



## **BETWEEN LAW AND LIFE: THE EVERYDAY REALITIES OF COMMUNITY-BASED LAW ENFORCERS IN MAINTAINING PEACE AND ORDER**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Maintaining peace and order at the community level is a fundamental concern in local governance, with community-based law enforcers (barangay tanod) serving as one of the most essential yet frequently overlooked components of community-based public safety in the Philippines. This study examined the lived experiences of ten barangay tanods actively serving in five barangays, focusing on the nature of their roles, the challenges they encounter, and the personal convictions that sustain their service. A qualitative phenomenological research design was adopted, and Colaizzi's method of data analysis was applied to narratives gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Gumarang Jr., 2021). Six central themes emerged from the analysis: (A) Multifaceted Role of a Barangay Tanod; (B) Challenges and Sacrifices; (C) De-escalation and Communication as Core Skills; (D) Personal Growth and Transformation Through Service; (E) Community Cooperation as the Foundation of Peace; and (F) Intrinsic Motivation and Sense of Calling. The findings revealed that despite facing considerable physical risks and receiving minimal institutional recognition, Barangay Tanods demonstrated an unwavering sense of dedication and commitment toward their communities. These findings carry significant implications for local government units, barangay officials, policymakers, and researchers committed to strengthening community-based law enforcement in the Philippines.

**Keywords:** *Barangay Tanod, Community-Based Law Enforcement, Lived Experiences, Peace and Order, Phenomenological Study*

## INTRODUCTION

Maintaining local security through community policing and auxiliary law enforcement actors is a pressing global concern. Across countries, community-based policing initiatives aim to build trust, improve responsiveness, and share responsibility for public safety; however, implementation faces persistent challenges such as limited resources, unclear role definitions, inconsistent training, and pressures from crime trends and political dynamics (Ekici, 2022; Beams, 2023). These structural and operational gaps mean community partners and local enforcers often operate under strain while expected to deliver tangible safety outcomes for residents (Ekici, 2022).

In the Philippines, neighborhood peacekeeping rests heavily on barangay level actors (e.g., barangay tanods/BPSOs), who are frontline responders yet face chronic issues: inadequate training, unclear authority, low remuneration, and high exposure to community pressures and hazards (Rosario, 2021; Research Synergy Press, 2024). Empirical work in the country also highlights how community enforcement is shaped by local politics, resource constraints, and episodic crises (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic), which magnify the tension between written law and everyday practice for these actors (Cruz, 2021; Paje, 2022).

Previous qualitative and phenomenological studies have explored the lived experiences of auxiliary enforcers (e.g., barangay tanods, traffic enforcers, BPATs), documenting challenges such as role ambiguity, risk exposure, psychosocial stress, and coping strategies (Barican, 2025; Cruz, 2021; Paje, 2022; Taganas & Gupit, 2025). While these studies illuminate important themes, most focus on specific events (e.g., pandemic period) or localities. This study is unique because it centers on the everyday, lived meaning of being “between law and life” in five barangays, using phenomenology to surface how community-based enforcers interpret conflicts between formal legal expectations and the moral, social, and personal demands they face in routine peace and order work. The local focus allows in-depth exploration of contextualized coping strategies, relational dynamics with residents and formal police, and how this interplay shapes practical decision-making in day-to-day enforcement.

Therefore, this phenomenological research sought to understand and describe the essence of community-based law enforcers' lived experiences in maintaining peace and order in the five barangays mentioned above. The objectives were to document their everyday realities, identify tensions between legal duties and life demands, and surface recommendations grounded in participants' perspectives, justified by gaps in localized, lived experience research and by the practical need to inform training, policy, and support mechanisms at the barangay level. By privileging first-person narratives, the study aimed to produce actionable insight for local authorities, civil society, and scholars seeking to strengthen community policing from the ground up.

## Research Question

This phenomenological study aimed to answer the grand tour question: What are the

lived experiences of community-based law enforcers in Barangays West Balabag, East Balabag, Bong-Ao, Palinpinon, and Balayag Manok, Valencia, Negros Oriental in maintaining peace and order?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study uses a descriptive phenomenological research design, which is a qualitative approach that aims to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals (Creswell, 2007; Smith, 2023). Phenomenology is employed to uncover how these individuals interpret and make sense of their realities, as it focuses on uncovering the essence of experiences by exploring how people interpret their everyday lives (Smith, 2023). This is particularly applied to community-based law enforcers, examining how they balance professional responsibilities with personal life while maintaining peace and order in their communities. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, a method that provides flexibility in questioning, allowing participants to express their experiences in their own words while enabling the researchers to probe deeper into key issues (Longhurst & Johnston, 2023). All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate documentation and thorough analysis of their narratives.

### **Research Locale**

The study was conducted in five selected barangays of a first class municipality in Negros Oriental, situated approximately nine kilometers west of Dumaguete City, Philippines. These barangays were considered an ideal setting for the study due to their peaceful environment and close-knit community dynamics. Within these communities, barangay tanods serve as the primary frontline peacekeepers responsible for maintaining safety and order, making them the central focus of the research on grassroots peacekeeping and community security.

### **Research Participants**

The participants in this study were individuals with firsthand experience in maintaining peace and order within their community. Using purposive sampling, the researchers selected community-based law enforcers who could provide rich and detailed insights into their daily experiences and challenges in upholding law and order in five barangays. This sampling method ensured that participants possess relevant knowledge and direct involvement with the phenomenon being studied (Dahal, 2024). A total of ten participants were chosen once data saturation was achieved, based on the following criteria: being a permanent resident of the selected barangays, aged between 25 to 60 years old, and being an active community-based law enforcer such as a barangay tanod or peace and order officer with at least one year of service experience. These participants were expected to share valuable perspectives about their lived experiences in balancing the demands of law enforcement and the realities of community life.

## **Research Instrument**

This study employed a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of community-based law enforcers as they perform their duties in maintaining peace and order. A semi-structured guide served as the primary research instrument to collect detailed and personal accounts of their daily challenges, responsibilities, and coping mechanisms. The interview guide was carefully designed to capture essential themes such as the difficulties of enforcing laws, interactions with community members, work-life balance, and the emotional and social realities of their role. The guide provided flexibility, allowing participants to express their insights and feelings freely while ensuring that key aspects of their experiences were thoroughly discussed. To ensure comfort and openness, interviews were conducted at the participants' preferred time and location. Prior to each session, informed consent was obtained, emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality of all responses. With permission, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation of the participants' narratives. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis to identify shared patterns and unique experiences among the participants.

