

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Citizens' trust in police enforcement in Calbayog City, Philippines

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### ABSTRACT

Trust in police enforcement is a fundamental element for maintaining public order, promoting community safety, and ensuring the legitimacy of law enforcement agencies. It develops positive relationships between the police and the community, encouraging cooperation and compliance with the law. When citizens trust the police, they are more likely to report crimes, provide useful information, and engage in lawful behavior, which enhances crime prevention and resolution efforts. This paper descriptively analyzed citizens' trust towards police enforcement in Calbayog City, Philippines in terms of accountability, transparency, fairness, and community engagement. Participants were purposively sampled using online tools and categorized into three groups: ordinary citizens (n=150), barangay officials (n=50), and members of the police auxiliary unit (n=225). Findings indicated that the public trust towards the police enforcement in the city was generally high and positive, but the auxiliary unit consistently rated police performance more favorably than ordinary citizens or barangay officials. The police enforcement in Calbayog City, while demonstrating generally positive accountability, transparency, fairness, and community engagement, still needs considerable focus on further development. It is essential to prioritize efforts aimed at bridging the gap between the police and the community, with particular emphasis on enhancing transparency, fairness, and inclusivity. There was also a need to develop effective communication channels to connect to a larger public. Acknowledging and addressing historical issues, perhaps through public forums or community outreach programs, would demonstrate commitment to fairness and accountability. Such initiatives would contribute to the strengthening of public trust and cooperation, which facilitates more effective policing and the improvement of public safety.

**Keywords:** accountability; community engagement; fairness; transparency; police enforcement; public trust

## 1. Introduction

Trust denotes the belief in the reliability, truthfulness, or capability of an individual or organization. In the context of law enforcement, trust and confidence are essential in promoting public engagement in community decision-making and the management of local services. These elements develop institutional accountability, enhance the responsiveness of public institutions, and encourage both public cooperation with law enforcement and compliance with the law. Confidence is conceptualized as a motive-based trust anchored in shared social values between law enforcement and the community<sup>[1,2]</sup>. The establishment of such trust is integral to ensuring effective collaboration and accountability in public institutions.

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Despite its importance, trust in law enforcement has seen a notable decline in many communities. Public perceptions of police attentiveness, reliability, and responsiveness critically influence trust levels<sup>[3]</sup>. Trust in governmental institutions, particularly the police, is foundational to public safety, social cohesion, and the preservation of democratic governance. High levels of trust typically result in greater citizen engagement, more frequent crime reporting, and increased participation in community safety initiatives. Conversely, declining trust weakens public cooperation, heightens fear, and erodes societal bonds<sup>[4]</sup>.

A significant psychological barrier to trust in law enforcement is the fear of retaliation. When citizens perceive a risk of harm or reprisal for reporting crimes or misconduct, they are less inclined to engage with the police. This fear is especially prevalent in communities with historical patterns of abuse or corruption, further entrenching cycles of mistrust and disengagement. A failure by the police to demonstrate fairness, transparency, and accountability substantially erodes public confidence in their integrity. Ineffective responses to these concerns create significant barriers to collaboration between law enforcement and the community<sup>[5]</sup>. Addressing such issues requires equitable and transparent enforcement practices to restore public trust.

Social cohesion, defined as the strength of relationships and solidarity within a community, also plays a crucial role in shaping trust in law enforcement. As a multidimensional construct, social cohesion is associated with various positive societal outcomes, including social stability, environmental sustainability, and enhanced public health<sup>[6]</sup>. Communities that perceive law enforcement as equitable and unbiased tend to exhibit stronger social bonds and greater trust in public institutions. Conversely, perceptions of bias or political interference undermine social cohesion, leading to community fragmentation and alienation. Therefore, consistent and equitable law enforcement practices are imperative to rebuild communal trust and strengthen unity<sup>[7]</sup>.

Stress arising from negative encounters with law enforcement represents another psychological factor that undermines trust. Interactions perceived as unfair, excessively forceful, or lacking transparency often result in prolonged anxiety and a reluctance to engage with the police in the future. Additionally, law enforcement officers themselves face considerable stress due to exposure to high-risk situations and organizational demands, which may impair their interactions with the public. This mutual strain exacerbates mistrust, highlighting the importance of implementing strategies to improve both officer well-being and community perceptions of law enforcement<sup>[8]</sup>.

There was limited understanding about public trust towards police enforcement in Calbayog City, Philippines—and across the country in general. Understanding public trust in law enforcement requires examining its various dimensions, including procedural justice, distributive justice, and the role of community engagement. This study only descriptively analyzed the public trust towards police enforcement, emphasizing assessment in accountability, transparency, fairness, and community engagement. Strengthening public trust is not merely a matter of improving police performance; it requires addressing historical injustices, encouraging community engagement, and promoting a culture of accountability and transparency. This preliminary understanding shall be used in further analysis to be conducted about building public trust in police enforcement in the country.

