

Public Trust and Institutional Satisfaction: An Assessment of Police-Community Relations in Calbayog City

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Abstract: This study assessed the relationship between public trust and institutional satisfaction regarding the Calbayog City Police. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive-comparative design, survey data were collected from 150 long-term residents across three major districts. The findings reveal a statistically significant positive correlation between overall community trust and satisfaction with police competence. While respondents reported high trust in procedural justice and satisfaction with active law enforcement, critical gaps were identified in perceived neutrality and proactive crime prevention. Demographic analyses indicated that middle-aged cohorts and medium-to-long-term residents reported significantly higher trust and satisfaction than newer, younger residents. The study concludes that while baseline institutional satisfaction is robust, it remains heavily dependent on the equitable application of justice. Elevating police-community relations requires targeted, high-visibility community engagement and transparent accountability mechanisms to address specific vulnerabilities in perceived neutrality and proactive public protection

Keywords: Public Trust, Institutional Satisfaction, Procedural Justice, Police-Community Relations, Law Enforcement

Introduction

Public trust and institutional satisfaction are foundational to the efficacy and legitimacy of law enforcement. When communities trust their police, it enhances collective efficacy, mitigates the fear of crime, and actively shapes group-level cooperation with authorities (Brien & Tyler, 2020; Kochel & Weisburd, 2019). Globally, confidence in criminal justice institutions is heavily influenced by the nature of citizen contacts, victimization experiences, and perceptions of procedural justice (Berthelot, McNeal, & Baldwin, 2018; Prinsloo, 2019; Singer et al., 2019). Furthermore, community policing models rely on this established legitimacy to not only reduce local crime rates but also to improve job satisfaction among the officers themselves (Crowl, 2017).

The determinants of this public trust are multifaceted, encompassing instrumental performance, expressive interactions, and normative models of behavior (Lim & Kwak, 2022). Institutional trust is intrinsically linked to actual police performance (Boateng, 2017; Boateng, 2018), and diagnosing the factors behind officer performance remains a critical area of continual evaluation.

(Mendoza et al., 2020). In the Philippines, the Philippine National Police (PNP) operates under the mandate of the Philippine National Police Reform and Reorganization Act of 1998 (Republic Act 8551), which explicitly tasks the agency with enforcing laws, preventing crimes, and ensuring public safety in partnership with the community

Calbayog City, a first-class component city and a major commercial hub in Eastern Visayas with a steadily growing population (Worldometer, 2020), presents a dynamic environment requiring robust law enforcement to maintain peace and order across its diverse districts. Despite established PNP mandates, empirical assessments of how specific demographic variables—such as age, sex, educational attainment, and years of residence—affect community perceptions in this specific locality are limited. Establishing a baseline of these dynamics is necessary to bridge the gap between theoretical community policing and tangible institutional satisfaction.

To address this gap, this study assesses public trust and institutional satisfaction regarding the Calbayog City Police personnel. Specifically, it evaluates community trust through the lenses of neutrality, trustworthiness, procedural justice, and good police-community relations. It concurrently measures satisfaction with police competence in enforcing laws, preventing and controlling crimes, maintaining peace and order, and ensuring public safety. Finally, the study tests the null hypotheses that demographic profiles do not significantly differentiate the assessments of trust and satisfaction, and that there is no significant relationship between community trust and satisfaction with police competence.

Methods

Research Design and Setting

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design to assess the influence of public trust on the perceived competence of police personnel. The research was conducted in Calbayog City, a first-class component city in the province of Samar, Philippines. The study locale encompassed the city's three major districts: Calbayog, Tinambacan, and Oquendo. To ensure a robust assessment of police-community dynamics, five barangays from each of the three districts were purposively selected based on two criteria: higher population density and a greater concentration of Philippine National Police (PNP) personnel.

Participants and Sampling

The target population comprised long-term community residents, defined as individuals who had resided in their respective barangays for a minimum of five years, ensuring that respondents possessed sufficient experiential knowledge of local police performance. A combination of cluster and quota sampling was employed. Across the 15 selected barangays, a quota of 10 respondents per barangay was established, yielding a total sample size of 150 participants.

Data Collection and Instrument

Data were gathered using a self-administered, researcher-developed questionnaire. The instrument was subjected to content validation by two independent experts in law enforcement and criminology prior to deployment. The questionnaire utilized a four-point Likert scale to measure two primary constructs: community trust (categorized into neutrality, trustworthiness, procedural justice, and good police-community relations) and community satisfaction with police competence

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(categorized into enforcing laws, preventing and controlling crimes, maintaining peace and order, and ensuring public safety and internal security).

Prior to administration, formal authorizations were secured from the respective Chiefs of Police and Barangay Chairpersons. The research team engaged directly with the respondents to explain the study's objectives and provide instructions for completing the survey.

Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to ethical research standards. All participants were fully briefed on the research objectives and the scope of the investigation. Written informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, with a clear stipulation that participation was entirely voluntary and that respondents reserved the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. To protect participant welfare, strict confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the data collection and analysis phases; no personally identifiable information was recorded or reported in the findings.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were processed and analyzed using standard statistical software. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, weighted means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the demographic profiles and the baseline levels of community trust and satisfaction. To test the hypotheses regarding demographic differences, inferential statistics were applied: independent samples t-tests were utilized to compare assessments based on sex, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to determine significant differences across age groups, educational attainment levels, and years of residence. Finally, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was conducted to determine the significance and direction of the relationship between community trust and satisfaction with police competence.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The study included 150 respondents from the selected barangays in Calbayog City. As detailed in Table 1, the sample was slightly predominantly male (54.7%), with the majority of participants falling between the ages of 31 and 50 (56.0%). A significant portion of the respondents held a college degree (42.7%) or post-graduate qualifications (34.7%). In terms of community tenure, the majority had resided in their respective barangays for 6 to 15 years (62.0%).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 150)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	82	54.7
	Female	68	45.3
Age Group	20–30	29	19.3
	31–40	42	28.0
	41–50	42	28.0
	51 and above	37	24.7
Educational Attainment	High School	34	22.7
	College	64	42.7

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	Post-graduate	52	34.7
Years of Residence	1–5	35	23.3
	6–10	48	32.0
	11–15	45	30.0
	16 and above	22	14.7

Baseline Levels of Community Trust and Institutional Satisfaction

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the assessed constructs. Overall, respondents expressed a high level of trust in the Calbayog City Police, rating *Procedural Justice* as the highest dimension ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.39$), characterized by objective decision-making and dignified treatment of the public. Conversely, *Neutrality* received the lowest relative trust score ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.40$). Regarding satisfaction with police competence, respondents were most satisfied with the enforcement of laws ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.38$) and maintaining peace and order ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.34$), but reported significantly lower satisfaction with proactive measures for preventing and controlling crimes ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.41$).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Community Trust and Police Competence Satisfaction

Construct	Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Community Trust	Procedural Justice	3.18	0.39	Trustworthy
	Trustworthiness	3.14	0.31	Trustworthy
	Good Police-Community Relations	3.12	0.36	Trustworthy
	Neutrality	3.08	0.40	Trustworthy
Satisfaction	Enforcing the Laws	3.11	0.38	Satisfied
	Maintaining Peace and Order	3.11	0.34	Satisfied
	Ensuring Public Safety	3.05	0.37	Satisfied
	Preventing and Controlling Crimes	2.98	0.41	Satisfied

(Note: 1.00-1.50 = Not Trustworthy/Satisfied; 1.51-2.50 = Slightly Trustworthy/Satisfied; 2.51-3.50 = Trustworthy/Satisfied; 3.51-4.00 = Highly Trustworthy/Satisfied)

Demographic Differences in Perceptions

Independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were conducted to test for significant differences across demographic profiles (Table 3). Sex yielded significant differences only in satisfaction levels; males were more satisfied with crime prevention efforts ($p = .003$), while females were more satisfied with public safety measures ($p = .015$). Age significantly impacted overall trust ($p = .001$) and overall satisfaction ($p = .015$), with the 31-40 age cohort consistently reporting the most positive assessments. Educational attainment had isolated effects, significantly differentiating perceptions of

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trustworthiness ($p = .009$) and maintaining peace ($p = .000$), where high school-educated respondents reported higher scores than their post-graduate counterparts. Finally, years of residence significantly influenced overall trust ($p = .002$) and overall satisfaction ($p = .000$), with medium-to-long-term residents (6–15 years) reporting higher scores than new residents (1–5 years).

Table 3. Summary of Significant Demographic Differences in Trust and Satisfaction (Hypothesis Testing)

Variable	Demographic Test Factor	Test Statistic	p-value	Decision on H0
Trust: Neutrality	Age	F = 3.103	.029*	Rejected
	Years of Residence	F = 7.843	.000*	Rejected
Trust: Trustworthiness	Educational Attainment	F = 4.902	.009*	Rejected
	Years of Residence	F = 2.916	.036*	Rejected
Trust: Procedural Justice	Age	F = 6.047	.001*	Rejected
Overall Trust	Age	F = 5.558	.001*	Rejected
	Years of Residence	F = 5.000	.002*	Rejected
Satisfaction: Enforcing Laws	Age	F = 6.992	.000*	Rejected
	Years of Residence	F = 3.122	.028*	Rejected
Satisfaction: Preventing Crimes	Sex	t = 8.985	.003*	Rejected
	Age	F = 4.783	.003*	Rejected
	Years of Residence	F = 9.480	.000*	Rejected
Satisfaction: Peace & Order	Educational Attainment	F = 11.536	.000*	Rejected
Satisfaction: Public Safety	Sex	t = 6.029	.015*	Rejected
	Age	F = 5.472	.001*	Rejected
Overall Satisfaction	Age	F = 3.582	.015*	Rejected
	Years of Residence	F = 9.281	.000*	Rejected

Note: Only statistically significant relationships ($p < .05$) are displayed. Non-significant variables retain the null hypothesis.

