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Comparing the Work Performance and Professionalism of Police Officers: Criminology vs. Non-Criminology Graduates and Their Theoretical and Managerial Implications in the Philippine Law Enforcement Sector

Kleiya Isles P. Octavio¹ and Rowell P. Nitafan^{2*}

^{1,2}University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato

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ABSTRACT

The Philippine National Police (PNP), as the foremost law enforcement agency in the country, bears the critical responsibility of upholding public safety, maintaining order, preventing crime, and conducting investigations across the nation. Given the scope and complexity of these duties, the PNP necessitates a workforce with a broad array of competencies to effectively confront the dynamic challenges of policing within a democratic framework. However, the inclusion of both criminology and non-criminology graduates into its ranks has resulted in discernible disparities in work performance, largely attributable to the variations in academic training and the alignment of specialised skills with the demands of the police profession. This study is a descriptive-comparative research that aims to examine the significant difference in work performance and professionalism among uniformed personnel in the Philippine National Police (PNP) based on their educational qualifications, specifically comparing criminology and non-criminology graduates. Stratified proportionate sampling was followed in the selection of the 120 police officers assigned to the Third Congressional District of Cotabato Province. Data were collected using survey questionnaires and analysed using the mean and t-test. The study revealed that there is a significant difference in the work performance and professionalism of criminology and non-criminology graduates, although both of them demonstrated excellent work performance and professionalism. Finally, it was ascertained that police officers who are criminology graduates exhibited a slightly higher level of work performance and professionalism compared to police officers who are not criminology graduates. The findings suggest that enhancing criminology programmes with practical training, such as simulations and internships, can improve police professionalism and competencies, aligning with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering more effective and accountable law enforcement. Integrating criminological principles into interdisciplinary education can bridge performance gaps in policing, supporting the development of stronger institutions that promote justice and public safety.

^{2*} Corresponding author. E-mail address: rpnitafan@usm.edu.ph

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Philippine National Police (PNP) was institutionalised under Republic Act No. 6975, formally known as the Department of the Interior and Local Government Act of 1990. As a civilian national police force under the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the PNP is mandated to enforce the law, prevent and control crime, maintain peace and order, and ensure public safety and internal security in active partnership with the community, guided by the principle that public service is a public trust. To monitor and enhance institutional performance, the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) implements the PNP Performance Evaluation System (PES), which measures personnel effectiveness based on service quality, operational readiness, and adherence to core values such as integrity, discipline, and excellence. This performance system aligns institutional goals with individual accountability, fostering a culture of meritocracy and continuous professional development within the organisation (Romano, 2022).

The PNP operates under a line-and-staff organisational framework, allowing for a wide range of functional specialisations beyond traditional law enforcement. Criminology graduates—trained in criminal law, forensic science, sociology, and investigative procedures—typically serve in frontline operational roles. Meanwhile, non-criminology professionals enter the PNP through the Lateral Entry Programme for Technical Officers (LETO), assuming vital roles in law, medicine, engineering, finance, education, and other specialised areas. These professionals address technical and administrative needs that are indispensable to modern policing. According to the 2023 NAPOLCOM Annual Report, hundreds of technical officers were commissioned through the LETO programme, underscoring the PNP's commitment to diversified talent acquisition.

Criminology remains one of the most popular degree programmes in the Philippines for individuals aspiring to enter law enforcement. The National Institute of Justice (2022) affirms that criminology equips graduates with analytical and practical tools to address crime and administer justice. Tumang et al. (2024) observed that “a majority of criminology graduates pursue police careers,” with a significantly higher absorption rate into the PNP compared to graduates of other disciplines. These graduates are often deployed in technical units such as crime scene investigation, intelligence, and case management, where their academic preparation directly matches field demands. By contrast, non-criminology professionals, though fewer in number, enhance the organisational capacity of the PNP by contributing to administrative efficiency, medical and welfare services, infrastructure development, and community engagement. Their inclusion highlights the value of a multidisciplinary police force that is responsive to the growing complexities of public safety and security (Mendoza et al., 2020). Despite differences in educational preparation, both groups are expected to demonstrate professionalism, operational competence, and accountability to the public.