## **2. Literature review**

The concept of trust in law enforcement is extensively explored in scholarly literature<sup>[9-11]</sup>. Recent academic inquiries have increasingly focused on the role of trust during emergency policing situations<sup>[12]</sup>. Despite extensive investigations into police trust and legitimacy<sup>[13,14]</sup>, scholarly debates persist regarding the

measurement and relationship between these concepts. While some researchers treat trust and legitimacy as interchangeable, others view them as conceptually distinct but interrelated phenomena<sup>[14]</sup>.

Police legitimacy has been a focal point of criminal justice research, with multiple theoretical frameworks proposed over time. Sunshine and Tyler<sup>[15]</sup> offer one of the earliest and most influential definitions, describing legitimacy as the quality of an institution that engenders voluntary compliance and deference to authority. This framework has been widely adopted to analyze the public's willingness to comply with law enforcement directives without coercion<sup>[14,16,17]</sup>. However, Reisig et al.<sup>[18]</sup> challenged this notion by arguing that the obligation to obey does not necessarily influence perceptions of legitimacy.

Recent studies have integrated perspectives from political science, proposing a tripartite model to measure legitimacy: (1) the extent to which police adhere to legal standards, (2) a shared moral alignment between the police and the public, and (3) citizens' consent to submit to police authority<sup>[13,19,20]</sup>. Alternatively, Bottoms and Tankebe<sup>[21]</sup> contend that legitimacy and the obligation to obey are distinct constructs, advocating for their separate examination. They conceptualize legitimacy as the rightful exercise of authority, which is contingent upon four primary factors: procedural justice, police lawfulness, distributive fairness, and police effectiveness. These elements serve as the foundation for developing public trust in law enforcement<sup>[22]</sup>.

Consequently, trust in law enforcement has been approached from various angles within the criminal justice literature. First, it is frequently considered an integral component of legitimacy, alongside shared values and a sense of obligation<sup>[23,24]</sup>. This conceptualization builds upon Tyler's seminal work, which distinguishes between institution-based trust (reflecting perceptions of police honesty and commitment to community welfare) and motive-based trust (highlighting benevolence and sincere efforts to serve the public)<sup>[25-27]</sup>. Second, scholars argue that legitimacy precedes trust, as citizens' preconceived expectations about law enforcement behavior serve as a benchmark for evaluating institutional performance<sup>[28]</sup>. This perspective underscores the normative dimension of legitimacy while emphasizing trust as contingent upon police adherence to these norms. Third, trust is often associated with individual-level assessments, whereas legitimacy pertains to institutional authority<sup>[19,29,30]</sup>. Trust in this context involves public evaluations of the police's goals, abilities, and competence, while legitimacy focuses on justifying police authority and compliance.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

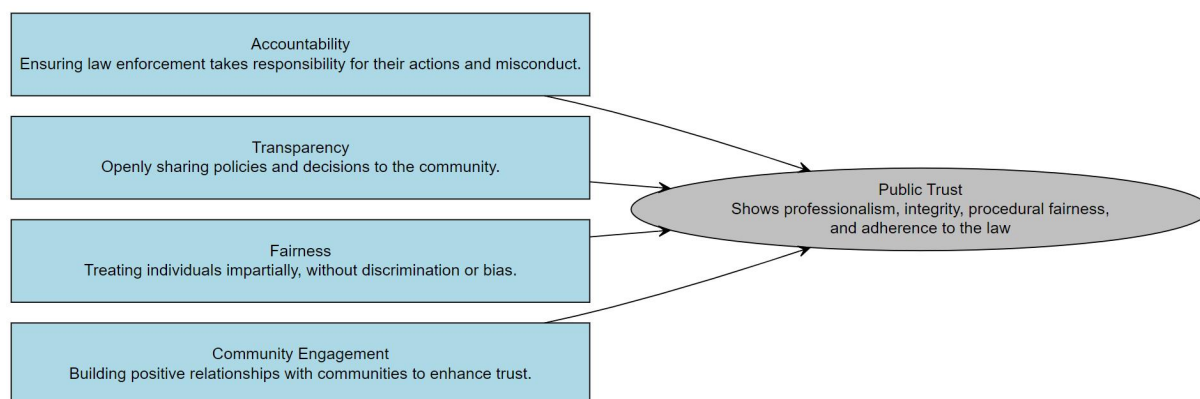
Social learning theory posits that individuals' past experiences significantly influence their future expectations, shaping their perceptions of trust in institutions like the police. In this context, trust in law enforcement represents citizens' confidence, which stems from their subjective evaluations of police practices and performance<sup>[31,32]</sup>. Similarly, performance theory associates institutional trust with the perceived effectiveness and efficiency of an institution in fulfilling its responsibilities. When individuals perceive law enforcement as capable of maintaining order and ensuring justice without bias, their trust in the police tends to increase. Conversely, heightened concerns about crime, disorder, or systemic bias led to diminished trust<sup>[33]</sup>.

