
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Bridging Theory and Practice: Delving into the Lived Realities of Local Chief Executives on Peace and Order Program Implementation

Bimboy C. Cueno¹✉ and Dodelon F. Sabijon²

¹*Faculty Member, College of Criminology, Foundation University, Dumaguete City, Philippines*

²*Dean, College of Criminal Justice Education, University of Cebu-Main Campus, Cebu City, Philippines*

Corresponding Author: Bimboy C. Cueno, **E-mail:** cuenobimboy@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

There have been no researches that shed light on the lived realities surrounding peace and order program implementation viewing from the lens of local chief executives. Researches in this area are predominantly quantitative and does not explicitly demonstrate the vividness of any experience. Hence, hinging on transcendental phenomenological approach, this study was conducted with the aim of uncovering the complexities and mechanisms underlying the peace and order program implementation. Ten mayors from various cities and municipalities in Negros Island Region, Philippines, were interviewed using purposive sampling technique and data were analyzed through Colaizzi's method. Findings revealed that peace and order program implementation contributed to the forged alliances in the pursuit of peace and order, and consequently ameliorated safety and security within the society. However, the implementation thereof was described to be shackled by the scarcity of resources and was hampered by the misfortunes of clientelism, forcing local chief executives to resort to methodical priority-based tactic. Political culture, therefore, played a role in the implementation of the Local Government Units' implementation of the peace and order program. Nevertheless, participants described government-communal relation as a potent weapon against criminality. For better program execution, participants yearned for national legislated financial appropriation. This study recommends for international and national peace and order-related benchmarking, upgrading of peace and order-related equipment and technology, continuous training of local chief executives in public safety, crises management and community engagement, and for the augmentation of funds of the Peace and Order Council through a national legislative act.

| KEYWORDS

Peace and Order Program, Mayors, Phenomenology, Negros Island, Philippines

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 August 2025

PUBLISHED: 08 September 2025

DOI: 10.32996/ijlps.2025.7.5.1

1. Introduction

Peace and order are the most valuable humanitarian commodities in the society. It has been described as an "inseparable partners to development" (Nierras, 2022, p. 470), a "fundamental asset" (Uzoekwe, et al., 2023, p. 395-401), the "agents of sustainable growth" (Iorkpen, 2022, p. 563), and the "humanity's highest values" (Rummel, 1981, n.p.). Undoubtedly, in the absence of peace and order, chaos will prevail and society will tumble. However, amidst the momentousness of peace and order, lies the impossibility of peace perpetuity. Though conflicts are negotiated and legally settled, peace and order are just temporary symmetries in the actual human relations. Crime would persist and with psychosocial differences, it would continue to lurk even in the most angelic and godly society.

Peace and order programs across countries are often carried out by its leaders. However, as time passes, the world becomes less peaceful. In fact, the 2024 Global Peace Index (GPI) revealed a deterioration of 0.56% on the global level of peacefulness, a twelfth decline in the past 16 years, citing Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Ukraine as the least peaceful countries (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2024). The same report pointed North America with Canada and United States to have the

largest recorded regional deterioration in peace due to increase in violent crimes and perceptions of criminality. According to Institute for Economics and Peace (2004), the quantifiable dismal effect of crime to economy was estimated to be \$19.1 trillion in 2023, equitable to \$2,380 per person.

Likewise, in Asia-Pacific region, peace and order was found to decline by 0.1% with North Korea, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, and China to be the least peaceful countries according to 2024 Global Peace Index (GPI). Philippines although had 3.2% decrease in criminality in the first half of 2024 (Cervantes, 2024), and had improved four places to 104th out of 163 countries with GPI of 2.210, was still viewed as worse than the average of 1.935 GPI of the Asia-Pacific, making the country as the fourth least peaceful in the region. With this, the peace and order program of the country is put into limelight.

Philippines entrusts its peace and order not only with the law enforcement pillar but also with the elected local chief executives – mayors. In fact, mayors, have the greatest influence in orchestrating peace and order within their territory as they are deputized National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) representative holding the power to command over the Philippine National Police (PNP) (R.A. 8551). Mayors are also legally mandated to formulate and implement peace and order programs and to recommend strategic actions aimed in promoting public safety measures and in amplifying peace and order along with anti-insurgency initiatives (DILG MC 2019-143).

A number of researches were conducted on peace and order program implementation. However, these studies were all quantitative in nature, thus, failed to uncover the complexities and mechanisms underlying the phenomenon. In addition, the detailed account on the intricacies faced by local chief executives in the program implementation are not detailed in scholarly literature. A deep pool of knowledge in this area is imperative for any interventions, including legal, financial, and social, to be effective.

2. Literature Review

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 7160 or the Local Government Code directs all local government units to ensure that peace and order are maintained within their respective area of jurisdiction. The law mandates the establishment of Peace and Order Council (POC) in every province, municipality, and city. In a separate law, Republic Act No. 6975, mayors are directed to develop and establish an integrated community peace and order and public safety plan that will encompass priorities of action and program thrusts in coordination with the local Peace and Order Council (POC). The creation of peace and order plan, headed by the mayor as the chairman of the Peace and Order Council (POC), is in collaboration with law enforcement agencies, other government instrumentalities or counterparts, and the community. For better execution, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) issued Memorandum Circular No. 2022-118 which pointed out the guidelines in the development and formulation of the peace and order and public safety plan. The circular mandates local government units through their respective POCs, to include in their peace and order program, strategic activities aimed to combat against crime and disorder, illegal drugs, threats to the environment and human security, and conflicts including insurgency, terrorism, and violent extremism.

The mayor as the chairman of the POC is assisted by the vice mayor who is designated as POC vice chairperson (DILG Circular No. 2019-143). The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) sets the minimum municipal or city POCs membership, to wit, one from Sanguniang Panlungsod/Bayan member who chaired the Committee on Peace and Order and Public Safety, president of the Liga ng mga Barangay, city or municipal counterparts (PNP, BFP, PDEA, etc.), and, three representatives from any recognized Civil Society Organizations (CSO). Upon discretion and consultation of the local chief executive, membership of the POC can be expanded.

Moreover, Executive Order No. 773, series of 2009 was issued to reorganize the POC. Section 3 of the same decree enumerates the following synopsis functions of the subnational levels including city and municipal POCs: (a) to provide a platform for dialogue and discussions on major problems and issues which is affecting the peace and order, insurgency included; (b) recommend strategies for the enhancement of peace and order and public safety including insurgency; (c) propose measures to converge and orchestrate internal security operations efforts of civil authorities and agencies, both police and military; (d) utilize moral suasion to and/or recommend sanctions against local chief executives who are giving material and political support to the communist rebels; (e) monitor the provision of livelihood and infrastructure development programs and projects in the remote rural and indigenous population areas adopted to isolate them from the communist rebels; and, (f) perform all other functions assigned by law. The aforementioned are also reflected in Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Circular No. 2019-143 which contained the omnibus guidelines for Peace and Order Council (POC) functionalities.

Originally, peace and order and public safety program is implementable for three years. This is in consonance with the term of office of the mayor. Thus, after election is concluded, DILG mandates all mayors upon assumption of duty, to pass a resolution

for the constitution of the city or municipal POCs. Once created, POCs are instructed to convene in a quarterly basis (DILG Circular No. 2019-143).

On the other hand, the local chief executive is also tasked to institute Peace and Order Council Sub-Committees. First is the Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE). The highest-ranking Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) official in the municipality or city shall head this sub-committee. Members shall be decided by the POC through a resolution. Second is Criminality sub-committee which is headed by the highest-ranking official from the Philippine National Police (PNP). Like PCVE, membership shall also be decided by the POC through a resolution. The two aforementioned are tasked to recommend strategic plans on criminality, insurgency, and extremism respectively.

Furthermore, to sustain peace, protect life, and to enhance national security, the Philippine government crafted the National Security Policy 2023-2028. It outlines a national understanding on the contemporary risk and threats in the community and the principles that will aid in providing human security. In its basic, it serves as guide to action from the government's end. The policy document calls for vigorous support to peace and program in all levels of government. It also mandates the local government units to craft holistic strategies in curtailing insurgency, terrorism, and criminality both local and transregional.

Embedded in the peace and order program are strategic efforts to curtail, if not, reduce illicit drug proliferation in the country. Philippines has been a drug infested area. Even after the government's controversial drug war, illegal substances continue to exist. With this, the Department of the Interior and Local Government mandates all local chief executives to include in their respective peace and order program, activities on anti-illegal drugs. To strengthen the program, DILG institutionalize the Philippine Anti-Illegal Drugs Strategy (PADS) in 2018 to strategically align itself with the anti-illegal drug programs of the Philippine government. Part of its commitment is to strengthen its Anti-Drug Abuse Councils (ADACs). Part of the Philippine Anti-Illegal Drugs Strategy (PADS) is the continuous monitoring of the Community-Based Drug Rehabilitation Program (CBDRP) of the communities as well as the establishment of Special Drug Education Centers and Programs. Also, it capacitates and tracks the local government units' commitment against illegal drugs.