## **Data Gathering Procedure**

The data collection was conducted during the second semester of Academic Year 2025–2026 in five barangays. Before starting the face-to-face interviews, the researchers wrote a formal letter to the Barangay Captain requesting permission to conduct the study among community-based law enforcers. After receiving approval, the researchers coordinated with the designated barangay official who would provide the list of qualified participants. The researchers then identified potential participants and personally communicated with them to explain the purpose of the study and invited them to participate. After they agreed, one-on-one interviews were scheduled at a time convenient for them to ensure they could openly share their experiences. Before each interview, the researchers explained the study objectives and assured the participants of confidentiality. They were asked to sign an informed consent form and were informed that the interview would be recorded using a mobile voice recorder. Each interview was expected to last 20–30 minutes, with prompting questions used only for clarification.

During the interviews, the researchers listened carefully and asked questions only when needed. Broad and non-leading questions were used to allow the participants to express their narratives freely. To minimize bias, the researchers took notes on both verbal and non-verbal cues, along with basic demographic information. Finally, all recorded interviews were transcribed and checked against the audio files to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the transcribed data.

## **Data Analysis**

The study used Colaizzi's method as the primary tool for analyzing interview data gathered from community-based law enforcers, an approach well-regarded for its structured and impartial process that stayed true to the actual lived experiences of the

participants (Abalos et al., 2016; Gumarang Jr., 2021). All interview recordings were carefully transcribed and subjected to repeated review, after which relevant statements and key phrases were identified and organized into significant themes that captured the participants' challenges, duties, coping mechanisms, and relationships with the community. The resulting categories were further consolidated into overarching themes, including the complexity of maintaining law enforcement responsibilities alongside community rapport, the constraints posed by insufficient resources, the burden of societal expectations, and the difficulty of handling personal stress in a demanding work environment. The interpreted findings were then examined through the lens of established criminological, sociological, and community policing frameworks, enabling a meaningful comparison between the firsthand accounts of the participants and the broader body of existing scholarship on how environmental, social, and personal circumstances shaped the effectiveness of those tasked with maintaining peace and order. In doing so, the study yielded substantive and actionable insights drawn from five barangays, contributing knowledge that served as a basis for evidence-based policy reforms, targeted community initiatives, and further academic inquiry into the lived realities of local law enforcers and their role in building safer communities.

## RESULTS

After the researchers' thorough analysis of the interview transcripts, a total of six emergent themes were identified. Each major theme covers two subthemes, namely, A) Multifaceted Role of a Barangay Tanod: 1) Beyond Law Enforcement and 2) Community guide and mentor, especially to youth; B) Challenges and Sacrifices: 3) Physical risks and dangers and 4) Family strain and work-life imbalance; C) De-escalation and Communication as Core Skills: 5) Calm dialogue over use of force and 6) Patience and emotional regulation under pressure; D) Personal Growth and Transformation Through Service: 7) Shift in worldview and sense of purpose and 8) Development of resilience, patience, and discipline; E) Community Cooperation as the Foundation of Peace: 9) Shared responsibility for peace and order and 10) Trust-building with residents as ongoing practice; F) Intrinsic Motivation and Sense of Calling: 11) Service as vocation, not merely employment and 12) Commitment despite lack of pay and recognition.

### ***Emergent Theme 1: Multifaceted Role of a Barangay Tanod***

This emergent theme captures the dynamic and evolving nature of Barangay tanod's role, which extends far beyond the formal boundaries of law enforcement. Across the narratives, participants consistently describe their responsibilities as fluid, situational, and deeply embedded within the social fabric of the community. Rather than functioning solely as enforcers of rules, tanods assume multiple roles depending on the needs of the moment ranging from mediators and educators to rescuers, mentors, and frontline responders. The lived experience of being a tanod is therefore characterized not by a fixed job description but by adaptability and responsiveness to community realities. Their role is shaped by everyday encounters with diverse individuals, crises, and social issues, requiring not only authority but also empathy, communication, and moral judgment. This

multifaceted identity reflects a form of grassroots governance where enforcement is inseparable from care, guidance, and service.

### ***Theme 1: Beyond law enforcement (mediator, counselor, helper)***

This theme highlights how Barangay tanods transcend their formal mandate as law enforcers by actively engaging in roles that require emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication, and community involvement. Participants emphasized that their daily work involves not only maintaining order but also educating, guiding, and supporting individuals within the community. Their accounts reveal that enforcement alone is insufficient in addressing the complexities of community life. Instead, Barangay tanods adopt a more relational approach, listening to concerns, mediating disputes, and offering assistance. This shift from authority-driven action to service-oriented engagement reflects a deeper understanding of peacekeeping as a collaborative and human-centered process.

Participant 1 captured this reality when he stated, *Dili lang kini basta pagtan-aw sa palibot, kundili pag-atubang sa lain-laing klase sa mga tawo ug sitwasyon matag adlaw.* (Trans: It is not just about watching the surroundings, but about facing different kinds of people and situations every day.)

He further elaborated that their work goes beyond enforcement, *Dili lang kay enforcement ang among trabaho, kundili apil usab ang edukasyon ug paggiya sa komunidad.* (Trans: Our work is not just about enforcement, but also includes educating and guiding the community.)

Participant 4 reinforced this by saying, *Ang pagka-tanod dili lang kay pagdakop o pagbantay. Mas importante ang pagpakig-uban sa komunidad. Kamo dapat ang unang moduol sa mga tawo, maminaw sa ilang problema, ug motabang sa ilang panginahanglan.* (Trans: Being a barangay tanod is not just about arresting or watching. More important is engaging with the community. You should be the first to approach the people, listen to their problems, and help with their needs.)