A substantial body of literature underscores the role of police-related variables, such as corruption, professionalism, criminal activity, and citizen interactions, in shaping trust in law enforcement. Police corruption, for example, has been consistently associated with a decline in public trust, as it develops perceptions of unfair and unjust practices during police-citizen interactions<sup>[5]</sup>. Corrupt behavior diminishes procedural fairness and undermines the legitimacy of law enforcement institutions<sup>[10,34]</sup>. Studies further

suggest that when corruption is prevalent, officers may engage in criminal behavior to conceal their misconduct, thereby eroding trust in the justice system<sup>[35]</sup>.

Professionalism in policing, like adherence to legal boundaries, integrity, honesty, and non-discriminatory practices, is another crucial determinant of public trust. Citizens tend to place greater trust in officers who exhibit these qualities<sup>[36,37]</sup>. Conversely, perceptions of unprofessional conduct diminish confidence in law enforcement. Moreover, police-citizen contact, whether through routine stops or community engagement, significantly influences public perceptions. Negative encounters, such as excessive use of force or unwarranted searches, reduce trust, while positive interactions, like assisting citizens or deterring crime, enhance it<sup>[38,39]</sup>.

This paper observed patterns describing public trust in the recent literatures. Key factors influencing trust include police professionalism, integrity, procedural fairness, and lawfulness<sup>[36,37]</sup>. Corruption and misconduct undermine trust which cause perceptions of injustice and diminishing institutional credibility<sup>[10,34]</sup>. Positive interactions between police and citizens can build trust, while negative encounters, such as the use of excessive force, erode it<sup>[39]</sup>. Hence, this leads to the metric used in this study (**Figure 1**) that assessed public trust using accountability, transparency, fairness, and community engagement.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual paradigm of the study.

## 4. Methods

### 4.1. Research design

This paper descriptively analyzed how citizens of Calbayog City, Philippines trusted the police enforcement based on accountability, transparency, fairness, and community engagement. Its primary objective is to present an accurate and comprehensive overview of a phenomenon, human behaviors, or social conditions at a given point in time<sup>[40,41]</sup>. It does not manipulate any variables; instead, they focus solely on describing the sample and the observed variables<sup>[42]</sup>. Descriptive studies examine the attributes of a population, explore issues present within a group, organization, or community, and analyze differences in traits or practices across entities<sup>[43,44]</sup>. In this study, the descriptive analysis was exploratory in nature, focusing primarily on providing an in-depth understanding about the perceptions of the sampled participants.

### 4.2. Participants and sampling

There were three primary participants of this study: ordinary citizens, barangay officials, and auxiliary unit. Participants were recruited using online purposive sampling<sup>[45]</sup>, with a questionnaire administered through Google Forms to streamline data collection. Purposive sampling enabled researchers to strategically select participants who possess specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the objectives<sup>[46,47]</sup>. The use of online tools enhances the accessibility and efficiency of the recruitment process, broadening the potential

participant pool while maintaining targeted selection<sup>[48]</sup>. In selecting the participants, a screening questionnaire was utilized to evaluate participants' characteristics. There were five major sampling characteristics were considered: (1) currently residing in Calbayog City (>5 years), (2) must have direct or indirect involvement in local governance or community activities, (3) must be familiar with or have experience with barangay-level decision-making processes, (4) must be able to communicate in either Filipino or English, and (5) must be at least 18 years of age. Those who satisfied the predefined criteria were then directed to the main survey for further data collection. The screening of potential participants had 745 online responses, but only 425 met the criteria. The first group consisted of 150 ordinary citizens (streetside vendors, business cashiers, public transportation drivers, etc.), the second group included 50 barangay officials (barangay captain, barangay secretary, treasurer, etc.) from Calbayog City, and the third group comprised 225 members of the auxiliary unit (police investigator, field officers, etc.).