Historically, Philippines has been a center of conflict with past events relative to insurgencies, domestic armed conflicts, and violent crime. On the year 2024, the country is at 104th ranking out of 163 countries in terms of global peacefulness and fourth least peaceful country in Asia-Pacific (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2024). Contrarily, the Philippine National Police (PNP) boasted the decline of crime rate in the country. PNP data revealed a 61.87 percent dropped of index crimes (Nepomuceno, 2024). Also, crimes against persons such as physical injuries, rape, murder, and homicide trimmed down by 55.69 percent (Sigales, 2024). The PNP further revealed the reduction of crimes against property by 66.81 percent (Nepomuceno, 2024). In addition to this, the PNP also claimed improvements in operational efficiency due to increase of 27.13 percent in Crime Clearance Efficiency (CCE) and increase of 10.28 percent in the Crime Solution Efficiency (CSE) rate (Nepomuceno, 2024).

In consonance to the above feat, the national government bragged a safer country compared to the previous administration. Criminality were found to decline along with human rights violation (Flores, 2024). However, the aforementioned triumph has been weakened by the 2024 Numbeo Crime Index. In its 2024 report, Manila, Philippines' capital city, has been labeled as the "most dangerous city in Southeast Asia" (Armadillo, 2024, p.1). In its study, Manila was found to have a crime index score of 64.23, with a high rating of 72.51 in total criminality, 71.26 rating crimes against property and 71.12 in violent crimes (Numbeo, 2024; Armadillo, 2024). In addition, the perception of the public in terms of safety and security in Manila has sharply declined especially at night with safety index reducing to 29.96 (Salcedo, 2024). This report belied the claim of both the local Manila administration and of the national government.

On the other hand, Numbeo Crime Index (2024) also ranked Cebu at the fifth place and Iloilo at the eight. The report revealed a 51.6 percent crime index and 48.4 percent safety index of Cebu. On the other hand, Iloilo has 41.1% crime index and 58.9% safety index. With this data, the effort of the law enforcement agency in its fight against criminality becomes questionable. This also blunders the credibility of the reports of the national government.

Undoubtedly, the peace and order program of the government plays a crucial role in maintaining a safe society. Unlike crime initiatives from the law enforcement agencies, this program orchestrates coordination not just from the law enforcement pillar but also with the stakeholders of the community. The program fosters community unity and teamwork and the fight against criminality has been deemed to be a sum effort not by one but all facets of the society. However, the success of the program is contingent mostly on the political will of the local chief executives as they hold the yoke of leadership. Theoretically, a weak leader creates weak leadership, and weak leadership ensues poor performance.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) reported an 88.24 percent or 1,477 Local Government Units (LGUs) with functional Peace and Order Council (DILG, 2022). Recognizing the value of peace and order program, and to encourage the LGUs to join the fight against criminality, DILG initiated the giving of the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) Award (DILG, 2023). The award is given to municipalities and cities who had high performance in terms of functionality and development in peace and order. Functionality includes meetings, policies, plans, budget, and innovations while development encompasses citizen participation, gender sensitivity, public safety, and strategies in addressing criminality (DILG, 2023).

All and if not, majority agree that peace and order are not just some lofty idealism. It's a basic ingredient for human survival. However, due to cultural and social differences, disagreements eventuate and later evolve into violence and crime. With the basic understanding that peace is not constant, branches of the government chorused to combat against the factors that destroy it through the establishments of laws which regulate the behaviors of the people in the community. To supplement, peace and order programs of various modes are implemented. Concordantly, peace and order have always been the main business of international communities. For instance, United Nations (UN) since its founding in 1945 has a fundamental mission to maintain international peace and security. Similarly, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) envisioned itself for a peace, stability, and quality of life among ASEAN citizens. In the same manner, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and many other international organizations share the same goal.

The lessons from Iceland and Ireland, top two of the most peaceful country according to 2024 Global Peace Index (GPI), provides tidbits of idea as to how peace and order can be attained. Majority of the citizens in Iceland owned firearms and yet surprisingly there had been no shooting murders reported (Osby, 2023). Firearms have been used in hunting animals rather than killing humans. Also, there has been low level of corruption in the government. More investments are allocated to education, healthcare, and social services and not on militarization, not to mention the country's absence of any navy, army, or air force units. It only has coast guard (Hansen & Hauksdóttir, 2021). Also, Iceland is known to be of high literacy rate. Police officers don't carry firearms (only electroshock), and are known to be approachable and kind, and maintain highest degree of professionalism. In addition, terrorist attacks were unlikely and the level of trust was found to be high while violent crimes have been described as very little (Nair, 2016).

On the other hand, Ireland in the 2024 GPI, landed second as the most peaceful country in the whole world. Like Iceland, the country had been found to have minimal crime rate, high political stability, and strong economy. Ireland's defense forces have more focus on domestic security, peace training and support missions, domestic assistance, and capability maintenance and development (Murphy, n.d.). Notably, Philippines has been a recipient for various international assistance to help maintain its peace and order. Few of these are the United Nations human rights program which provides training and monitoring, United States' military aid for counterterrorism initiatives, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on fostering community resilience and for local peace efforts, and ASEAN on collaborative security measures and diplomatic efforts.

Empirical studies consider peace and order as keys to sustainable development (Sharifi et al., 2021; Subhayano et al., 2021; Hope, 2019). In the study of Sharifi et al. (2021), peace and sustainability in the community were viewed to be in a nexus. This relationship requires coordination (Subhayano et al., 2021). However, violent crimes whether political, environmental, or social, hamper sustainable development (Uwa et al., 2022). With this, Sharifi et al. (2021) stated that in order for the issues in the nexus to be addressed, there has to be an interaction between various stakeholders across and within the national, global, regional, and local scales. Thus, collaboration is of paramount importance in holistically understanding crime and in systematically strategizing efforts to suppress it.

On the other hand, the local chief executives as the main actors in the implementation of the peace and order program, must have good governance over the people and over the resources entrusted to them. Without good governance, implementation of the peace and order program could not attain its highest peak of success. Good governance was found to be essential in negating conflicts within the society (Naveed et al., 2023). Active civic engagement and dynamic governance practices were also found to play an important role (Naveed et al., 2023). Similarly, in the study of Krampe et al. (2021), good governance was found to reduce prejudice or bias, strengthens civil society and enhance human empowerment, and strengthens belief or trust with the government. Tabot (2023) in his research recommends that in the maintenance of peace and order, authorities should be prompt in their response against criminality before situations may become out of their control and goes beyond their competence.

Furthermore, Eti et al. (2024) puzzled by the resurgence of violent crime amidst peace and order interventions in a region in Nigeria, made an in-depth investigation into the phenomenon. In their study they stressed out commitment credibility as a critical factor in peace and order initiatives of the government. It is argued to be a predictive element in the success or pitfall of any programs geared towards peace and order. Credibility has been described as an important requisite in gauging the

legitimacy of the government at the same time a tool in measuring the effectiveness of the governing capacity of the government officials (Wu et al., 2024). To establish credibility, the government must execute impartial processes and services including the ability to sanction those who abuse in the implementation of programs (Levi, 2022). As applied to the implementation of peace and order program, this connotes persistency and unwavering commitment to realize the goal of a peaceful community. When stakeholders of the society, local communities and government officials included, fall short of belief and confidence towards the sincerity of the implementation of the peace and order programs, public apathy will result along with the likelihood of reemergence of crimes and conflicts (Eti et al., 2024). Thus, without consistency, there is no effectiveness.

In addition, Eti et al. (2024) argued that the shortfall of commitment in addressing conflicts and in providing effective solutions, will enfeeble the success of any peace and order initiatives. Hence, peace and order in the community is not just contingent on the existence of any program but also on the innate factor of the political leaders to fulfill with sincerity the matrix of activities designed to curtail criminality.

Moreover, Subhayano et al. (2021) investigated the implementation of peace and order program in a city of Indonesia. In their study, sub-district leaders were found to have poor performance in the execution of peace and order programs. This was associated with the complex duties the leaders were handling. Also, the researchers cited the lapses of the leaders in terms of coordination. The researchers stressed the importance of coordination from top to highest echelon of authorities to effectively implement peace and order efforts.

In Columbia, Jaramillo-Grajales and Cardenas-Vasquez (2020) studied the implementation of Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Program primarily based on the recognition of peace as a by-product of regional socio-economic development process, which directly affects the lives of the marginalized people, and accessibility to the government, health, cultural heritage, and education. Such peace and order program was found to strengthen the social fabric, participation, and the collective well-being of the public.

