

PERCEPTION OF CRIME SEVERITY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR PUNITIVE POLICIES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the perception of crime severity and the community support in punitive policies in Amas, Kidapawan, North Cotabato. The highest mean satisfaction under perception of crime severity is (4.88) most of the people feel uneasy or unsafe walking alone at night because of the severe criminal activities at night. However, the lowest mean is (4.48) the statement "The presence of visible law enforcement has helped reduce the fear of crime among community members" proves that because of criminal activities the businesses and establishment are affected. Meanwhile, the community support in punitive policies is very high and with a score of (4.90) community feels that punitive policies enhance public safety and trust in the justice system. The overall findings show a significant relationship between perception of crime severity and community support in punitive policies ($r=.857$, $p<.05$). The strength of correlation between the two variables is high and has a directly proportional relationship as revealed by the coefficient of .858. This finding that because of crime severity and the unsafe feeling the respondent strongly agree on the implementation of punitive policies for their safety and to prevent the criminal activities. The study shows how is it important to have a safe environment and how is it effective to implement punitive or heavy policies.

Keywords: Criminology, Community Safety, Municipality, Perception on

Crime Severity, Support on Punitive Policies, Philippines.

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INTRODUCTION

A community/nation capability to solve the crime severity are more effectively depends on its ability to comprehend the crimes patterns and how they relate to community policy, which was improve the prevention of crime and oversight of law enforcement, including the police. One of the factors of crime poverty, drugs, mental health, rape etc. The crime, violence, and terrorist rate in the Philippines is moderately high. The nation ranked among the worst five in the region on both order and security index in 2021. In addition, the Philippines was among the nations with the highest rate of incarceration per 100,000 people. Larger, more populous areas with higher unemployment rates and impoverished neighborhoods have very high crime rates.

Philippines has also one of the countries that has a most sever crime rates. As of January 2023, about 30 thousand crime incidents were recorded in the Philippines. Over eight thousand of which were reported in the National Capital Region while over four thousand incidents were from region 4-A. Crime incidents include both focus and non-focus crimes (Statista Research Department 2023). Despite of the government's efforts to lower the Philippines' crime rate, there are still a ton of records of index crimes and crimes against individuals and property. Given that the Philippines is an archipelago nation, it is crucial to examine the crime patterns that are unique to the nation's islands or regions, in order to supply information for effective enforcement by the police. Recognizing patterns in crime and the connections between certain areas to the communities was improve police management and crime prevention.

Therefore, the community support of the punitive policies describes not just what criminal justice institutions do, but also signifies a relationship between the state and its citizens. Mostly the injustice of the punitive policies of contemporary criminal justice was to attribute a super-abundance of moral agency, poor people are often punished, they are also vulnerable in a variety of other ways in the absence of other social supports, connection contact with police, the courts, and prisons. This is punishment as social policy—a way of responding to the range of social problems (including crime) associated to the community particularly severe variety of poverty. The burdens of punitive policy have fallen particularly heavily in low-income communities, especially in a rural community. Neighborhood segregation concentrates a wide variety of social problems—poverty, unemployment, public disinvestment, unaffordable housing, untreated health problems—that contribute to crime and attract the attention of authorities. Based on our review of related literature and studies, we have found that these articles The quick increase and ongoing high degree of support in support of the death penalty have been joined by support for additional severe penalties. Ramirez Mark (2014) has shown that there is a research gap on the perception on crime severity and community support sine through this way it can prevent the criminality.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, which served a dual purpose: to describe the socio-demographic profile of the respondents and to determine the significant relationship between their Perception of Crime Severity and Community Support for Punitive Policies. A descriptive-correlational design is particularly effective for studies aiming to both provide a detailed snapshot of a specific phenomenon and explore potential associations between variables. According to McBurney and White (2009), this type of research design enables researchers to systematically describe a situation and examine

the interconnections between variables without attempting to manipulate them.

In this study, quantitative research methods were employed as the foundation for data collection and analysis. Quantitative research, rooted in the positivism paradigm, involves the systematic gathering of numerical data, which is then analyzed using statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques to uncover patterns or relationships. This approach prioritizes objectivity and precision, employing structured methods such as inferential statistics, hypothesis testing, and the use of standardized data collection tools like surveys or questionnaires. These tools often include predetermined response formats, such as Likert scales, which facilitate the measurement of perceptions and attitudes (Lee & Slevitch, 2011). By relying on such structured protocols, quantitative research ensures consistency and reproducibility, which are crucial for deriving reliable and generalizable findings.