### 4.3. Instrumentation

A Likert-scale was designed to gather responses from participants. This tool is commonly used to measure individuals' views, feelings, or beliefs on a continuous scale<sup>[49]</sup>—a 4-point scale in this study. It presents a series of statements where participants indicate their level of agreement or disagreement, typically choosing from a predefined set of responses<sup>[50]</sup>. It is essential to focus on the validity of questionnaires during their design. Validity refers to how effectively a measurement tool evaluates the concept it is intended to assess<sup>[51]</sup>. (Bolarinwa, 2015). While reliability is essential in supporting the validity of a survey, it alone is not enough to guarantee its validity<sup>[52]</sup>. To assess validity, a group of experts was selected to evaluate the theoretical construct that the questionnaire is designed to measure. These validators included a professor with a PhD in Social Science and 15 years of research experience, a licensed psychometrician with expertise in survey development, and a senior statistician specializing in data validation and reliability analysis.

Further, reliability assesses the extent to which results from a survey, test, or observation are consistent and dependable, ensuring that they are stable over multiple uses or by different assessors<sup>[51]</sup>. Essentially, it measures the extent to which outcomes remain constant across time or when different individuals evaluate them. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) is the most frequently used measure to evaluate the internal reliability of a measurement tool<sup>[53]</sup>. The pilot testing was conducted through online survey among 30 residents, 30 barangay officials, and 30 members of police auxiliary unit. **Table 1** is the output of pilot testing, which presents the alpha values for accountability, transparency, fairness, and community engagement. This suggests that the Likert-scale was generally reliable.

**Table 1.** Output for reliability test.

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha			Description
		Residents	Barangay Officials	Auxiliary Unit	
Accountability	5	0.87	0.86	0.81	The scale exhibits a high degree of internal consistency, meaning the items within the scale consistently measure the construct of accountability.
Transparency	5	0.82	0.84	0.87	The scale is highly consistent, with the items working well together to measure the concept of transparency.
Fairness	5	0.85	0.88	0.90	The scale demonstrates a strong internal consistency, where all items are cohesively measuring the underlying construct of fairness.

Community Engagement	5	0.90	0.84	0.86	The scale is particularly reliable, with the items strongly correlating to one another, providing a stable and accurate measurement of community engagement.
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*Note:* 0.0-0.2 (Less Reliable); 0.21-0.40 (Rather Reliable); 0.41-0.60 (Quite Reliable); 0.61-0.80 (Reliable); 0.81-1.0 (Very Reliable)

**Table 1.** (Continued)

#### 4.4. Data collection

The research tools were initially written in English and later translated into Filipino or local languages as necessary to ensure the clarity and accuracy of participant responses. Initial surveys and discussions were held to improve unclear questions, based on input from the research advisor and statistician. Once the panel members approved the instrument, the final version was validated through an online survey conducted in Calbayog City, Philippines. The surveys were then electronically distributed to the participants. Data collection started after obtaining the required permissions and confirming participant cooperation. Following the collection, the data were organized and categorized according to predetermined procedures for analysis. The data collection process took place from September 2024 to November 2024. Afterward, the responses were exported into an Excel file for further processing and analysis.

#### 4.5. Data processing

Descriptive analysis was carried out to analyze the responses from the online survey. Descriptive analysis is a method used to objectively assess and characterize the nature and extent of sensory attributes<sup>[54,55]</sup>. In quantitative studies, descriptive statistics is often used to summarize, organize, and present data in a meaningful way<sup>[41,56]</sup>. In this paper, the Likert scale responses were assigned numerical values (Table 2), and the average values were calculated using the weighted mean. The analysis was carried out using the free statistical software Jeffreys’s Amazing Statistics Program (JASP), version 0.19.0.0.

**Table 2.** Mean descriptors for citizens’ trust.

Scale	Mean Value	Description	Interpretation
4	3.26–4.00	<b>Completely Trustworthy</b>	The citizens of Calbayog City view the police enforcement as highly reliable and dependable.
3	2.51–3.25	<b>Mostly Trustworthy</b>	At this level, the citizens largely trust the police, though some minor concerns may exist.
2	1.76–2.50	<b>Slightly Trustworthy</b>	The citizens have significant reservations about trusting the police enforcement.
1	1.00–1.75	Not Trustworthy	At this level, trust in the police enforcement is virtually nonexistent.

## 5. Results and discussion

### 5.1. Police enforcement accountability

The results of the accountability scale demonstrated high trust levels across different respondent groups, reflecting positive perceptions of police accountability in Calbayog City, Philippines. Presented in Table 3, the public trust in the police was generally positive, descriptively *mostly trustworthy* (M=3.23). However, the varying perceptions across different community groups indicate that trust is not uniform, with some groups, particularly the auxiliary unit, expressing higher confidence in police accountability compared to ordinary citizens and barangay officials.

