

Managing the Peace and Security Program at the Barangay; Work Experiences of Village Chiefs

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Abstract

This study explored the work experiences of village chiefs in managing peace and security programs in the barangays of Getafe, Bohol. It was anchored on Self-Efficacy Theory, Competence Motivation Theory, Routine Activity Theory, Rotter's Locus of Control Theory, and Crime Pattern Theory to explain leadership behavior, motivation, guardianship, and environmental influences on peace and order management. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to capture the lived experiences of the informants. The respondents were village chiefs or Punong Barangays who had rendered at least three years of service and possessed direct knowledge of managing peace and security programs in their barangays. Data were gathered through open-ended interviews, focus group interviews, voice recordings, and field notes, and were analyzed using Colaizzi's method. The findings revealed that the informants' experiences were marked by both positive and negative dimensions. Positive experiences included peaceful conflict resolution and resilient leadership during times of strain, while negative experiences involved the continuing struggle against vice, disobedience, and the emotional, physical, and financial burdens associated with barangay peacekeeping. The study also found that the village chiefs addressed these challenges through visible and proactive action, as well as trust-building and engaged dialogue within the community. Their aspirations focused on strengthening safety systems, professionalizing local peacekeeping, improving support for barangay personnel, and deepening community cooperation. The study concluded that barangay peace and security management is a demanding but essential leadership function that relies on resilience, community participation, and stronger institutional support. It recommended continued training and capacity building for village chiefs and Barangay Tanods, improved incentives and support systems for local watchmen, stronger community participation, enhanced use of monitoring systems and technology, and closer coordination among barangays, the LGU, the DILG, and the PNP. The study aligns with SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions and SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities because it promotes accountable local leadership, conflict resolution, and safer communities. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening community, governance, institutional, and socio-economic sustainability through more effective barangay-level peace and order management.

Keywords: Barangay Governance, Community Safety, Conflict Resolution, Peace and Order, Peace and Security Programs, Punong Barangay, Qualitative Phenomenology, Village Chiefs

1. Introduction

Peace and security at the barangay level are central to effective local governance, social stability, and sustainable development. The study situates barangays as frontline institutions in maintaining peace, resolving disputes, and responding to community-level threats. It emphasizes that local peace and order programs are shaped by governance structures, legal mandates, community participation, and the leadership capacity of Punong Barangays. Within this context, the study focuses on Getafe, Bohol, to examine the work experiences of village chiefs in managing peace and security programs and in resolving conflicts in their communities.

United Nations emphasize the importance of good local governance in achieving global development goals. This is particularly evident in its focus on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all, and establishing effective, responsible, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Additionally, the New Urban Agenda, recognizes the crucial role local governments play in managing urbanization and promoting sustainable development in cities and human settlements. Recognizing this significance, the World Bank and other international development organizations strongly advocate for decentralization and empowering local governments to effectively deliver services and respond to their communities' needs. In the Philippine setting, maintaining peace and security remains a persistent concern, especially in communities facing robbery, illegal drugs, and drunkenness. The Barangay Peacekeeping Operations (BPO) program was introduced to enable barangays to protect their neighborhoods through Barangay Peacekeeping Units (BPKUs) and Barangay Tanods. This localized approach aims to cultivate ownership, accountability, self-sufficiency, and proactive

conflict resolution. For village chiefs, the challenge lies in ensuring that residents feel secure under their leadership while reducing community-level transgressions. The study is anchored in Getafe, Bohol, a municipality with a distinct historical and geographic background. Because of its local context and community conditions, the researcher considered it important to examine the effectiveness of the Punong barangay in maintaining safety and security and to understand their experiences in resolving conflicts. This is meant to support the need for more empirical study and leadership development related to community dispute resolution.