The correlational design used in this study specifically focuses on examining the relationships between two or more variables within a single group of respondents. Unlike experimental designs, correlational research does not involve manipulating variables or establishing cause-and-effect relationships. Instead, it identifies and quantifies the strength and direction of associations between variables. These relationships can be either positive, where an increase in one variable corresponds to an increase in another, or negative, where an increase in one variable corresponds to a decrease in another (Devi, Barkha, & Shakeela, 2023).

In this context, the descriptive aspect of the design provides insights into the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, gender, educational attainment, and years of residence in the community. These variables offer essential context for interpreting the findings, as they may influence perceptions of crime and attitudes toward punitive policies. The correlational aspect, on the other hand, investigates the relationship between respondents' perceptions of crime severity and their support for punitive policies. Statistical techniques, such as Pearson's

correlation coefficient for normally distributed data or Spearman's rank correlation for non-parametric data, were used to measure the strength and direction of this relationship. This structured approach ensures that the study remains non-experimental, avoiding any manipulation of variables, and instead focuses solely on understanding the natural associations between them. The descriptive-correlational research design employed in this study provides a robust framework for exploring community attitudes and perceptions. By combining descriptive insights with correlational analysis, the study aims to offer valuable evidence on how perceptions of crime severity are linked to support for punitive policies, contributing to a deeper understanding of community attitudes toward crime and justice.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Barangay Amas, Kidapawan, North Cotabato. Its population is determined by the (2020) census was 7,579. This represents 4.71% of the population of Amas. Kidapawan is a component city in the landlocked province of Cotabato. It serves as the provincial capital.

Research Respondents

The respondents of the study included 60 residents from Barangay Amas, Kidapawan City, North Cotabato. The researcher utilized the simple random sampling method to select the respondents, a technique that ensured each individual in the population had an equal probability of being chosen. This method eliminated bias in the selection process, providing a fair and representative subset of the population. According to Pinkham (1987), simple random sampling allowed for the random selection of individuals from a population without the need for a pre-existing list of all members. This ensured that the process was both practical and unbiased. Only those residents of Barangay Amas who met specific inclusion criteria were considered eligible to participate in the

study, focusing on individuals who could contribute relevant data to the research objectives.

To determine the appropriate sample size, the researcher applied Slovin's formula, a widely accepted method for calculating sample sizes when the population size is known. Slovin's formula, $n = \frac{N(e)^2}{1 + Ne^2}$, where N represents the total population and e represents the desired margin of error (commonly set at 0.05 for a 95% confidence level), provides a systematic way to calculate the minimum sample size needed to ensure the findings are statistically reliable. For example, if the total population of Barangay Amas were 200, applying Slovin's formula would yield a sample size of approximately 133 respondents. However, due to practical constraints, including limited resources, time, and logistical considerations, the researcher opted to focus on 60 respondents.

Despite the reduced sample size, the use of simple random sampling ensured that the selection process remained both rigorous and unbiased, adhering to the principles of fairness and representativeness. By allowing every individual in the population an equal probability of being selected, this method minimized the risk of selection bias and guaranteed that the sample adequately reflected the diversity of the larger population within Barangay Amas. This unbiased representation was crucial in quantitative research, as it enhanced the generalizability of the findings, making them more applicable to the broader community.

The representativeness of the sample achieved through simple random sampling directly contributed to the validity of the study. Validity referred to the degree to which the research accurately measured or addressed the objectives it aimed to investigate. By including a sample that mirrored the characteristics of the target population, the study was better positioned to produce findings that genuinely reflected the realities of Barangay Amas residents. Additionally, the reliability of the study was reinforced, as the randomness of the selection process reduced the likelihood of systematic errors or biases that could distort the results. This

ensured that, if the study had been repeated under the same conditions, similar outcomes would have been achieved.