**Table 3.** Trustworthiness of police enforcement based on accountability.

Accountability Scale	Ordinary Citizens	Barangay Officials	Auxiliary Unit	Composite
1. Police personnel in Calbayog are being held responsible for instances of power abuse.	3.20 (MT)	3.25 (MT)	3.35 (CT)	3.27 (CT)
2. Citizens are shown respect and compassion.	3.18 (MT)	3.24 (MT)	3.33 (CT)	3.25 (MT)
3. Responsiveness to citizens' call is being showed by the police.	3.15 (MT)	3.10 (MT)	3.28 (CT)	3.18 (MT)
4. Police provide citizens with clear information regarding their policies and procedures.	3.12 (MT)	3.13 (MT)	3.30 (CT)	3.18 (MT)
5. Police are dedicated to public service and engaging with the community.	3.23 (MT)	3.22 (MT)	3.38 (CT)	3.28 (CT)
<b>Composite</b>	<b>3.18 (MT)</b>	<b>3.19 (MT)</b>	<b>3.33 (CT)</b>	<b>3.23 (MT)</b>

*Note:* 1.00–1.75 (*Not Trustworthy*); 1.76–2.50 (*Slightly Trustworthy*); 2.51–3.25 (*Mostly Trustworthy*); 3.26–4.00 (*Completely Trustworthy*).

In instances of power abuse, ordinary citizens (M=3.20) and barangay officials (M=3.25) both rated the police as mostly trustworthy. In contrast, the auxiliary unit provided a more positive response, rating the police as completely trustworthy (M=3.35). Regarding the respect and compassion shown by police officers toward citizens, ordinary citizens (M=3.18) and barangay officials (M=3.24) rated this aspect as mostly trustworthy. Meanwhile, the auxiliary unit offered a positive perception, rating this aspect as completely trustworthy (M=3.33). Both ordinary citizens (M=3.15) and barangay officials (M=3.10) evaluated the police's responsiveness to citizen calls as mostly trustworthy. However, the auxiliary unit assessed it more favorably, assigning a rating of completely trustworthy (M=3.28). Ordinary citizens (M=3.12) and barangay officials (M=3.13) consistently rated the police as mostly trustworthy in the provision of clear information on police policies and procedures. The auxiliary unit, however, viewed the police more positively, assigning a rating of completely trustworthy (M = 3.30). Lastly, the police's dedication to public service and community engagement was rated as mostly trustworthy by ordinary citizens (M = 3.23) and barangay officials (M = 3.22). Conversely, the auxiliary unit offered the highest evaluation, rating this aspect as completely trustworthy (M = 3.38).

Punch<sup>[57]</sup> examined the evolution of policing, its challenges in the USA and UK, and the centrality of trust and accountability in encouraging democratic and legitimate law enforcement. In shaping accountability, there is the existence of internal complexities of police organizations, the impact of misconduct and repressive practices on public trust, and the influence of socio-political dynamics, including social media, on modern policing<sup>[57]</sup>. Similarly, the findings suggested that accountability in police enforcement develops trust when officers take responsibility for power abuse, show respect and compassion, and respond promptly to citizens' concerns. Further, providing transparent information about policies and maintaining a strong commitment to public service and community engagement further reinforced trust. Both ordinary citizens and barangay officials of Calbayog City, Philippines rated police accountability as mostly trustworthy, in contrast to the completely trustworthy ratings given by the police themselves. This discrepancy is not necessarily negative, as it highlights the role of police enforcement in upholding high standards of integrity and accountability in policing<sup>[58]</sup>. Officers are expected to be accountable for their decisions, which justifies the need for significant scrutiny to ensure these principles are consistently maintained<sup>[59]</sup>.

## 5.2. Police enforcement transparency

The results for transparency scale yielded high trust levels from different groups of respondents. In **Table 4**, the findings indicated that the citizens of Calbayog City, Philippines were generally positive,

descriptively mostly trustworthy (M=2.74), about the transparency of police enforcement. However, the ordinary citizens had lingering skepticism about the openness and honesty of the police forces.

**Table 4.** Trustworthiness of police enforcement based on transparency.

Transparency Scale	Ordinary Citizens	Barangay Officials	Auxiliary Unit	Composite
1. The PNP Calbayog communicates effectively with the community.	2.23 (ST)	3.18 (MT)	3.23 (MT)	2.88 (MT)
2. Transparency and honesty are being strengthened with the community.	2.28 (ST)	3.20 (MT)	3.25 (MT)	2.91 (MT)
3. Public information is readily available to the public.	2.30 (ST)	2.33 (ST)	3.15 (MT)	2.59 (MT)
4. Feedback is treated as a tool for public service improvement.	2.45 (ST)	2.38 (ST)	3.20 (MT)	2.68 (MT)
5. During public dialogue and consultation, the police are transparent and open to any suggestions in situations that need decision-making.	2.35 (ST)	2.40 (ST)	3.18 (MT)	2.64 (MT)
<b>Composite</b>	<b>2.32 (ST)</b>	<b>2.70 (MT)</b>	<b>3.20 (MT)</b>	<b>2.74 (MT)</b>

*Note:* 1.00–1.75 (Not Trustworthy); 1.76–2.50 (Slightly Trustworthy); 2.51–3.25 (Mostly Trustworthy); 3.26–4.00 (Completely Trustworthy).