The role of educational qualifications in law enforcement performance is also recognised across the ASEAN region. In Singapore, police officers undergo rigorous academic and leadership training, with tailored programmes for both criminology and non-criminology graduates (Lim & Nalla, 2014). Malaysia's Royal Police Force integrates performance-based evaluations that correlate academic specialisation with operational outcomes (Rozi, 2015). Likewise, Thailand has institutionalised a competency framework that emphasises both technical skills and ethical performance indicators, illustrating how professional backgrounds shape police effectiveness (Nimsombun, 2000). These regional experiences highlight the importance of examining how educational qualifications influence policing outcomes—an area that remains underexplored in the Philippine setting.

While existing studies have examined job satisfaction, morale, and organisational culture within the PNP, there remains a critical gap in the literature regarding the extent to which educational qualifications—specifically the distinction between criminology and non-criminology graduates—affect work performance and professionalism (Refugia, 2021). Work performance, shaped by organisational culture, personality traits, and leadership styles, defines the operational effectiveness of the police

(Dapitan et al., 2023), while professionalism—anchored in ethical conduct, service orientation, and respect for human rights—sustains public trust (Mendoza et al., 2020). Yet, internal dynamics such as employee silence, which limits open communication and accountability (Nitafan, 2024), can weaken both performance and professionalism. Conversely, external pressures from social activism demand transparency and reform (Fulleros & Nitafan, 2024), reinforcing higher standards of police conduct. These opposing forces highlight the context in which educational background may significantly influence the work performance and professionalism of PNP personnel, a relationship this study seeks to explore.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The study generally aims to determine if there is a significant difference in the work performance and professionalism of Criminology and Non-Criminology police officers. Specifically, it aims to: 1) assess the level of work performance of uniformed PNP personnel in terms of knowledge of work, quality of work, adaptability, effectiveness under stress, initiative, morality, and ethical conduct; 2) ascertain the level of professionalism of the uniformed personnel in terms of professional referent, service, self-regulation, calling, and autonomy; 3) determine if there is a significant difference in the work performance of uniformed PNP personnel when analysed according to their educational qualification; and 4) determine if there is a significant difference in the professionalism of uniformed PNP personnel when analysed according to their educational qualification.

1.2 The Research Model

In framing the study, the researchers employed the National Police Commission's Performance Evaluation System to assess work performance and Hall's (1968) five attitudinal attributes of a profession to evaluate professionalism. The Performance Evaluation System, utilised within the Philippine National Police, measures officers' performance based on key criteria such as knowledge of work, quality of work, adaptability, effectiveness under stress, initiative, and ethical conduct.

Additionally, Hall's (1968) attitudinal attributes of a profession—service, self-regulation, calling, professional referent, and autonomy—are used to define professionalism. According to Hall, these attributes are crucial for assessing professionalism, as they reflect how practitioners perceive and approach their work.

The study is further grounded in the Theory of Human Capital, which suggests that education and training serve as investments that can enhance an individual's productivity and earning potential. Becker (1962) proposed that individuals with higher education and training possess greater knowledge and skills, leading to increased productivity. Brunello and Medio (2001) also highlighted that education and training foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills, all of which are vital for workplace success.

Figure 1 illustrates the distinction between the manifest variable, which is educational qualifications, and the latent variables, which are work performance and professionalism, following the methodological framework of Uy et al. (2016).

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance: 1) There is no significant difference in the work performance of uniformed PNP personnel when analysed according to their educational qualification; and 2) there is no significant difference in the professionalism of uniformed PNP personnel when analysed according to their educational qualifications.

