OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS OF DRUG ENFORCEMENT UNIT (DEU): BASIS FOR RESTRUCTURING THE FRAMEWORK OF DEU

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study was done to describe how the PNP Drug Enforcement Unit carries out its mandated operational and administrative functions.

Theoretical Framework: This study is anchored on the Theory of Multidimensional Approach which explains the process of assessing and implementing an approach such as methods, tactic, and strategy that consists of more than one feature/design to address a situation or problem that is considered complex or needs to be assessed from several points of view.

Method: In this study, the researchers used generic qualitative research, utilizing a grounded theory. Purposive sampling was used in selecting and identifying the participants of the study. A total of eight (8) participants were selected to describe the administrative and operational functions of the selected DEU. The data collection was done using the unstructure interview guide validated by the expert in the field. Ethical considerations

Results and Discussion: Themes were derived and analyzed, falling into five (5) main themes. They are as follows: 1) conundrums of insufficiency, 2) insufficiency reverberates ineffectiveness, 3) insufficiency breeds inefficiency, 4) labyrinth for development, and 5) taming of the flock.

Research Implications: The PNP DEU within their territorial jurisdiction are generally considered the center of the police responses to drug trafficking and use. Thus, they must mount the most sophisticated investigations techniques against drug traffickers. It is for this reason that they should have continuing training which are essential for their development.

Originality/Value: This study provides bases for restructuring the present framework of the PNP DEU. As it encourage that strategic shift from the existing framework to a restructured framework incorporating the improvements suggested as necessary by the participants.

Keywords: administrative, illegal drugs, operational, PNP drug enforcement unit, war on Drugs.

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FUNÇÕES OPERACIONAIS E ADMINISTRATIVAS DA UNIDADE DE CONTROLO DA DROGA (DEU): BASE PARA A REESTRUTURAÇÃO DO QUADRO DA DEU

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo foi feito para descrever como a Unidade de Fiscalização de Drogas da PNP executa suas funções operacionais e administrativas.

Estrutura Teórica: Este estudo está ancorado na Teoria da Abordagem Multidimensional, que explica o processo de avaliação e implementação de uma abordagem, como métodos, tática e estratégia, que consiste em mais de um recurso/design para lidar com uma situação ou problema que é considerado complexo ou precisa ser avaliado de vários pontos de vista.

Método: Neste estudo, os pesquisadores usaram pesquisa qualitativa genérica, utilizando uma teoria fundamentada. A amostragem objetiva foi utilizada na seleção e identificação dos participantes do estudo. Um total de oito (8) participantes foram selecionados para descrever as funções administrativas e operacionais do DEU selecionado. A coleta de dados foi feita por meio do guia de entrevista de desestruturação validado pelo especialista na área. Considerações éticas.

Resultados e Discussão: Os temas foram derivados e analisados, caindo em cinco (5) temas principais. São as seguintes: 1) conundrums da insuficiência, 2) a insuficiência reverbera a ineficácia, 3) a insuficiência gera a ineficiência, 4) labirinto para o desenvolvimento, e 5) domesticação do rebanho.

Implicações da pesquisa: O DEU PNP dentro de sua jurisdição territorial é geralmente considerado o centro das respostas policiais ao tráfico e uso de drogas. Assim, eles devem montar as técnicas de investigação mais sofisticadas contra os traficantes de drogas. É por esta razão que eles devem ter formação contínua que são essenciais para o seu desenvolvimento.

Originalidade/valor: Este estudo fornece bases para a reestruturação do atual quadro da PNP DEU. Encorajar essa mudança estratégica do quadro existente para um quadro reestruturado que incorpore as melhorias sugeridas pelos participantes, na medida do necessário.

Palavras-chave: administração, drogas ilegais, operacional, unidade PNP de fiscalização de drogas, guerra às drogas.

FUNCIONES OPERATIVAS Y ADMINISTRATIVAS DE LA UNIDAD DE LUCHA CONTRA LA DROGA (UDE): BASE PARA LA REESTRUCTURACIÓN DEL MARCO DE LA UDE

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Este estudio se realizó para describir cómo la Unidad Antidrogas de la PNP lleva a cabo sus funciones operativas y administrativas.

Marco Teórico: Este estudio se basa en la Teoría del Enfoque Multidimensional que explica el proceso de evaluar e implementar un enfoque como métodos, táctica y estrategia que consiste en más de una característica/diseño para abordar una situación o problema que se considere complejo o necesita ser evaluado desde varios puntos de vista.