Ordinary citizens rated the police’s ability to communicate effectively with the community as slightly trustworthy (M = 2.23), while the barangay officials (M=3.18) and the auxiliary unit (M=3.23) evaluated it as mostly trustworthy. For honesty, ordinary citizens believed that the police enforcement was slightly trustworthy (M=2.28), while barangay officials (M=3.20) and the auxiliary unit (M=3.25) rated it as mostly trustworthy. Both ordinary citizens (M=2.30) and barangay officials (M=2.33) believed that the availability of public information was slightly trustworthy, whereas the auxiliary unit (M=3.15) rated it mostly trustworthy. Similarly, the feedback used for service improvement was slightly trustworthy for ordinary citizens (M=2.45) and barangay officials (M=2.38), but mostly trustworthy for the auxiliary unit (M=3.20). Lastly, the ordinary citizens (M=2.35) and the barangay officials (M=2.40) believed that the openness of the police enforcement was slightly trustworthy, but the auxiliary unit rated it as mostly trustworthy (M=3.20).

Transparency is a fundamental principle of police operations in many countries. It involves keeping state and local authorities, as well as the public, informed about police activities related to protecting citizens’ rights and freedoms, combating crime, and ensuring public safety through the dissemination and publication of relevant information<sup>[60]</sup>. However, the ordinary citizens expressed concerns regarding police enforcement in Calbayog City, Philippines, particularly in the context of transparency. While efforts were made to improve communication, strengthen honesty, and provide access to public information, gaps remain in achieving consistent transparency. For example, the limited availability of public information and the perceived inadequacy of community consultations highlighted potential barriers to building trust. One potential solution for building community trust is to develop effective communication with citizens using digital technologies<sup>[61-63]</sup>. Senior officers have emphasized communication platforms used to engage with the public as a key component of public accountability, contributing to the establishment of public support and the legitimacy of the police force<sup>[64]</sup>.

### 5.3. Police enforcement fairness

The trustworthiness of police enforcement based on fairness, as shown in **Table 5**, revealed mixed perceptions among the different groups. Generally, the perception on fairness was mostly trustworthy (M=2.71), with ordinary citizens rating the police lower at slightly trustworthy (M=2.44) compared to barangay officials and the auxiliary unit. These findings suggested that while strides had been made in



ensuring fairness, significant gaps persisted, particularly in how fairness was perceived by ordinary citizens compared to other groups.

**Table 5.** Trustworthiness of police enforcement based on fairness.

	Fairness Scale	Ordinary Citizens	Barangay Officials	Auxiliary Unit	Composite
1.	The PNP Calbayog treats all citizens fairly, regardless of their economic status	2.08 (ST)	2.20 (ST)	3.15 (MT)	2.48 (ST)
2.	Enforce the law in accordance with the constitution.	2.12 (ST)	2.14 (ST)	3.12 (MT)	2.46 (ST)
3.	Conduct fair and impartial investigation.	2.20 (ST)	2.28 (ST)	3.18 (MT)	2.55 (MT)
4.	Provide equal access to services and information to the public.	2.95 (MT)	3.10 (MT)	3.11 (MT)	3.05 (MT)
5.	Value everyone’s views and opinions by actively listening to understand their perspective.	2.85 (MT)	3.05 (MT)	3.10 (MT)	3.00 (MT)
	<b>Composite</b>	<b>2.44 (ST)</b>	<b>2.55 (MT)</b>	<b>3.13 (MT)</b>	<b>2.71 (MT)</b>

*Note:* 1.00–1.75 (*Not Trustworthy*); 1.76–2.50 (*Slightly Trustworthy*); 2.51–3.25 (*Mostly Trustworthy*); 3.26–4.00 (*Completely Trustworthy*).

