International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

Guardians in Uniform: A Study on the Role and Experiences of Philippine Army Reservists in Community Security and Crime Prevention

Ranel Alvez Maglente

Philippine College of Criminology, Graduate School

ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of Philippine Army Reservists in their roles in community security and crime prevention, focusing on personnel assigned to the 801st Ready Reserve Infantry Battalion (RRIBn) in Northern Samar. Specifically, it examined the meaning and significance of reservist service, the challenges and ethical dilemmas encountered during security and public safety activities, the influence of service on personal identity and civic responsibility, and the nature of collaboration with law enforcement agencies and community members. The study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design. Seven active or Ready Reserve personnel with at least five years of service experience were purposively selected as participants. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions and analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method. The findings revealed that reservists viewed their service as a voluntary commitment to public service, national duty, and community protection. Their contributions extended to crime prevention, disaster response, humanitarian assistance, and community development. However, they encountered operational constraints involving inadequate equipment, logistical limitations, transportation difficulties, limited training opportunities, personnel safety, and competing civilian responsibilities. Service experiences also strengthened discipline, leadership, accountability, courage, and civic responsibility. Participants generally described their relationships with law enforcement agencies, local government units, and community members as cooperative and mutually beneficial. Based on these findings, the study proposed the *Stronger Together* strategic framework, emphasizing inter-agency coordination, capacity building, resource enhancement, ethical leadership, community engagement, and systematic monitoring and evaluation. The study highlights the importance of coordinated institutional support in strengthening community security and sustainable peace in Northern Samar.

Keywords: Philippine Army Reservists, community security, crime prevention, lived experiences, inter-agency collaboration, civic responsibility

I. INTRODUCTION

Community security and crime prevention are essential components of public safety, local governance, and sustainable development. Maintaining peace and order requires coordinated participation among law enforcement agencies, military institutions, local government units, and community stakeholders. In areas experiencing security concerns, natural disasters, and socioeconomic challenges, collaborative approaches are particularly important in protecting communities and strengthening public confidence.

In the Philippines, the Philippine Army Reserve Force serves as a supporting component of national defense and community security. Republic Act No. 7077, or the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines Reservist Act of 1991, provides the legal foundation for the organization and development of the country's reserve force. Within their authorized functions, reservists may contribute to national defense, disaster response, humanitarian assistance, and community development activities.

Northern Samar provides an important setting for examining these responsibilities. The province's geographical characteristics and security context underscore the importance of coordination among military personnel, the Philippine National Police (PNP), local government units (LGUs), barangay officials, and community organizations. Within this environment, the 801st Ready Reserve Infantry Battalion (RRIBn) provides a relevant institutional context for understanding how Army Reservists experience and interpret their contributions to community security and crime prevention.

Although reservists may participate in public safety initiatives, their experiences involve more than the performance of assigned duties. Their service may require personal sacrifice, professional discipline, ethical judgment, adaptability, and the balancing of military responsibilities with civilian employment and family obligations. Operational limitations, including inadequate equipment, transportation difficulties, insufficient training opportunities, and coordination concerns, may also affect their capacity to respond to community needs.

Furthermore, collaboration between reservists and other security institutions requires effective communication, clear responsibilities, mutual trust, and respect for established mandates. Understanding how reservists perceive these relationships can provide useful insights into the practical conditions that support or constrain community-based security initiatives.

Despite the importance of reserve personnel in local security and public service, their lived experiences and perceptions of inter-agency collaboration warrant closer examination. Exploring these experiences can contribute to a deeper understanding of the personal, organizational, and operational dimensions of reservist service.

Therefore, this study explored the lived experiences of Philippine Army Reservists assigned to the 801st RRIBn in Northern Samar. Specifically, it sought to understand:

1. How reservists describe the meaning and significance of their roles in community security and crime prevention.
2. What challenges and ethical dilemmas they encounter during crime prevention and public safety activities.
3. How reservist service influences their personal identity, values, and sense of civic responsibility.
4. How they perceive their relationships and collaborations with law enforcement agencies and community members.
5. What strategic measures may strengthen inter-agency integration for sustainable peace and security in Northern Samar.

The study aimed to contribute to discussions on community security, reservist development, collaborative governance, and institutional coordination. Its findings also served as the basis for proposing strategic measures responsive to the experiences and needs identified by the participants.

II. METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of

Philippine Army Reservists in community security and crime prevention. This approach was appropriate because the research focused on participants' firsthand experiences, perceptions, interpretations, and reflections regarding their service.

Rather than measuring the effectiveness of security operations through numerical indicators, the study sought to understand the meanings participants attributed to their responsibilities, challenges, personal development, and relationships with other institutions.

Research Participants and Sampling Technique

The study involved seven active or Ready Reserve personnel assigned to the 801st RRIBn in Northern Samar. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevant experience and direct involvement in reservist activities.