Método: En este estudio, los investigadores utilizaron investigación cualitativa genérica, utilizando una teoría fundamentada. Se utilizó el muestreo intencional para seleccionar e identificar a los participantes del estudio. Se seleccionó un total de ocho (8) participantes para describir las funciones administrativas y operativas de la UDE seleccionada. La recopilación de
Operational and Administrative Functions of Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU): Basis for Restructuring the Framework of DEU


Resultados y Discusión: Se derivaron y analizaron temas, que se clasificaron en cinco (5) temas principales. Son los siguientes: 1) enigmas de la insuficiencia, 2) la insuficiencia reverbera la ineficacia, 3) la insuficiencia engendra la ineficiencia, 4) el laberinto para el desarrollo, y 5) la doma del rebaño.

Implicaciones de la investigación: El PNP DEU dentro de su jurisdicción territorial generalmente se considera el centro de las respuestas policiales al tráfico y uso de drogas. Por lo tanto, deben montar las técnicas de investigación más sofisticadas contra los narcotraficantes. Por esta razón, deben tener una formación continua que sea esencial para su desarrollo.

Originalidad/Valor: Este estudio proporciona las bases para re estructurar el marco actual del PNP DEU. En la medida en que fomenta ese cambio estratégico del marco existente a un marco reestructurado que incorpore las mejoras sugeridas como necesarias por los participantes.

Palabras clave: administrativo, drogas ilegales, operativo, PNP, unidad de control de drogas, guerra contra las drogas.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, the thrust of the Duterte administration is the eradication of illegal drugs. Drug law enforcement agencies are all geared towards crushing this age. The Philippine National Police (PNP), as one of the agencies of the government tasked to enforce the anti-drug laws, also once declared an all-out war against drugs to protect the youth and the future of this country from drug addiction and its ill effects. The PNP is firm on its ground to fight this social ill and is ever vigilant in its ways to achieve a community free from illegal drugs translated into a ground for nurturing dreams, lives, and ambitions.

The war against drugs is carried out by the law-enforcers who are tasked to implement the drug laws, within the bounds of law. Drug law-enforcers must, at all times, faithfully comply with the mandatory requirements of the rules in the conduct of anti-illegal drug operations. Law enforcers are responsible for maintenance of peace and order. They serve and protect the community. They enforce the law, including the laws involving illegal drugs. In the Philippines, unplanned operations or chance upon illegal drug activities maybe arrested by any law enforcement officers but planned anti-illegal drugs operation, including buy bust operation and service of search warrants, can only be performed by members of the Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU) who are specifically tasked to carry out the same. President Duterte’s war on drugs received much attention not only
on a national scale but also on an international community. He was both applauded and criticized for his strong stance against illegal drugs. The president’s strongest armor in his battle against illegal drugs is the PNP DEU.

The members of the DEU, from the national level, down to the regional, provincial, municipal and station levels are specifically and specially trained in drug laws, procedures, rules and regulations, and other relevant issuances. They are also vetted to ensure their fitness to perform their duties. Six years now, after President Duterte’s administration, the war against illegal drugs is not yet won. This inevitably invites scrutiny of the “weapon” that is used by one of the biggest organizations in the country, PNP DEU, in its battle against illegal drugs.

A study related to this issue conducted by Geçer & Mahinay (2018) cited the result of Social Weather Survey conducted in 2017, which revealed the level of satisfaction on the war against drugs conducted by the Philippine law enforcers. For the first quarter of 2017, 43% stated that they were satisfied, 35% were somewhat satisfied while 12% were dissatisfied.

The PNP DEU, PNP wide (along with PNP DEG), is one of the responsible units (Revised PNP Manual on Anti-Illegal Drugs Operation and Investigation, 2014) for the prevention and control of illegal drugs in support of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) as mandated by law. NAPOLCOM Resolution No. 2017-317 approved the reorganization and renaming of the PNP Anti-Illegal Drugs Group (PNP-AIDG) as PNP Drug Enforcement Group (PNP DEG) and the creation of Drug Enforcement Units (DEUs) under the PNP territorial units. The proposed reorganization, renaming and creating Drug Enforcement Units under the PNP territorial units, is aimed at intensified PNP campaigns in effectively dealing with the complexity of drug operations, involving organized crime groups in drug trafficking, and in eradicating or dismantling clandestine drug laboratories and other plant sources of illegal drugs.

