

Understanding Firearms Possession Through the Lived Experiences of Detained Offenders

Francisco Aradillos Florinosos, Jr.¹, Roberto R. Magbojos²

¹Master of Science in Criminal Justice Student, University of Mindanao-Main,

²Professor, University of Mindanao-Main

Abstract

This study explored and understood the lived experiences of convicted offenders involved in firearm-related crimes within Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Guided by a qualitative phenomenological design, the research aimed to uncover offenders' motivations, perceptions, and realizations concerning firearm possession and use. Twenty-five (25) convicted offenders were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, employing a validated semi-structured interview guide, and analyzed through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework. The findings revealed that firearm-related crimes often arose from complex social, occupational, emotional, and environmental circumstances rather than deliberate criminal intent. Themes such as peer influence, job-related exposure, emotional instability, alcohol use, and fear-driven self-protection emerged as critical factors shaping firearm use. Participants later expressed regret, moral awakening, and advocacy for lawful firearm regulation. The study implies that firearm policies may benefit from integrating psychosocial education, community intervention, and occupational regulation. It also contributes to criminological understanding by emphasizing empathy-driven rehabilitation and preventive strategies that address root social causes of firearm-related offenses.

Keywords: firearm-related crimes, lived experiences, convicted offenders, phenomenology, thematic analysis, rehabilitation, social influence

INTRODUCTION

Firearm-related crime refers to violence committed with the use of a gun. In the Philippines, gun ownership remains highly prevalent and poorly regulated, giving rise to numerous firearm-related offenses. The country ranks third in Southeast Asia in terms of gun ownership, and firearms are frequently used in criminal activities (SEASIA, 2024). Although laws governing firearm licensing and registration exist, many owners fail to renew their permits due to the complexity and inaccessibility of the process, particularly in rural provinces (PNA, 2023; Leal, 2024). This situation has led to an alarming proliferation of unlicensed guns nationwide, contributing to criminal acts that endanger communities. As Quitariano (2025) emphasized, firearm-related violence has far-reaching social, psychological, and economic impacts, fostering fear, societal disruption, and structural instability. These realities underscore the importance of examining firearm use and ownership through the perspectives of those who have been directly involved in firearm-related offenses.

Under current laws, civilians are generally not authorized to acquire high-powered rifles (Republic of the Philippines, 2023). However, amendments to the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic

Act 10591—the Comprehensive Law on Firearms and Ammunition—have allowed civilians to own semi-automatic rifles (Peralta-Malonzo, 2024). Despite these legal controls, a large number of firearm-related incidents continue to occur, suggesting the widespread circulation of unlicensed or unregistered weapons. Civilian gun ownership in the Philippines remains high, with a significant portion consisting of “loose” or unregistered firearms. Recent reports from the Philippine National Police indicate that more than 700,000 firearms with expired or missing licenses are circulating nationwide, highlighting the scale of unregulated gun possession (Philippine News Agency, 2023; The Manila Times, 2024).

The persistence of illegal firearms contributes to elevated levels of gun-related violence; for instance, nearly 5,000 firearm-related incidents were recorded in 2023 alone (Cabico, 2024). Taken together, these patterns illustrate how widespread civilian gun possession continues to challenge the capacity of state forces and law-enforcement agencies to manage firearm-related crime effectively. This persistent issue calls for a deeper understanding of the offenders’ lived experiences to address the roots of firearm-related violence.

Gun ownership has long been associated with aggression, dominance, and criminal conduct (Stroebe et al., 2024). Empirical studies show that higher gun availability correlates with increased rates of homicide and violent crimes (Crokidakis, 2022). Although the relationship between firearms and violence is complex, empirical research shows that increased access to firearms—even in private homes—can act as an enabler of impulsive violent action, significantly raising the likelihood that conflicts or aggressive intentions transform into fatal encounters (Hawkins et al., 2025; Goyal et al., 2024; Cerda et al., 2025). Recent developments, such as the emergence of non-serialized or “ghost guns,” have intensified these challenges, posing new threats to communities (Jackson et al., 2023). Thus, there is a pressing need to explore firearm-related crimes through the lens of convicted offenders to uncover the personal, social, and environmental factors that shape their behavior. As Collins et al. (2020) observed, understanding offenders’ knowledge and experiences regarding firearm use is crucial for crafting evidence-based interventions and policies.

