

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Analysis of community participation practices on law enforcement: Observable effects on Peace and order

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored community participation practices in supporting local law enforcement at the barangay level in Eastern Visayas, Philippines. A total of 20 participants—including seven barangay tanods, eight purok leaders, and five local constituents—were purposively selected. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. Findings show complementary roles across community actors: tanods provide frontline visibility (patrols, curfew support, de-escalation), while purok leaders organize meetings, mobilize residents, and mediate minor disputes. Citizen engagement—via prompt reporting, group messaging, and assembly participation—was associated with quicker responses, fewer petty conflicts, and a stronger sense of collective responsibility. Perceived challenges included fear of retaliation, uneven participation, coordination lapses, and occasional partiality in informal mediation. Overall, community participation appears to enhance vigilance, trust, and responsiveness, but sustained impact depends on consistent coordination, impartial processes, and supportive mechanisms (e.g., training and anonymous reporting). The study recommends capacity-building in conflict mediation, improved protection and reporting protocols, and structured feedback channels to strengthen participatory governance and localized peacekeeping.

Keywords: Community; participation; law enforcement; peace and order

1. Introduction

Maintaining peace and order at the barangay level in the Philippines is a shared responsibility between law enforcement agencies and the community. Barangay tanods, purok leaders, and local constituents play pivotal roles in supporting local law enforcement efforts. Despite the recognition of their contributions, there remains a significant gap in understanding the specific practices of community participation and their observable effects on peace and order. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the community participation practices of barangay tanods, purok leaders, and constituents, and examining the perceived effects of such involvement on maintaining peace and order at the barangay level.

Unlike neighborhood organizations in many other countries, barangays are legally mandated as the smallest political units of government in the Philippines, with formal authority to maintain peace and order.

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This structure represents a unique governance model that institutionalizes grassroots participation by combining state mandate with civic responsibility. In contrast, community policing in other parts of Southeast Asia or Latin America is often voluntary or less formalized. This distinctiveness positions the barangay as an important case for examining participatory governance in practice.

Key variables in this study include community participation practices and observable effects on peace and order. Topics of interest encompass community policing, citizen engagement, conflict resolution, and local governance. The study integrates key concepts such as participatory governance, social capital, and community resilience, drawing from both national and international literature. The integration of frameworks that examine self-initiated protection behavior and policy awareness, as found in research on the Magna Carta for women workers^[1-2], further informs the study's focus on policy-informed participation.

To situate this study, both national and international perspectives on community-oriented policing and citizen engagement are relevant. Nationally, programs such as the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Teams and the Revitalized Pulis sa Barangay (R-PSB) highlight state initiatives to strengthen community collaboration in law enforcement. Internationally, scholarship on community policing underscores the value of citizen engagement in enhancing trust, vigilance, and preventive action. These strands of literature inform an analysis of how barangay tanods, purok leaders, and residents work collectively to maintain safety and resolve conflicts.

This study aims to contribute to these discussions by exploring the community participation practices of barangay tanods, purok leaders, and constituents, and by examining the perceived effects of such involvement on peace and order at the barangay level in Eastern Visayas.

The research is guided by the following questions: (1) What community participation practices do barangay tanods, purok leaders, and constituents engage in to support local law enforcement efforts?; and (2) What are the perceived effects of community involvement in law enforcement on maintaining peace and order at the barangay level?

2. Literature review

2.1. Community participation in local governance

Community participation is a cornerstone of democratic governance, ensuring transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. Globally, participatory structures such as citizens' councils and neighborhood associations have been established to institutionalize civic engagement in policymaking. In the Philippines, initiatives such as the establishment of People's Councils allow civil society organizations to participate directly in local government unit (LGU) decision-making processes, fostering a more inclusive approach to development^[3]. These mechanisms echo broader principles of inclusive governance, including efforts to amplify marginalized voices, such as in gender mainstreaming campaigns that often face setbacks due to cultural attitudes and digital behaviors^[4].