Furthermore, the deliberate application of Slovin's formula to calculate the sample size added to the study's methodological rigor. While the formula provided a statistically sound basis for determining the ideal sample size, the researcher pragmatically adjusted the number of respondents to 60 to accommodate practical constraints such as time, resources, and logistical considerations. This balanced approach demonstrated a thoughtful compromise between theoretical ideals and real-world feasibility, ensuring that the study remained manageable while still maintaining its scientific integrity.

The systematic sampling process also enhanced the credibility of the research. By combining the robustness of Slovin's formula with the fairness of simple random sampling, the study established a strong foundation for the collection of meaningful and reliable data. This methodological soundness ensured that the insights generated from the respondents' perspectives were valid reflections of the broader population, enabling the study to provide valuable contributions to understanding the research problem. Ultimately, this approach not only upheld the scientific standards of the research but also ensured that its findings remained relevant and actionable, even within the constraints of a reduced sample size.

Research Instrument

The researchers utilized a modified questionnaire as the primary instrument to gather the necessary data for the study. The questionnaire was carefully structured into three distinct sections to comprehensively address the research objectives and collect relevant information effectively.

The first part of the questionnaire focused on the demographic profile of the respondents. It collected data on essential characteristics, including sex, age, and civil status. This information provided a

foundational understanding of the respondents' socio-demographic backgrounds, which is critical for analyzing variations in perceptions and attitudes based on personal characteristics. Understanding the demographic profile allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the study's findings, as socio-demographic factors often influence individual views and behaviors (Creswell, 2014).

The second part of the questionnaire assessed the respondents' perceptions of crime severity. This section was designed to evaluate their level of agreement regarding the severity of various types of crimes and their social impacts. A 5-point Likert scale was employed to measure respondents' perceptions, with response options ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). Likert scales are widely recognized as an effective tool for measuring attitudes and perceptions, as they provide a quantitative representation of subjective responses, enabling researchers to analyze trends and patterns systematically (Joshi, Kale, Chadel, & Pal, 2015). With focusing on types of crimes and their social impacts, this section aimed to capture the respondents' subjective evaluations of crime severity within their community.

The third part of the questionnaire explored respondents' support for punitive policies. This section included a series of questions designed to gauge their attitudes toward policies aimed at addressing crime, particularly in terms of crime rates, public safety, and trust in the justice system. Similar to the second part, a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure responses, providing a structured and consistent method for evaluating the level of agreement with various statements. This section aimed to uncover the factors influencing community support for punitive measures, such as their perceptions of the effectiveness of these policies in enhancing public safety and their trust in the criminal justice system. Prior studies suggest that public trust in justice institutions significantly shapes support for punitive measures (Tyler, 2006).

The use of a modified questionnaire ensured that the data collection process was systematic, reliable, and aligned with the research

objectives. The combination of demographic data, perceptual assessments, and attitudes toward punitive policies allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the perception of crime severity and support for punitive measures. The use of a validated instrument, supported by theoretical foundations and prior research, further strengthens the credibility and reliability of the data collected.

Level of Perception of Crime Severity

Range of Means	Description	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree	The respondent perceives the crime as extremely severe and acknowledges its significant impact.
3.41 – 4.20	Agree	The respondent perceives the crime as severe and acknowledges its considerable impact.
2.61 – 3.40	Neutral	The respondent perceives the crime as moderately severe with a noticeable but less critical impact.
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree	The respondent perceives the crime as having minimal severity or a limited impact.
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree	The respondent perceives the crime as not severe and having little to no impact.

Level of Community Support in Punitive Policies

Means Range	of Description	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree	The respondent strongly supports punitive policies, believing they are highly effective for crime control.
3.41 – 4.20	Agree	The respondent agrees with punitive policies, viewing them as generally effective in addressing crime.
2.61 – 3.40	Neutral	The respondent is somewhat supportive of punitive policies but may have reservations about their overall effectiveness.
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree	The respondent disagrees with punitive policies, believing they are not effective or are overly harsh.
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree	The respondent strongly opposes punitive policies, perceiving them as ineffective or unjust.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher sought formal permission from the campus director to conduct surveys with respondents located outside the campus. This step ensured that the study adhered to institutional protocols and obtained the necessary approval to engage with individuals beyond the academic environment. A formal letter of consent was prepared and addressed to the respondents, outlining the purpose of the survey, the nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. The consent letter sought approval from each respondent before their participation, ensuring that their involvement was voluntary and informed.