Participant 6 also reflected, *Nakig-coordinate ko sa among kapitan ug sa relief team, ug nakahatag mi nila ug ayuda. Kana nga moment, naka-realize gyud ko nga ang trabaho diay sa tanod dili lang kay magpatuman ug balaod, pero magtabang pud sa komunidad.* (Trans: I coordinated with our barangay captain and the relief team, and we were able to provide them with assistance. That moment made me realize that being a tanod is not just about enforcing rules, but also about helping the community.)

Participant 5 further added, *Ang trabaho sa tanod dili lang about pagdakop o pagbadlong, kundi apil pud ang pagtabang ug pag-amuma sa komunidad.* (Trans: The work of a tanod is not just about arresting or reprimanding, but also includes helping and taking care of the community.)

## **Theme 2: Community guide and mentor, especially to youth**

This theme reflects Barangay tanods' role as informal mentors and moral guides, particularly for the youth. Instead of immediately resorting to arrest or punishment, participants described adopting a preventive and educative approach, engaging young individuals through dialogue, advice, and guidance. Their narratives illustrate a conscious effort to influence behavior by fostering awareness, responsibility, and future-oriented thinking among the youth. The act of sitting down, listening, and speaking "like an older brother" signifies a shift from enforcement to mentorship, where barangay tanods become figures of guidance rather than fear.

Participant 6 vividly described his relationship with the youth in their barangay, *Adunay mga panahon nga mag-atubang mi ug mga kabatan-onan nga murag pasaway gyud. Kanang dili maminaw sa ginikanan, maglaag hangtod kadlawon. Dili man pud pwede nga dakpon dayon, so amo silang ginaduolan, ginastoryahan, ginapahinumduman nga naa silay kaugmaon nga angay bantayan. Usahay makalingkod gyud mi nila ug mag istorya, mura mi'g magulang nila.*

(Trans: There are also times when we deal with young people who are a bit stubborn, those who don't listen to their parents and stay out very late. We don't immediately arrest them. Instead, we approach them, talk to them, and remind them that they have a future to take care of. Sometimes we even sit down with them and have a real conversation, like an older brother would.)

He then reflected on the deeper meaning of this role, *Makita nako nga importante pud diay nga naa mi role nga murag tiggiya, dili lang tigbantay.* (Trans: I realized that we also play a role as guides, not just guards.)

Participant 4 echoed this approach when handling curfew violators, *Usa ka adlaw, naa mi nasakpan nga grupo sa mga batan-on nga nag-inom bisan naa pay curfew. Amo silang giistorya ug gipahimangnoan. Dili mi gusto nga mosangpot sa dakop dayon, kay mas importante ang pag-edukar ug pagpasabot.* (Trans: One day, we caught a group of young people who were drinking even though there was still a curfew. We talked to them and gave them a warning. We did not want to immediately proceed to arresting them, because educating and explaining is more important.)

Participant 7 also spoke to this mentoring role, *Dili man pud pwede nga dakpon dayon, so amo silang ginaduolan, storyahan, ginapahinumduman nga naa silay kaugmaon nga angay bantayan.* (Trans: We don't immediately arrest them. Instead, we approach them, talk to them, and remind them that they have a future worth protecting.)

## **Emergent Theme 2: Challenges and Sacrifices**

This theme highlights the deep burdens experienced by community-based law enforcers in carrying out their roles. Barangay tanods consistently described their service as

physically demanding, emotionally draining, and personally sacrificial, involving a continuous negotiation between risk, resilience, and personal cost. They faced unpredictable dangers, exhaustion, and difficult trade-offs between professional responsibilities and family life. Despite these hardships, they remained committed to their duties, driven by a strong sense of honor and dedication to their community, reflecting that the essence of their service lies not only in action but also in endurance and self-sacrifice.

### **Theme 3: Physical risks and dangers**

This theme highlights the inherent physical dangers embedded in the daily work of barangay tanods. Participants recounted experiences of being directly exposed to violence, hazardous environments, and life-threatening situations, whether during altercations, disaster response, or routine patrols. The unpredictability of their role places them in constant vulnerability, where injury can occur without warning. Despite these risks, participants demonstrated a willingness to continue their duties even when harmed, reflecting a deep sense of responsibility and courage. Their experiences emphasize that physical danger is not an occasional occurrence, but a normalized aspect of their everyday service.

Participant 8 shared the most graphic account of physical danger,

*Kalit lang gyud ko nadapuan ug botelya sa akong abaga. Sakit kaayo, murag nangurog akong lawas sa kalit nga impact. Apan bisan nasamdan ko, wala ko niundang. Amo silang gipabulag, uban sa akong kauban nga tanod ug pipila ka barangay officials.*

(Trans: Suddenly a bottle hit me on my shoulder. It was very painful, my body seemed to tremble from the sudden impact. But even though I was injured, I did not stop. We separated them, together with my fellow tanods and a few barangay officials.)

He continued to reflect on the inherent risk, *Didto nako nasabtan nga ang trabaho sa tanod, dili gyud malikayan ang risgo. Dili ka kabalo kung kanus-a ka masamdan o maapil sa gubot.* (Trans: That was when I came to understand that in the work of a tanod, risk is truly unavoidable. You do not know when you might get injured or get caught up in trouble.)

Participant 4 acknowledged the danger of calamity response, *Makapoy kaayo kay basa mi gikan ulo hangtod tiil, apan ang among hunahuna kay unsaon pagluwas sa tanan.* (Trans: It was very exhausting because we were wet from head to toe, but our minds were focused on how to save everyone.)

Participant 5 also recognized the danger in his service, *Bisan kapoy ug delikado, makahatag gyud og kalipay kung makabalo ka nga nakatabang ka sa imong isigkatawo.* (Trans: Even though it was exhausting and dangerous, it truly gives you joy when you

know that you have helped your fellow human being.)

#### **Theme 4: Family strain and work-life imbalance**

This theme captures the personal sacrifices made by Barangay tanods, particularly in relation to their families. Participants expressed feelings of guilt, conflict, and emotional tension arising from the demands of their role, which often require them to prioritize community service over family time. Their narratives reveal a constant struggle to balance dual responsibilities, where fulfilling one role may come at the expense of the other. The emotional weight of missing important family moments, coupled with the need to justify their absence, highlights the deeply personal impact of their service.