Alternatively, harmony in the society is not only established through the implementation of peace and order programs from the government. Other countries ventured on embedding peace programs in their respective school setting. In fact, peace concepts are imperative to be integrated in the school curricula (Al Mushaigri & Haiyan, 2021). In East-Java Province of Indonesia peace school program was utilized as one of the strategies for religious moderation strategies in the educational institutions (Tolchah et al., 2021). The said program was found to significantly impact the values of tolerance and peace among students (Tolchah et al., 2021). In addition, in Colombia, Velez (2021) in her study found out that integrating peace education in the curriculum affects students' psychological development if it is praxis oriented and aligned with the real-life scenarios. On the other hand, to prevent extremism in Pakistan and Lebanon, researchers strongly recommended the incorporation of peace education across educational institutions (Qadeem, 2021).

In the Philippines, several empirical studies on the implementation of peace and order programs were conducted in different regions of the country. Breva (2020) utilized a quantitative descriptive approach to examine the level of importance and effectiveness of the peace and order and public safety program in combating crimes in Albay province. Findings revealed considerable degree of relevance of the program (Breva, 2020). Also, active participation of the community, the barangay officials, and the office counterparts, were found to be present during the peace and order plan formulation. Peace and Order Council in Albay has been found to be 100 percent functioning (Serafica, 2023). On the other hand, Aydinan and Ayeo-Eo (2020) investigated the extent of the implementation of the peace and order program in a barangay of Nueva Ecija. In their study, they found out that the program was moderately implemented as perceived by the residents. The researchers, recommends for the persistent planning and execution of the program. The research of Aydinan and Ayeao-Eo (2020) is in consonance with the study of Habiatan (2019). Like the previous, peace and order program was also found to be moderately functioning in terms of policies, plans, meetings, organization, and budget. The barangay POC was found to be cooperative in the implementation thereof.

Unlike other researches on peace and order program, the study of Ignacio and Besas (2024) looked into the level of implementation of the above program and correlate it with the leadership style of the barangay captains in General Santos city. Three salient findings were unveiled. Firstly, the implementation of peace and program were found to be effective. This means that the program had a considerable effect in the deterioration of crime rate. Secondly, the barangay captains' leadership style was described to be democratic especially in the crafting of the plan, policies, vision, and mission. Thus, stakeholders were given a free hand in determining the correct approach against crime. And, thirdly, the study saw a significant relationship between leadership styles and the level of implementation of the peace and order program.

In addition, the correlation between the level of implementation of the peace and program, and the challenges encountered was also studied (Reyes, 2023). Results show the absence of considerable link between the aforementioned variables. Hence the magnitude of obstacles did not have any influence on the implementation of the program.

While there is an absence of peace and order program studies in Negros Oriental, there are however two quantitative researches conducted in the neighboring province. One is the study Nicor-Mangilimutan et al. (2020), and, two is of Pilar (2024). In the study of Nicor-Mangilimutan et al. (2020), descriptive-comparative design was utilized to assess the extent of implementation of the peace and order and safety plan in terms of public safety, anti-illegal drugs, enforcement of ordinances, and crime prevention and control. Also, the study looked into the differences of the implementation of the program across communities as well as the challenges encountered. The study unveiled great extent of implementation of the program. However, significant differences were found when barangays are grouped in certain category.

In addition, Pilar (2024) in his research found out that the implementation of peace and order program in Bacolod city was high. The implementation which resulted to an increase in the percentage of drug-free barangays was recorded. Logistical support to the Katarungang Pambarangay as well as appropriation of budget for peace and order program was also revealed.

All of the aforementioned studies were conducted outside Negros Oriental, Philippines and were quantitative in nature. Although the study of Pilar (2024) used quantitative-qualitative approach, its qualitative side however, catered only on the insights of the participants on the peace and order program, hence, does not explicitly demonstrated the vividness of any experience. Phenomenological research can contribute in uncovering the complexities and mechanisms underlying the implementation of the program. On the other side, majority of the researches that focused on the implementation of peace and order programs are viewed from the lens of the barangay chairmen or from its constituents. As of the time this study was conducted, there was no empirical study that investigates on the same phenomenon from the views of local chief executives. Hence, to address the dearth in literature, this research seeks to delve into the lived experiences of the local chief executives in the implementation of the peace and order program. This also seeks to explore the challenges, coping strategies, and aspirations of the participants.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study utilized transcendental phenomenological methods from the phenomenological traditions popularized by Edmund Husserl (1859—1938) (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological approach aims to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of people's everyday experiences (Shosha, 2012; Polit & Beck, 2008; Van Manen, 1990), and directing the understanding of the phenomenon which is consciously experienced by people themselves (Shosha, 2012; Polifroni & Welch, 1999). Moreover, the method required the researcher to conduct bracketing. Bracketing is a strategy of improving the validity of the results of a phenomenological study by suspending one's experiences and preconceptions relevant to the phenomenon in question throughout the research process (Chan et al., 2013). This allowed the researcher to understand the phenomenon at a deeper level (Creswell, 2007; Merleau- Ponty, 1956). The lived experience was dealt with a sense of "newness" to elicit rich and descriptive data (Creswell, 2007).

3.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in the eight (8) municipalities and two (2) cities of Negros Island Region, Philippines. The region consists of the provinces of Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental, and Siquijor with combined 57 municipalities and cities. Most crimes in the selected municipalities and cities were crimes against persons, property, and insurgency.

3.3 Research Participants

The researcher collected qualitative data from ten (10) research participants after data saturation was met at ten. Data saturation occurs when no new categories of data emerge or when the researcher begins to hear the same comments over and over again (Grady, 1998). On the other hand, the participants of the study were selected using purposive sampling method. The selection was in consonance with the pre-specified criteria : a) participant must be a local chief executive in a city or municipality; and, b) participant must have experience in the implementation of peace and order program for at least 3 years.

3.4 Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was utilized in the collection of the data. The interview guide was subjected for validation and checking by the research and ethics committees. With this, the reliability of the instrument was ensured. On the other hand, to allow participants to provide more detailed, nuanced, and contextual information, the researcher made use of open-ended questions. This means that the researcher was flexible and at certain times required him to craft additional questions during the

interview. Furthermore, for better data collection, the mother tongue of the participants was used. This allowed them to be comprehensive in their answers, thereby generating a more quality data.

3.5 Data Gathering Procedure

After validation and approval of the interview guide from the Ethics Committee, and prior to data collection, the researcher sent a request letter to the local chief executives identified as participants of the study. The letter contained the purpose of the study, mechanics in data collection, and the significance thereof. In addition, attached to the letter was the informed consent that detailed the informant's voluntary participation. The informants were given the liberty to choose the time, date, and place for the conduct of the interview. Informants were required to sign an informed consent form before the face-to-face in-depth interviews. The span of the interview was mainly dependent on the generosity of the participants to provide information. Prompt questions were used to clarify some statements of the participants. With this, the informants were afforded with the opportunity to provide lengthy versions of the story of their experiences. All interviews had no remuneration for the informants. In addition, all interviews were tape-recorded and the audio files were stored in a Google Drive account to which only the researcher had access. To preserve the confidentiality of the recordings and anonymity of the participants, the researcher was the one who personally transcribed the interview recordings. All transcriptions were conducted using headphones so that interviews would not be overheard by other persons present in a room designated for transcription. Transcripts bore no identifiable names of the persons involved. Codes, aliases, and pseudonyms were used instead as identifying information.

3.6 Data Analysis

To analyse the data, Colaizzi's (1978) method was used. First, horizontalization was conducted. In horizontalization, the researcher read closely all the transcripts and highlighted the significant statements that tend to answer the major research questions of the lived experiences on the implementation of the peace and order program. Second, the researcher formulated meanings for each of the highlighted statements. The statements were restated using a third person speaking position interpreting the highlighted statements. The themes were then created out of the formulated meanings as the third stage. After this, the researcher wrote the overall components of the lived experiences investigated. Finally, a composite description of the elements was written to form the essence of the lived experienced on the implementation of the peace and order program. In addition, the researcher had reference on his field notes during the analysis. The researcher also discussed the findings with the participants to further validate the research results.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher, in all phases, anchored on the principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and autonomy. In beneficence, the researcher clung on the protection of the informants' right to freedom from discomfort, and informants' right to protection from any exploitation (Johansen et al., 2008). Moreover, the researcher made sure that the study could provide scientific basis for any possible enhancement of the peace and order program. To observe the principle of non-maleficence, the researcher was meticulous not to cause any harm (physical, emotional or psychological) or any form of degradation on the participants. Furthermore, the researcher also exercised justice in the conduct of the study by providing fair treatment to the participants regardless of their political affiliations. The researcher also aligned himself with the ethical standard of autonomy in all stages of the study. With this, the researcher supplied the participants with informed consent that detailed all information necessary for them to decide on their participation. Full respect and consideration were observed in cases where the informants refuse to participate.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Lived Experiences of Participants in the Implementation of Peace and Order Program

4.1.1 Positive Experiences

4.1.1.1 Forged Alliances in the Pursuit of Peace and Order

Implementation of the peace and order program ignites various agencies of the community to chorus in the pursuit for a tranquil society. Peace and order as sine qua non to human existence, become a shared responsibility of everybody and is not deemed to be a burden of the local chief executive alone. Informants witnessed the strengthened collaboration among government and non-government organizations allowing for a more comprehensive and systematic approach to solving peace-related problems.