This process aligned with ethical research practices, ensuring transparency and respect for the participants' rights.

Once consent from the respondents was obtained, the researcher personally distributed the survey questionnaires. By administering the surveys in person, the researcher ensured that the respondents clearly understood the purpose of the study and the questions they were asked. This approach also allowed for immediate clarifications or questions to be addressed, minimizing potential confusion and ensuring that the data collected was accurate and reliable. After the questionnaires were completed, the researcher collected them in person for analysis and interpretation. This hands-on approach facilitated direct interaction with the respondents, enabling the researcher to address any issues that arose during the survey process and ensuring that the responses were properly gathered and prepared for further analysis.

The collection and analysis of the survey responses were handled meticulously to guarantee the integrity of the data. The researcher organized the responses systematically to facilitate a clear understanding and accurate interpretation. This involved ensuring that all completed questionnaires were properly stored and categorized, making them easily accessible for analysis. Each survey was checked for completeness and consistency, and any missing or unclear responses were flagged for follow-up or clarification, ensuring the reliability of the data. Accuracy in data collection was prioritized, as it directly impacted the quality of the conclusions drawn. The researcher took steps to minimize potential errors during the collection process, ensuring that the survey questions were clearly understood by the respondents and eliminating any biases that could arise from the way the questions were framed. Additionally, the researcher maintained strict confidentiality, ensuring that no personal identifiers were linked to the survey responses. This approach fostered trust and encouraged honest participation.

Once the surveys were collected, the researcher began the process of analyzing the data. This included coding responses, identifying

trends, and applying appropriate statistical techniques to interpret the findings. The accuracy and organization of the data allowed for a robust analysis, where patterns or relationships in the responses were identified and explored in detail.

A structured approach to data collection and analysis was essential not only for ensuring that the research was conducted ethically but also for enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. Validity ensured that the study accurately measured what it was intended to measure, meaning that the survey responses truly reflected the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents. By carefully organizing the responses and analyzing them using well-established methodological procedures, the researcher ensured that the findings were both relevant and authentic.

Reliability, on the other hand, referred to the consistency of the data over time or across similar conditions. The careful collection process, coupled with rigorous analysis, contributed to the reliability of the research, ensuring that if the study were repeated under similar circumstances, similar results would be obtained. The combination of these two elements—validity and reliability—strengthened the study's conclusions, providing a sound basis for understanding the perspectives of the respondents and drawing meaningful insights from the research.

Furthermore, maintaining an ethical approach throughout the research process was vital for the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Ensuring informed consent, protecting participants' confidentiality, and adhering to ethical guidelines throughout data collection and analysis safeguarded the participants' rights and encouraged greater participation. This ethical foundation, paired with meticulous data handling, ensured that the study produced credible, actionable, and scientifically rigorous results that contributed valuable insights to the field of research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Perception of Crime Severity

The table illustrates that the overall mean score of 4.77 reflects a strong agreement among respondents regarding the severity of crime in their community, highlighting widespread awareness and concern about criminal activities and their effects. This high level of consensus suggests that crime is a pressing issue that significantly influences the daily lives and perceptions of safety among community members. The most critical concern, as indicated by the highest mean score of 4.88, is the fear stemming from crimes involving weapons or firearms. This points to an acute awareness of violent crimes, which are perceived as posing immediate and direct threats to personal safety. Such a perception may lead to increased anxiety and caution, particularly in public spaces or situations where individuals feel vulnerable.

Table 1. Perception of Crime Severity

Indicators	Mean	Std.	Description
			Deviation
Types of Crime			
1. Most people in the community feel unsafe when walking alone at night due to recent criminal incidents	4.88	.324	Very High
2. The frequency of violent crimes in the neighborhood has significantly increased over the past year.	4.83	.376	Very High
3. Local authorities have been effective in addressing serious crimes and reducing community fears.	4.77	.427	Very High
4. Crimes involving weapons or firearms are becoming a common concern for residents in this area.	4.78	.415	Very High

5. People in the community are 4.82 .390 Very High more worried about property crimes (e.g.. burglary, theft) than violent crimes.