An analysis by Gualberto et al. (2022) revealed that residents in areas such as Surigao del Sur have increasingly resorted to keeping firearms as a form of protection, especially amid perceived threats of violence. This local trend has contributed to the persistence of firearm-related crimes. Consequently, this study situates itself within that context, focusing on the lived experiences of convicted firearm offenders in Surigao del Sur to better understand the underlying causes of their actions.

The literature also suggests that firearm ownership is not always driven by malicious intent but can stem from fear, insecurity, or the need for power and control (Keil et al., 2019). Understanding why individuals possess firearms—whether for protection or aggression—is essential for shaping effective gun control policies. Moreover, social and emotional factors have been shown to influence violent behavior. Recent research continues to demonstrate that seemingly minor provocations can escalate into serious violence when firearms are present. Contemporary studies show that increased access to guns can facilitate impulsive or aggressive action, particularly among individuals already experiencing emotional distress or heightened arousal (Hawkins et al., 2025). Emotional states play a crucial role in shaping criminal decision-making, with immersive experimental research indicating that anger, fear, and other affective responses can rapidly intensify situational threats and push individuals toward violent choices (Hartmann et al., 2024). Evidence from youth populations further reveals that exposure to gun violence is associated with elevated anxiety, depressive symptoms, and reactive aggression, underscoring how weapons in one’s environment amplify the risk of violent behavior (Boxer et al.,

2021). Psychological motivations tied to insecurity and perceived danger also drive individuals to view firearms as sources of control and protection, reinforcing patterns of defensive or retaliatory aggression (Dowd & Malone, 2024). These findings collectively affirm that firearm availability interacts strongly with emotion, perception, and social context, increasing the likelihood that conflicts escalate into harmful or fatal encounters (Marquez et al., 2025).

Synthesizing these findings, it becomes evident that a blend of cultural, psychological, and situational factors influences firearm possession in the Philippines. For affluent families, firearms symbolize power and social status, while for ordinary citizens, they represent protection against perceived lawlessness. However, despite regulatory frameworks, the persistence of loose firearms and unmonitored sales continues to fuel criminal activity. The lack of strict enforcement of firearm laws and the easy availability of unlicensed weapons contribute significantly to gun-related offenses. Understanding these patterns requires examining how offenders rationalize, justify, and ultimately regret their firearm use.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study is anchored on Social Learning Theory (Sharma & Gupta, 2023); Murphy, 2025), which posits that criminal behavior is learned through social interaction, observation, and imitation. It is supported by the Integrated Situational Theory (Wikström et al., 2024), which highlights how situational and environmental contexts shape decisions to carry or use firearms. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens for interpreting offenders' behaviors, revealing how social exposure, emotional conditioning, and environmental pressures interact to produce firearm-related crimes.

In line with the interpretivist philosophical paradigm, this study theorized that social reality is constructed through human experience. Therefore, exploring offenders' lived experiences provides valuable insights into the personal meanings and motivations underlying firearm use. The study focused on the province of Surigao del Sur as a setting where firearm-related offenses remain prevalent and where offenders' voices have been underrepresented in criminological research.

The study aimed to develop a framework for understanding firearm possession through the lived experiences of detained offenders. Specifically, it sought to determine (1) the motivations behind firearm-related crimes as perceived by convicted offenders; (2) their perceptions regarding firearm use and possession; and (3) their insights and realizations after committing the crime. By capturing these narratives, the study endeavored to illuminate the human and contextual dimensions of firearm-related offenses, contributing to policy enhancement, rehabilitation, and preventive strategies.

By examining how individuals perceived firearms before, during, and after committing an offense, the research highlighted critical gaps in emotional regulation, legal awareness, and responsible firearm ownership. The findings directly aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, which emphasizes reducing violence, strengthening the rule of law, and promoting safe and inclusive societies. The study contributed to SDG 16 by offering empirical data that could guide policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations in designing targeted programs such as firearm safety education, restorative justice initiatives, and strengthened regulatory measures to curb illegal possession. Ultimately, this research not only advanced criminological and psychological understanding of firearm misuse but also supported national and global efforts toward building safer, more peaceful communities.

METHOD

Research Participants

This study targeted 25 convicted offenders of firearms-related crimes within the province of Surigao del Sur, encompassing individuals of all ages and genders. As purposive sampling is to be employed in the study which selected that participant by virtue of their capacity to provide richly-textured information, relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Bekele and Ago (2022) posit that a large sample size allows for the unfolding of a new and richly textured understanding of the phenomena, but is small enough to allow for a deep case analysis of qualitative data. This method is justified by its appropriateness for accessing specific information-rich cases, such as convicted offenders with firearms-related crime involvement.