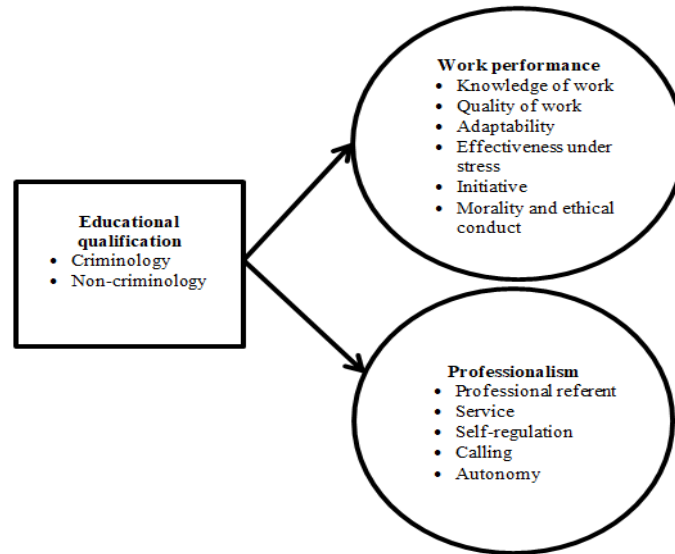


Fig. 1. The research model

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study is quantitative research that followed a descriptive-comparative research design. Following the framework of Nitafan et al. (2024), descriptive research design was used to assess the work performance of uniformed PNP personnel in terms of knowledge of work, quality of work, adaptability, effectiveness under stress, initiative, morality, and ethical conduct and their professionalism in terms of professional referent, service, self-regulation, calling, and autonomy. Comparative research design was used to determine if there is a significant difference in the work performance and professionalism of uniformed PNP personnel when analysed according to their educational qualification.

The study involved 120 uniformed police officers assigned to police stations across the six municipalities comprising the 3rd Congressional District of Cotabato Province, Banisilan, Carmen, Kabacan, M'lang, Matalam, and Tulan. Although a larger sample size of 150 was initially considered, the final number was determined based on the actual availability of personnel, operational responsibilities, and logistical feasibility in reaching multiple sites. Despite the adjustment, the sample size of 120 remains statistically acceptable for generating valid and reliable results. To ensure representativeness and minimise sampling bias, stratified proportionate sampling was utilised, with each municipality considered a separate stratum (Nitafan & Idris, 2024). However, to promote comparability and equal representation, the 120 respondents were evenly distributed, selecting 20 uniformed officers from each municipality. This sampling method was deemed appropriate as it strikes a balance in the number of samples in each study area, ensuring consistency and fairness across locations (Howell et al., 2020; Poliquit et al., 2022). Consistent with the guidelines outlined by Pamposa and Nitafan (2025), this study strictly observed the principles of research ethics.

The data were collected using survey questionnaires. The study modified the PNP performance evaluation system of the National Police Commission in Makati, Metro Manila, to measure the work performance of the police officers in terms of rules, regulations, standards, and code of conduct. Hall's (1968) five attitudinal attributes of a profession were also used in measuring the police officers' professionalism in terms of professional referent, service, self-regulation, calling, and autonomy.

The data were analysed using mean and t-test. Following the framework of Nitafan (2025), mean was used to assess the work performance of uniformed PNP personnel in terms of knowledge of work, quality of work, adaptability, effectiveness under stress, initiative, morality, and ethical conduct and their professionalism in terms of professional referent, service, self-regulation, calling, and autonomy. The normality of the data was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, after which the t-test was applied. T-test was used to determine if there is a significant difference in the work performance of uniformed PNP personnel when analysed according to their educational qualification.