2.2. The role of barangay tanods in peace and order

Barangay tanods serve as the frontline force in community peacekeeping, with responsibilities spanning crime prevention, traffic management, and emergency assistance^[5]. Training programs in municipalities such as Pavia, Iloilo, and Cebu City have underscored the importance of traffic control and community policing as part of barangay-level safety strategies^[6-7]. These initiatives highlight the evolving role of tanods from traditional night-watch functions to proactive agents of public safety. However, their effectiveness may be constrained by limited awareness of legal frameworks and citizen protections—gaps similar to those observed among teachers regarding knowledge of their own legal rights^[8-9].

2.3. Purok leaders and community mobilization

Purok leaders act as vital intermediaries between barangay councils and residents. They not only assist in implementing programs but also mobilize residents for collective initiatives. Leadership qualities—particularly communication skills—have been shown to significantly influence the effectiveness of grassroots participation^[3]. Furthermore, emotional connection and delivery styles, as evidenced in public training contexts, play a critical role in mobilization and resonance with constituents^[10].

2.4. National programs and policy directions

At the national level, the Philippines has implemented programs designed to strengthen community–law enforcement collaboration. The Barangay Peacekeeping Action Teams (BPAT) and the Revitalized Pulis sa Barangay (R-PSB) initiative in Region 11 illustrate how government policy institutionalizes the role of grassroots actors in maintaining peace and order^[11]. Beyond these peacekeeping efforts, broader reforms aimed at strengthening public integrity and accountability—particularly among local officials with administrative functions—reflect ongoing attempts to enhance governance structures^[12].

2.5. Citizen engagement and satisfaction with governance

Citizen participation directly correlates with satisfaction in local governance. Arrabaca and Base^[13] found that active involvement in barangay assemblies improves citizen satisfaction, particularly when feedback mechanisms such as post-assembly evaluations are utilized to ensure community voices are acknowledged. Building trust is especially important in addressing socially sensitive issues—such as same-sex relationships—where engagement is deeply shaped by religious and cultural norms^[14-15].

2.6. Training and capacity building for community leaders

Effective peacekeeping depends on continuous training and capacity building for barangay tanods and local leaders. Studies emphasize that competencies in conflict resolution, first aid, disaster response, and traffic management are strengthened through professional development programs^[16-18]. Beyond technical skills, soft skills and confidence—often identified as challenges even for academic leaders in public speaking^[19]—are equally essential for barangay leaders to perform effectively in high-pressure, real-world contexts.

2.7. Community-oriented policing and international comparisons

Internationally, studies highlight how community-oriented policing fosters trust and improves safety outcomes. Foundational works^[20-22] show that citizen engagement can strengthen law enforcement legitimacy and crime prevention. In Latin America, neighborhood watch programs and in Southeast Asia, citizen-driven safety initiatives often rely on voluntary cooperation, but they lack the legally mandated structure of the Philippine barangay system. Comparative perspectives thus highlight the distinctiveness of barangay governance as a formalized, institutionalized model of grassroots peacekeeping. Emerging scholarship has also noted the relevance of behavioral and communication dynamics in digital and community spaces^[23]—for instance, strong language in online gaming environments shaping youth attitudes and engagement^[24] suggesting future directions for youth-oriented peacekeeping strategies.

2.8. Challenges in community participation

Despite its benefits, community participation faces persistent barriers. Limited awareness of governance processes, inadequate training, and scarce resources undermine effectiveness^[16]. Socioeconomic instability during the COVID-19 pandemic further constrained participation, particularly among low-income families balancing modular learning with household demands^[25-26]. Cultural and social norms also shape participation—whether through religious values emphasizing forgiveness and reconciliation^[27] or

expectations surrounding service delivery, as reflected in Filipino customer service practices^[28]. These challenges underscore the need for sustained policy reform, targeted training, and supportive infrastructure to strengthen grassroots governance.