The reviewed literature presents several recurring themes. First, leadership confidence, motivation, and resilience are treated as critical to effective peacekeeping. Bandura's self-efficacy theory explains that confidence shapes motivation, persistence, initiative, and the ability to handle social and organizational responsibilities (Bandura, 1997). Similarly, competence motivation theory explains that mastery, encouragement, and constructive feedback strengthen intrinsic motivation and independent performance (Harter, 1978). Second, the literature highlights crime prevention as a function of opportunity, guardianship, and environment. Routine Activity Theory explains that crime occurs when a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian converge in time and space (Cohen and Felson, 1979). The theory emphasizes that changes in routines, supervision, and environmental design affect crime opportunities, while improved guardianship and situational prevention can reduce them (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Felson, 2006). Crime Pattern Theory further explains that crime clusters in familiar, accessible, and opportunity-rich places, underscoring the importance of visibility, land-use design, and strategic governance in community safety. Third, beliefs about personal control influence leadership behavior and responsibility. Rotter's Locus of Control Theory explains how people's perceptions of whether outcomes depend on their actions or on external forces shape their motivation, persistence, and decision-making. In relation to the study, the theory supports the view that leaders who believe they can influence outcomes are more likely to take active roles, confront challenges positively, and strive for improvement. Fourth, empirical studies consistently point to competency, collaboration, local guardianship, and participatory governance as essential in grassroots peacekeeping. Vicente (2019) underscored the frontline role of BPATs and their contribution to deterrence and community trust. Domingo (2020) emphasized that social inequality can generate conflict and that participatory governance helps mitigate tension. Benter (2020) highlighted the value of the Katarungang Pambarangay system in delivering accessible justice and promoting social cohesion. Ascendens Asia (2023) stressed commitment, discipline, and competence among barangay personnel, while Cabacang et al. (2020) and RSIS International (2022) emphasized guardianship, trust, communication, and collaboration. Aydinan et al. 2021 likewise showed that strong leadership, police coordination, and policy enforcement are central to effective peace and order programs.

Globally, the study is framed by governance and development agendas that recognize peace, justice, and accountable institutions as necessary for sustainable development. The UNDP (2015) emphasized that peace, justice, and strong institutions are vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 16). The UN-Habitat's New Urban Agenda (2016) likewise underscored the role of local governments in fostering peaceful and inclusive communities through participatory governance. The World Bank (2018) added that decentralization improves service delivery and enhances local government responsiveness. The literature also notes that security is strongly linked to people's perception of safety and its influence on social behavior and cohesion (Shehayeb, 2008). Nationally, the study is grounded in the constitutional and legal framework for barangay governance. The 1987 Philippine Constitution, particularly Article II and Article X, provides the basis for peace, order, public safety, and the barangay's role as the basic political unit of governance (1987 Philippine Constitution, Art. II; 1987 Philippine Constitution, Art. X). Republic Act No. 7160, 1991 further defines the authority of barangays, the Punong Barangay, and the Sangguniang Barangay in maintaining peace and order, while the Katarungang Pambarangay Law institutionalizes community-based dispute resolution (Republic Act No. 7160, 1991). Executive Order No. 773, 2009, DILG Memorandum Circular 2017-112, DILG Memorandum Circular 2015-63, and DILG Memorandum Circular 2018-144 provide operational guidance for peace and order councils, anti-drug councils, and public safety planning (Executive Order No. 773, 2009; DILG, 2017; DILG, 2015; DILG, 2018). Additional support comes from Republic Act No. 6975, 1991; Republic Act No. 8551, 1998; Republic Act No. 9165, 2002; Republic Act No. 10821, 2016; Republic Act No. 10121, 2010; Executive Order No. 366, 2004; and BHRAC Guidelines (n.d.). Locally, the study is situated in Getafe, Bohol, where village chiefs manage peace and security in communities with varied peace and order conditions. The local context makes barangay leadership especially important in maintaining safety, mediating disputes, and coordinating with institutions and residents.