To qualify, participants had to be active or Ready Reservists engaged in battalion operations, community initiatives, or security-related functions. They were also required to have at least five years of service experience and sufficient exposure to activities such as crime prevention, public safety, disaster response, or inter-agency collaboration.

These criteria ensured that participants could provide detailed accounts of their experiences and explain how reservist service influenced their professional responsibilities, personal values, and commitment to community welfare.

Research Locale

The study was conducted within the operational context of the 801st RRIBn in Northern Samar, Eastern Visayas, Philippines. The locale was selected because of the battalion's involvement in security-related activities, community assistance, disaster response, and collaborative initiatives with government institutions.

The setting provided an appropriate context for exploring reservists' experiences in community security and their interactions with the PNP, local government units, barangay officials, and other community stakeholders.

Research Instrument

The primary data-gathering instrument was a semi-structured interview guide developed in accordance with the study's research questions. It covered five major areas: the meaning and significance of reservist service, operational challenges and ethical dilemmas, personal identity and civic responsibility, inter-agency relationships, and recommendations for strengthening community security.

The instrument allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own words while enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions for clarification and deeper understanding.

The interview guide underwent expert review by three validators. Their comments and recommendations were considered in refining the questions to improve clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives.

Data-Gathering Procedure

The researcher sought the necessary institutional permissions before conducting data collection. Eligible participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and ethical safeguards.

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, depending on participant availability and the nature of the information being explored. With appropriate consent, interview sessions were recorded to support accurate transcription and analysis.

The recordings were transcribed verbatim and checked for accuracy and completeness. The researcher repeatedly reviewed the transcripts to become familiar with the participants' accounts and identify statem-

ents relevant to the research questions.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method. The analysis involved examining the transcripts, identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, organizing related meanings into thematic clusters, and developing comprehensive descriptions of the participants' experiences.

The resulting themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions, with attention to preserving the meanings expressed by the participants. Member checking was conducted by providing participants with summaries of preliminary findings relevant to their contributions and inviting feedback on the accuracy of the interpretations. This process supported the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to decline or withdraw without penalty.

Confidentiality and anonymity were protected through appropriate handling of identifying information, secure data storage, and responsible presentation of the findings. Given the security-sensitive context, the researcher avoided collecting classified operational information or details that could compromise personal safety or institutional security.

The findings were presented to reflect participants' accounts faithfully and were intended for academic and policy-related purposes.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of participants' accounts revealed interconnected themes concerning public service, community protection, operational challenges, personal development, and inter-agency collaboration. Collectively, these findings demonstrate how reservists understood their roles and navigated the practical demands of community security and crime prevention.

3.1 Meaning and Significance of Reservist Service

The participants described reservist service as a voluntary and selfless commitment to public service, national duty, and community protection. Their accounts indicated that their responsibilities extended beyond military affiliation to include assisting communities during emergencies, supporting crime prevention initiatives, participating in humanitarian activities, and contributing to community development.

Their involvement in public service reflected a sense of duty and willingness to assist others when circumstances required additional personnel and support. Participation in civic activities, disaster response, and community assistance also demonstrated the broader social dimensions of reservist service.

The findings suggest that reservists understood their roles through a combination of patriotism, service orientation, personal fulfillment, and concern for community welfare. Their contributions were perceived not only in terms of security-related responsibilities but also through their involvement in activities that promoted solidarity and public confidence.

These findings highlight the value of recognizing reservists as contributors to community resilience and public welfare, while maintaining the distinction between their authorized functions and the formal responsibilities of law enforcement agencies.

3.2 Challenges and Ethical Dilemmas in Community Security

Despite their commitment to service, participants identified several challenges affecting their ability to

carry out assigned responsibilities. These included inadequate equipment, limited logistical support, transportation difficulties, insufficient specialized rescue resources, and restricted opportunities for continuing training.

Such constraints could complicate responses to emergencies and community safety concerns, particularly when operations required specialized equipment, reliable transportation, or coordinated assistance from other institutions.

Participants also described ethical and operational dilemmas involving personal safety, security risks, humanitarian considerations, and competing civilian and family responsibilities. Their experiences reflected the need to balance assigned duties with the practical limitations of available resources and individual circumstances.

In addressing these challenges, participants emphasized remaining calm, maintaining professionalism, focusing on assigned tasks, communicating effectively, adapting to changing conditions, and seeking guidance when necessary. These strategies demonstrated the importance of resilience and sound judgment in demanding situations.

The findings indicate that individual dedication alone may not be sufficient to address the demands of community security. Institutional support, appropriate equipment, continuous training, clear operational procedures, and effective coordination are also important considerations.

3.3 Influence of Reservist Service on Personal Identity, Values, and Civic Responsibility

The participants described reservist service as an experience that strengthened personal discipline, accountability, courage, alertness, responsibility, and commitment to public service. Their involvement in training, security activities, and community assistance contributed to their development as individuals and reinforced their sense of purpose.