2.9. Research gap and study contribution

The reviewed literature affirms the critical role of barangay tanods, purok leaders, and citizen engagement in local governance and peacekeeping. However, most studies emphasize structural policies, training programs, or institutional mechanisms, with less focus on the lived experiences and everyday practices of grassroots actors. Few works situate barangay governance within international comparisons, despite its distinctiveness as a legally mandated, institutionalized model of community peacekeeping. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the practices and perceived effects of community participation in Eastern Visayas, contributing a grounded account of how participatory governance, social capital, and resilience are operationalized at the barangay level.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study adopts a qualitative exploratory research design to examine the community participation practices of barangay tanods, purok leaders, and constituents, and to assess their perceived effects on maintaining peace and order at the barangay level. The design is appropriate for exploring under-researched phenomena and for gaining in-depth insights into the lived experiences and subjective perceptions of community actors involved in grassroots governance and peacekeeping.

3.2. Population and sampling

The study focused on barangay tanods, purok leaders, and local constituents from Eastern Visayas. A total of 20 participants were included, comprising seven (7) barangay tanods, eight (8) purok leaders, and five (5) residents. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation from key community actors directly engaged in peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Inclusion criteria required that barangay tanods and purok leaders be currently serving in their official roles and that resident participants be active members of their barangay, with prior involvement in community safety or local governance activities.

This sample size was deemed appropriate for a qualitative study employing reflexive thematic analysis, as it allowed for in-depth exploration of perspectives while reaching thematic saturation. However, the relatively small sample and concentration in Eastern Visayas may limit the generalizability of findings to other regions of the Philippines. The results should therefore be interpreted as context-specific insights that provide valuable depth but not broad statistical representation. Their demographic distribution by role, gender, and age is presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Participant demographics by role, gender, and age

Role	Number of Participants	Male (n)	Female (n)	Age Range (years)
Barangay Tanods	7	5	2	28–55
Purok Leaders	8	4	4	30–60
Local Constituents	5	2	3	25–50
Total	20	11	9	

3.3. Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to elicit in-depth accounts of community participation in local law enforcement. Questions probed (a) specific activities undertaken by tanods, purok leaders, and residents; (b) patterns of collaboration in addressing conflicts and disturbances; and (c) perceived effects of participation on peace and order. The guide was expert-reviewed and pilot-tested for clarity before field use. (See **Table 2** for the question set.)

Table 2. Interview guide questions.

Objectives	Interview question
1. To explore the community participation practices of barangay tanods, purok leaders, and constituents in supporting local law enforcement efforts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What roles or activities do you participate in to help maintain safety and enforce rules in your community? 2. How do barangay tanods, purok leaders, and community members work together in addressing local issues or conflicts? 3. Can you describe a time when community cooperation played a key role in solving a law enforcement concern?
2. To examine the perceived effects of community involvement in law enforcement on maintaining peace and order at the barangay level.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How has community involvement in law enforcement affected the overall peace and safety in your area? 2. What changes have you observed in crime prevention or conflict resolution due to active participation of community members? 3. In your opinion, what are the strengths and limitations of community participation in maintaining peace and order?

3.4. Data gathering procedure

This study utilized a qualitative approach through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with barangay tanods, purok leaders, and local constituents from selected barangays in the Philippines. Prior to data collection, formal approval was obtained from barangay councils, and the interview guide was reviewed by experts and pilot-tested for clarity. Using purposive sampling, 20 participants were selected based on their active roles in peace and order efforts. Interviews, lasting 30 to 45 minutes, were conducted in quiet, private locations within the barangay, with informed consent obtained beforehand. Ethical considerations, such as confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the use of pseudonyms, were strictly observed. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim within 48 hours, reviewed for accuracy, and validated through member checking with select participants. This process ensured the collection of context-rich, credible data for subsequent thematic analysis. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached, with no new substantive themes emerging in the final interviews.