The PNP territorial drug enforcement units, shall perform, among others, the following functions: a) act as operating arms of the PNP on Demand Reduction Strategy, b) implement the anti-illegal drug strategy of the PNP in their respective areas of responsibility, c) strictly implement the protocol on the conduct of anti-illegal drug operations, d) be responsible for the service of warrants of arrest and conduct of manhunt operations, and e) coordinate any matters of mutual concern with other PNP units, as
well as with the units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and other law enforcement agencies which are operating within their respective areas of jurisdiction.

The PNP has innovated its anti-drug unit to respond to the demands of time and its people. Particularly, the PNP’s anti-illegal drug group has been renamed and reconstituted, uniformly, PNP-wide in order to address the problems of abuses that generate public dismay, disgrace, and disfavor. The PNP’s arm against illegal drugs which the said agency utilized for its anti-illegal drug campaign was NAPOLCOM RESOLUTION 2017-317. The PNP, likewise, issued a Command Memorandum dated January 19, 2018, with subject: PNP Supplemental Operational Guidelines and Adherence to Policies on Anti-Illegal Drugs Campaign. This recent issuance, along with Memorandum dated September 8, 2018, entitled “Guidelines in the Recalibrated Anti-Illegal Drugs Campaign” is currently being use as of to date by the DEU within the territorial units, PNP-Wide. The latter expressly provides for its purpose, which textually reads as:

*The recalibrated war on drugs is designed to align the PNP’s campaign against illegal drugs with the President’s directive to be relentless and chilling to the High Value Targets (HVTs) who continue to peddle illegal drugs, including their patrons and protectors, while saving the lives of drug dependents and their families from the destructive effects of substance abuse.*

The PNP DEU, PNP-wide, is under the control and direction of the PNP territorial unit concerned. This unit is responsible for the prevention and control of illegal drugs in support of the PDEA as mandated.

The DEU has the following composition based on January 19, 2018, Memorandum (page 6, vetting and selection of DEU members, number 2): on its regional scale, the Police Regional Drug Enforcement Units (PRDEUs), consisting of 8 members, headed by the Regional Director, PROs which shall concentrate on regional HVTs and across district/province/city borders in coordination with District Directors/Provincial Directors/City Directors. In the provinces, the Provincial Drug Enforcement Unit (PDEU) consists also of eight (8) members and is headed by the Provincial Director of Police Provincial Office and shall conduct operations against Provincial HVTs and across city/municipal borders. Pursuant to 2014 Revised Manual on Drug Operations and Investigation, the team composition of Special Operating Unit (SOU) of PNP Drug Enforcement Group may, likewise, be composed of only 8 members, which are: 1) team
The vetting and selection of DEU members are also set forth strictly. Each unit must ensure the proper vetting of the members of the DEU through stringent screening and thorough background investigation. The DEU members shall be at least five (5) years in the service and only one (1) DEU shall be established in the regional and provincial down to the municipal and station levels only and consisting of eight (8) members only.

For years now since the recalibration of PNP’s anti-drug unit, there has been a wide public interest in the central issue of how the DEU carries out its mandated operational and administrative functions. This issue oftentimes generates public interest and, at times, strong public opinion and clamor (Simangan, 2018). The composition of the DEU has been criticized for being insufficient, both in quality and in quantity, to carry out the multitude of tasks that have been placed by the PNP on its shoulders. Notably, the unit lacks manpower, resources, and skills, and is generally subjected to public opinion.

Jensen & Hapal (2018) conducted study on violent exchange and the war on drugs, exploring police violence and corruption in the Philippines. The study is reflective of the manner by which the DEU carries out both its administrative and operational functions. Likewise, Dangani & Tamayo (2017) conducted a study about the operatives of the defunct Anti-Ilegal Drugs Operatives of Cavite Police Provincial Office (CPPO) with regards to surveillance, apprehension, and prosecution. The same never dealt with the administrative and operational capability of the PNP DEG as far as the framework is concerned. Tigno’s (2018) study was done to call the attention of policy makers pertinent to ill effects of drug and found that there was a necessity for reframing the anti-drug war campaign from a social development issue.