Social Impact

6. Residents in this community feel 4.75 .437 Very High less safe walking outside at night due to recent criminal activities.

7. The presence of visible law 4.48 .504 Very High enforcement has helped reduce the fear of crime among community members.

8. Criminal activities in this 4.68 .504 Very High neighborhood have negatively affected local businesses and public services.

9. People in this community avoid 4.82 .390 Very High certain areas due to concerns about crime and personal safety.

10. The social ties between 4.87 .343 Very High neighbors have weakened as a result of increasing crime rates in the area.

Overall **4.77** **.361** **Very High**

Concerns about property crimes, including burglary and theft, also scored highly with a mean of 4.82, reflecting their prevalence and the impact they have on residents' sense of security and well-being. These crimes not only cause financial loss but also erode trust within the

community, as they often imply a breach of personal and communal safety. Additionally, the high mean score of 4.87 for the weakening of social ties reveals the profound social repercussions of crime. Rising crime rates seem to have strained relationships among neighbors, reducing the sense of unity and collaboration that is vital for a thriving community. This social fragmentation could lead to further isolation and a reduced ability for the community to collectively address safety concerns.

Despite these challenges, the presence of law enforcement is seen as a positive factor, albeit with a slightly lower mean score of 4.48. While respondents acknowledge that visible policing contributes to reducing fear, this score suggests that such efforts may not fully address the community's heightened concerns about crime. Persistent issues, such as violent and property crimes, may overshadow the reassuring effect of law enforcement, indicating a gap between perceived safety measures and the reality of crime experienced by residents.

The data portrays a community profoundly impacted by crime, where the perception of its severity is rooted in both tangible risks and the broader social consequences. The high levels of agreement across indicators emphasize the urgent need for more effective crime prevention strategies, stronger law enforcement presence, and initiatives to rebuild social cohesion. Addressing these concerns holistically could help restore a sense of safety and unity within the community.

High perceptions of crime severity are closely linked to public fear of crime, which has become a critical issue in many communities. When individuals perceive crime as severe, it often triggers a heightened sense of fear and insecurity, which can have far-reaching social implications. Leones and Celia (2021) emphasize that crimes involving firearms and property crimes are particularly pervasive in communities, leading to increased fear among the public. Firearm-related crimes, in particular, are often associated with violence and unpredictability, contributing to a growing sense of danger. This fear can further weaken social cohesion as

individuals become more reluctant to engage with their communities, fearing for their safety and the safety of their families.

The relationship between crime severity and fear is not merely about the frequency of crimes but also about their perceived impact on society. According to Stylianou (2003), public perception of crime severity is shaped by the perceived wrongfulness and social harm caused by specific crimes. Crimes that are seen as morally egregious or that cause significant harm to individuals or communities tend to elicit stronger reactions from the public. Violent crimes, such as assaults or robberies, and property crimes, such as burglary or theft, are particularly damaging in this regard because they not only cause immediate harm to victims but also have broader social consequences, such as fostering an environment of distrust and fear.

These findings are corroborated by data from the Philippine National Police (PNP), which has reported an increasing number of incidents of crimes against property and persons in urban areas. As the number of such crimes rises, so too does the public's fear and sense of vulnerability. This is especially true in urban centers where crime rates are often higher, and the proximity to criminal activity can exacerbate the perception of danger. The PNP's reports suggest that the increased frequency of crimes in these areas has contributed to the public's growing concern about personal safety and security.

This heightened fear and vulnerability, in turn, can lead to a demand for more punitive measures and stricter law enforcement, as communities seek ways to restore safety and prevent further harm. However, it also underscores the complex relationship between crime perception, public fear, and social cohesion. When crime is perceived as a serious threat, it can create a cycle where fear leads to demands for harsher policies, which may not always address the underlying causes of crime or the root issues contributing to public fear. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for policymakers who aim to balance public safety with effective crime prevention and community trust in the justice system.

The findings reveal that the perception of crime severity is notably high among community members, with the highest mean score (4.88) indicating a strong sense of unease and insecurity, particularly when walking alone at night due to active criminal activities. This highlights the significant impact of crime on the daily lives and mobility of residents, as many opt to avoid venturing outside after dark to ensure their safety and reduce their risk of encountering dangerous situations.

