.	Interpretation
Crime Reduction	.080	.130	Not Significant
Police-Public Relations	.123(*)	.020	Significant

*Significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.05$

Table 9 tabulates the action plan, which shall focus on finding alternatives that could help reduce the top 5 ranking problems encountered by the respondents namely; (1) Corrupt Officers, (2) Lack of Personnel, (3) Unupdated technology, (4) Unhealthy Officers, and (5) lack of Budget.

Table 9. Proposed Action Plan to Enhance the Police Visibility

Program /Projects /Activities	Strategies	Performance Indicators
Intensifying Moral Recovery	1. Strengthen the PLEB	More resolved
	2. Encourage the Citizenry to report anomalies of the Police	Increased reported and resolved cases of corruption/anomaly
	3. Remove those have been proven	Scare off remaining corrupt

	committing illegal, unethical, and/or abusive acts	officers
Recruitment of additional personnel	1. Reallocate funds for salary and recruitment	Increased Police Applicants
	2. Improve Physical Education	Produce more fit graduates of Schools
	3. Train and authorize local authorities like barangay Tanod and local peace and order officers	Increased alternative authority figures
Provision of Modern Equipment	1. Gain 24/7 access to LGUs CCTV cameras	Police officers stationed at CCTV rooms of LGUs
	2. Reallocate for the purchase of vehicles and other equipment	Purchase new vehicles
	3. Teach officers the use of new technology	Trained Police Operations
Intensify PNP Health Programs	1. Improved regular exercise	Daily exercises to be performed before, during, and after reporting in for duty
	2. Coordinate with PNP Regional Office	Creation of a Memorandum Intensifying Physical Fitness
	3. Promote Proper Diet	Regular Check-up and nutritionist consultations
Additional Budget Allocation	1. Reallocate funds	Transfer funds from less used annual budgets of other agencies
	2. Seek out Donations	Gain equipments/funds from grants of other organizations
	3. Allocate Funds Efficiently	Prioritized Patrol expenses

4. CONCLUSION

The surveyed Respondents believed that police visibility has high effect on crime reduction. Corrupt police personnel are the number one problem encountered as perceived by the surveyed respondents. The group of respondents belongs to 46-55 has significantly lower response regarding the importance of police-public relations compared to the groups of respondents belong to 26-35 years old and 56-above. Survey shows that people who answered high effects in Police-Public relations perceived more problems in maintaining constant police visibility. The proposed action plan focused on finding alternatives that could help address the identified potential problems encountered in the implementation of police visibility.

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