The inclusion criteria comprised those who have been formally convicted of offenses involving firearms, currently reside within the geographical boundaries of Surigao del Sur, and have signed informed consent. To ensure the sample's specificity, participants must be presently detained under the jurisdiction of Surigao del Sur Jails. Exclusion criteria involve individuals who do not have signed informed consent, have not been convicted of firearms-related offenses, those residing outside the province of Surigao del Sur, and convicted offenders not currently held in Surigao del Sur Jails. These criteria aimed to outline a focused and relevant participant group, providing a significant understanding of firearms-related crimes from the perspective of convicted offenders in the specific context of Surigao del Sur.

The choice of Surigao del Sur as the study locale was justified by its relevance to the research topic, as it had witnessed incidents of firearms-related crimes. Additionally, the researcher is currently residing in the province, hence there is the convenience of conducting the study. The study was conducted during the second semester of Academic Year 2024-2025.

Materials and Instrument

The research instrument for the study was a semi-structured interview guide based on the study's objectives. The guide centers around three key thematic areas: the personal experiences of offenders, their perceptions of using firearms, and any realizations they may have had throughout their involvement in firearms-related crimes. The questions in the instrument aim to elicit detailed narratives, probing participants' individual backgrounds, motivations, and the contextual factors that influenced their decisions to engage in criminal activities involving firearms.

The semi-structured nature of the research instrument allows flexibility during interviews, enabling the research team to adapt to the unique and often sensitive stories shared by the participants. The instrument underwent expert content validation to ascertain its relevance, clarity, and suitability for the study's objectives. The panel of evaluators provided an approved validation outcome of ten (10) "Yes" ratings, signifying a very good level of content validity and confirming that the instrument was ready for field application. This step was crucial in confirming that the questions align with the study's objectives and ethical considerations, contributing to the overall validity and reliability of the research instrument.

Design and Procedures

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design, which sought to explore and understand the lived experiences of convicted offenders involved in firearms-related crimes. Phenomenology was deemed appropriate because it focuses on describing and interpreting participants' subjective realities—the meanings they attach to their experiences—allowing for a deeper understanding of their motivations, perceptions, and realizations regarding firearm possession and use. The design aligns with the interpretivist philosophical paradigm, which assumes that reality is socially constructed

and that human behavior can best be understood through the perspectives of those who experience it. Within this framework, the researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection and interpretation, ensuring immersion in the participants’ narratives and contexts.

The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature, conducted within the Surigao del Sur Provincial Jail over a three-month period in 2025. It followed a cross-sectional time dimension, gathering data at a single point in time to capture the participants’ lived realities during incarceration. The primary objective was to elicit rich, contextual accounts that reveal the multifaceted reasons behind firearm-related crimes and the offenders’ subsequent realizations.

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the Surigao del Sur Jail Administration and the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC Protocol No. 2024-467). The research protocol included a detailed description of objectives, methodologies, ethical safeguards, and participant rights. After administrative approval, participants were individually briefed about the purpose, process, risks, and benefits of the study. Informed consent was voluntarily obtained, ensuring that participation was both free and fully informed. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed throughout the study, emphasizing that participation or withdrawal would not affect their treatment or privileges as inmates.

To establish rapport and minimize potential bias, a pre-data collection orientation was conducted, during which participants could express questions or concerns. The data collection process employed a multi-method approach, integrating in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The in-depth interviews provided individualized insights into participants’ motivations, decisions, and emotional responses, while FGDs facilitated interactive exchanges that revealed shared experiences and social dynamics surrounding firearm use. Each interview and discussion was audio-recorded—with permission—and transcribed verbatim. A post-data collection debriefing was also conducted to address any psychological discomfort that may have emerged.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding Firearms-Related Crimes

Table 1.
Experiences of the Detained Offenders on Firearm-Related Cases

Themes	Core Ideas
Peer-Induced Criminal Involvement	Circumstantial involvement with peers; cultural or familial pressure to bear arms; unwilling involvement in organized aggression
Job-Related Firearm Exposure	Duty-based possession due to job as security personnel; mandatory firearm issuance through paramilitary service; employer-enabled access to unlicensed firearms
Emotion and Alcohol-Driven Firearm Violence	Firearm use triggered by conflict; anger and personal conflict as a trigger for firearm violence; alcohol-induced escalation of conflict leading to firearm use
Protection-Oriented Firearm Possession in High-Risk Settings	Armed for protection in conflict-prone or rebel-infested areas; carried firearms due to community vulnerability to violence; possession justified by fear of crime and personal harm
Financially Induced Firearm Possession and Use	Accepted paid assignment involving firearm-related crime; intent to profit from unauthorized possession or sale of firearm; accepted fire-

arm through opportunistic, low-cost transaction

The experiences of the convicted offenders revealed that firearm-related crimes often stemmed from complex personal, occupational, and social contexts. Many participants emphasized that their involvement with firearms was not premeditated but rather circumstantial emerging from peer influence, occupational roles, and situational threats.