3.5. Data analysis

The study used reflexive thematic analysis^[29] to examine interview data from barangay tanods, purok leaders, and local constituents. Transcripts were read repeatedly for familiarization, then coded to identify ideas related to community participation and peacekeeping. Codes were organized into themes and subthemes, which were reviewed and refined to ensure alignment with participants' experiences. The six phases of reflexive thematic analysis are shown in **Figure 1**, with the process applied iteratively to allow refinement. Member checking was conducted by sharing thematic summaries with selected participants, enhancing the credibility of interpretations.

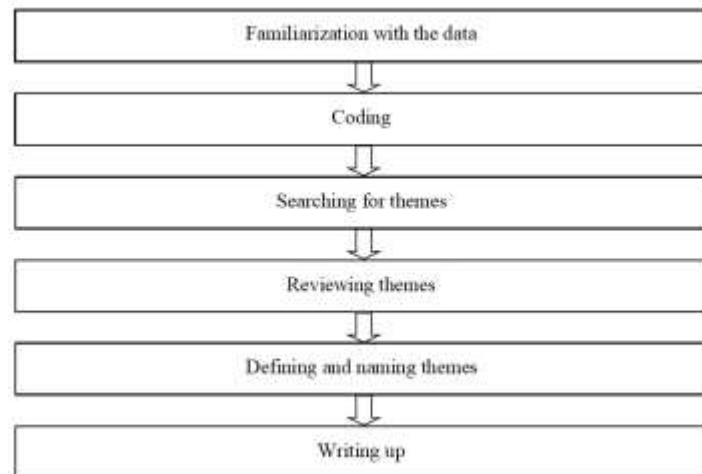


Figure 1. Six steps in conducting reflexive thematic analysis

4. Results

Research Objectives 1. To explore the community participation practices of barangay tanods, purok leaders, and constituents in supporting local law enforcement efforts.

Question No. 1. What roles or activities do you participate in to help maintain safety and enforce rules in your community?

1.1 Crime Prevention and Community Surveillance

Half of the respondents (10/20) reported that barangay tanods regularly conducted patrols, particularly at night, to deter criminal activities and maintain community safety. Their responsibilities included enforcing curfews, resolving minor neighborhood disputes, and coordinating with barangay captains and local police when necessary. Respondents also emphasized their role during emergencies, such as assisting in evacuations and maintaining public order.

Beyond these duties, tanods described patrols as a preventive strategy that enabled early identification of suspicious behavior and reduced risks of theft, vandalism, and altercations. Their presence in high-risk areas, such as schools, sari-sari stores, and dimly lit alleyways, was viewed as both a deterrent to crime and a source of reassurance for residents.

“I regularly patrol our streets, especially at night, to deter any criminal activities. I also assist in implementing curfews and help resolve minor disputes between neighbors.”

“Patrolling helps us identify suspicious behavior early and prevent crimes such as theft, physical altercations, and vandalism.”

1.2 Community Meetings and Assemblies

Seven (7) participants explained that they organized or attended community meetings to discuss safety protocols, sanitation, and fire prevention. Assemblies were also opportunities to update residents on ordinances and to raise practical concerns such as streetlight repairs or drainage issues. Such gatherings promoted transparency, fostered cooperation, and encouraged residents to take part in decision-making processes.

“We hold monthly meetings to discuss safety, upcoming events, and immediate concerns.”

"Attending assemblies helps us stay informed about new ordinances and projects."

1.3 Participation in Barangay Assemblies and Consultations

Three respondents (3/20) reported participating in barangay assemblies and monitoring their surroundings for suspicious behavior. They also contributed to safety by promoting disaster preparedness, volunteering during events, and assisting with tasks such as crowd control or health monitoring. Assemblies were viewed as valuable venues for staying informed about ordinances, safety measures, and projects, as well as for raising concerns on infrastructure and sanitation. Respondents emphasized that participation fostered transparency and demonstrated community support.