Conversely, the lowest mean score (4.48) reflects a moderately positive acknowledgment of the role of visible law enforcement in alleviating fear of crime. This suggests that the presence of law enforcement has some effect in deterring criminal activities, but there is room for improvement to maximize its impact. The results underscore the importance of strengthening security measures and implementing more effective policies to address criminality, increase the visibility of law enforcement, and foster a safer environment for community members.

Community Support in Punitive Policies

The overall mean score of 4.80 strongly suggests that respondents largely agree on the effectiveness of punitive policies, with the majority expressing a Strongly Agree stance. This demonstrates that the respondents have a high level of confidence in the role that punitive measures play in maintaining public safety. The highest mean score of 4.90 for trust in the justice system highlights a significant belief that punitive policies not only reduce crime but also contribute to creating a safer community. Respondents seem to view the justice system as a reliable and integral force in combating criminal activity and fostering an environment of safety and order.

Table 2. Community Support in Punitive Policies

Indicators	Mean	St. Deviation	Description
Crime and Public Safety			

1. The implementation of stricter sentencing laws .83 .376 Very High has contributed to a noticeable reduction in crime in our community.

2. I feel safer in my neighborhood due to the .87 .343 Very High increased presence of law enforcement as a result of harsher penalties for criminal offenses.

3. Punitive measures, such as mandatory .75 .437 Very High minimum sentences effectively deter individuals from committing repeat offenses in our community.

4. Community safety has improved since the .82 .490 Very High introduction of stricter juvenile detention policies for youth offenders.

5. The use of punitive policies, like longer prison .72 .454 Very High terms for drug-related crimes, has made a positive impact on reducing drug-related incidents in our area.

Trust in the Justice System

6. The community believes that the justice system .78 .415 Very High applies punitive policies fairly to all individuals, regardless of their background.

7. Most community members trust that law .77 .465 Very High enforcement officers uphold justice impartially when enforcing punitive policies.

8. The justice system is effective in reducing crime .75 .437 Very High through the enforcement of punitive measures, according to the community's perception.

9. The community is confident that judges and .83 .376 Very High courts are unbiased when sentencing individuals

under punitive laws.

10. The community feels that punitive policies .90 .303 Very High enhance public safety and trust in the justice system.

Overall	.80	.340	Very High
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Following closely behind, the strong agreement with the role of law enforcement presence in increasing safety, reflected in the mean score of 4.87, indicates that respondents recognize the positive impact of visible police presence in deterring criminal activities. Law enforcement officers serve as a deterrent, with their presence reassuring residents that potential offenders may be apprehended before committing crimes, thereby reducing the perceived risk of criminal behavior.

Additionally, respondents agree that punitive measures are not only fair but also effective in deterring crime, with mean scores of 4.78 and 4.75, respectively. These scores suggest that the public believes in the fairness of the justice system's approach to crime prevention, as well as its capacity to act as a deterrent to criminal behavior. People perceive punitive measures, such as stricter sentencing and harsher penalties, as effective tools in discouraging individuals from engaging in criminal activities.

Overall, these results demonstrate a strong public endorsement for punitive policies, reflecting widespread confidence in the justice system's role in reducing crime and maintaining order. Respondents' belief in the efficacy of law enforcement and punitive measures underscores their expectation that these tools should continue to be utilized as primary methods for ensuring community safety and addressing criminality. The public's overwhelming support for these policies highlights the need for

sustained efforts in law enforcement and the continued implementation of measures aimed at crime reduction.

The strong support for punitive measures, as observed in many communities, aligns closely with the principles of Deterrence Theory, initially proposed by Cesare Beccaria. Beccaria's theory suggests that the severity, certainty, and swiftness of punishment are key factors in deterring criminal behavior. According to this framework, individuals are rational actors who weigh the potential benefits of committing a crime against the potential costs or punishments they would face. If the punishments for criminal acts are severe, certain, and swiftly applied, individuals are less likely to commit crimes, as the perceived costs outweigh the potential rewards.