(The "Pulahan" is a group of civilians who helped the local government to stabilize the peace and order situation in the locality. They already long existed. When the insurgency started, they became an auxiliary force of the soldiers in the mountains. The terrorists were eliminated and they helped us with it. Many joined the group composing approximately of 200 or more members. We supplied them with rice, coffee, and allowance). (Participant 2)

(A task force organization known as SCAA or Special CAFFGU Active Auxiliary also helped in the peace and order program implementation. We have "Pulahan" but "Guardians" are the ones that mostly helped us in our peace and order program. That is also one organization that helped us in suppressing criminality. We have them collaborate with the PNP and that all their moves are supervised by the PNP. The adviser is the PNP. So, we have "Pulahan," guardians, and SCAA). (Participant 3)

(It's a big happiness that all agencies are united and are helping each other. So if many are contributing to peace, the bigger the possibility that the community is peaceful. All problems like if one agency noticed that there is a possible crime to happen on a certain period, all agencies of POC immediately convened to discuss the possible strategies to address the problem. They easily organize and then coordinate with their operations to help). (Participant 4)

(By means of peace and order program all agencies of the society are helping each other to protect the community from crimes. That is why I said that there is a reduction because if there is an important occasion like fiesta, which before there was usually somebody being killed, our non-government organizations like guardians, police auxiliary, tanods, and today even fraternities, and other various groups, everyone helped in guarding the peace. So, there is no more dependence with police. Peace and order become the business of everybody and not only of the government). (Participant 6)

(All of the members of the council understood that this is ours, that it is our job and responsibility to guard peace and not by one person only, not only for the PNP, not for the BJMP, BFP, or officials, everyone are involved. So, they understood, that is why they cooperate). (Participant 8)

(Just imagine, during the fiesta here members of the council contributed for the safety for those who visited the town. Fraternities helped maintain order during discos of course supervised by the PNP. Then business owners contributed for the snacks for our traffic management office so that traffic flow is okay. Our health units had their booth so that in case of emergency, they can easily give first aid. The BFP was on standby for any fire incidents. All as in all were working together for a peaceful community). (Participant 9)

Peace and Order Program implementation necessitates the collaboration among various stakeholders in the community. Villanueva (2014) who explored on the community-based security mechanisms, found out that incorporating diverse stakeholders in the government's peace efforts result to increased community trust and higher levels of participation in peace and order programs. Residents were found to be more willing to report crimes or engage in volunteer patrols when they felt ownership over their initiative. Collaboration was also seen to help prevent escalation of conflict as agencies of the community help in resolving issues before they required formal law enforcement involvement.

On the other hand, Allen (2022) delved into the theory and practice of peacemaking by emphasizing the pivotal role of the various agencies in the community in the maintenance of peace and order. It was stated that strengthened collaboration in the pursuit of peace and order pave way for a successful implementation of any peace programs. Furthermore, it was also underscored the importance of grassroots initiatives and rooted in the belief that effective peacemaking arises from the active participation of those most impacted by conflict, ensuring that peace processes are both inclusive and contextually relevant.

Furthermore, peace and order are undeniably requisites to sustainable development (Sharifi et al., 2022; Subhayano et al., 2021; Hope, 2019). Sharifi et al. (2021) viewed peace and sustainability to be in a nexus. This relationship requires intra and inter coordination (Subhayano et al., 2021). However, violent crimes challenge sustainable development (Uwa et al., 2022). With this, Sharifi et al. (2021) argued that in order for the issues in the nexus to be addressed, an interaction between various stakeholders across and within the national, global, regional, and local scales is of paramount importance.

In the same vein, local chief executives, as chairpersons in implementing peace and order programs, needs effective governance both in managing people and handling public resources. Naveed et al. (2023) argued that good governance is crucial in preventing societal conflicts. Their study also highlights the importance of active citizen participation and responsive governance. Likewise, Krampe et al. (2021) found that strong governance reduces bias, empowers communities, strengthens civil society, and builds public trust in government institutions. Meanwhile, Tabot (2023) emphasizes that authorities must respond swiftly to criminal activities to prevent situations from escalating beyond their capacity to manage.

Conversely, Eti et al. (2024) underscored the importance of commitment credibility as a key determinant in the effectiveness of government-led peace and order initiatives. This credibility is seen as a vital predictor of whether such programs succeed or fail. According to Wu et al. (2024), credibility serves both as a benchmark for evaluating government legitimacy and as a measure of officials' governing effectiveness. Levi (2022) further explains that to build credibility, governments must implement fair, unbiased processes and enforce accountability, including sanctioning those who misuse their roles. In the context of peace and order programs, this means sustained and resolute dedication to fostering a secure and peaceful society. When public officials

and community stakeholders lack trust in the sincerity of such programs, it can lead to public disengagement and increase the risk of renewed crime and unrest (Eti et al., 2024). Simply having programs in place is not enough, consistent and genuine commitment from political leaders is essential. Without it, the effectiveness of peace and order efforts is undermined, and their goals remain unattained.

4.1.1.2 Ameliorated Safety and Security

Participants of the study recognized peace and order program of the government as key factor in amplifying the peace and order situation in their respective territorial jurisdiction. The safety and security measures have been increased, enhanced, or made more significant than they were before. Furthermore, index and non-index crimes are viewed to be lower and society is observed to be generally peaceful.

(The fact that the our municipality is generally a peaceful town, you will not hear of gunning incidents happening here, that in itself is an achievement and that in itself is what I tell my people every time I want them to think of who might be our next leader should be). (Participant 5)

(Let me bring you to the time that I was not yet the mayor. This is not to boast. Before, crimes against property here were very rampant. The numbers of theft and robbery were very high before. But with peace and order program that we strongly implemented, crime rate decreased. In fact, I have to tell you during my time as the mayor and as head of the Peace and Order Council, crimes continue to drop. Actually, there was more than 20 percent drop of the crime rate last year). (Participant 6)

(I tell you, the peace and order program decreased the crimes here in our municipality. In past theft were prevalent here. In fact, it was known that their were many thieves here. In the past, stores were burglarized and money were stolen. Why do you think it happened? Because the peace and order program was a failure. There were stabbings in different places, crimes were very serious. Why did it happen? Because again the program was a failure. What else? In the past there were so many gambling, cockfighting, head-tail coin gambling, illegal numbers game, horse fighting game, and many more. But look at the crime rate now. It decreased because of the peace program. Even data from the PNP will tell you that). (Participant 7)

(Aside from that, because of the peace and order program, there were NPAs here in our town before, but they went back to the fold of the government because they surrendered as they feel that the LGU strived to deliver services to them. They were from the far flung areas where accessibility is hard due to the absence of roadways). (Participant 8)

(Even if you will go to our police station now the crimes that are recorded are very few and most of these are just minor crimes like disputes between couples, gossiping of neighbors that are brought to the police. But in terms of grave crime like killings, although we have but it's just rare.) (Participant 9)

(The POC is of great help in the low rates of murder and other crimes). (Participant 10)

Fiedler (1964) argued that solutions to problems are dependent to the peculiarties of its circumstances. In the context of peace and order program implementation, informants are able to align their anti-crime strategies with the demands of the situation of their locality resulting to improved communal safety and security. Theoretically, a different crime requires a different approach. Contingent leaders are those who are flexible in choosing the right strategies, are pliant on the pressures brought by the situation, and are adaptive to necessary change in the organization. When mayors as chairperson in the implementation of the peace and order program able to provide a tailor-fit solution on a problem, a positive outcome is to be expected which is peace and security of the general public.

Breva (2016) outlined key steps such as situational analysis, objective setting, strategy development, and monitoring and evaluation as important requisites for a successful peace and order and public safety plan. All these steps entail updated information or profiling of the community which is the main recipient of the peace program. By integrating data-driven decision-making and aligning with modern standards, local government can be empowered to address local issues related to crime, violence, illegal drugs, and other threats to peace and order. It also emphasized on the alignment of local initiatives with national priorities and promotes evidence-based policymaking, ensuring that public safety plans are not only responsive but also sustainable.

Moreover, Van Tongeren (2013) highlighted the significant role of peace and order councils in enhancing peace and stability, particularly in conflict-prone and post-conflict areas. In his study, he found out that countries like the Philippines, Nepal, and Kenya, where local peace and order councils were effectively established and supported, there was a notable decrease in local-level violence and an increase in community engagement in peace processes. The research underscores local peace councils as

vital grassroots mechanisms for conflict prevention, early warning, and resolution which promoted inclusive dialogue and building trust between communities and local authorities. It further emphasizes that the success of peace and order councils depends heavily on their legitimacy, inclusivity, and sustained institutional support from both government and civil society.