Participant 3 shared, “Sa akong kaso, wala gyud koy plano nga magdala og pusil, apan tungod sa presyur sa akong grupo, napugos ko nga mogamit niini aron maprotektahan akong kaugalingon.” (In my case, I didn’t intend to carry a firearm, but because of pressure from my group, I was forced to use it for protection).

This reflects how social pressures and group affiliations normalize the act of carrying firearms, particularly in communities where violence is prevalent. Similarly, job-related exposure to firearms was another recurring experience. Participant 1, a security guard, shared: “Kada duty nako ma feel nako nga safety ko kay naa koy pang depensa.”

(Every time I work, I feel safe because I have something to defend myself.)

Participant 23, a forest guard, added: “Usa ko ka forest guard maong naga dala-dala ko ug armas. Pero dili gyud mi allowed nga magdala pero tungod sa threat sa mga smuggler ug NPA sa reserve forest, maong nagdala-dala ko ug armas.” (I am a forest guard, so I carry a firearm. But we are not allowed to carry one; still, due to threats from smugglers and the NPA, I had to bring one). Such accounts show that occupational risk and weak policy enforcement expose workers to unregulated firearm possession.

Emotional and alcohol-driven incidents also featured strongly. Participant 11 narrated: “Tungod sa alak sir. Naka inom ko ato nga time. Ang akong lumon gi bunalan ug butilya sa ulo, ako nga nakakita ug dala sa empluwensya sa ilimmun, naa pud koy pusil maong akong nagamit sa pagpatay.”

(Because of alcohol, I drank at that time. My friend was hit on the head with a bottle, and under the influence, I had a firearm, so I used it to kill). This demonstrates how emotional outbursts and intoxication can escalate conflict to lethal violence.

In high-risk and rebel-infested areas, some participants justified firearm possession for protection. Participant 4 explained: “Ako sir NPA rebel ko. Maong naa koy armas para sa pakiggubat. Para sa proteksyon. Kay naa mi kalaban.”

“I was an NPA rebel, so I had a firearm for combat and protection because we had enemies.” Others admitted to engaging in financially motivated firearm use. Participant 18 stated: “Gisuhulan lang mi aron pagpatay sa kaaway sa akong kaila.” (We were hired to kill the enemy of my acquaintance).

These findings align with criminological literature highlighting how social, occupational, and environmental factors converge to shape firearm use. Beardslee et al. (2021) found that offenders often carry firearms either for self-protection or due to occupational exposure. Weybright et al. (2024) similarly emphasized that peer influence and community norms can normalize firearm possession as a perceived necessity for safety or status. Parents and caregivers exposed to community violence are more likely to own firearms—signaling that collective vulnerability and social environment drive firearm prevalence (Smith et al., 2024) Overall, the narratives show that firearm-related crimes arise not merely from deviant intent but from social vulnerability, peer reinforcement, and systemic failures in firearm regulation.

Perceptions of Firearm Use

Table 2. Perceptions of Detained Offenders in Using Firearms

Themes	Core Ideas
Firearms as Tools of Protection and Control	Firearms enhanced one’s sense of security in professional roles; necessary for self-defense and survival; means to intimidate and assert dominance
Firearms as Unlawful and Regrettable	Perceived firearms as unlawful when not authorized; recognized that misuse of firearms can destroy lives
Firearms Seen as Risky Tools	Now reject firearm possession and use; view guns as dangerous; believe firearms should not be part of civilian life

Initially, many offenders perceived firearms as practical tools essential for survival in dangerous environments. Possession symbolized safety and authority, particularly for those whose jobs exposed them to risk. Participant 5, a security guard, shared: “Yes, sir, I was a security guard, so I had experience with firearms. During my duty, I felt safe because I had a way to defend myself.” Participant 7 echoed similar sentiments: “Abi nako nga ang pusil makahatag og gahum ug proteksyon.” (I thought that firearms provide power and protection).