"I participate by attending barangay assemblies and reporting any suspicious behavior in our area. I also help promote safety by educating my neighbors about disaster preparedness."

"Attending assemblies helps me stay informed about new ordinances, safety measures, and community projects."

Question No. 2. How do barangay tanods, purok leaders, and community members work together in addressing local issues or conflicts?

2.1 First Responders in Local Incidents

Ten respondents (10/20) reported that barangay tanods were typically the first to respond to community problems such as disputes or thefts. They were notified by purok leaders or directly by residents and worked to calm situations, gather details, and escalate cases to the barangay captain if necessary. Respondents emphasized the importance of reliable community reporting, which enabled them to act fairly and quickly. As trained responders, tanods aimed to de-escalate domestic disputes, street fights, and nighttime disturbances, while also maintaining records to monitor repeated offenses.

"When there's a problem in the community like a noisy dispute or a case of theft we're usually the first to respond. Purok leaders inform us right away or the residents report to us directly. We work with the purok leader to calm the situation, gather details, and report to the barangay captain if needed."

"As tanods, we are trained to act quickly and de-escalate situations before they get worse. Whether it's domestic issues, street fights, or disturbances at night, we are on call and make sure to assess the situation without bias."

2.2 First Point of Contact for Local Issues

Five respondents (5/20) reported that purok leaders often served as the first point of contact for local issues. Minor conflicts were typically mediated at their level, while more serious or safety-related concerns were referred to barangay tanods. Respondents noted that residents generally cooperated due to trust and familiarity, as purok leaders lived closely with their neighbors and were approachable. Issues ranged from family disputes to street maintenance, and early intervention was seen as essential to preventing escalation.

"As a purok leader, I serve as the first point of contact for most local issues. If it's a minor conflict, I talk to both sides and try to resolve it. If the situation becomes heated or involves safety concerns, I call the barangay tanod to assist. Residents usually cooperate because they trust us."

"Since we live closely with our neighbors, they usually feel more comfortable approaching us first. Issues range from family arguments to street maintenance concerns."

2.3 Reporting Conflicts and Concerns Responsibly

Five respondents (5/20) reported that when conflicts such as loud arguments or neighborhood disputes arose, they informed their purok leader or barangay tanods rather than confronting individuals directly. They emphasized that purok leaders were trusted to listen and act, while residents supported peace by avoiding gossip and attending community meetings. Participants also highlighted that reporting recurring issues such as domestic violence or disruptive behavior to authorities helped maintain safety and prevented escalation.

"When there's a conflict, like loud arguments or neighborhood issues, we tell our purok leader or report it to the tanods. We know our purok leader will listen and take action."

"As residents, we don't take matters into our own hands. If we notice repeated arguments, domestic violence, or disruptive behavior, we inform the proper authorities instead of confronting people directly."

Question No. 3. Can you describe a time when community cooperation played a key role in solving a law enforcement concern?

3.1 Identifying the Pattern of Criminal Activity

Eight respondents (8/20) recounted a series of petty thefts in their barangay, such as stolen bicycles and clothing, which were addressed through coordinated nightly patrols involving purok leaders and resident volunteers. Community members contributed by reporting suspicious activity, and one provided CCTV footage that helped identify the suspect, a newcomer to the area. Respondents noted that most incidents occurred between 11:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. in poorly lit locations. Collective vigilance and information sharing ultimately led to the suspect's apprehension and the cessation of thefts, illustrating the effectiveness of coordinated community action.

"There was a time when we had a series of petty thefts in our barangay bicycles and clothes disappearing at night. We coordinated with purok leaders and conducted nightly patrols with help from some volunteers."

"Residents began to speak up, which helped us identify that the incidents weren't random but targeted and possibly done by someone familiar with the area."

3.2 Nature of the Conflict and Early Signs

Six respondents (6/20) recounted cases where community cooperation prevented conflicts from escalating into formal complaints. In one instance, a feud between two households was resolved through dialogue facilitated by community elders and barangay tanods in the barangay hall, with witnesses present. Participants also described a boundary dispute that had escalated into daily arguments and threats until neighbors intervened, prompting mediation before the situation became unmanageable. These examples illustrated the community's role as mediator in addressing disputes peacefully.