The study is based on the following theories that can help explain and clarify the issue this study addresses at namely: Self Efficacy Theory of Bandura (1977), Competence Motivation Theory of Harter (1986), Routine Activity Theory of Cohen and Felson (1997), Julian Rotter's Locus of Control Theory, and Crime Pattern Theory (Brantingham & Brantingham). Self-efficacy theory explains how confidence influences motivation, persistence, initiative, and performance in leadership and community responsibilities (Bandura, 1997). Competence motivation theory explains the role of mastery, encouragement, and feedback in strengthening independent action and sustained engagement (Harter, 1978). Routine Activity Theory explains how crime emerges from the convergence of offenders, targets, and lack of guardianship, thereby supporting situational prevention and barangay-level vigilance (Cohen and Felson, 1979; Cohen & Felson, 1979; Felson,

2006). Rotter's theory explains how beliefs about control shape responsibility, effort, and positive engagement in challenges. Crime Pattern Theory explains how environmental layout, routine movement, and activity spaces shape the clustering of crime, thus supporting strategic visibility, patrols, and environmental design in barangay governance. Collectively, these theories provide a multidimensional basis for understanding how personal agency, competence, routine activities, and spatial conditions influence peace and security management at the barangay level.

The reviewed studies collectively highlight the indispensable role of barangay leadership, competency, collaboration, and guardianship in maintaining peace and security at the grassroots level. They demonstrate that effective peacekeeping requires not only structured governance but also the dedication and participation of community members. However, despite the wealth of research on BPAT operations and barangay tanods, there remains limited scholarly attention on the lived experiences and leadership roles of the Punong Barangay in managing peace and order initiatives. This gap underscores the importance of the present study, which seeks to explore the real-world experiences of barangay leaders in promoting safety, mediating conflicts, and fostering partnerships with law enforcement agencies, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on local governance and public safety in the Philippine context. The rationale is therefore both practical and scholarly. Practically, the study addresses the burden placed on barangay leaders in upholding peace and order. Scholarly, it seeks to generate empirical insight into leadership experiences, challenges, and aspirations that are not fully captured in studies focused mainly on barangay tanods, BPATs, or formal structures of peacekeeping.

The study aligns most directly with SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions because it focuses on maintaining peace and order, resolving disputes, strengthening barangay-level governance, and improving community safety through accountable and participatory local leadership. This alignment is explicitly reinforced by the discussion of peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and effective institutions at all levels, as well as by the citation of the UNDP (2015) and the legal frameworks governing barangay justice and peace mechanisms. The study also connects with SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities because it addresses community safety, inclusive local governance, and barangay-based mechanisms for maintaining harmonious and secure living environments. The discussion of the New Urban Agenda and community-based governance supports this connection. A secondary alignment may be observed with SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals, as the study highlights coordination among barangay officials, police, community members, and other institutions in promoting peace and security.

The study contributes to community sustainability by examining how village chiefs help sustain safe, cohesive, and resilient communities through peacekeeping, mediation, and public safety initiatives. It contributes to policy and governance sustainability by strengthening understanding of how barangay leaders implement constitutional, statutory, and administrative mandates on peace and order. It also contributes to institutional sustainability because effective barangay leadership supports trust in local institutions, encourages citizen participation, and reinforces the continuity of local governance mechanisms. In addition, the study supports socio-economic sustainability because peaceful coexistence is presented in the literature as a condition for development, productivity, and community well-being. Safer and more orderly barangays create environments where families can thrive, residents can participate in community life, and local development efforts can proceed more effectively. For these reasons, the study has value not only for criminal justice and public administration, but also for development studies, local governance, social policy, and community planning.

Overall, the study is grounded in international development principles, Philippine legal mandates, and established theories of motivation, control, guardianship, and crime opportunity. It is further supported by related studies showing that grassroots peacekeeping depends on leadership, competence, collaboration, and trust. Given the limited attention to the lived experiences of Punong Barangays, the study is justified as an inquiry into how barangay leaders actually manage peace and security programs, respond to challenges, and aspire to improve local peace and order outcomes.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study was oriented toward qualitative research and was designed to capture the lived experiences of village chiefs in relation to peace and security management in their barangays. The researcher's role was to understand what the participants were expressing about their experiences and to engage them in a way that would yield rich, in-depth descriptions (O'Brien, 2005). The use of Colaizzi's method further indicates that the study followed a phenomenological orientation, since this method employs components of husserlian and phenomenological inquiry and emphasizes the description of experiences (Mallannao & Gumarang 2021).