The research conducted by Ramirez (2014) and Blumstein & Beck (1999) supports Beccaria's theory by showing that stricter sentencing laws and visible law enforcement practices can help reduce crime rates. When the public perceives that laws are being strictly enforced and punishments are harsh and inevitable, the deterrent effect becomes more pronounced. Ramirez's study, in particular, highlights the importance of visible law enforcement in enhancing public trust, which in turn promotes a safer and more secure community. The visible presence of law enforcement officers and the clear application of laws can create a deterrence effect where potential offenders are dissuaded by the perceived likelihood of punishment.

Moreover, Frost & Pickett (2019) argue that community support for punitive policies often increases in response to heightened perceptions of crime severity. As crimes become more frequent or more violent, the public tends to support stronger measures to combat crime, including harsher penalties. This response is driven by a desire for greater security and a fear of crime, as communities feel vulnerable to the risks posed by criminal behavior. The growing community demand for punitive measures reflects the social and psychological dynamics at play when the public feels unsafe and seeks ways to restore order and stability.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in the Philippine context, where the government's implementation of stricter drug-related penalties and community-policing programs, such as the Community-Oriented Policing System (COPS), has contributed to a greater sense of safety among the public. The introduction of harsher penalties for drug-related offenses, combined with proactive policing efforts, has been designed to deter criminal activity, particularly drug abuse and trafficking, which are perceived as major threats to public safety. According to the UNICRI Survey (1990), these measures have been associated with a greater sense of safety within communities, even though concerns about human rights violations and the effectiveness of these policies remain.

In summary, the growing public support for punitive measures can be seen as a reflection of the principles of Deterrence Theory, where perceived crime severity and the desire for safety lead communities to endorse stronger law enforcement and harsher punishments. This dynamic is particularly visible in the Philippine context, where specific measures aimed at drug-related crimes have led to an enhanced public perception of safety, even as the effectiveness and ethical implications of these measures are debated.

Table 3. Significant Relationship

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	Community Support in Punitive Policies		
	R	p-value	Remarks
Perception of crime severity	.858***	.000	Significant †

The results of the study indicate a significant relationship between satisfaction and commitment ($p<.05$), highlighting that as satisfaction increases, so does commitment, especially in relation to community support for punitive policies. More specifically, the study reveals a strong,

directly proportional relationship between the perception of crime severity and community support for punitive policies, with a correlation coefficient of $r = .857$ ($p < .05$). This high strength of correlation indicates that as the perception of crime severity increases, so does the community's support for stricter punitive measures. In other words, the more the community perceives crime as a serious threat, the more likely they are to advocate for harsher policies to address criminal activities.

This finding is consistent with Wasiam's (2019) research, which emphasizes that the strict implementation of sentencing rules and punitive measures has a positive impact on community safety. Wasiam notes that, as the population continues to grow, so does the prevalence of criminal activities, making the need for robust crime prevention strategies even more urgent. According to this perspective, the implementation of strong, community-supported punitive policies plays a crucial role in deterring crime. In enforcing harsher penalties and increasing the visibility of law enforcement, communities can lower the crime rate, ensuring that public safety is maintained despite the growing challenges associated with population expansion.

In summary, the results of this study suggest that community satisfaction with punitive policies is linked to an increased sense of commitment to supporting these policies. The direct correlation between crime severity perceptions and support for punitive measures reflects a collective desire to address rising crime rates and ensure a safer environment for all residents. This relationship underscores the importance of public perception and the role that community support for strong law enforcement can play in reducing crime.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusion taken out from the interpretation in the previous chapter. It is also present the recommendation being drawn.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Crime severity requires greater attention, as community safety is essential. This suggests that more focus should be given to ensuring security, and implementing punitive policies can help reduce criminal activities and protect citizens from harm.
- A strong, significant relationship exists between the perception of crime severity and community support for punitive policies ($r = .857$, $p < .05$). This indicates that increased concerns about crime lead to stronger support for harsher law enforcement and penalties.
- The high correlation ($r = .857$) shows that the two factors—crime severity perception and support for punitive measures—are closely linked, with the level of support being a strong predictor of perceived crime severity.

Recommendations

- Local authorities should increase the presence of law enforcement and surveillance systems to reassure citizens and effectively address crime severity in the community.
- Community leaders should organize forums and discussions to raise awareness about the importance of addressing crime severity and supporting stricter crime control policies.
- Law enforcement agencies should adopt and implement punitive measures backed by research, ensuring that these policies are effective in deterring crime while gaining public support.

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