Participant 7 gave the most honest account of the tension within his home,

*Adunay mga higayon nga ang akong asawa masuko kay wala na koy oras sa ila. Makaingon siya nga mas priority nako ang barangay kaysa sa pamilya. Lisod kaayo kay duha ka responsibilidad ang akong gisaligan. Pero ako gyud siyang ginastoryahan ug ginapasabot nga dili lang para sa uban akong gibuhat, kundi para pud sa kaluwasan sa among pamilya.*

(Trans: There were even times when my wife would get angry because I no longer had time for them. She would say that I prioritize the barangay over the family. It was very difficult because I was entrusted with two responsibilities. But I always talked to her and explained that what I was doing was not just for others, but also for the safety of our family.)

Participant 9 expressed the most emotionally raw account of family sacrifice,

*Ang pinaka-sakit nga bahin sa akong trabaho mao ang mga gabii dihang naghilak ang akong anak, nagpangutana kung nganong kanunay kong wala. Niadtong mga higayona, naghunahuna ko kung hustong desisyon ba ang akong gihimo.*

(Trans: The most painful part of my job was the nights when my child would cry, asking why I was always away. During those moments, I questioned whether the decision I made was the right one.)

Participant 6 also acknowledged the personal cost of the role, *Naa koy pamilya nga akong ginahunahuna, pero kabalo ko nga importante pud ang akong role sa komunidad. Mao nga bisan kapoy, padayon gihapon ko sa pagserbisyo.* (Trans: I have a family to think about, but I also know that my role in the community is important. That is why even when it is tiring, I continue to serve.)

#### **Emergent Theme 3: De-escalation and Communication as Core Skills**

This theme reveals that effective barangay law enforcement is rooted in communication,

patience, and emotional intelligence rather than authority or force. Participants consistently emphasized that maintaining peace is achieved through dialogue, empathy, and self-control, making conflict resolution a human-centered process. Their lived experiences demonstrate that barangay tanods go beyond mere enforcement, taking on the roles of mediator, counselor, and educator within the community. From a phenomenological perspective, their success is defined not by the exercise of power, but by their ability to manage tensions, understand emotions, and influence behavior without escalating conflict.

### ***Theme 5: Calm dialogue over use of force***

This theme underscores the belief that verbal communication is the primary tool of conflict resolution. Participants consistently rejected the notion that authority must be enforced through physical means, instead emphasizing the power of calm explanation, active listening, and compassionate engagement. As expressed by participants, situations involving intoxicated individuals, non-compliant residents, or public disturbances were often resolved through strategic communication rather than aggression. This demonstrates that even in volatile scenarios, restraint and dialogue are more effective in achieving compliance and preventing escalation.

Participant 9 articulated this belief most memorably,

*Natuohan ko nga ang pinaka-epektibong armas sa usa ka Tanod dili ang iyang baston, kondili ang iyang boses, ang iyang pag-amping, ug ang iyang abilidad sa pakigsulti sa mga tawo. Daghan ang nasulbad dili pinaagi sa gahom, kondili pinaagi sa pagsabot ug pagpakabana.*

(Trans: I came to believe that the most effective weapon of a Tanod is not his baton, but his voice, his care, and his ability to talk to people. Many situations were resolved not through force, but through understanding and compassion.)

Participant 10 expressed a similar conviction, *Natudloan nako niadto nga ang pinaka-importante nga armas sa usa ka tanod dili ang palo-palo o ang uniporme, kondili ang bugnaw nga ulo ug mainit nga kasingkasing.* (Trans: I learned something that night, that the most important weapon of a Tanod is not a baton or a uniform, but a cool head and a warm heart.)

Participant 1 recalled applying this principle with a drunk individual,

*Sa among pag-abot, among gisulayan og kalma nga pakig-istorya kaniya, apan dili siya maminaw tungod sa kahubog. Kinahanglan namo gamiton ang among training sa pag-handle og ing-ana nga sitwasyon, dili dayon gamiton ang kusog, kundili unahon ang de-escalation.*

(Trans: When we arrived, we tried to calmly talk to him, but he would not

listen because of his drunkenness. We had to use our training in handling that kind of situation, not to immediately use force, but to prioritize de-escalation.)

Participant 5 also shared his approach,

*Naa koy nasinati nga usa ka tawo nga nagpugos og agi bisan walay quarantine pass. Ako siyang gi-explainan sa kahimtang ug sa balaod, pero nisukol gyud siya. Sa ingon ana nga sitwasyon, kinahanglan gyud kalmado ka, dili ka magpadala sa emosyon.*

(Trans: I had an experience where a person was forcing his way through even without a quarantine pass. I explained the situation and the rules to him, but he truly resisted. In that kind of situation, you truly need to be calm, you cannot let yourself be carried away by emotion.)

### **Theme 6: Patience and emotional regulation under pressure**

This theme captures the importance of self-control in high-stress situations. Participants described scenarios where they were provoked, disrespected, or confronted with hostility, yet chose to remain calm and composed. Their ability to regulate emotions allowed situations to gradually de-escalate, transforming potential conflicts into manageable interactions. This demonstrates that emotional discipline is not optional, but a critical survival and effectiveness skill in their role.

Participant 6 demonstrated composure when faced with a hostile curfew violator, *Sa sugod, taas kaayo iyang tingog, pero ako gyud gi-control akong kaugalingon. Sa kadugayan, nihinay ra pud siya ug nisabot.* (Trans: At first, he raised his voice, but I controlled myself. Eventually, he calmed down and understood.)

Participant 2 also shared how patience defined his response to conflict, *Sa ingon nga sitwasyon, importante gyud ang kalma ug pasensya. Wala mi niresponde og kasuko, hinunoo, among gihinay-hinayan og istorya ug gipahinumduman sa balaod. Sa kadugayan, nisabot ra siya ug miuli* (Trans: In that kind of situation, calmness and patience are truly important. We did not respond with anger; instead, we gradually talked to him and reminded him of the rules. Eventually, he understood and went home.)

Participant 7 recalled managing a heated disco brawl with patience, *Lisod kaayo kay kinahanglan nimo pugngan ang sitwasyon nga dili ka mogamit ug kusog dayon. Amo silang gipahiluna, gitabangan sa uban tanod ug giistorya hangtod nahunong ang away.* (Trans: It was very difficult because you need to control the situation without immediately using force. We settled them down, were helped by the other tanods, and talked to them until the fight stopped.)