The scale utilised in this study categorises respondents' levels of agreement and provides corresponding descriptive ratings based on the mean score intervals. A mean score range of 4.21 to 5.00 is interpreted as Strongly Agree (SA), indicating an excellent rating. Mean scores from 3.41 to 4.20 are classified as Agree (A), signifying an above-average rating. Scores within 2.61 to 3.40 correspond to Slightly Agree (SLA), denoting an average rating. Scores between 1.81 and 2.60 are interpreted as Disagree (D), reflecting a below-average rating, while scores from 1.00 to 1.80 fall under Strongly Disagree (SD), indicating a very poor rating. This scale provides a structured framework for evaluating responses across multiple levels of agreement.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Work performance of PNP uniformed personnel based on educational qualification

Table 1 presents the level of work performance of PNP uniformed personnel based on educational qualification. The study revealed that PNP uniformed personnel demonstrated excellent work performance, with an overall mean score of 4.67. This indicates that they are highly effective and competent in fulfilling their designated job roles and responsibilities, particularly in the areas of knowledge of work, quality of work, adaptability, effectiveness under stress, initiative, morality, and ethical conduct.

Table 1. Work performance of PNP uniformed personnel based on educational qualifications.

Indicators	Criminology graduates			Non-criminology graduates		
	Mean	Interpretation	Standard deviation	Mean	Interpretation	Standard deviation
Knowledge of work	4.82	Excellent	0.33	4.61	Excellent	0.44
Quality of work	4.80	Excellent	0.34	4.60	Excellent	0.42
Adaptability	4.76	Excellent	0.44	4.57	Excellent	0.49
Effectiveness under stress	4.75	Excellent	0.36	4.50	Excellent	0.49
Initiative	4.67	Excellent	0.64	4.50	Excellent	0.55
Morality and ethical conduct	4.83	Excellent	0.31	4.63	Excellent	0.44
Overall	4.77	Excellent	0.25	4.57	Excellent	0.31

Several studies corroborate the assertion that PNP uniformed personnel exhibit excellent work performance. Escalona and Nabe (2024) found that criminology programmes effectively equip graduates with the necessary competencies to perform their duties at a high level. Similarly, Dapitan et al. (2023) noted that non-criminology graduates in law enforcement also perform effectively, often bringing unique skills and perspectives derived from their prior academic or professional backgrounds. Gabriel (2023) further revealed a significant relationship between work–life balance and job performance among police personnel, suggesting that improved balance contributes to higher performance ratings. Likewise, a 2023 study conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police concluded that police departments

with clear and well-defined policies report lower rates of officer misconduct and higher levels of public satisfaction. Collectively, these studies underscore the competence and effectiveness of PNP personnel in carrying out their responsibilities.

The findings further indicate that Criminology graduates outperformed Non-Criminology graduates in terms of work performance, achieving an overall mean score of 4.77, which denotes an excellent rating. Their performance was largely attributed to strong results across key competencies, including morality and ethical conduct ($M = 4.83$), knowledge of work ($M = 4.82$), quality of work ($M = 4.80$), adaptability ($M = 4.76$), effectiveness under stress ($M = 4.75$), and initiative ($M = 4.67$). Practically, this suggests that the BS Criminology curriculum contributes significantly to the development of competencies crucial to policing roles, reinforcing the value of specialised education in law enforcement. Theoretically, these findings support human capital theory, demonstrating how discipline-specific training enhances skill acquisition and professional readiness, thereby positively influencing work performance.

Non-Criminology graduates also demonstrated excellent work performance, with an overall mean score of 4.57. Their strengths were particularly evident in their morality and ethical conduct ($M = 4.63$), knowledge of work ($M = 4.61$), quality of work ($M = 4.60$), adaptability ($M = 4.57$), effectiveness under stress ($M = 4.50$), and initiative ($M = 4.50$). Practically, this implies that Non-Criminology graduates, despite having less specialised academic preparation, possess substantial capabilities in essential competencies, likely developed through practical experience and in-service training. Theoretically, this finding broadens the perspective of human capital theory by suggesting that professionalism and performance may be enhanced not only through formal education but also through experiential learning and exposure in the field.

3.2 Professionalism of PNP uniformed personnel based on educational qualification

Table 2 presents the level of professionalism of PNP uniformed personnel based on educational qualification. The results revealed that personnel exhibited above-average professionalism, with an overall mean score of 4.13. This indicates that they frequently uphold ethical standards, values, and professional behaviours in the performance of their duties. The dimensions of professionalism assessed include service orientation, self-regulation, sense of calling, professional referent, and autonomy.