"Both families agreed to meet in the barangay hall with witnesses present. We resolved the issue peacefully, avoiding any legal action. It was a good example of how the community can act as a mediator before problems escalate into formal complaints."

"Neighbors began to worry about their safety. That was when I decided it needed intervention before it got out of hand."

3.3 Immediate Reporting and Coordination with Barangay Tanods

Six respondents (6/20) recalled an incident where a suspected break-in was prevented through swift community action. Neighbors immediately contacted the barangay tanod, checked on the household, and one resident discreetly followed the suspect until tanods apprehended the individual nearby. This case further demonstrated the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms (see Section 2.4).

"One night, there was a loud commotion someone was trying to break into a neighbor's house. A few of us in the area called the barangay tanod and even went outside to check on our neighbor."

Research Objectives 2. To examine the perceived effects of community involvement in law enforcement on maintaining peace and order at the barangay level.

Question No. 1. How has community involvement in law enforcement affected the overall peace and safety in your area?

Enhanced Community Vigilance

Seven respondents (7/20) reported that community involvement enabled residents to become more alert and proactive. Early reporting of family disputes, suspicious persons, or disturbances allowed issues to be addressed before escalation. Respondents emphasized that patrolling responsibilities were no longer carried out solely by barangay tanods but were increasingly shared with residents. This vigilance was supported by reliable communication channels, further discussed in Section 2.4.

"Community involvement has made our job easier and more effective. Residents are now more alert and proactive. They report issues early whether it's a family dispute, a suspicious person, or a minor disturbance so we can respond before it escalates."

1.2 Active Community Engagement in Programs

Six respondents (6/20) reported that encouraging active participation in initiatives such as clean-up drives, group patrols, and regular meetings contributed to a noticeable decrease in crime and conflict. They emphasized that peacekeeping was no longer viewed solely as the responsibility of barangay officials but as a collective duty of all community members. This shift was associated with increased mutual respect among residents and greater involvement of young people in safety programs.

Respondents also highlighted that activities such as Bayanihan sa Purok fostered a sense of ownership and accountability. Even small acts of participation, such as joining a single clean-up or patrol, were perceived to strengthen residents' attachment to their community. These activities were described not only as efforts to maintain cleanliness but also as meaningful contributions to protecting and safeguarding the barangay.

"Since we started encouraging active participation, such as clean-up drives, group patrols, and regular meetings, crime and conflict have decreased significantly. People now understand that peacekeeping isn't just the tanod's job or the barangay captain's responsibility it's everyone's."

"Activities like 'Bayanihan sa Purok' encourage everyone to take ownership of their surroundings. When people join even just for one clean-up or patrol, they begin to care more about the community."

1.3 Increased Sense of Security Through Mutual Watchfulness

Seven respondents (7/20) reported feeling safer due to collective vigilance, noting fewer thefts, reduced street violence, and quicker responses to issues. Purok group chats and assemblies were viewed as effective channels for communication and connection, encouraging residents to take concerns more seriously. Even small actions—such as reporting a broken light or a suspicious vehicle—were described as reassuring, particularly for vulnerable groups like older adults and children.

"I feel much safer knowing that everyone in the community is watching out for each other. We've seen fewer thefts, less street violence, and faster responses when issues arise. The purok group chats and assemblies make us feel heard, and we're more connected than ever."

"Even small things like someone texting in the group chat when a light is out or a suspicious vehicle is parked too long help us feel protected."

Question No. 2. What changes have you observed in crime prevention or conflict resolution due to active participation of community members?