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Municipality of Getafe, Bohol. The thesis describes Getafe as a municipality located on the northern shore of Bohol, around 92 kilometers from the port town, with a distinct historical background tied to

migration, fishing, and early settlement. This local setting served as the context for examining how Punong Barangays manage peace and security concerns within their respective communities.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were village chiefs or Punong Barangays in the Municipality of Getafe. They were selected on the basis of their direct experience and knowledge of managing peace and security programs in their barangays. The study noted that the informants met the established conditions, having been in service for at least three (3) years and possessing extensive knowledge of the process of managing the peace and security program in their barangay. The focus on these informants was intended to generate firsthand accounts of successes, struggles, and aspirations related to conflict resolution, law enforcement coordination, community cooperation, and local peace and order management.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The thesis states that random selection will be used in conducting a survey in Municipality of Getafe, Bohol. At the same time, the interview phase specifically involved informants who satisfied the study's qualifications and included individual interviews with six (6) informants followed by focus group interviews. Participation was entirely voluntary. Before inclusion, the participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. They were also assured that all information would be treated confidentially and that their responses would be anonymized.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used a questionnaire during the interview and employed an open-ended interview guide to give participants more freedom to express themselves. Data were documented through a voice recorder and field notes, while important points from the informants were also recorded in a notebook or journal to support follow-up inquiries. The transcribed interviews were later encoded and compiled for closer examination to ensure that the responses truly represented the exact words of the informants.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Before starting the in-depth interview, the researcher separately explained the goals of the research to each informant, including the specific advantages, dangers, and methods involved. After consent was granted, each informant received a copy of the informed consent form and was asked to sign it to indicate willingness to participate. During the actual interview, the researcher again clarified the purpose of the study and the interview process. The interviews were documented using a voice recorder and field notes, with attention given to the convenience of the interviewees, including the location and the duration of the session. The researcher collected data through individual interviews and focused group interviews using a voice recorder and field notes. Digital audio recordings were manually transcribed within 72 hours after the interview, and care was taken to ensure that the recordings and transcriptions accurately portrayed the discussion experience. The researcher first conducted individual interviews with six (6) informants, followed by focus group interviews. The interviews used an open-ended format, and the informed consent form specified that informants would not be identified in the research, could withdraw from the study, and would be provided with the researcher's contact information. The study was projected to last three (3) months and was expected to be completed before the last week of May.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The researcher utilized Colaizzi's method of data analysis because it was considered the most appropriate for the study. Colaizzi's method employs components of husserlian and phenomenological inquiry and places emphasis on the description of experiences (Mallannao & Gumarang 2021). After transcription, the researcher encoded and compiled all transcripts, then thoroughly examined them to ensure that the questions and answers accurately reflected the informants' exact words. To strengthen dependability and credibility, the study also used referential adequacy by preserving a subset of the raw data without analysis for later review and comparison with future findings.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Before the interviews began, the Village Chiefs were given a thorough explanation of the interviewing process, which would be documented in writing. The interview location was deemed satisfactory by the interviewees, and the need for confidentiality was emphasized. Unless granted consent, interviewees were not identified. Any recorded input, whether in written form, on tape, or in interview notes, was utilized in line with the interviewees' preferences. The researcher also recognized the need for personal safety during fieldwork and left contact information from the visited locations to a friend. The study emphasized beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and autonomy as guiding ethical principles.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Experiences of the Informants in Managing Peace and Security Programs in Their Barangay

3.1.1 Harmonious Resolution: The Art of Amicable Settlement and Mutual Respect

The results showed that the informants derived satisfaction from resolving disputes peacefully through amicable settlement, calm dialogue, and restorative approaches. They described fulfillment in being able to settle conflicts without escalating them into formal legal cases, while fostering empathy, forgiveness, and mutual respect. The findings emphasized that these peaceful resolutions strengthened relationships in the community and contributed to a more orderly barangay environment. This finding suggests that barangay peace and security management is deeply rooted in community-based mediation and restorative leadership. It supports Benter (2020), who emphasized the value of the Katarungang Pambarangay system in delivering accessible justice and strengthening confidence in local conflict-resolution processes. It also reflects the view that transparent and sustained dialogue builds trust and helps prevent escalation of disputes, as noted by Villanueva and Cruz (2018), while personal engagement and mutual accountability foster sustainable peace (Lopez, 2016).