Table 2. Professionalism of PNP uniformed personnel based on educational qualifications

Indicators	Criminology graduates			Non-criminology graduates		
	Mean	Interpretation	Standard deviation	Mean	Interpretation	Standard deviation
Professional referent	4.24	Excellent	0.79	3.88	Above average	0.86
Service	4.38	Excellent	0.59	3.92	Above average	0.76
Self-regulation	4.21	Excellent	0.73	4.22	Excellent	0.70
Calling	4.32	Excellent	0.59	4.15	Above average	0.66
Autonomy	3.97	Excellent	0.77	3.98	Above average	0.85
Overall	4.22	Excellent	0.51	4.03	Above Average	0.49

Previous studies have also documented high levels of professionalism within the Philippine National Police. Marimon (2022), for example, examined the professionalism and work performance of PNP commissioned officers and reported very high professionalism, highlighting officers' strong awareness of their positive reputation among colleagues, their deep sense of belonging to the organisation, and their ability to generate innovative ideas. Similarly, Kogan and Holmboe (2013) emphasised the PNP's

systematic use of performance assessments as a means of monitoring and reinforcing professionalism among its personnel. Collectively, these studies underscore the institution's comprehensive approach to fostering professionalism.

The present findings further indicate that Criminology graduates outperformed Non-Criminology graduates in professionalism, with an overall mean score of 4.22, which falls within the excellent range. Their professionalism was particularly evident in the dimensions of service ($M = 4.38$), calling ($M = 4.32$), professional referent ($M = 4.24$), self-regulation ($M = 4.21$), and autonomy ($M = 3.97$). Practically, this suggests that Criminology graduates possess a well-developed professional mindset shaped by a curriculum that prioritises ethics, service orientation, and regulatory standards—all of which are vital in law enforcement practice. Theoretically, these results align with Hall's (1968) model of professionalism, which posits that professional identity and self-regulation are cultivated through education that is aligned with role-specific values and expectations.

By contrast, Non-Criminology graduates demonstrated good professionalism with a mean score of 4.03. Their strongest dimensions were self-regulation ($M = 4.22$), calling ($M = 4.15$), autonomy ($M = 3.98$), service ($M = 3.92$), and professional referent ($M = 3.88$). From a practical perspective, this implies that Non-Criminology graduates develop professionalism primarily through on-the-job experiences and alternative training opportunities, which help compensate for the absence of criminology-focused academic preparation. Theoretically, these findings extend Hall's model by suggesting that professionalism can also be cultivated through diverse professional pathways, thereby reinforcing the notion that both structured education and experiential learning are effective in instilling professional values and behaviours.

3.3 Significant difference in the work performance of PNP uniformed personnel when analysed according to their educational qualification

Table 3 presents the test of significant difference in the work performance of PNP uniformed personnel when analysed according to their educational qualifications. The results revealed a significant difference in work performance based on educational background, as indicated by the p-value of 0.001. This finding warrants the rejection of the first null hypothesis, which stated that there is no difference in the work performance of the two groups.

Table 3. Significant difference in the work performance of Criminology and Non-criminology police officer graduates

	Mean	p-value	Indication	Decision
Criminology graduates	4.77	0.001	Significant	Do not accept Ho1
Non-criminology graduates	4.57			

The observed difference in the work performance of Criminology and Non-Criminology police officer graduates can be attributed to several factors. Ayeo-eo and Doquilla (2021) reported that employers were highly impressed with the performance of Criminology graduates, emphasising their exceptional skills and preparedness for law enforcement roles. Their specialised training and relevant academic background likely contribute to their superior levels of work performance. Similarly, Nayoyos-Refugia (2024) highlighted that Criminology graduates were highly employable and consistently received positive evaluations from employers regarding both their job performance and the applicability of their academic preparation. These findings reinforce the claim that Criminology graduates are better equipped for professional roles, resulting in higher performance outcomes.