2.1 Early Reporting and Faster Resolution

Seven respondents (7/20) reported that community involvement enabled faster resolution of issues without frequent reliance on police intervention. Petty thefts and neighbor disputes, which previously lingered, were now resolved more quickly due to early reporting and assistance from residents. This reduced physical altercations and vandalism in public areas. Respondents emphasized that such improvements were strongly linked to communication mechanisms (see Section 2.4).

"Because of the community's involvement, we now resolve many issues faster and without needing police intervention. Before, petty thefts and neighbor disputes would drag on because no one would speak up. "

2.2 Increased Awareness of Barangay Rules and Responsibilities

Five respondents (5/20) reported that conflicts rarely escalated due to greater resident participation in meetings and patrols. Increased awareness of barangay rules reduced violations, while openness to dialogue encouraged peaceful, local solutions, often facilitated by elders and neighbors. Respondents also noted that explaining the rationale behind ordinances—such as curfews, noise restrictions, and health measures—fostered voluntary compliance, reducing the need for formal warnings.

"One big change is that conflicts rarely escalate now. Since more residents attend meetings and take part in patrols, they are more aware of barangay rules and are less likely to break them. Also, people are more open to dialogue."

"During meetings, we explain not just the rules but also the reasons behind them—like curfews, anti-noise ordinances, and health safety measures."

2.3 Empowerment Through Community Awareness

Eight respondents (8/20) reported that whereas residents were once hesitant to report crimes, they had become more confident due to clearer systems of support and information drives. Barangay initiatives—such

as assemblies, rights-awareness campaigns, and guidance on anonymous reporting—were perceived to empower community members, including housewives and senior citizens, to contribute by staying alert and reporting concerns. Respondents emphasized that this shift fostered a stronger sense of responsibility and collective vigilance, leading to a more peaceful environment.

“Before, people were scared to report crimes. Now, we feel more confident because we know there’s a system and support.”

“The information drives by the barangay about our rights, how to report anonymously, and what services are available really helped us. It’s not just about fear anymore. We know what to do, where to go, and who to talk to.”

2.4 Communication and Rapid Reporting Mechanisms

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of reliable communication channels, such as purok group chats, barangay hotlines, and assemblies, in enabling timely interventions. These tools allowed residents to report concerns immediately, which facilitated faster responses from tanods and discouraged escalation. Respondents noted that even small actions, such as notifying leaders about broken streetlights or suspicious vehicles, enhanced both vigilance and the sense of community security.

“Now, if there’s a loud argument or suspicious person in the area, someone notifies us right away, often through text or the purok group chat.”

“The quick response from the tanods showed how important it is to know emergency numbers and have a clear reporting process in place.”

Question No. 3. In your opinion, what are the strengths and limitations of community participation in maintaining peace and order?

3.1 Shared Responsibility and Coordination Challenges

Six respondents (6/20) reported that the greatest strength of community participation was the sense of shared responsibility, as they no longer felt isolated in maintaining peace and order. Cooperation—through providing information, joining patrols, or remaining vigilant—was perceived to make the work of barangay tanods easier while enhancing overall community safety. Respondents further observed that collective vigilance discouraged criminal activity, as offenders were less likely to target communities where residents actively supported one another.

However, participants also identified limitations. They noted that involvement was not always consistent, with some residents becoming active only when directly affected. In addition, instances occurred where individuals acted independently without proper coordination, which at times created confusion or even exacerbated conflicts.

“The biggest strength is that we’re no longer left alone. When residents cooperate like giving tips, joining patrols, or just being vigilant it makes our job easier and the community safer.”

“Not everyone is consistent. Some are active only when something happens near them. Also, there are times when people take matters into their own hands without coordination, which can create confusion or even worsen the situation.”

3.2 Community-Based Conflict Resolution and the Need for Impartiality

Ten respondents (10/20) reported that community involvement promoted early resolution of conflicts, as timely reporting and neighbor intervention prevented escalation and fostered accountability. However, participants also acknowledged limitations, noting that personal biases sometimes influenced fairness and that limited training in mediation occasionally resulted in ineffective or unequal resolutions.