3.1.2 Fearless Unity: Leading with Strength in Times of Strain

The findings showed that the village chiefs also experienced leadership as a process of remaining calm, steady, and resilient during tense situations. The theme emphasized that barangay officials managed community tensions not through force or intimidation but through clear, compassionate communication and strong presence. Their leadership style reflected confidence and composure in guiding residents during conflict and uncertainty. This result indicates that peacekeeping at the barangay level depends not only on authority but also on emotional control, empathy, and firm yet humane leadership. It is consistent with literature showing that strong leadership, effective coordination, and accountability sustain peace initiatives and help resolve disputes amicably (Aydinan et al. 2021). It also resonates with Self-Efficacy Theory, since leaders who believe in their capacity to influence outcomes are more likely to act decisively and persist under pressure (Bandura, 1997).

3.1.3 Unyielding Tides: The Relentless Battle Against Vice and Defiance

The results revealed that one major negative experience involved the continuing struggle against vice, noncompliance, drunkenness, theft, drugs, and disorderly behavior. The informants described how warning residents and enforcing ordinances did not always prevent theft or drug-related incidents, and how maintaining order required repeated reminders, assemblies, and vigilance. These accounts showed that resistance and defiance persisted despite the efforts of barangay leaders. This finding shows that peace and security work at the barangay level is a continuing struggle against recurring social problems rather than a one-time intervention. It supports Routine Activity Theory, which explains that crime persists when opportunities remain present and guardianship is weak or inconsistent (Felson and Clarke, 1998; Doc Mckee, 2024; Goldstein, 1990). It also aligns with Vicente (2019) and Cabacang et al. (2020), who stressed the importance of visible local guardianship, proactive monitoring, and coordinated peacekeeping to deter unlawful behavior.

3.1.4 Weary Souls: The Burden of Unseen Sacrifices and Unsung Efforts

The results showed that barangay peacekeeping imposed serious emotional, physical, and financial burdens on the informants. They described exhaustion, discouragement, gossip, false accusations, opposition, lack of appreciation, and even thoughts of resignation. Some also reported having to borrow money to cover barangay-related expenses and facing dangerous situations involving violent offenders and weapons, sometimes leading them to personally intervene because tanods were afraid or at risk. This finding highlights that the work of village chiefs is not only administrative but personally costly and at times dangerous. The result underscores the hidden burden of grassroots leadership and reinforces the need for support, protection, and recognition for barangay officials and local watchmen. It also reflects the literature's emphasis that local peacekeeping depends on sustained commitment, discipline, and community support, and that these roles become harder to sustain when leaders face constant negativity and insufficient institutional backing (Ascendens Asia, 2023; RSIS International, 2022).

3.2 Challenges Encountered in Managing the Peace and Security Program in the Barangay

3.2.1 Eyes on the Ground: Power in Presence and Tactical Action

The results showed that the informants relied heavily on visible and proactive peacekeeping practices, including regular patrols, timely interventions, strategic deployment of personnel, curfews, and watch programs. Their presence in the community was described as a deterrent to criminal activity and a source of reassurance to residents. The theme emphasized that peace and order were reinforced when officials were consistently seen and actively engaged on the ground. This finding is consistent with Routine Activity Theory, which emphasizes the role of capable guardianship in reducing opportunities for crime (Felson and Clarke, 1998; Felson & Clarke, 1998). It also supports Cabacang et al. (2020), who found that crimes occur more frequently in the absence of visible guardians, and Aydinan et al. 2021, who stressed the importance of strong leadership and effective coordination in implementing peace and order programs.