Ordinary citizens (M=2.08) and barangay officials (M=2.20) perceived fair treatment regardless of economic status as slightly Trustworthy, indicating doubts about equitable treatment. However, the auxiliary unit rated it as mostly trustworthy (M=3.15), suggesting they saw the police as fair in handling people across different economic backgrounds. Both ordinary citizens (M=2.12) and barangay officials (M=2.14) believed that enforcing the law constitutionally was slightly trustworthy, reflecting uncertainty about the police’s commitment to upholding constitutional law. The auxiliary unit, however, expressed confidence (M=3.12) with mostly trustworthy rating. Ordinary citizens (M=2.20) and barangay officials (M=2.28) believed that the police enforcement was slightly trustworthy in conducting fair and impartial investigations. However, the auxiliary unit was mostly trustworthy (M=3.18) about their fair and impartial investigations. Notably, the ordinary citizens (M=2.95), barangay officials (M=2.10), and the auxiliary unit (M=3.05) believed that the police enforcement was mostly trustworthy in providing equal access to services and information. Lastly, the ordinary citizens (M=2.85), barangay officials (M=3.05), and the auxiliary unit (M=3.10) believed that the police enforcement was reasonably attentive to community perspectives with mostly trustworthy rating.

While prior studies suggest that effective crime control encourages trust, some scholars argued that police procedural fairness also helps in shaping the public’s trust in law enforcement<sup>[65,66]</sup>. Proponents of procedural fairness assert that it is a crucial aspect of police operations, with the public favoring the evaluation of police officers based on the fairness of their methods and decision-making during interactions<sup>[66,67]</sup>. For example, police officers in Calbayog City, Philippines organized community meetings where they create a space for residents to voice their concerns. Rather than simply presenting information, officers actively listened to the residents’ worries, took careful note of their suggestions, and showed effort to address any fears about safety. Public perceptions of fairness within the police organization are strong indicators of positive attitudes toward community service<sup>[68,69]</sup>. However, there were still necessary developments in building fairness in law enforcement, including the need for consistent application of the law across all social groups, improving transparency in decision-making processes, ensuring unbiased investigations and equal treatment of citizens, and enhancing community engagement to build trust and collaboration.

#### **5.4. Police enforcement community engagement**

In **Table 6**, the trustworthiness of police enforcement in Calbayog City, based on community engagement, showed varied perceptions across different groups. The composite trustworthiness rating was

mostly trustworthy (M=2.81), suggesting that the police were viewed positively in their efforts to engage with the community, but there were still areas for improvement.

**Table 6.** Trustworthiness of police enforcement based on community engagement.

Community Engagement Scale	Ordinary Citizens	Barangay Officials	Auxiliary Unit	Composite
1. Residents of Calbayog City have the opportunity to build stronger trust in their local police through community works.	3.29 (CT)	3.05 (MT)	3.03 (MT)	3.12 (MT)
2. Encouraging open communication and mutual respect between residents and police officers can help alleviate social problems.	2.95 (MT)	2.24 (ST)	2.15 (ST)	2.45 (ST)
3. Police officers have the chance to balance their authoritative role with meaningful community engagement efforts.	2.85 (MT)	2.28 (ST)	2.20 (ST)	2.44 (ST)
4. Residents can develop more positive attitudes towards police officers through shared experiences and mutual understanding, regardless of socio-economic status or political views.	2.80 (MT)	3.10 (MT)	3.05 (MT)	2.98 (MT)
5. Trust in police officers can be strengthened by addressing past injustices and promoting inclusivity.	2.90 (MT)	2.20 (ST)	2.15 (ST)	2.42 (ST)
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.96 (MT)</b>	<b>2.57 (MT)</b>	<b>2.52 (MT)</b>	<b>2.81 (MT)</b>

*Note:* 1.00–1.75 (Not Trustworthy); 1.76–2.50 (Slightly Trustworthy); 2.51–3.25 (Mostly Trustworthy); 3.26–4.00 (Completely Trustworthy).

Ordinary citizens rated the opportunities for trust building completely trustworthy (M=3.29), indicating strong confidence in the potential of community initiatives to encourage trust. In contrast, barangay officials (M=3.05) and the auxiliary unit (M=3.03) rated it as mostly trustworthy, reflecting moderate but positive perceptions of this engagement strategy. Ordinary citizens were generally positive about the effectiveness of open communication (M=2.95) rated as mostly trustworthy. However, barangay officials (M=2.24) and the auxiliary unit (M=2.15), highlighting their doubts about whether communication and respect were sufficient to resolve social issues. Similarly, the ordinary citizens again rated authoritative roles more favorably, mostly trustworthy (M=2.85), emphasizing effort needed to balance police enforcement roles. However, barangay officials (M=2.28) and the auxiliary unit (M=2.20) rated it as slightly trustworthy indicating that more work was needed in this aspect. Remarkably, the ordinary citizens (M=2.80), barangay officials (M=3.10), and the auxiliary unit (M=3.05) were generally positive, being mostly trustworthy, indicating inclination towards how experiences could develop positive attitudes towards police enforcements. Lastly, the ordinary citizens believed that the police enforcement was mostly trustworthy (M=2.90) in addressing past injustices and promoting inclusivity, while both barangay officials (M=2.20) and auxiliary unit (M=2.15) believed it was slightly trustworthy.