However, several participants later realized that firearms also functioned as instruments of intimidation and control. Participant 8 confessed: “Para sa akoa, usa ka pamaagi kini sa pagpanghadlok. Mas sayon ang pagpakabuhion sa among grupo kung adunay armas.” (For me, it was a way to intimidate. It was easier for our group to survive if we had firearms).

With time and reflection, most participants recognized the dangers and illegality of unauthorized possession. Participant 2 admitted that when he held a firearm—especially an unlicensed one—he realized that it was not good to possess a firearm without a license, particularly if he was not part of the uniformed personnel.

Regret was a common sentiment. Participant 21 stated that he regretted carrying a firearm, acknowledging that it was not good. Some participants, such as Participant 11, also discouraged civilian possession, explaining that if a person did not have the legal right to carry a firearm, they should refrain from doing so. He added that he himself had no right to carry one, and as a result, he was now in prison, where life was difficult.

This evolution from perceived protection to increased awareness of harm aligns with findings by Sokol et al. (2024), who reported that individuals often begin carrying firearms in response to fears about personal safety but later confront the risks and negative consequences associated with gun possession. Connolly et al. (2025) similarly note that individuals exposed to neighborhood violence initially view firearms as necessary defensive tools, yet over time recognize that carrying a weapon can escalate danger rather than reduce it. Further, Mitchell et al. (2025) emphasize that ongoing exposure to firearm violence shapes post-experience reflection, leading many young people to reassess their beliefs about guns and increasingly reject firearms as reliable sources of control, protection, or safety.

Motivations for Firearm Use

Table 3. Motivations of Detained offenders for Firearm Use

Themes	Core Ideas
False Confidence	Felt a boost in self-assurance when armed; felt protected and less vulnerable in public spaces
Fear and Nervous-	Nervousness due to accidental discharge or arrest; anxiety from realizing conse-

ness	quences
Regret and Guilt	Deep remorse after the act; emotional suffering and guilt

Participants’ motivations reflected a mix of psychological reassurance and external pressures. Many initially experienced a false sense of confidence and invulnerability while armed. Participant 6 shared: “Naa man gud mga tao na nag bahad-bahad nako, maong napugos ko nga mugamit sa pusil aron proteksyon nako.” (There were people who threatened me, so I was forced to use a firearm for protection).

This perceived safety masked the emotional tension that firearm possession created. Participants reported fear of accidental discharge, police arrest, and escalating violence. Over time, these anxieties turned into deep remorse. Participant 12 stated: “Oo, labi na pagkahuman nako magamit ang pusil. Usa ka gabii nga di ko katulog, sige lang ko’g huna-huna sa akong nabuhat.”

(Yes, especially after using the firearm. One night, I couldn’t sleep, constantly thinking about what I had done)

Such emotional distress illustrates the moral awakening that followed impulsive firearm use. Recent findings support this pattern: Sokol et al. (2024) reported that heightened fear, perceived threat, and emotional strain significantly increase the likelihood of impulsive firearm carrying and use. Similarly, Ellyson et al. (2023) found that alcohol use and heightened emotional arousal contribute to risky gun-carrying behaviors among young individuals, often leading to actions they later regret. A large scoping review further emphasizes that firearms can act as facilitators of impulsive action during periods of distress, amplifying fear, trauma, and aggression rather than providing genuine protection (Hawkins et al., 2025). These accounts highlight the duality of firearm possession—offering a temporary sense of empowerment while simultaneously fostering fear, guilt, and long-term emotional burden. They also underline the need for firearm education that incorporates emotional regulation, legal awareness, and moral responsibility.

Realizations of Detained Offenders after Committing the Crime

Table 4.

Realizations and Insights of Detained Offenders

Themes	Core Ideas
Awareness of Responsibility	Realized that true strength comes from moral choices, not weapons; understood the irreversible harm firearms can cause; recognized firearm ownership as a serious obligation
Advocacy for Legal Use	Believed only government-authorized individuals should possess firearms; rejected civilian use without permits; encouraged legal compliance

Post-crime reflections revealed a significant moral and psychological transformation among participants. Many recognized that true strength lies not in weapons but in ethical self-control. Participant 2 shared: “Wala ko magduha-duha sa una, pero pagkahuman nga na-priso, didto ko nakamatngon.”

(I didn’t have doubts at first, but after I was imprisoned, that’s when I realized).

Participant 18 expressed remorse: “Kung mabalik pa lang ang panahon, dili na gyud ko magdala og armas.”