Relationship Between Community Trust and Institutional Satisfaction

A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation revealed a statistically significant, positive relationship between overall community trust and overall satisfaction with police competence ($r = .175$, $p = .032$). As detailed in Table 4, specific sub-dimensions also correlated significantly. Trust in police neutrality was positively associated with satisfaction in preventing and controlling crimes ($r = .179$, $p = .029$). Furthermore, trust in procedural justice ($r = .172$, $p = .036$) and good police-community relations ($r = .206$, $p = .011$) were both significantly correlated with satisfaction in enforcing the laws.

Table 4. Significant Pearson Correlations Between Trust and Satisfaction Dimensions

Community Trust Dimension	Police Competence Dimension	Pearson r	p-value	Decision on H0
Neutrality	Preventing and Controlling Crimes	.179*	.029	Rejected
Procedural Justice	Enforcing the Laws	.172*	.036	Rejected
Good Police-Community Relations	Enforcing the Laws	.206*	.011	Rejected
Overall Community Trust	Overall Satisfaction	.175*	.032	Rejected

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to assess the relationship between community trust and institutional satisfaction regarding the Calbayog City Police. The findings reveal a statistically significant, positive correlation between overall community trust and satisfaction with police competence, reinforcing the premise that public perceptions of legitimacy are deeply intertwined with operational efficacy.

Respondents reported the highest levels of trust in the police's exercise of *Procedural Justice*. The data suggests that when police personnel make objective decisions and treat individuals with dignity, public satisfaction with law enforcement significantly increases. This aligns closely with normative models of policing, which argue that procedural fairness is often more critical to establishing police legitimacy than the actual outcomes of police encounters (Prinsloo, 2019). Furthermore, this high perception of procedural justice actively shapes group-level cooperation, empowering authorities to maintain peace and order more effectively (Brien & Tyler, 2020).

Conversely, *Neutrality* and proactive *Crime Prevention* emerged as relative weaknesses in the public's assessment. The significant correlation between trust in police neutrality and satisfaction in preventing crimes highlights a critical dynamic: citizens who perceive inconsistencies or bias in how laws are applied are less likely to believe the police can effectively protect them. This supports the assertion that institutional trust in developing and transitioning contexts relies heavily on instrumental performance and the visible, equitable application of justice (Boateng, 2017; Boateng, 2018; Lim & Kwak, 2022).

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The demographic variations observed in this study further illuminate the complex nature of police-community relations. Trust and satisfaction were not uniform; for instance, medium-to-long-term residents (6–15 years) and middle-aged cohorts (31–40 years) reported significantly higher levels of trust and satisfaction than newer residents (1–5 years) and post-graduate degree holders. These disparities likely reflect variations in agency-specific contact and historical victimization experiences (Berthelot, McNeal, & Baldwin, 2018; Singer et al., 2019). Newer residents, lacking long-term relational context with local authorities, may require more deliberate, expressive interactions to build institutional confidence.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable baselines for police-community relations in Calbayog City, it is not without limitations. The cross-sectional, descriptive nature of the research captures a snapshot in time and precludes causal inferences between demographic changes and trust. Furthermore, relying on self-reported survey data introduces potential perception bias. Finally, because the Philippine National Police operates across vastly different socio-cultural and geographic landscapes, the specific dynamics of Calbayog City may not perfectly generalize to the entire national apparatus (Mendoza et al., 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Public trust and institutional satisfaction in Calbayog City are robust, anchored heavily by strong procedural justice and effective responses to active incidents. However, sustaining and elevating this trust requires addressing the perceived gaps in neutrality and proactive crime prevention.

To enhance institutional satisfaction, it is recommended that the Calbayog City Police prioritize high-visibility, proactive community engagement strategies, particularly targeting newer residents and specific demographic cohorts expressing lower confidence. Implementing localized hot spots policing combined with active community partnerships can significantly improve collective efficacy and deter crime (Kochel & Weisburd, 2019). Furthermore, institutionalizing community policing frameworks will not only reduce the fear of crime among residents but also reinforce police legitimacy and improve job satisfaction among the personnel deployed (Crowl, 2017). Finally, establishing transparent grievance mechanisms and standardizing police responses will help address community concerns regarding neutrality, ensuring that law enforcement in Calbayog City is consistently perceived as both competent and impartial.

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