Law enforcement agencies must prioritize cooperation to strengthen relationships with the communities they serve<sup>[70]</sup>. (Modise, 2023). It is essential that both the police and the community actively participate in this process, as effective functioning depends on mutual engagement<sup>[71]</sup>. In Calbayog City, Philippines, ordinary citizens demonstrated significant trust in the police enforcement in terms of community engagement. Local police can enhance trust and develop a sense of partnership by collaborating with residents on community projects and promoting open communication and mutual respect to address social issues and ensure peaceful coexistence. Similarly, studies highlight that enhancing public involvement can be achieved by increasing awareness of community policing efforts, establishing systems and frameworks that encourage active participation, and implementing methods that ensure fairness and respect toward individuals<sup>[72-74]</sup>. There is potential for improvement in police-community relations in Calbayog City. Police officers could balance their authority with increased community engagement, showing approachability and empathy. In

addition, addressing past injustices, promoting inclusivity, and engaging citizens from diverse backgrounds would enhance trust, fairness, and collaboration, ultimately strengthening public safety and justice.

## **6. Limitations**

While the study offers understanding about public trust towards police enforcement in Calbayog City, several limitations should be acknowledged. One key limitation is the sample size, which may not fully represent the entire population of Calbayog City. The study included only a limited number of respondents from specific groups—ordinary citizens, barangay officials, and the auxiliary unit—thus limiting the generalizability of the findings to other sectors of the community. Another limitation is the sampling process, which used purposive sampling to select participants based on specific criteria. While this method allowed for the inclusion of individuals who were directly involved with or affected by police operations, it may have introduced bias, as it did not account for random selection. Furthermore, the methods used in the study, like questionnaires, may not capture the full complexity of the respondents' perceptions. The structured nature of these tools may have limited the depth of responses, preventing participants from fully expressing their thoughts and experiences. Similarly, the study relied on self-reported data, which can be influenced by social desirability bias or participants' reluctance to provide honest answers, particularly in sensitive areas such as police accountability and transparency. Lastly, the generalizability of the findings is limited by the specific context of Calbayog City. Replicating the study in other cities or regions with varying characteristics would be essential to understanding the broader implications of police accountability, transparency, and fairness on public trust. Future studies could expand the sample size to include a broader range of community members, ensuring that the results are more representative of the general population. While the study provides valuable insights into local perceptions of police performance, the findings may not be applicable to other regions with different socio-political dynamics or law enforcement structures.

## **7. Conclusion**

The results of the study on police accountability, transparency, fairness, and community engagement in Calbayog City, Philippines revealed important preliminary data about public trust towards local police force. Generally, ordinary citizens and barangay officials rated the police as mostly trustworthy across most scales, while the auxiliary unit exhibited higher trust levels, often rating the police as completely trustworthy. Despite these positive evaluations, the study also highlighted discrepancies in perceptions, particularly with ordinary citizens expressing more skepticism in the areas of transparency, fairness, and community engagement. This divergence in trust levels underscored the need for further improvements in how police officers interact with the community, focusing on better communication, equitable treatment, and increased engagement with diverse socio-economic and political groups. While strides have been made in certain areas, such as building trust through accountability and community initiatives, the study also highlighted persistent challenges in ensuring transparency and fairness, particularly in addressing past grievances and promoting inclusivity. Thus, while trust in the police force exists, it remains a work in progress, requiring continued effort to ensure greater transparency, fairness, and collaboration between the police and the community.

The findings of this study suggest several key recommendations for improving police-community relations and enhancing public trust in law enforcement in Calbayog City. First, police officers should be encouraged to balance their authoritative role with more active participation in community engagement initiatives. It is also crucial for the police to address past injustices and work towards fostering inclusivity in their practices. Implementing comprehensive training programs focused on communication, fairness, and conflict resolution can help officers handle sensitive issues more effectively and empathetically. The use of

digital platforms for communication and public engagement should be prioritized. This will help to build greater trust and accountability among the public, especially for those who may feel disconnected from traditional communication channels. Lastly, it is recommended that the police conduct regular public forums and community meetings, allowing residents to voice their concerns and engage in open dialogue with officers. Such initiatives can contribute to the continuous improvement of police practices and ensure that community perspectives are taken into account when shaping law enforcement policies.

## **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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