4.1.2 Negative Experiences

4.1.2.1 Shackled by Scarcity of Resources

Participants express their frustrations on the limited funds intended for the implementation of the peace and order program. Insufficient funding was deemed to obstruct the successful execution of peace and order initiatives, limiting the capacity of local government units (LGUs) to tackle crime, illegal drugs, insurgency, and other peace-related concerns. Scarcity of financial resources encompasses the lack or absence of necessary equipment to combat crime as well as the difficulty of the local chief executives in obtaining the necessary technological upgrades to be at par with the modern society. Peace and order program was described to be broad, thus requiring a huge budget. The fund for the peace and order program implementation does not only concentrate to a single law enforcement body but is rather fragmented to various agencies both governmental and non-governmental. Due to the numbers of agencies under the umbrella of the Peace and Order Council (POC), financial resources to support the operations of such agencies were deemed to be lacking.

(The job for peace and order is huge but the budget is small. Remember, it's not only the PNP that is in sole charge of peace and order. It includes therein the equipment for the BFP, NBI, intelligence groups, and others. That's why the work of the POC in the LGU is to determine what particular projects that should be prioritized. There are lots of things to do and the budget is lacking always). (Participant 1)

(It is very true that budget is really the problem in the peace and order program implementation because the resources to be used in the implementation of the program are very expensive. For instance, the PNP vehicles, equipment for the BFP, honorarium for the auxiliary, and others. Even the seminars for crime prevention needs budget so it is really a challenge especially that our municipality is not that rich). (Participant 3)

(The police for example are not only there to stand and to watch, waiting for crimes. They need equipment like vehicles, gasoline, and all financial support for their day to day operations. Their fund is insufficient. The equipment of the BFP are old that need replacement and upgrade. Even our CCTV cameras are not yet complete. Budget is all the root cause of the problem in peace and order program implementation). (Participant 6)

(The challenges is on the lack of new vehicles that would run after criminals because again of our limited resources. Most of the times it is where the problem lies). (Participant 7)

(For one, we don't have traffic lights. Most of the motorists come into conflict in the streets due to heavy traffic on our major highways. We don't have funds. Another is our CCTV cameras in major streets and thoroughfares are not yet complete. CCTV cameras can help in easily tracking the criminals. Again, we lack funds. All these require money and for now I am still balancing as to whether we resort again to loan or we get everything from the city budget which I think for now is difficult as it will paralyze other areas that also need spending). (Participant 9)

(I know that it is very hard to budget the money of the government. Recently, the money that we spent for assistance alone reached 10 million. That is still insufficient. In fact, we fall short. What we did is we politicians just contribute. It is hard to implement the peace and order program if you are short of budget. That's the reality we face every year). (Participant 10)

Undeniably, sufficient funding is a foundational element in the successful implementation of peace and order programs. Financial resources directly affect the capacity of local government units (LGUs) and law enforcement agencies to maintain security, prevent crime, and respond to public safety concerns (Crews, 2023). A lack of financial resources, in particular, can make an organization vulnerable, forcing it to adapt by altering its strategies, forming alliances, or conforming to the expectations of funders (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Financial constraints was highlighted in the study of Nicor-Mangilimutan et al. (2020). Moreover, Buendia (2005) also pointed out the critical role of local government units (LGUs) in advancing peace and order at the grassroots level, while also exposing the institutional and financial constraints that hinder their effectiveness. Among the key findings is that many local government units, especially in conflict-affected areas, lack the necessary financial resources, technical capacity, and political autonomy to sustain peace and order initiatives. The study reveals that although mechanisms like Peace and Order Councils (POCs) exist, their implementation is often weak due to inconsistent funding, overlapping mandates, and lack of coordination with national agencies. Furthermore, peacebuilding programs are frequently politicized or deprioritized, particularly during leadership

transitions. Despite these challenges, the research emphasizes that when LGUs are empowered and adequately supported, they can play a transformative role in crime suppression making them vital actors in the peace process.

Thus, financial sustainability is not just a technical concern—it is a political and moral obligation. It reflects the government's commitment to protecting its constituents and ensuring that peace is not only achieved but also maintained over time. Krampe et al. 2021 asserted the importance of resource governance in the sustainability of peace.

4.1.2.2 Misfortunes of Clientelism

Clientelism was viewed by participants to influence the way requests for peace and order-related assistance are made to higher government offices, often prioritizing political connections or loyalty over merit or need. Realizations of requests are slow, difficult, and in certain times, not possible to achieve due to political favoritism or discrimination. Participants expressed dislike and dismay as to how higher government offices respond to assistance on peace-related projects which for them resulted to abeyance of various peace initiatives. Clientelism that played a role in the implementation of the peace and order program was described to be frustrating and stressful.

(The national government is slow. I got headache thinking that what I wanted is to be speedy but it could not be materialized quickly probably because of political color. In that area I got a little frustrated. Just recently I requested for a fire truck but until now I receive none. We requested for a building for the BFP but until now there is nothing yet. Our local government is not capable in buying a firetruck because it is too expensive. If we resort to loan, we already have huge debt). (Participant 1)

(As of now, I don't have any friends or anybody close to me in politics. I have difficulty in asking for assistance in my peace and order projects for the municipality. It is an advantage if you are a political ally and that you are also close because asking assistance for the peace and order projects become easy. It should be like you are closed to the congressman. If you are friends but not closed, of different political parties, you cannot seek assistance for your request. That is one of the obstacles if you ask to the national). (Participant 3)

(However, political affiliation is a challenge there. Say you requested something in the provincial government but you are at the opposition, nothing will happen to you. That's normal in politics. Political party can be an advantage or a disadvantage). (Participant 4)

(I could not depend on the national government because if I made a request there, it would take a long time before it is materialized. If you are not politically inclined with them or if you are not an ally, which is normal in politics, the projects you requested will not be realized. This is the reality of the Philippine politics when you are not an ally.) (Participant 6)

(I have peace and order-related requests that I brought to the province and the national. But the reality is, sometimes it is hard to realize these requests. I already experienced where I kept on making several follow-ups to them and yet our requests were not granted because I was not an ally. Being close is a need so that if you have requests such as buying equipment for the PNP, NDRRMC, CCTV, BFP equipment, we can be given. But if acquaintance only, not an ally, or even if you are an ally but you are not close, we have to go back to the LGU and then save money until we ourselves becomes capable to buy.) (Participant 8)

(But to be fair with the higher government offices, there are projects requested by us and were realized. But again, you need to go to the needle's hole first. It is advantageous if you are closed to those at the top because it becomes easy. That's the truth). (Participant 9)

This finding is in consonance with Scott's (1972) Patron-client principles. Scott (1972) described political relationships as informal, hierarchical exchanges between powerful figures known as patrons and less powerful individuals or groups. He argued that in this dynamic, patrons offer benefits such as funds or access to services as benefits for political alliance or support of the lower ranking politician. In this study, mayors who seek peace and order-related assistance to higher government officials often described clientelism as an obstacle that delays or prevents the materialization of the assistance sought. Political relationship is deeply personal and based on mutual obligation rather than formal rules or policies. Patron-client system that challenges the quality of the implementation of the peace and order program was seen to rely on favoritism and selective distribution, often reinforcing existing power structures.

In addition, Teehanke and Calimbahin (2022) illustrated how patronage networks operate within clientelistic and clan structures, influencing electoral outcomes and the allocation of resources from higher government offices. These networks thrive in local settings where access to basic services and development funds is mediated through political connections rather than transparent, institutionalized channels. Likewise, clientelism facilitates violence (Sarkar & Sinha, 2022) and fails to deliver

representation, rather, it results to marginalization (Raleigh et al., 2021). Informants in this study admitted of being the subject of political discrimination in their requests for peace and order projects. To simply put, clientelism significantly affects the realization of assistance from higher government offices by shaping the allocation of resources based on political loyalty rather than objective need or merit. Informants who heads local communities with limited political leverage or opposition affiliations was overlooked, leading to unequal distribution of government support.

Furthermore, Gherghina and Volintiru (2023) clearly illustrated the negative effects of clientelism on local government performance and autonomy. They argued that clientelistic practices distort the intended benefits of decentralization, which is supposed to bring governance closer to the people and enhance service delivery. Instead of promoting responsive and accountable local governance, clientelism results in the politicization of budget allocations, where central governments favor localities led by politically aligned parties, regardless of actual need or merit. This undermines fairness and efficiency in public spending. Ultimately, the study concludes that clientelism weakens democratic accountability, discourages local innovation, and erodes the institutional integrity of local governance, making it harder for local governments to serve their communities effectively and independently.

4.2 Coping Strategy

4.2.1 Methodical Priority-Based Budgeting

To cope up from the scarcity of financial resources in the implementation of the peace and order program, informants resorted to a systematic evaluation and allocation of funds in a structured, strategic way to ensure that funds are directed toward the most important, high-impact, and time-sensitive areas of peace and order initiatives. The goal of methodical priority-based budgeting is to achieve maximum efficiency and value for the available resources. With this, peace and order-related projects are sorted and are allocated with funds based on the chronological order of importance.