3.2.2 Bridging Divides: Cultivating Trust Through Engaged Dialogue

The findings showed that the informants addressed challenges by repeatedly explaining ordinances, reminding residents of penalties, conducting barangay assemblies, encouraging vigilance, and promoting collective responsibility, particularly in relation to drug prevention and theft. Community engagement and house-to-house or assembly-based communication

emerged as important tools for sustaining order and encouraging compliance. This result suggests that peace and security management depend strongly on communication-based leadership and participatory governance. It supports Villanueva and Cruz (2018), who emphasized that sustained and transparent conversations build trust and de-escalate tensions. It also aligns with Torres & Mendoza (2019), who highlighted the effectiveness of direct outreach in strengthening compliance and correcting misinformation, and with Lopez (2016), who emphasized personal engagement and mutual accountability as foundations of sustainable peace.

3.3 Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Management of the Peace and Security Programs in the Barangay

3.3.1 Guardian's Gaze: Strengthening Safety with Skilled Forces

The results showed that the informants wanted stronger physical and organizational safety systems, including 24/7 guarded outposts, improved street lighting, permanent or more accessible police presence, and better-equipped personnel. They expressed a desire to move from reactive responses to more proactive and visible forms of protection, with security infrastructure serving both as deterrent and as reassurance to residents. This finding suggests that the informants viewed long-term peace and security as dependent on strengthened capacity, professionalization, and sustained confidence in their ability to shape outcomes. The discussion in the thesis connects this aspiration to Self-Efficacy Theory, emphasizing that belief in one's capacity to act effectively supports proactive efforts and program sustainability (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). It is also linked to Competence Motivation Theory, since the desire to implement stronger and more visible safety measures reflects an effort to demonstrate effective and competent leadership (White & Duda, 1994; Feltz & Weiss, 1982).

3.3.2 Rooted Resilience: Uplifting Local Heroes and Strengthening Community Bonds

The findings indicated that the informants also aspired for stronger support systems for barangay personnel and deeper community cooperation. The theme implied the need to value local peacekeepers, strengthen neighborhood vigilance, improve support and training for volunteers, and foster tighter community bonds so that peace and security become shared responsibilities rather than burdens carried only by officials. This finding indicates that the sustainability of barangay peacekeeping depends on both human support and collective efficacy. The discussion supports the idea that crime prevention is strengthened when communities actively participate, when neighborhood watch structures are supported and trained (Sarre & King, 2010), and when local watchmen are given better incentives and recognition for their risky duties (Respicio & Co, 2025). It also reflects the importance of collective efficacy and social cohesion in sustaining community intelligence and shared responsibility for safety (Sampson et al. 1997).

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that the lived experiences of village chiefs in managing peace and security programs in the barangays of Getafe, Bohol were characterized by both meaningful accomplishments and difficult burdens. The findings showed positive experiences in amicable conflict resolution and strong leadership during strain, negative experiences in dealing with vice, defiance, and personal sacrifices, practical responses centered on visible action and engaged dialogue, and aspirations focused on strengthening safety systems and community support. Overall, the study affirms that barangay peace and security management is a demanding but essential leadership function that depends on resilience, community participation, and stronger institutional support.

The study recommends a broad strengthening of barangay peace and security efforts through continued training and capacity building for village chiefs and Barangay Tanods, better incentives and support systems for local watchmen, stronger community participation through neighborhood vigilance and regular consultations, improved use of technology and local monitoring systems, and closer coordination among barangays, the LGU, the DILG, and the PNP. It also recommends that researchers adopt community-based participatory approaches and that future studies further examine the roles of the DILG and LGU, as well as the long-term sustainability, local adaptability, and modernization of barangay peace and security initiatives.

The study was limited to the lived experiences of ten informants who had rendered at least three years as village chiefs in selected barangays of Getafe, Bohol, and it used a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach based on interviews and focus group discussion. As such, the findings are context-specific and are intended to provide in-depth understanding of this local setting rather than broad generalization across all barangays.

Compliance with ethical standards

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