“If I could go back in time, I would never carry a firearm again.” Others developed strong advocacy against unauthorized firearm possession. In addition, participant 20 emphasized that he would only use a

firearm if he had a license and if he were part of the government, noting that as a civilian, he understood such possession to be illegal.

These reflections parallel recent findings on post-offense moral shifts among justice-involved individuals. Thompson et al. (2024) found that individuals who undergo incarceration often experience a profound moral reevaluation, leading them to reject prior patterns of weapon carrying and develop stronger commitments to lawful behavior. Likewise, Albright and Nelson (2023) reported that guilt, shame, and exposure to the consequences of violence commonly trigger prosocial transformation, with many offenders expressing remorse and a desire to distance themselves from firearms. Broader trauma research also supports this trajectory, as Mitchell et al. (2025) observed that young people exposed to firearm-related harm often reassess their beliefs about guns, shifting from perceiving firearms as protective to recognizing their emotional and social risks. Such realizations underscore the value of restorative justice programs emphasizing moral recovery, emotional regulation, and civic responsibility. Integrating these insights into correctional education has the potential to transform offenders into advocates for legal compliance, responsible firearm ownership, and violence prevention.

IMPLICATION AND CONCLUDING REMARK

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study imply that firearm-related crimes are influenced by a convergence of social, occupational, emotional, and environmental factors rather than by deliberate criminal intent alone. This is suggestive of the need for policies and standards that move beyond mere firearm regulation and toward a more holistic framework addressing the social and psychological dimensions of firearm use. The study results are indicative of the importance of integrating preventive education, psychosocial support, and occupational monitoring within firearm control systems to reduce the likelihood of misuse. In practice, the study may guide policymakers and law enforcement agencies in formulating interventions that emphasize the moral, emotional, and social responsibilities associated with firearm possession. The results imply that firearm management programs could integrate awareness campaigns on the legal and ethical consequences of illegal firearm use, conflict resolution, and anger management initiatives within high-risk communities. Moreover, the findings are suggestive of the need to align professional firearm training with psychological preparedness, especially among security personnel, forest guards, and other occupations where weapon handling is part of daily responsibility.

Incorporating these findings into policy frameworks may lead to the development of community-based strategies promoting non-violent means of conflict resolution. Such strategies could involve partnerships among local government units, law enforcement, educational institutions, and social welfare offices in implementing early intervention programs. Likewise, firearm control standards may include regular mental health evaluations for individuals in armed professions and the inclusion of socio-emotional training modules in firearm licensing requirements. This integrated approach is indicative of a shift toward a preventive and rehabilitative model of firearm regulation rather than one that is purely punitive.

Implications for Future Research

The results of this study suggest multiple avenues for future inquiry that could deepen the understanding of firearm-related crimes. Future research may employ longitudinal designs to explore how offenders' perceptions and attitudes toward firearms evolve over time, particularly after rehabilitation or reintegration into society. This could lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term psychological and behavioral transformations experienced by convicted offenders.

Further, this study implies that the use of mixed-methods approaches—combining qualitative narratives with quantitative data—may offer richer insights into the interplay among personal motivations, environmental pressures, and institutional factors that contribute to firearm-related offenses. Expanding future research to include participants from diverse socio-economic, educational, and geographic backgrounds may also yield more nuanced perspectives on the structural conditions influencing firearm behavior.

Additionally, future studies may explore the effectiveness of various rehabilitation and reformation programs, particularly those centered on moral recovery, psychological counseling, and restorative justice. Comparative studies across different regions or countries could also be beneficial, as these may identify context-specific policy practices that successfully mitigate firearm-related crimes. These directions indicate the potential to build an evidence-based foundation for national firearm policy reforms and community safety strategies.

Concluding Remarks

This study has accomplished its purpose of exploring the lived experiences, motivations, perceptions, and realizations of individuals convicted of firearm-related crimes. The findings have been indicative of how firearm offenses arise from complex social interactions, occupational exposure, emotional instability, and environmental insecurity. The research contributes meaningful insights into the Philippine context, revealing that firearm-related crimes are not solely a product of personal choice but of intertwined social conditions that may lead individuals to see firearms as tools of protection or control.

Conducting this study has provided the researcher with profound personal realizations about the human side of crime and punishment. It has been an enlightening experience that fostered a deeper appreciation for the value of empathy, rehabilitation, and understanding in addressing social deviance. The results imply that effective crime prevention cannot rely solely on law enforcement or punitive measures; rather, it may depend on creating environments that foster emotional resilience, moral awareness, and social responsibility.