“If neighbors intervene or report issues early, it prevents bigger problems. It builds relationships and accountability.”

“Sometimes, personal biases affect fairness. Some people side with friends or relatives even when they’re wrong.”

3.3 Empowerment Through Participation vs. Fear of Retaliation

Four respondents (4/20) reported that participation gave them a sense of empowerment and satisfaction, as they were no longer reliant solely on officials but actively contributed to creating a safer environment for their families. Community involvement was described as fostering unity and visible improvements in neighborhood safety. However, participants also acknowledged persistent challenges, including fear of retaliation from influential individuals, lack of protection, distrust in authorities, and social stigma, which discouraged some residents from speaking up or engaging fully.

“It feels good to be part of the solution. We’re not just waiting for officials to act. When we help by attending meetings or watching over the neighborhood we’re creating a better place for our families.”

“There’s still fear, especially when the people involved in trouble are influential or known troublemakers. Some of us are still hesitant to speak up, especially without assurance of protection.”

5. Discussion

This study explored the practices, effects, and perceived strengths and limitations of community participation in supporting local law enforcement, particularly within barangay-level systems. The analysis highlights a robust, community-centered framework for peacekeeping, grounded in cooperation, proactive engagement, and shared accountability.

Findings reveal that barangay tanods and purok leaders perform complementary roles. Tanods act as frontline enforcers, conducting patrols, assisting with curfews, and providing immediate responses during emergencies. These practices align with community policing frameworks, where local engagement enhances law enforcement legitimacy, responsiveness, and crime prevention^[20-22]. Purok leaders facilitate communication, mediate minor disputes, and organize collective initiatives, reflecting principles of participatory governance, where multiple stakeholders are engaged in decision-making and problem-solving^[30-31].

Participation in barangay assemblies demonstrates how civic engagement fosters social capital, building trust and reciprocity among residents and leaders. Residents’ willingness to report issues through structured channels rather than intervening directly reflects growing confidence in local institutions and strengthens community cohesion. These findings extend previous literature on community policing by highlighting the formalized, institutionalized model of barangay governance, which contrasts with voluntary neighborhood watch programs observed internationally^[24].

The study also shows that community participation contributes to preventive law enforcement outcomes. Coordinated patrolling, resident vigilance, and mediation of disputes reduce crime and conflict escalation.

This outcome supports theories emphasizing the role of dense social networks and collective efficacy in sustaining safe communities^[31-32]. Furthermore, youth and senior citizen involvement demonstrates the multi-generational dimension of participatory governance, reinforcing resilience and civic responsibility.

While community involvement enhances responsiveness and empowerment, challenges remain. Inconsistent participation, coordination gaps, and potential biases in conflict mediation underscore the need for targeted training, protective mechanisms, and continuous capacity building, consistent with literature emphasizing the importance of skills development for local peacekeeping actors^[16, 19]. Cultural and social norms also influence participation, echoing prior findings on the interplay between societal values and citizen engagement^[33, 28].

Additionally, respondents noted concerns over impartiality in conflict mediation. Personal relationships and biases occasionally interfere with fair resolution processes. Moreover, fear of retaliation, especially when dealing with influential individuals or known troublemakers, remains a barrier for some community members. These findings highlight the need for additional training in conflict resolution and the establishment of protective mechanisms to ensure the safety of those who report issues.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study affirm the critical role of community participation in maintaining peace and order at the barangay level. The coordinated efforts of barangay tanods, purok leaders, and residents have created an ecosystem of shared vigilance, trust, and responsive action. While there are challenges to consistency and impartiality, the prevailing community culture supports the idea that safety is a collective responsibility, not the sole duty of formal authorities.

To enhance these efforts further, future initiatives should include capacity-building programs for conflict mediation, more inclusive safety protocols, and structured platforms for anonymous reporting. Strengthening the infrastructure for participatory governance will ensure that communities remain empowered, resilient, and secure.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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