### **Emergent Theme 4: Personal Growth and Transformation Through Service**

This emergent theme reveals that service as a barangay tanod is not only an act of duty,

but a transformative life experience that reshapes the individual's identity, values, and worldview. Across participants' narratives, their years of service contributed to a profound internal evolution, affecting how they perceive their role in society, relate to others, and define purpose in life. Participants consistently reflected that their experiences extended beyond routine responsibilities, becoming a source of personal development, moral realization, and emotional maturity. Through continuous exposure to real-life challenges, conflicts, and community needs, they developed a deeper understanding of service as a vocation grounded in sacrifice, compassion, and responsibility.

### ***Theme 7: Shift in worldview and sense of purpose***

This theme highlights the profound shift in how participants perceive life, service, and their role in the community. Many participants described a transformation from viewing the role as a task or obligation into recognizing it as a meaningful calling or vocation. Their narratives reveal an expanded worldview, one that integrates community welfare, family relationships, and personal responsibility into a unified sense of purpose. Service becomes not just something they do, but something that defines who they are.

Participant 9 expressed this transformation most powerfully, *Pagkahuman sa 8 ka tuig, nabal-an nako nga ang pagka-Tanod nagbag-o sa akong kinabuhi, sa akong pananaw sa kalibutan, sa akong relasyon sa akong pamilya, ug sa akong pagmahal sa akong komunidad.* (Trans: After 8 years, I came to realize that being a Tanod changed my life, my view of the world, my relationship with my family, and my love for my community.)

Participant 3 summarized the transformation succinctly, *Ang akong kasinatian nagtudlo nako nga ang tinuod nga serbisyo dili lang trabaho, kundi usa ka bokasyon nga puno sa sakripisyo, pasensya, ug gugma sa komunidad.* (Trans: My experiences have taught me that true service is not just a job, but a vocation filled with sacrifice, patience, and love for the community.)

Participant 1 also reflected, *Sa tanan nakong kasinatian, akong nasabtan nga ang pagka-barangay tanod usa ka serbisyo nga puno sa sakripisyo.* (Trans: From all my experiences, I have come to understand that being a barangay tanod is a service full of sacrifice.)

### ***Theme 8: Development of resilience, patience, and discipline***

This theme reflects the cultivation of essential personal qualities through repeated exposure to demanding and unpredictable situations. Participants emphasized how their experiences strengthened their emotional endurance, self-discipline, and ability to remain patient under pressure. Their growth is not accidental but forged through continuous adaptation to challenges, including conflict situations, physical risks, and community expectations. Over time, these qualities become ingrained, shaping their responses both within and beyond their role.

Participant 1 recalled an early lesson that stayed with him, *Didto nako nasabtan nga importante kaayo ang pasensya ug disiplina sa among trabaho.* (Trans: That was when I

understood that patience and discipline are very important in our work.)

Participant 8 captured the full demands of the role, *Kinahanglan ka ug kusog sa lawas, kusog sa hunahuna, ug labaw sa tanan, kusog sa kasingkasing. Kay dili lalim ang mag-alagad sa komunidad, labi na kung usahay ikaw mismo malagay sa peligro.* (Trans: You need physical strength, mental strength, and above all, strength of heart. Because it is not simple to serve the community, especially when sometimes you yourself are placed in danger.)

Participant 3 also grew in his understanding of strength, *Daghan kaayo kog nasinati nga mga panghitabo nga nakapahimo nako nga mas lig-on, mas pasensyoso, ug mas responsable isip usa ka miyembro sa komunidad.* (Trans: I have experienced many situations that helped me become stronger, more patient, and more responsible as a member of the community.)

### ***Emergent Theme 5: Community Cooperation as the Foundation of Peace***

This emergent theme underscores that sustainable peace and order in the barangay is fundamentally a shared responsibility that extends beyond the role of Barangay tanods. Participants consistently emphasized that their efforts, while essential, are insufficient without the active participation, trust, and cooperation of the community. Their lived experiences reveal that peacekeeping is not merely enforcement, but a collaborative process involving residents, barangay officials, and law enforcement agencies. The effectiveness of their role is therefore deeply dependent on the strength of relationships, mutual trust, and coordinated action.

### ***Theme 9: Shared responsibility for peace and order***

This theme reflects the collective understanding that maintaining peace is not limited to formal authorities but is a community-wide obligation. Participants consistently expressed that compliance with rules, cooperation among residents, and shared accountability significantly influence the success of peacekeeping efforts. Their narratives reveal that when community members actively participate, by following regulations, reporting incidents, and supporting initiatives, the work of Barangay tanods becomes more effective and manageable. Conversely, lack of cooperation increases difficulty and risk.

Participant 1 articulated this with clarity, *Nakat-on usab ko nga ang kalinaw ug kahapsay dili lang responsibilidad sa usa ka tawo o grupo. Kinahanglan kini ang paningkamot sa tanan, sa tanod, sa lider sa barangay, ug sa matag residente.* (Trans: I also learned that peace and order is not just the responsibility of one person or group. It requires the effort of everyone, of the tanod, of the barangay leaders, and of every resident.)

Participant 5 echoed this,

*Sa akong mga nasinati, nakaingon gyud ko nga ang kalinaw ug kahusay sa barangay dili lang responsibilidad sa tanod o pulis, kundi sa tanan. Kung*

*magtinabangay ang mga residente ug mosunod sa balaod, mas sayon kaayo ang among trabaho.*

(Trans: From my experiences, I have truly come to say that the peace and order of the barangay is not only the responsibility of the tanod or the police, but of everyone. If the residents help one another and follow the rules, our work becomes much easier.)

Participant 4 further reinforced this belief, *Ang kalinaw ug kahapsay sa barangay dili lang responsibilidad sa tanod, kundi sa tanan. Apan kami ang unang linya sa depensa.* (Trans: The peace and order of the barangay is not only the responsibility of the tanod, but of everyone. But we are the first line of defense.)