(As mayor, I have to budget based on what is available. I prioritized projects that had bigger benefits to the peace and order program. Those which are much needed were allocated with a budget although it is not much because we are not a first-class municipality. Our budget is not that big. What is 250 million pesos if it has still to be deducted with the salary of the people, crude and gasoline. It is also deducted with the projects of the barangays, services, making the budget small). (Participant 1)

(So, it's true that money is a challenge. So, what do we do? Prioritization. The Peace and Order Council during the stage of budget planning only fund prioritize projects such as anti-crime seminars, minor equipment such as hand-held radios, uniforms for our crime volunteers, honorarium to all person involve in crime fighting, and other prioritized initiatives). (Participant 3)

(In terms of budget challenges, prioritization of projects of what should be the first. Those that are not very important will be last. Those that are more important projects related to peace and order will be prioritized. As of now, CCTV camera is what we consider and hopefully will be realized because this is important in guarding the peace). (Participant 4)

(Which has the biggest impact the CCTV cameras or the purchase of a motorcycle for tourist police? Motorcycle is important as means of transportation but we deemed CCTV cameras as having more impact that the motorcycle. So, we prioritized CCTV. That is our way in terms of utilizing our funds). (Participant 6)

(The other strategy is program prioritization. You see, funds of the government are limited. All projects related to peace and order are important. Nothing is not important. But if we buy or support all budget proposal from all law enforcement bodies for example, our funds will be drained. We have to consider also on the programs of other departments. So the best thing to do is prioritize everything). (Participant 7)

(All cannot be bought. So, what should be done? We only support those projects of the council considered as top most priority. We always gave funds to those that are very important, those considered as very important on the daily operations of the agencies). (Participant 10)

This emergent theme connects with Fiedler's (1964) principles of management. When applied to the prioritization of projects in the implementation of the peace and order program, suggests that in funding certain peace and order-related initiatives, the decision should depend on the specific internal and external factors affecting the organization at the time. Participants in this study selected which areas of the peace and order program has more bearing in terms of organization's strategic goals, available budget, stakeholder needs, risk level, peace and order conditions, regulatory requirements, and magnitude of impact of the peace-related project. For example, in a period of economic uncertainty, participants prioritized those deemed to be very essential to the daily operations of the agencies under the Peace and Order Council (POC). Methodical prioritization helps

informants remain flexible and responsive, choosing funding priorities based on the most relevant and influential situational variables.

Shoemaker (2024) emphasized the importance of systematic priority-based budgeting in the selection of what project is to be funded. In an organization like the local government units where financial resources are limited, the leader should be effective in choosing the right project management methodology tailored to specific needs, as well as developing realistic plans within workable schedules. Priority-based project budgeting is important because it ensures that limited financial resources are allocated to the most critical and high-impact initiatives. By evaluating and ranking projects based on their alignment with organizational goals, urgency, and potential benefits, decision-makers can focus funding on programs that deliver the greatest value to the community.

On the other hand, Mitchell (2023) highlighted that although methodical priority-based budgeting of projects introduces a framework for evaluating programs based on strategic importance, its practical influence is often constrained by political realities, entrenched budget structures, and institutional resistance to change. Priority-based budgeting requires local government units to evaluate all programs and services based on their relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with priorities. This ensures that limited resources are allocated to initiatives that deliver the greatest value and impact.

4.2.2 Strengthened Government-Community Relation Through Core Services

Government-communal relation refers to the interaction, collaboration, and communication between government institutions and the community or public they serve. It involves efforts by the government to engage with citizens, address their needs, include them in decision-making, and build trust to ensure effective governance and social development. This relationship was described to be crucial for maintaining peace, promoting participation, and improving service delivery. Participants believed that basic government services are essential for societal well-being and play a significant role in reducing the likelihood of crime. Participants believed that when these services are well-developed and effectively delivered, they address many of the root causes of criminal behavior and contribute to a stable, safe, and prosperous society. Most importantly, addendum to the delivery of government core services is adherence of government employees to certain personal traits such as kindness and sympathy towards the people they serve.

(There are many rebels because they were not properly given attention by the government. So my first executive order was to establish the so called Service with a Smile. In that order, employees are required to give proper treatment to all people. It is true that you will not receive proper treatment before and this is also the reality with other municipalities. I offered free coffee there and chairs. I also put a TV so that those people from the mountains can also watch movies. Some of them rarely watched TV. So once they are properly treated here, they may say that there is a government and that they will no longer join the New People's Army). (Participant 1)

(We brought to the mountain areas all services such as haircut, dentistry, and medicines which was also one of the factors that eradicated insurgency as people realized that they are loved, given attention, and is not neglected by the government. It also includes projects such as concreting of roads going to the mountain areas. The reason why many joined the NPA is because they felt that there is no government that take care of them. By concreting the roads, they would feel the presence of the local government and would become a reason for them to leave the rebel life). (Participant 2)

(In elementary, from daycare up to grade 6, we give free school supplies. Everyone will be given. It is different in college because parents have bigger problems on the college tuition fees. We give three thousand every year and they are very happy with it. That is our strategy for the people not to join with the rebels. When constituents have high education, crime rate will go down because people are educated). (Participant 3)

(If you want peace, people should feel that there is a government. Treating properly those people from the mountains, giving them assistance every time they go to me, these are the best ways that they will not join the rebel group. Fortunately, as of now because of my treatment with the poor through assistance, I no longer heard any activities of the NPA in the mountains). (Participant 4)

(I know in what aspect lies the problem of insurgency. It is in the barangays and sitios that had no roadway. So, I put out roadways. When they saw that the roadway was made, they were very happy. I went to them every week. They become close to me and I to them. They are no longer with the rebel group. See? services plus relationship really matter). (Participant 5)

(If they will feel that the mayor is ready to help, they will not do bad acts because they will say that they will not join because the mayor is our friend). (Participant 6)

This finding supports the study of Nubani et al. (2023). The researchers in their study found out that community-driven planning, improvements in the built environment, and trust-building activities reduced crime by nearly 49% in targeted areas. The study further revealed that the unification of community members, stakeholders, policymakers, and experts can serve as a powerful method for shaping environmental design and crime prevention efforts—particularly in the context of reduced police funding. Moreover, effective crime reduction should be grounded in both social initiatives and tailored physical enhancements that reflect the specific needs of the locality. Overall, this collaborative model promotes alternative, community-led approaches to public safety beyond traditional policing.

Reddick and Demer (2024) stated that effective delivery of local government services is crucial for fostering community well-being, promoting social equity, and enhancing public trust in governance. Basic public services delivery must be tailored to specific local and national contexts with key considerations with citizen expectations, economic efficiency, democratic accountability, and capacity limitations. As the level of government closest to the people, local authorities are responsible for essential services such including public safety.

On the other hand, recent empirical studies have demonstrated that the effective delivery of basic government services plays a significant role in crime prevention by addressing underlying social and environmental factors. For instance, Jain and Biswas (2021) examined rural India and found out that the construction of roads in villages led to improved connectivity, increased employment opportunities, and enhanced living standards, all of which contributed to a reduction in criminal activities. The study highlighted that better street lighting and public transportation services, facilitated by road infrastructure, were direct channels through which crime rates declined.

4.3 Participants' Aspiration

4.3.1 Yearning for National Legislated Funds

Participants emphasized the strong need for additional funding through national legislation to enhance the quality of the implementation of the peace and order program. Participants felt that securing funding through a national law enables the Peace and Order Council in municipalities and cities to fulfill its quest for modern equipment such as patrol vehicles, communication devices, and surveillance cameras that can aid in amplifying the peace and order situation in their respective locality. A national law was described to be an effective tool that can aid in financial sufficiency thereby strengthening the overall impact and sustainability of peace and order initiative and leading to a more secure and stable community.

(Financial support through a law plus our local income could help. Through that, we can realized many projects in the peace and order program. Most income of our constituents are mainly coming from fishing and farming because we are an agricultural municipality. So we have small IRA unlike other municipalities. To admit, we are not a rich municipality. So I am aspiring for a more national fund for the LGU which in turn can be translated to better and effective additional projects for peace and order program). (Participant 2)

(I hope that the national government can craft a law that can provide additional funding for the peace and order projects which is incapable for us to provide financial allocation). (Participant 4)

(We have NTF ELCAC but it would be better that in every year there is a specified financial assistance from the national office for the peace and order of every municipality so that our small budget will be added a little). (Participant 5)

(There are many things to do in the council but the fund is limited that is why hopefully it becomes regular for the national government to assist in the projects of the Peace and Order Council. A law realtive to this could be of big help to us). (Participant 6)

(I hope that the national government could pass a law that will annually allocate budget to the municipality for their peace and order efforts). (Participant 9)

(Our income here is not enough. The demand for peace and order stability is huge. There are many unsolved cases due to the lack of equipment that can help in the investigation of cases. If there is a law that obligates the national government to allocate funds for the CCTV for example, that is going to speed up investigation. In turn, that can translate to a more peaceful society. We are and agricultural municipality and our money is not enough). (Participant 10).

Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) developed by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) best elucidates this emergent theme. This theory suggests that organizations such as local governments are not totally sufficient in terms of resources. Mayors as chairpersons in the Peace and Order Council recounted that there is a lack of sufficient revenue or capacity to provide more quality in the implementation of the peace and order program so they look to the national government for financial assistance, grants, or

subsidies. In relation to informants' yearning for economic grace from the national government, Resource Dependence Theory explains this as a strategic response to resource scarcity. Bigger funds offer higher quality in the peace and order program implementation.

Dougherty et al. (2024) emphasized the critical role of intergovernmental fiscal support in addressing fiscal disparities between national and local governments. According to the authors, this financial support is essential for promoting equitable service delivery and aligning local expenditures with national priorities. Local governments especially in developing regions, lack the internal revenue capacity to meet the growing demands of the constituents. Financial support from higher government offices helps bridge this gap, enabling LGUs to fund essential services. These funds also play a strategic role in ensuring coherence and coordination across levels of government.

In addition, Reyes (2023) supported the aspirations of the informants for economic grace from the national government. He asserted that policy reforms and increased fiscal support should be provided to empower local government units in fulfilling their mandate for local peace and order. Specific issues were found to include the lack of funds for personnel training, communication equipment, and mobility support which are all essential components for proactive peacekeeping. The study found that limited funding restricted the scope and reach of initiatives, resulting in suboptimal outcomes. It emphasized the need for increased financial support to strengthen these programs and achieve desired peace and order objectives.

5. Conclusion

Peace and order are sine qua non to societal existence and progress. The findings indicated that the implementation of the peace and order program fostered strategic partnerships in the pursuit of societal safety, leading to improved security within communities. However, its execution was hindered by limited resources and the adverse effects of clientelism, prompting local chief executives to adopt a strategic, priority-based approach. Political culture emerged as a significant factor influencing how Local Government Units carried out the program. Despite these challenges, participants viewed strong government-community relations as a powerful tool in combating crime. To enhance implementation, they emphasized the need for a nationally legislated budget allocation. The study recommends international and national benchmarking on peace and order practices, modernization of related equipment and technology, continuous training for local chief executives in public safety, crisis response, and community involvement, and the increase of Peace and Order Council funds through national legislation.

5. Study Limitations and Future Research

This study was geographically limited to ten municipalities and cities in Negros Island, Philippines. Hence, the findings may not be generalizable to other locations due to different demographic factors, economic capability, political dispositions, and others. It is recommended that a similar investigation will be conducted in other locations to add rigidity of the current findings.

Secondly, this study only revolves on the lived experiences of the mayors in the implementation of the peace and order program. It is recommended that future studies should delve into the influence of political dynamics on the prioritization and funding of peace and order programs. Researchers in this area can provide understanding as to how political interests, leadership transitions, and party affiliations can shape the direction, effectiveness, and sustainability of public safety initiatives. In many cases, programs may be underfunded, delayed, or redirected based on political alliances or patronage, rather than community needs or evidence-based assessments. This study can reveal how political agendas affect decision-making processes, resource allocation, and the continuity of peace and order efforts. Findings from this research will help promote more transparent, equitable, and need-based program planning and can guide reforms that depoliticize peace and order initiatives at the local level.

Thirdly, the level of effectiveness of interagency cooperation in the implementation of the peace and order program can also be an area for future research. This study can explore how well different government agencies such as the Philippine National Police (PNP), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), local government units (LGUs), and non-government organizations, coordinate and collaborate to achieve shared goals. This could shed light on the challenges, strengths, bottlenecks, and best practices in interagency dynamics, providing recommendations to enhance synergy, efficiency, and overall impact of peace and order initiatives. This would ultimately contribute to a more streamlined and effective approach to public safety and conflict resolution.

Lastly, future studies should explore the long-term impact of continuous training in public safety, conflict resolution, criminal justice, and community engagement, on the effectiveness of local chief executives. Examining the relationship between further education and improved peace and order outcomes can help researchers identify specific training modules that significantly enhance program delivery skills. This can lead to the development of tailored training programs that address the unique needs of local chief executives.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6988-2820>

References

- [1] Al Mushaiqri, M. R. S., & Haiyan, L. (2021). Inclusion of islamic peace concepts in school curricula. *Journal of Dharma*, 46(4), 501-516.
- [2] Allen, S. H. (2022). *Interactive peacemaking: A people-centered approach*. Routledge.
- [3] Armadillo, G. (2024). *Manila crime rate rises, worst in Southeast Asia – Numbeo Crime Index*. Reddit. Retrieved November 2, 2024 from <https://www.reddit.com/r/Philippines/>.
- [4] Aydinan, J. J. B. & Ayeo-Eo, S. P. (2020). Implementation of barangay peace and order programs: A situational analysis. *Journal of Progressive Research in Social Sciences*, 10(1), 30-34.
- [5] Breva Jr, D. (2020). Evaluation of the peace and order and public safety plan: Its relation to the crime prevention priority issues of the province of Albay. *JPAIR Multidisciplinary Research*, 41(1), 74-87.
- [6] Breva, J. (2016). *Peace and Order and Public Safety (POPS) planning guidebook*. European Union.
- [7] Buendia, R. G. (2005). The role of local government in the Philippine peace process: Institutional and political dimensions. In *Human Development Report 2005: Peace, Human Security and Human Development in the Philippines*, 87–106.
- [8] Cervantes, F. (2024). *Crime incidents in PH see 3.29% decline in H1 2024: DILG*. Retrieved November 7, 2024 from <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1231320>.
- [9] Chan, Z. C., Fung, Y., & Chien, W. (2013). Bracketing in phenomenology: Only undertaken in the data collection and analysis process. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(30), 1-9.
- [10] Colaizzi, P. F. (1978). *Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [11] Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.
- [12] Crews, C. H. (Ed.). (2023). *Introduction to local government finance* (5th ed.). UNC School of Government.
- [13] Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). Circular No. 2019-143. (2019). *Omnibus guidelines for Peace and Order Council (POC) functionalities*. Retrieved October 28, 2024 from <https://tinyurl.com/2s48ytxb>
- [14] Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). MC 2019-143. (2019). *Omnibus guidelines on peace and order councils*. Retrieved October 28, 2024 from <https://region12.dilg.gov.ph/sites/default/files/issuances/MC2019-143.pdf>.
- [15] Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). Memorandum Circular No. 2022-118. (2022). *Guidelines on the development and formulation of the peace and order and public safety plan*. Retrieved October 28, 2024 from <https://tinyurl.com/y8evnt8j>.
- [16] Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). (2022). *88.24% or 1,477 LGUs nationwide have functional local Peace and Order Councils*. Retrieved October 29, 2024 from <https://tinyurl.com/ycx743nk>.
- [17] Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). (2023). *Abalos: Only high-performing peace and order councils are eligible for SGLG*. Retrieved October 30, 2024 from <https://tinyurl.com/yckavxmd>.
- [18] Dougherty, S., Montes Nebreda, A. & Mota, T. (2024). *Adapting intergovernmental fiscal transfers for the future: Emerging trends and innovative approaches*. OECD Publishing.
- [19] Eti, C. E., Audu, S.D. & Osah, G. (2024). Credibility commitment and peace building in Niger Delta region of Nigeria. *Wukari International Studies Journal*, 8(2), 65-77.
- [20] Executive Order No. 773. (2009). *Further reorganizing the peace and order council*. Retrieved October 29, 2024 from https://lawphil.net/e_xecutive/execord/eo2009/eo_773_2009.html.
- [21] Fiedler, F. E. (1964). *A contingency model of leadership effectiveness : Advances in experimental social psychology*. Academic Press.
- [22] Flores, H. (2024). DILG: Crime rate lower under President Marcos compared to Duterte. Retrieved October 31, 2024 from <https://tinyurl.com/5ekceh82>.
- [23] Gherghina, S. & Volintiru, C. (2023). Budgetary clientelism and decentralization in Hungary and Romania. *Journal of Developing Societies*, 39(1), 40–62.
- [24] Grady, M. P. (1998). *Qualitative and action research: A practitioner handbook*. Phi Delta Kappa International.
- [25] Habiatan, E. N. (2019). The barangay peace and order council of Cabagan, Isabela. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*, 8(10), 415-441.
- [26] Hansen, P. E., & Hauksdóttir, G. R. T. (2021). Iceland and arctic security: US dependency and the search for an arctic identity. *On Thin Ice*, 162-171.
- [27] Hope Sr., K. R. (2019). Peace, justice and inclusive institutions: Overcoming challenges to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 32(1), 57–77.
- [28] Ignacio, R. & Besas, M. (2024). Public safety implementation and residents' satisfaction as predictors of community's peace and order in Tacurong City. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 24(4), 420-435.