Conversely, Dapitan et al. (2023) examined the experiences of Non-Criminology graduates in the PNP, underscoring their motivation and adaptability despite the absence of formal criminology training.

While these officers may face greater challenges, their resilience and unique perspectives still enable them to contribute positively to organisational performance, albeit to a lesser extent than their Criminology-trained counterparts.

3.4 Significant difference in the professionalism of PNP uniformed personnel when analysed according to their educational qualification

Table 4 presents the test of significant difference in the professionalism of PNP uniformed personnel when analysed according to their educational qualifications. The results revealed a significant difference in professionalism based on educational background, as indicated by the p-value of 0.041. This finding leads to the rejection of the second null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant difference in the professionalism of the two groups. Supporting this result, Habiatan (2022) found that Criminology graduates demonstrate higher levels of professionalism due to their comprehensive training in ethics, law enforcement protocols, and community engagement. Similarly, Mojares et al. (2015) emphasised that Criminology graduates undergo extensive preparation in professional conduct and ethical decision-making, which likely contributes to their higher professionalism scores. Furthermore, a study on the employment status of Criminology graduates revealed that most respondents were permanently employed in course-related jobs, underscoring the effectiveness of the Criminology programme in equipping graduates for professional roles (Ayeo-eo & Doquilla, 2021).

Table 4. Significant difference in the professionalism of Criminology and Non-Criminology police officer graduates

	Mean	p-value	Indication	Decision
Criminology graduate	4.22	0.041	Significant	Do not accept Ho2
Non-criminology graduates	4.03			

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

This study established a statistically significant distinction between the work performance and professionalism of police officers based on their academic backgrounds, with both Criminology and Non-Criminology graduates exhibiting high standards of conduct and operational effectiveness. Criminology graduates, however, demonstrated a modest but consistent advantage, reflecting the value of discipline-specific education in preparing officers for the technical and ethical demands of policing. Yet beyond these surface-level metrics, the findings revealed deeper, more complex dimensions of professional identity, motivation, and institutional alignment that warrant critical attention.

A closer examination of the Criminology graduates' responses uncovered a paradox: while their formal training enhanced their competence, it also fostered a more rigid interpretation of their occupational role. Some officers displayed reluctance to participate in ongoing training, especially when duties were perceived as falling outside the scope of traditional crime prevention, such as mediating community disputes. This signals a lingering disjunction between academic paradigms and the evolving realities of frontline law enforcement, particularly in contexts where community engagement and conflict resolution are central to public trust. Their preference for citizen review boards over internal peer evaluation reflects a notable shift towards valuing transparency and external accountability, potentially challenging the hierarchical and insular norms of police culture. Furthermore, the inclination of some Criminology graduates to explore alternative careers and assert autonomy in daily decision-making underscores an internal struggle for professional self-definition and purpose, one that institutions must address if they aim to foster long-term commitment and cohesion.

While the study's insights are robust, its cross-sectional design limits its ability to capture dynamic shifts in attitudes and behaviour over time. Moreover, the exclusive reliance on self-reported measures,

though practical, may be influenced by personal bias or socially desirable responding. Crucially, several high-impact variables were not explored, including leadership style, organisational culture, psychological resilience, stress exposure, job satisfaction, and perceptions of career progression. These unexplored dimensions may play a pivotal role in shaping both performance and professionalism, and their omission points to fertile ground for future inquiry.