### **Theme 10: Trust-building with residents as ongoing practice**

This theme highlights that trust is not automatic but is continuously built through consistent interaction, visibility, and integrity. Participants described how routine patrols, casual conversations, and fair treatment of residents contribute to stronger relationships within the community. Trust transforms residents from passive observers into active partners, enabling them to cooperate, share information, and support peacekeeping efforts. Participants emphasized that respect is earned through actions rather than authority, reinforcing the importance of ethical conduct.

Participant 1 described the importance of relationship-building during quiet duty hours,

*Aduna usab mga adlaw nga mingaw ang duty, apan dili pasabot nga relax na mi. Magpadayon gihapon mi sa pagpatrolya aron masiguro nga walay mahitabo nga dautan. Sa ingon ana nga mga panahon, makig-istorya mi sa mga residente aron mapalig-on ang relasyon sa komunidad. Importante kaayo ang pagsalig sa mga tawo kay sila mismo mahimong among kauban sa pagmintinar sa kalinaw.*

(Trans: There are also quiet days on duty, but that does not mean we can relax. We continue patrolling to ensure that nothing bad happens. During those times, we talk with the residents to strengthen the relationship with the community. The trust of the people is very important because they themselves can become our partners in maintaining peace.)

Participant 7 described how trust is earned through integrity, *Nakat-on pud ko nga ang respeto dili nimo mapugos, kundi imong makuha pinaagi sa imong buhat. Kung makita sa mga tawo nga patas ka ug matinuoron, mas mutuo sila nimo.* (Trans: I also learned that respect cannot be forced but can be earned through your actions. When people see that you are fair and honest, they trust you more.)

### ***Emergent Theme 6: Intrinsic Motivation and Sense of Calling***

This emergent theme reveals that the sustained commitment of barangay tanods is deeply rooted in intrinsic motivation rather than external rewards. Despite facing low compensation, limited recognition, and numerous challenges, participants consistently expressed a strong internal drive grounded in service, purpose, and love for the community. Their narratives demonstrate that being a Barangay tanod is not merely perceived as employment but as a vocation or calling, a role imbued with meaning, identity, and moral responsibility. Fulfillment is derived not from material gain, but from intangible rewards such as gratitude, pride, and the knowledge that they contribute to the safety and well-being of others.

### ***Theme 11: Service as vocation, not merely employment***

This theme reflects the participants' perception of their role as a mission-oriented form of service rather than a conventional job. Many described waking up each day with a sense of duty that transcends financial compensation, viewing their work as a commitment to protect and serve the community. Their accounts emphasize that the meaning they attach to their role shapes their persistence, even in the face of hardship. Service becomes an expression of identity and purpose, not simply a task to be completed.

Participant 4 spoke to this, *Nakat-on ko nga ang pagka-tanod dili lang kay trabaho, kundi serbisyo gyud para sa katawhan.* (Trans: I learned that being a tanod is not just a job, but truly a service for the people.)

Participant 9 echoed this sense of mission, *Kana ang rason nganong nagmata ko matag adlaw, nagbistida sa akong uniporme, ug nagpadayon sa akong misyon, dili alang sa suweldo, dili alang sa dungog, kondili alang sa akong mga kababaryo nga nagtuo nga adunay nagbantay kanila.* (Trans: That is the reason I wake up every day, put on my uniform, and continue my mission, not for the salary, not for the glory, but for my fellow community members who trust that someone is watching over them.)

Participant 1 expressed this vocation with conviction, *Sa matag adlaw nga moduty ko, akong gihuna-huna nga ang akong ginabuhay dili lang trabaho, kundili usa ka misyon sa pagpanalipod ug pagserbisyo sa akong isigkatawhan.* (Trans: Every day that I go on duty, I think to myself that what I am doing is not just a job, but a mission to protect and serve my fellow human beings.)

### ***Theme 12: Commitment despite lack of pay and recognition***

This theme reflects the participants' unwavering dedication despite systemic limitations. Even when faced with physical danger, exhaustion, and minimal compensation, they continue to serve with steadfast commitment and resilience. Their persistence demonstrates that their motivation is not dependent on external conditions but on a deeply internalized sense of duty, honor, and responsibility. This highlights the extraordinary level of dedication present among participants.

Participant 8 delivered the most powerful declaration of unwavering dedication, *Bisan pa sa tanan, ang kasamdan, kakapoy, ug kahadlok, padayon gihapon ko sa akong serbisyo isip barangay tanod. Kay para nako, dako kaayo nga karangalan ang makatabang sa pagpanalipod sa among barangay ug sa among mga silingan.* (Trans: Despite everything, the injuries, exhaustion, and fear, I still continue my service as a barangay tanod. Because for me, it is a very great honor to be able to help in protecting our barangay and our neighbors.)

Participant 7 concluded with equal resolve, *Bisan pa ana, proud ko nga nakaserbisyo ko sa among barangay ug nakatampo sa kalinaw ug kahusay sa among komunidad.* (Trans: Even so, I am proud that I have been able to serve our barangay and have contributed to the peace and order of our community.)

Participant 3 summed up the spirit of commitment that runs through all ten participants, *Padayon gihapon ko kay kabalo ko nga importante ang akong papel sa komunidad.* (Trans: I continue to serve because I know that my role is important to the community.)

## DISCUSSION

Within the first emergent theme, “Multifaceted Role of a Barangay Tanod”, the participants go beyond conventional law enforcement by serving as educators, mediators, counselors, and community helpers. Their work is rooted in compassion and human connection, treating peacekeeping as a collaborative effort. Notably, they act as informal mentors to the youth, preferring dialogue and guidance over punishment, aiming to build civic responsibility and sustain long-term community order.

The first sub-theme, “Beyond Law Enforcement”, revealed that Barangay tanods performed roles that significantly transcended the boundaries of conventional law enforcement. Participants consistently articulated that their daily responsibilities encompassed education, mediation, counseling, and community assistance. Rather than functioning solely as enforcers of rules and regulations, Barangay tanods operated as community servants who engaged with residents across a wide spectrum of human situations. This relational orientation reflected a service model grounded in compassion and contextual awareness, wherein peacekeeping was understood as a collaborative and human-centered endeavor rather than a purely authoritative function.