This research journey has been both intellectually and personally transformative, leading to insights about the importance of education, advocacy, and community engagement in shaping ethical behavior. The lessons learned underscore that individuals are not beyond change; given proper guidance, moral reflection, and support, they are capable of transformation and positive reintegration into society. Ultimately, this study suggests that meaningful social reform begins with understanding the causes of deviant behavior and addressing them through compassion, policy innovation, and sustained community collaboration.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my family—especially my wife and children whose love, patience, and constant support have been my greatest source of strength throughout this research journey. Their understanding during the long hours of writing, system development, and revisions made this work possible. To my parents and loved ones who continuously believed in my dreams, thank you for your prayers, encouragement, and unwavering faith in my capabilities.

My sincere appreciation is also extended to my adviser and the panel members, whose expertise, guidance, and constructive feedback greatly shaped and strengthened this study. Their dedication to academic excellence and their willingness to share valuable insights helped refine every aspect of this

research. I am likewise grateful to the research participants, who generously shared their time, experiences, and honest perspectives. Their cooperation made the data collection process meaningful and grounded in real operational contexts.

To my supportive colleagues, mentors, and friends who continuously offered assistance, motivation, and technical advice, I am truly thankful. Their encouragement during difficult phases reminded me that research is not a solitary journey but a collaborative effort shaped by a community of supportive individuals. Finally, to everyone who contributed in ways big and small—thank you. This accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine.

References

1. Albright K., Nelson J., “Moral transformation and desistance: Understanding the post-offense emotional journey of incarcerated individuals”, *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 2023, 62 (4), 355–372.
2. Beardslee J., Kan E., Simmons C., Pardini D., Peniche M., Frick P.J., Steinberg L., Cauffman E., “A within-individual examination of the predictors of gun carrying during adolescence and young adulthood among young men”, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 2021, 50 (10), 1952–1969. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-021-01464-6>
3. Bekele W.B., Ago F.Y., “Sample size for interview in qualitative research in social sciences: A guide to novice researchers”, *Research in Educational Policy and Management*, 2022, 4 (1), 42–50. <https://doi.org/10.46303/repam.2022.3>
4. Boxer P., Sloan-Power E., Goldstein S.E., “Exposure to gun violence: Associations with anxiety, depressive symptoms, and aggression among male juvenile offenders”, *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 2021, 50 (6), 840–853. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33830838/>
5. Cabico G., “Nearly 5,000 gun-related incidents reported in 2023 — PNP”, *GMA News Online*, January 2024. <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/900116/nearly-5-000-gun-related-incidents-reported-in-2023-pnp/story/>
6. Cerda M., Weiss R.E., Jennings W.G., “Dealing with guns: Investigating the spatial attraction of gun dealers on localized gun violence”, *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 2025. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11292-025-09666-9>
7. Connolly E.J., Wingert A.C., Reidy D.E., et al., “Perceived neighborhood crime and gun carrying behavior: Examining the role of a history of traumatic brain injury”, *Injury Epidemiology*, 2025, 12, Article 34. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-025-00588-8>
8. Dowd E., Malone C., “Passion for guns and beliefs in a dangerous world: An examination of defensive gun ownership”, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 2024, 41 (5), 1270–1291. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38623794/>
9. Ellyson A.M., Choi A.L., Borowsky I.W., “The association of alcohol use and heavy drinking with subsequent handgun carrying among youth from rural areas”, *Journal of Rural Health*, 2023, 39 (4), 778–788. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jrh.12777>
10. Goyal M.K., Badolato G.M., Muthusamy A., “Household firearm ownership and firearm mortality: A national population-based study”, *JAMA Network Open*, 2024, 7 (2), e240215. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2822551>