Service also provided opportunities to develop leadership, confidence, adaptability, and the ability to work with others. Exposure to demanding situations encouraged participants to appreciate the importance of preparation, responsible decision-making, and cooperation in fulfilling assigned responsibilities.

These experiences strengthened their identification with community service and responsible citizenship. Participants viewed their contributions as expressions of civic responsibility and nation-building rather than solely as military obligations.

The findings suggest that reservist service can serve as a context for personal growth and character formation. However, these conclusions represent the participants' perceptions of their own development and should not be interpreted as a standardized measurement of personal transformation among all reservists.

3.4 Relationships and Collaboration with Law Enforcement Agencies and Community Members

Participants generally described their relationships with the PNP, local government units, and community members as cooperative and mutually beneficial. Their accounts emphasized teamwork, communication, information sharing, trust, and shared responsibility for maintaining peace and public safety.

Collaboration was particularly relevant to community assistance, disaster response, local government activities, and other initiatives requiring coordinated participation. Working with different institutions allowed reservists to contribute manpower, support community activities, and participate in shared public service objectives.

The findings also highlighted the importance of maintaining positive relationships between security personnel and the communities they serve. Trust and cooperation may support community participation, facilitate communication, and strengthen collective responses to public safety concerns.

Nevertheless, the study primarily documented participants' perceptions of their working relationships. It did not independently establish the operational effectiveness of existing inter-agency arrangements. Further evaluation involving additional stakeholders and operational indicators would be necessary to determine the extent to which these relationships improve measurable security outcomes.

3.5 Strategic Measures for Strengthening Inter-Agency Integration

The findings pointed to the need for a more coordinated and adequately supported approach to community security and crime prevention in Northern Samar.

The participants' experiences and the challenges identified in the study informed the proposed strategic framework entitled **"Stronger Together: Strategic Measures for Sustainable Peace and Security in Northern Samar."**

The framework contains six interconnected components:

1. **Inter-agency integration.** Strengthen coordination among Army Reservists, the PNP, local government units, and other relevant institutions through regular coordination activities, clearly defined responsibilities, and shared planning.
2. **Training and preparedness.** Provide continuing capacity-building opportunities, joint training, emergency preparedness exercises, and relevant skills development to improve readiness for authorized security and disaster-response assignments.
3. **Equipment and logistical support.** Assess and address resource requirements involving equipment, transportation, communication tools, and specialized rescue resources, subject to agency mandates and available funding.
4. **Ethical leadership and personnel safety.** Reinforce responsible decision-making, professional conduct, risk awareness, personnel protection, and appropriate operational safeguards.
5. **Community engagement.** Encourage participation in community-based peace and security initiatives, disaster preparedness, civic service, and public education activities that promote trust and collective responsibility.
6. **Monitoring and evaluation.** Establish appropriate mechanisms for assessing implementation, identifying resource gaps, documenting collaborative activities, and reviewing progress toward agreed objectives.

The proposed framework translates the study's findings into practical areas for institutional consideration. Its implementation would require stakeholder consultation, validation, appropriate authorization, resource allocation, and continuing evaluation.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study explored the lived experiences of seven Philippine Army Reservists assigned to the 801st RRIBn in Northern Samar and highlighted their perceived contributions to community security and crime prevention.

The findings indicate that participants regarded reservist service as an expression of patriotism, voluntary public service, national duty, and civic responsibility. Their reported contributions included crime prevention support, disaster response, humanitarian assistance, and community development.

However, their experiences also revealed operational and ethical challenges involving inadequate equipment, logistical limitations, transportation difficulties, insufficient training opportunities, personnel safety, and the need to balance service with civilian and family responsibilities. Participants described

resilience, professionalism, adaptability, communication, and coordination as important ways of managing these demands.

The study further indicates that reservist service contributed to participants' perceived development of discipline, leadership, accountability, courage, and a stronger sense of civic responsibility. Their generally positive perceptions of collaboration with law enforcement agencies, local government units, and community members underscore the importance of institutional cooperation in supporting community-based security initiatives.

Based on these findings, the proposed *Stronger Together* framework emphasizes inter-agency integration, training and preparedness, resource support, ethical leadership, community engagement, and systematic monitoring and evaluation. These measures provide a proposed direction for strengthening collaborative security governance in Northern Samar, subject to appropriate consultation, approval, resources, and implementation.

Because the study focused on seven purposively selected participants from a single reserve battalion, its findings are context-specific and are not intended to represent all Philippine Army Reservists. Future research may include additional battalions, provinces, and perspectives from police personnel, local government officials, and community members. Further studies may also examine how proposed coordination and capacity-building measures are implemented and whether they contribute to observable improvements in community security and crime prevention.

Overall, the study underscores that sustainable community security depends not only on the commitment of individual reservists but also on appropriate institutional support, clear responsibilities, ethical service, and coordinated participation among security agencies and communities.