- [29] Institute for Economics & Peace (2024). *Global Peace Index of 2024. Measuring peace in a complex world*. Retrieved October 25, 2024 from <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources>.
- [30] Iorkpen, N. (2022). Peace and security-essential tools for national development. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 6(1), 563-571.
- [31] Jain, R. & Biswas, S. (2021). The road to safety: Examining the nexus between road infrastructure and crime in rural India. *ArXiv Preprint*, 2112. 07314.
- [32] Jaramillo-Grajales, F. L. & Cárdenas-Vásquez, L. F. (2020) Psycho-social intervention characteristics in the Magdalena Medio peace and development program as a peace construction scene in Colombia. *Construcciones Cotidianas De La Paz*, 133.
- [33] Johansen, M. V., Aagaard-Hansen, J., & Riis, P. (2008). Benefit--a neglected aspect of health research ethics. *Dan Med Bull*, 55(4), 216-8.
- [34] Krampe, F., Hegazi, F., & VanDeveer, S. D. (2021). Sustaining peace through better resource governance: Three potential mechanisms for environmental peacebuilding. *World Development*, 144, 105508.
- [35] Levi, M. (2022). Trustworthy government: the obligations of government & the responsibilities of the governed. *Daedalus*, 151(4), 215-233.
- [36] Merleau-Ponty, M., & Bannan, J. F. (1956). What is phenomenology?. *Cross Currents*, 6(1), 59-70.
- [37] Mitchell, D. (2023). Priority-based budgeting: An honest broker among municipal functions? *Public Budgeting & Finance*, 43(1), 21-37.
- [38] Murphy, D.S. (n.d.). *Ireland and NATO*. Retrieved October 30, 2024 from <https://ams.hi.is/en/publication/81/>.
- [39] Nair, N. V. (2016). Constructing indices of peace: A critical reappraisal with particular reference to Global Peace Index. *Gandhi Marg Quarterly*, 38(1), 71-100.
- [40] National Security Council. (2023). *National security policy 2023-2028*. Retrieved October 29, 2024 from <https://tinyurl.com/52pvzeyb>.
- [41] Naveed, K., Khalid, F. & Voinea, C.L. (2023) Board gender diversity and corporate green innovation: an industry-level institutional perspective. *Corp Soc Responsib Environ Manag* 30, 755-772.
- [42] Nepomuceno, P. (2024). *PNP logs 'remarkable' drop in PH crime rate*. Retrieved November 3, 2024 from <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1236671>.
- [43] Nicor-Mangilimutan, R. G., Mejica, M. N. A. & Caelian, M. V. (2020). Implementation of the community peace and order and public safety program in Negros Occidental, Philippines. *Philippine Social Science Journal*, 3(3), 76-84.
- [44] Nierras, M. C. (2022). Peace and order: The inseparable partners to development. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 14(1), 470-475.
- [45] Nubani, L., Fierke-Gmazel, H., Madill, H., & De Biasi, A. (2023). Community Engagement in Crime Reduction Strategies: A Tale of Three Cities. *Journal of Participatory Research Methods*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.35844/001c.57526>.
- [46] Numbeo Crime Index. (2024). *South-Eastern Asia: Crime index by city 2024*. Retrieved October 25, 2024 from <https://tinyurl.com/y2v3xb44>.
- [47] Osby, J. (2023). Here's why Iceland was named the most peaceful destination of 2023. Retrieved November 5, 2024 from <https://tinyurl.com/2sdbkp28>.
- [48] Pfeffer, J. & Salancik, G. (1978). *The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective*. Stanford Business Classics. Stanford Business Books.
- [49] Pilar, J. G. (2024). When there is peace, there is order: Bacolod City's cognizance on the implementation of peace and order. *Puissant*, 5, 1488-1510.
- [50] Polifroni, E. C., & Welch, M. (Eds.). (1999). *Perspectives on philosophy of science in nursing: An historical and contemporary anthology*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- [51] Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2008). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- [52] Qadeem, M. (2021). Peace Education: A Remedy for Preventing Violent Extremism in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research*, 3(2), 1-25.
- [53] Raleigh C, Choi HJ, Wigmore-Shepherd D (2022). Inclusive conflict? Competitive clientelism and the rise of political violence. *Review of International Studies*, 48(1):44-66.
- [54] Reddick, C. G. & Demir, T. (Eds.). (2024). *Handbook of public service delivery*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- [55] Republic Act (RA) 6975. (1990). *Department of the Interior and Local Government Act of 1990*. Retrieved October 25, 2024 from <https://web.senate.gov.ph/lisdata/76716414!.pdf>.
- [56] Republic Act No. 7160. (1991). *The Local Government Code of 1991*. Retrieved October 25, 2024 from <https://tinyurl.com/m93wu357>.
- [57] Republic Act No. 8551 (1998). *Philippine National Police (PNP) reform and reorganization act of 1998*. Retrieved October 25, 2024 from <https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/lisdata/2532521834!.pdf>.
- [58] Reyes, J. (2023). Peace and order initiatives and challenges encountered by Barangay Tres City of Calamba: Basis for policy reformulation. *Multidisciplinary International Journal of Research and Development (MIJRD)*, 3(2), 160-177.

- [59] Rummel, R. J. (1981). *Understanding conflict and war: Vol. 5: The just peace*. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.
- [60] Salcedo, M. (2024). *Maynila, 'most dangerous city' sa buong Southeast Asia – Numbeo Crime Index*. Retrieved October 27, 2024 from <https://balita.mb.com.ph/2024/11/01/maynila-most>.
- [61] Sarkar, A. & Sinha, A. (2022). Clientelism and violence: The politics of informal economy, *Economic Modelling, Elsevier*, vol. 114(C).
- [62] Scott, J. C. (1972). Patron-client politics and political change in Southeast Asia. *The American Political Science Review*, 66(1), 91–113.
- [63] Serafica, G. (2023). *Albay's peace and order councils rated 100% functional*. Retrieved October 28, 2024 from <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1211701>.
- [64] Sharifi, A., Simangan, D., Kaneko, S. Virgi, H. (2021). The sustainability–peace nexus: why is it important? *Sustain Sci* 16, 1073–1077 (2021).
- [65] Shoemaker, J. (2024). *On time, on budget: Managing projects with limited time and resources*. Inspira.
- [66] Shosha, G. A. (2012). Employment of Colaizzi's strategy in descriptive phenomenology: A reflection of a researcher. *European Scientific Journal*, 8(27), 31–43.
- [67] Sigales, J. (2024). *Index crime rate in PH down by 61.87% from 2022 to 2024 – PNP*. Retrieved October 27, 2024 from <https://tinyurl.com/y53s578z>
- [68] Subhayano, T., Yogja, M. A., Devi, A. A. M. & Wedayanti, R. P. (2021). Ecological citizenship camat and village head in maintaining peace and order at Pangkalan Kerinci Sub District Pelalawan Regency. *Advances in Social Science, Education, and Humanities Research*, 525, 1–6.
- [69] Tabot, T. T. (2023). Maintenance of peace and order and the enforcement of the rule of law by the state during the ghost town operation in Kumba. *International Journal of Public Administration and Management Research*, 9(2), 85–97.
- [70] Teehankee, J. C. & Calimbahin, C. A. (Eds.). (2022). *Patronage democracy in the Philippines: Clans, clients, and competition in local elections*. Bughaw (Ateneo de Manila University Press).
- [71] Tolchah, Moch. and Yahiji, Kasim and Posangi, Said Subhan & Ainiyah, nur (2021) The Contribution of The School of Peace as A Religious Moderation Implementation. *Al Ulum*. 21 (1): 3. pp. 50–68.
- [72] Uwa, O. G., Aisedion, R., & Adi, I. (2022). Rethinking peace, security and sustainable development in Nigeria. *Int. J. Educ. Humanit. Soc. Sci*, 5(01), 88–103.
- [73] Uzoekwe, H. E., Nnadi, G. C., Edna Nkechi Ofojebe, N. L., & Ojo, T. A. (2023). Strategies for promoting and maintaining peace in communities as perceived by guidance counsellors. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*. 06 (01).
- [74] Van Manen, M. (1990). Beyond assumptions: Shifting the limits of action research. *Theory Into Practice*, 29(3), 152–157.
- [75] Van Tongeren, P. (2013). Potential cornerstone of infrastructures for peace? How local peace committees can make a difference. *Peacebuilding*, 1(1), 39–60.
- [76] Velez, G. (2021). Learning peace: Adolescent Colombians' interpretations of and responses to peace education curriculum. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*. 27(2), 146–159.
- [77] Villanueva, A. S. (2014). Barangay peace and order committees: An analysis of community-based security mechanisms in the Philippines. *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, 58(2), 123–145.
- [78] Wu, J., Ma, Y., Zou, H., Zhang, C. & Yan, R. (2024). Exploration of the impact mechanism of government credibility based on variable screening method. *Journal of Data Analysis and Information Processing*, 12(3), 479–494.