Subsequent research should consider longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to trace the professional evolution of police officers across different stages of their careers. Rich qualitative exploration, through interviews or narrative analysis, could illuminate the underlying beliefs, tensions, and aspirations that shape officer behaviour beyond the quantifiable metrics. Furthermore, integrating psychological and organisational variables would yield a multidimensional framework that more accurately captures the interplay between education, institutional culture, and personal vocation. Comparative studies across law enforcement agencies, or even across countries with different policing philosophies, could further broaden the theoretical and practical scope of these findings.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND MANAGERIAL PRACTICE

The research findings suggest several key implications for enhancing training and development within law enforcement administration. First, implementing targeted training programmes tailored to address specific needs can bridge the gaps in professional conduct and procedural knowledge identified among Criminology and non-Criminology graduates. These programmes should reinforce foundational skills in professionalism, ethical decision-making, and an understanding of the broad responsibilities of law enforcement. Emphasising non-criminal responsibilities, such as community relations and dispute management, could help Criminology graduates develop a more comprehensive view of their roles and reduce reluctance towards further training.

Furthermore, promoting continuous professional development by making training accessible and offering clear pathways for career advancement will encourage officers to pursue lifelong learning. Addressing hesitations towards additional training may require highlighting how these programmes support long-term growth and job satisfaction. Increasing funding for training and development is also essential, as it will ensure that the Philippine National Police (PNP) has the necessary resources to stay current with evolving demands in law enforcement, thus equipping officers with the tools needed to perform effectively.

To reinforce a culture of professionalism and ethical conduct, workshops and seminars focused on accountability, service to the community, and commitment to ethical principles should be regularly offered. These initiatives can help officers, particularly those without formal criminology training, understand and internalise the values integral to law enforcement. Additionally, supporting officers' preferences for autonomy by providing mentorship and guidance on independent decision-making can empower them in daily operations. For Criminology graduates specifically, focused training on self-regulation, public service, and the standards of professionalism will help deepen their understanding of the broader scope and responsibilities of their roles, thus fostering both confidence and commitment.

Moreover, the findings of this study suggest valuable implications for curriculum development in criminology and related fields. Given that criminology graduates demonstrated slightly higher levels of work performance and professionalism, integrating focused, practical training within criminology programmes could further enhance these competencies among future law enforcement professionals. Educational institutions offering the Bachelor of Science in Criminology may consider incorporating experiential learning components such as simulations, community-based internships, and ethics-based coursework to strengthen professional skills tailored to police work. Additionally, for non-criminology fields that contribute to law enforcement careers, an interdisciplinary approach that includes elements of

criminology could bridge performance gaps, potentially benefiting the overall quality of policing in the Philippines.

Finally, from a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of professional identity formation in policing. It challenges the assumption that specialised education alone ensures institutional fit, and instead reveals how that very specialisation may shape expectations, foster individual autonomy, and influence how officers perceive their roles within larger organisational systems. These findings point to an urgent need for reimagining professional development, one that integrates technical rigor with leadership training, emotional intelligence, and adaptive capacity. In doing so, law enforcement institutions can move towards cultivating a new generation of police officers: highly competent, intellectually agile, and emotionally attuned to the evolving expectations of the communities they serve. This, ultimately, is the kind of professionalism that transcends mere compliance and begins to redefine the future of policing in a complex democratic society.

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8.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. All expenses incurred in the conduct of this study were shouldered by the researchers.

9.0 AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Kleiya Isles P. Octavio, as the main researcher, designed and conducted the study, collected the necessary data, and wrote the results and discussion, including the initial draft of the manuscript. Dr. Rowell P. Nitafan, as the research supervisor, developed the methodology, analysed the data, and provided overall guidance, feedback, and supervision throughout the research process.

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About the Authors

Kleiya Isles P. Octavio is an alumna of the Bachelor of Science in Criminology of the University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato. Her research interests focus on law enforcement organisations and administration, as well as professional conduct and ethical standards in the field of criminal justice. Her email address is kipoctavio@usm.edu.ph.

Rowell P. Nitafan is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Social Science and Philosophy at the University of Southern Mindanao. He served as the Programme Head of the Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from 2020 to 2023. Currently, he is the Head of the Department of Student Policy and Research under the Office of Student Affairs and the College Research Coordinator of the College of Arts and Social Sciences. His research interests include patrimonialism, everyday politics, public management, and structural violence and social development in the Bangsamoro Region, Philippines. He can be reached at rpnitafan@usm.edu.ph.



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