11. Hartmann F., van Gelder J.L., Baranenko E., “Affect, emotions, and crime decision-making: Emerging insights from immersive 360° video experiments”, *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 2024. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11292-024-09615-y>
12. Hawkins D.A., Clarke R.P., Nguyen T.M., “The impact of firearm ownership, violence, and policies on mental health: A systematic scoping review”, *Journal of Affective Disorders Reports*, 2025, 17, 101123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadr.2025.101123>
13. Jackson S.M., Rippy M., Chaplin T., “Troubleshooting violence: An evaluation of ghost guns, firearm-related violence, and law enforcement policy in a Bay Area city”, *Policing*, 2023, 17. <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paac114>
14. Johnson M., Lee S., “Bullying and physical violence and their association with handgun carrying among youth growing up in rural areas: Longitudinal evidence 2005–2019”, *Journal of Rural Health*, 2023, 39 (4), 536–548. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36596325/>
15. Leal G.K., “PNP to simplify gun license renewal, open permit hubs in Visayas, Mindanao”, *News5 PH*, June 2024. <https://news5.com.ph/articles/pnp-to-simplify-gun-license-renewal-open-permit-hubs-in-visayas-mindanao>
16. Marquez A., Johnson R., Lasky F., “Unpacking violence: Examining socioeconomic, psychological, and genetic drivers of gun-related homicide and potential solutions”, *Social Sciences*, 2025, 9 (6), 190. <https://www.mdpi.com/2413-8851/9/6/190>
17. McCann J., Juarez T., “The effect of gun violence on community mental health”, *Weitzman Institute*, May 2024. <https://www.weitzmaninstitute.org/the-effect-of-gun-violence-on-community-mental-health/>
18. Mitchell K.J., Banyard V., Taylor B.G., Mumford E.A., Liu W., Turner H.A., “Prevalence of exposure to someone else’s firearm violence, threats, and risky behavior among a national sample of young people in the United States”, *Frontiers in Public Health*, 2025, 13, Article 1451268. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2025.1451268>
19. Murphy T.F., “Akers’ Social Learning Theory: Understanding criminal behavior through learning”, *Psychology Fanatic*, August 2025. <https://www.psychologyfanatic.com/akers-social-learning-theory/>
20. Pechorro P., Curtis S., DeLisi M., Maroco J., Nunes C., “Dark Triad psychopathy outperforms self-control in predicting antisocial outcomes”, *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education*, 2022, 12 (6), 549–562. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ejihpe12060041>
21. Pechorro P., DeLisi M., Gonçalves R.A., Maroco J., “Bold, mean and disinhibited: Self-control and antisocial outcomes in youth”, *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 2021, 29 (6), 871–888. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2021.1995519>
22. Peralta-Malonzo T.A., “PNP allows civilians to own semi-automatic, long firearms”, *SunStar*, March 2024. <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/pnp-allows-civilians-to-own-semi-automatic-long-firearms>
23. Philippine News Agency, “PNP identifies over 700,000 loose firearms nationwide”, March 2023. <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1220493>
24. Philippine News Agency, “PNP reminds cops, soldiers to renew gun permits regularly”, May 2023. <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1202488>
25. Quitariano E., “Curbing the proliferation of illegal firearms”, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 2025. <https://opinion.inquirer.net/182021/curbing-the-proliferation-of-illegal-firearms>

26. SEAsia.co, “Highest gun ownership in Southeast Asia (2024)”, SEAsia, 2024. <https://seasia.co/infographic/highest-gun-ownership-in-southeast-asia-2024>
27. Sharma K., Gupta K., “An analysis of Social Learning Theory to the changing nature of juvenile crimes”, *Journal of Law and Public Policy*, 2023, 5 (2), 9457.
28. Smith C., Sullivan T.N., Ross K.M., “Association between community violence exposure and teen parental firearm ownership”, *Injury Epidemiology*, 2024, 11, Article 64. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-024-00542-0>
29. Sokol R.L., Oliphant S.N., Bhatia S., Thulin E.J., Degli Esposti M., Hans Z., “Associations between perceived threats and firearm behaviors among U.S. adults”, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2024, 67 (5), 641–649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2024.06.024>
30. Stroebe W., Leander N.P., Kruglanski A.W., “Gun ownership and gun violence: A comparison of the United States and Switzerland”, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, Article 101987.
31. Tharshini N.K., Ibrahim F., Kamaluddin M.R., Rathakrishnan B., Nasir N.C.M., “The link between individual personality traits and criminality: A systematic review”, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2021, 18 (16), 8663. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18168663>
32. United Nations, “SDG Lounge Report – Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”, UN Partnerships, 2025. https://unpartnerships.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2025-01/SDGLoungeReport_Digital_0.pdf
33. Weybright E.H., Terral J., Gause E., Oesterle S., Rowhani-Rahbar A., “Firearm experiences, behaviors, and norms among rural adolescents”, *JAMA Network Open*, 2024, 7 (10), e2441203. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.41203>
34. Wikström P.O.H., Treiber K., Roman G.D., “Explaining crime events and criminal careers: Situational Action Theory (SAT) and its developmental ecological action (DEA) model”, Oxford University Press, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198865865.001.0001>