The second sub-theme, “Community Guide and Mentor, Especially to Youth”, demonstrated a pronounced commitment to the welfare and moral development of the youth within their respective communities. Rather than resorting to punitive measures, Barangay tanods adopted preventive and educative approaches when engaging young individuals who exhibited problematic behavior. Through sustained dialogue, personal counsel, and the cultivation of interpersonal relationships, Barangay tanods assumed the role of informal mentors. This approach reflected an understanding that sustainable community order was best achieved through the cultivation of civic responsibility among the younger generation, rather than through deterrence alone.

The second emergent theme, “Challenges and Sacrifices”, revealed that participants face significant physical risks as a routine part of their duties, including violent altercations and disaster response situations. Despite injuries and hazardous conditions, they remain steadfast in fulfilling their responsibilities. Beyond physical dangers, their service also takes a toll on family life, as community duties frequently take priority over time with loved ones, leading to feelings of guilt and emotional tension. These personal sacrifices highlight the often overlooked burdens that come with serving as a Barangay tanod.

The third sub-theme, “Physical Risks and Dangers”, underscored that Barangay tanods were routinely exposed to significant physical risks in the performance of their duties. Participants recounted direct involvement in violent altercations, disaster response operations, and other life-threatening situations. These accounts revealed that physical danger was not an exceptional circumstance but rather an inherent and normalized aspect of community service. Despite sustaining injuries and enduring hazardous conditions, participants demonstrated an unwavering sense of duty and resilience, continuing to fulfill their responsibilities without cessation.

The fourth sub-theme, “Family Strain and Work-Life Imbalance”, pertained to the strain imposed upon familial relationships as a direct consequence of their service obligations. The demands of their role frequently required them to prioritize community duties over time spent with their families, resulting in feelings of guilt, conflict, and emotional tension within the domestic sphere. Participants articulated the profound difficulty of navigating dual responsibilities, serving the community while simultaneously fulfilling their roles as spouses and parents. These personal sacrifices represented a significant yet often overlooked dimension of Barangay Tanods' service.

The third emergent theme, “De-escalation and Communication as Core Skills”, revealed that participants prioritize calm dialogue and active listening over the use of force when resolving conflicts. Composure and empathetic communication are regarded as more effective peacekeeping tools than physical intervention. Equally important is emotional self-regulation, as tanods consciously exercise restraint when faced with hostility or provocation. The ability to manage one's emotions under pressure is not just a personal trait but a professional necessity that directly shapes the outcome of conflict situations.

The fifth sub-theme, “Calm Dialogue Over Use of Force”, as revealed by participant accounts, highlighted the primacy accorded to verbal communication and dialogue in the resolution of conflicts. Participants uniformly emphasized that composure, active listening, and empathetic engagement were more effective instruments of peacekeeping than the exercise of physical force. In volatile and potentially dangerous situations, Barangay tanods consistently prioritized de-escalation, employing measured and deliberate communication strategies to restore order and prevent further deterioration of community relations.

The sixth sub-theme, “Patience and Emotional Regulation Under Pressure”, was identified as an indispensable competency in the performance of their duties. When confronted with hostility, provocation, or non-compliance, Barangay tanods consciously

exercised restraint and maintained composure. Their narratives illustrated that the ability to manage one's emotional responses under conditions of stress was not merely a personal virtue but a professional necessity, one that directly influenced the outcome of conflict situations and determined the effectiveness of peacekeeping interventions.

The fourth emergent theme, “Personal Growth and Transformation Through Service”, showed that participants underwent a meaningful shift in perspective, moving from viewing their role as a mere obligation to embracing it as a personal vocation tied to their identity and sense of purpose. Fulfillment became rooted in collective welfare rather than individual gain. Alongside this shift, repeated exposure to hardship and adversity cultivated resilience, patience, and self-discipline, qualities that were not innate but developed over time. These personal transformations ultimately made them more effective peacekeepers and more well-rounded members of their communities.

The seventh sub-theme, “Shift in Worldview and Sense of Purpose”, revealed that sustained engagement in community service engendered a profound transformation in the participants' perception of their role and their broader understanding of civic responsibility. Many participants described a fundamental shift from viewing their assignment as a task or obligation to recognizing it as a meaningful vocation. Over time, service became intrinsically linked to their sense of identity, purpose, and community belonging. This expanded worldview reflected a deepening commitment to the welfare of others, wherein personal fulfillment was derived not from individual gain but from collective benefit.

The eighth sub-theme, “Development of Resilience, Patience, and Discipline”, showed that the cumulative demands of Barangay tanod service, encompassing physical hardship, interpersonal conflict, and emotional adversity, contributed significantly to the personal development of participants. Repeated exposure to challenging circumstances fostered the cultivation of resilience, patience, and self-discipline as enduring personal qualities. Participants acknowledged that these attributes were not innate but were forged through continuous adaptation to the exigencies of their role. These qualities, in turn, enhanced their effectiveness as peacekeepers and enriched their overall character as members of the community.

The fifth emergent theme, “Community Cooperation as the Foundation of Peace”, indicated that participants recognize that maintaining peace and order is a shared responsibility, not theirs alone. When residents actively cooperate and exercise communal accountability, peacekeeping becomes more effective and less burdensome. Central to this cooperation is trust, which is not imposed by authority but earned through consistent presence, integrity, and genuine engagement with residents. Once established, trust transforms community members from passive observers into active partners, strengthening barangay level peacekeeping from the ground up.

The ninth sub-theme, “Shared Responsibility for Peace and Order”, revealed that participants collectively affirmed that the maintenance of peace and order within the barangay was not the exclusive responsibility of Barangay tanods or formal authorities,

but rather a shared obligation that demanded the active participation of all community members. When residents complied with established regulations, cooperated with peacekeeping efforts, and exercised communal accountability, the burden borne by Barangay tanods was substantially reduced, and the efficacy of peacekeeping initiatives was markedly enhanced. This perspective reflected a community-centered conception of public safety that transcended institutional boundaries.

The tenth sub-theme, “Trust-Building with Residents as Ongoing Practice”, highlighted that the development of trust between Barangay tanods and community residents was a continuous and deliberate process, cultivated through consistent interaction, visible presence, and the demonstration of integrity in all professional conduct. Participants emphasized that trust could not be imposed through authority but had to be earned through sustained ethical behavior and genuine engagement with the community. When trust was established, residents transitioned from passive observers to active partners in the maintenance of peace, thereby amplifying the effectiveness of barangay-level peacekeeping mechanisms.

The sixth emergent theme, “Intrinsic Motivation and Sense of Calling”, demonstrated that participants view their service as a vocation driven by a deep sense of duty rather than financial gain or external recognition. Their motivation is intrinsic, rooted in genuine commitment to the welfare of their community. Even in the face of minimal compensation and limited institutional acknowledgment, their dedication remains unwavering. For them, the honor of serving and contributing to their neighbors' safety and wellbeing serves as a reward in itself, sustaining their resolve despite adversity and systemic neglect.

The eleventh sub-theme, “Service as Vocation, Not Merely Employment”, revealed that a distinguishing characteristic of the participants in this study was their articulation of Barangay tanod service as a vocation, a mission-driven commitment that transcended conventional employment paradigms. Many participants expressed that their motivation to serve was not contingent upon financial remuneration or external recognition but was rooted in a deeply internalized sense of duty toward their fellow community members. This vocational orientation imbued their daily activities with meaning and purpose, sustaining their engagement even in the face of significant personal hardship and systemic limitations.

Finally, the twelfth sub-theme, “Commitment Despite Lack of Pay and Recognition”, showed that participants demonstrated an extraordinary level of dedication and perseverance. Their accounts revealed that the absence of adequate remuneration did not diminish their commitment but rather affirmed the depth of their intrinsic motivation. For these individuals, the honor of serving their community and contributing to the safety and wellbeing of their neighbors constituted a reward of immeasurable worth, one that sustained their resolve to continue in the face of adversity, sacrifice, and systemic neglect.

## Conclusions

This qualitative study employed the phenomenological approach to explore the lived

experiences of Barangay Tanods actively serving in Valencia, Negros Oriental. In light of the findings summarized above, the researchers drew the following conclusions:

First, the lived experiences of Barangay Tanods in the five barangays of Valencia, Negros Oriental were shaped primarily by the multifaceted nature of their roles, the physical and emotional demands of their service, and their deeply internalized sense of vocation. These elements collectively defined how they navigated their responsibilities, managed adversity, and sustained their commitment to community peacekeeping.

Second, despite being routinely exposed to physical danger, family strain, and inadequate compensation, Barangay Tanods remained steadfast, compassionate, and dedicated to serving their communities. Their perseverance reflected not merely professional obligation, but an extraordinary depth of character rooted in unconditional love for their neighbors and a genuine sense of civic duty.

Third, effective peacekeeping at the barangay level was less dependent on the exercise of authority and more reliant on communication, emotional regulation, and trust-building. The consistent application of calm dialogue and de-escalation strategies proved to be a far more sustainable and effective approach to maintaining peace and order than the use of force.

Fourth, sustained service as a Barangay Tanod fostered significant personal growth and transformation. Repeated exposure to hardship cultivated resilience, patience, and discipline, qualities that not only enhanced their effectiveness as peacekeepers but also enriched their character and deepened their sense of purpose and community belonging.

Lastly, the maintenance of peace and order was a shared and collective responsibility that could not rest on the shoulders of Barangay Tanods alone. Positive relationships between tanods and community residents, grounded in trust, mutual respect, and active cooperation, served as the true foundation of sustainable barangay-level peace, making community engagement an indispensable pillar of effective grassroots law enforcement.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are hereby offered:

### **Barangay Tanods**

1. Barangay Tanods may actively engage in available training opportunities, community dialogues, and peer learning sessions to continuously pursue personal and professional growth.
2. Barangay Tanods are encouraged to prioritize their own physical and mental wellbeing by seeking support when needed, recognizing that their capacity to serve the community is directly linked to their overall health and emotional stability.

## **Barangay Officials**

1. Barangay officials may establish structured and regular training programs focused on communication, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation to further develop the peacekeeping competencies of Barangay Tanods.
2. Barangay councils may invest in capacity-building programs that equip Barangay Tanods with the necessary skills to handle increasingly complex community situations with greater confidence and effectiveness.

## **Community Residents**

1. Community residents may take an active and conscious role in supporting peacekeeping efforts by complying with barangay regulations and reporting concerns to Barangay Tanods promptly.
2. Residents may treat Barangay Tanods with the dignity and respect their service deserves, fostering a culture of shared responsibility in maintaining a safe and harmonious community environment.

## **Local Government Units (LGUs)**

1. Local government units may implement appropriate measures to improve the compensation, benefits, and welfare packages extended to Barangay Tanods, including fair and adequate remuneration and hazard pay.
2. LGUs may provide comprehensive health and life insurance coverage for Barangay Tanods that genuinely reflects the physical risks and personal sacrifices inherent in their service.

## **Future Researchers**

1. Future researchers may conduct further studies exploring the lived experiences of Barangay Tanods in other municipalities, cities, and provinces across the Philippines to generate a broader and more comprehensive understanding of community-based law enforcement across the country.
2. Academic researchers may conduct in-depth studies examining the psychological well-being and mental health of Barangay Tanods, with particular focus on the long-term effects of stress, trauma, and emotional burden brought about by the demands of frontline community service.

## **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

This study adhered to ethical standards in conducting qualitative phenomenological research involving Barangay tanods. Guided by the principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, the researchers ensured the protection, dignity, and well-being of all participants throughout the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was secured prior to data collection. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of all information shared. To protect privacy, pseudonyms were used, personal identifiers were

excluded, and all collected data were stored in password-protected and encrypted files accessible only to the researchers.

To maintain the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the researchers practiced bracketing by consciously setting aside personal biases and preconceptions about law enforcement and community peacekeeping prior to data collection. A bracketing interview was conducted with the guidance of an experienced qualitative researcher to foster openness and neutrality. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the study through a field journal where observations, emotional responses, and reflections were recorded after each interview session. These practices ensured that interpretations remained grounded in the genuine lived experiences of participants rather than shaped by the researchers' assumptions. Together, these measures upheld ethical responsibility, integrity, and respect, ensuring that the voices and everyday realities of Barangay tanods were represented authentically and responsibly.

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