Several studies have been conducted, as stated above, about the effect and social impact of drug operations in the Philippines, but such studies lack information about the structure, mechanism, and framework of the Unit. They were able to identify some problem, but without finding out the root cause of the problem. The purported dilemmas faced by the Unit may not be the real problem but are mere manifestation of the organization’s disfunction caused by its “young” framework.
This explains the ocean of incidents leading to dissatisfaction. On February 24, 2021, the local newspapers, tv programs and social media shocked us about the misencounter of PNP forces and PDEA agents at Quezon City, which resulted in armedconfrontation and strained relationship between PNP and PDEA. In their work, Atun et al. (2019), rightfully cited the number of deaths of suspects in drug war. Not only did it cause public unrest for a while, but it also caught the attention of the international community. The world is, therefore, watching the controversial drug war in the Philippines. Further, there have been isolated reports of irregularity in the conduct of drug operations. The lives sacrificed and the blood spilled cannot be redeemed by merely asking forgiveness from the country and people. The officers and authorities must fill in the gaps, fill in the blanks through the correction of the framework and internal mechanism as a way of fitting apology to the people and country. Only by doing it can they at least compensate for the errors which already have resulted in bloody sacrifices. Hence, this study revisited the existing framework that has broken many hearts and many more dreams of ordinary people.

The previous studies had not described how the PDEG carries out its administrative and operational functions. The studies were focused on the impact or effect of the operations, without providing information on the structure or framework of the PNP DEG. As of this date, there has been no recorded study conducted to describe the manner by which the Drug Enforcement Unit carries-out its administrative and operational function. It is for this reason that the researchers took pains to conduct the present study.

Several studies have noted that the anti-illegal drug war is marred with human rights violation, state perpetrated killings, and vigilante killings. Simbulan, Estacio, Dioquino-Maligaso, Herbosa, & Withers (2019) and Johnson & Fernquest (2018) found in their studies that the war on drugs is a bloody and revolutionary attempt to reduce illegal drugs in the Philippines. The battle against drugs is not a child’s play. It is difficult but police operatives stated that the war is being sustained, despite the difficulty. For the alleged violations of human rights, there are established internal procedures for the investigating the same, said Baldwin, Marshall & Sagolji (2016). Commission on Human Rights (CHR) is always on the look-out for every operation involving alleged
violation of human rights. Both houses of the Congress have also conducted investigations in aid of legislation and are also watching keenly the drug war.

Unknown to many, each PNP-sanctioned operation is guided by the existing framework of PNP Drug Enforcement Unit. Behind every operation which has been alleged to have been taken an innocent life, has violated the human rights or done in highly irregular manner, or has spilled blood from the sacrifice of the police officer is the framework which the Drug Enforcement Unit is mandated to comply. What is this framework and how is the administrative and operational capability of Drug Enforcement Unit related to this? It is against these backdrop that the instant study was conducted.

This study was done to describe how the PNP Drug Enforcement Unit carries out its mandated operational and administrative function. In this paper, the PNP Drug Enforcement Unit is introduced as to its structure, system, and functions. A program of development was proposed for the purpose of effective law implementation or execution of PNP’s anti-illegal drug campaign plan. The manner by which the Drug Enforcement Unit carries out its administrative and operational function greatly affects the drug operations and, in a larger sense, affects the battle against illegal drugs.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Theory of Multidimensional Approach which explains the process of assessing and implementing an approach such as method, tactic, and strategy that consists of more than one feature/design to address a situation or problem that is considered complex or needs to be assessed from several points of view. Since the researchers is focused on describing how the Drug Enforcement Group (DEG) carry out its administrative and operational functions, method, tactic, design and feature of the existing framework which is the basis for the carrying out of administrative and operational functions will be shown, studied, and assessed.

This study palpably shows that the present framework of the existing Drug Enforcement Unit is not sufficient to carry-out its mandated tasks. The conundrums of insufficiency of personnel - insufficient number; insufficient logistical resources; insufficient training, experience, and skills; and insufficient command and direction - also lead to decreased effectivity and decreased efficiency. Further, it is ideal that the
framework or set-up of the DEU be crafted in such a way that the operatives from PNP-wide would get their command and direction of operation from only one commander from Drug Enforcement Group (DEG). Presently, the DEUs in regions and provinces are under the direction and command of their regional directors and provincial directors; therefore, there are as many commands, priorities, and directions as the number of regional and provincial directors. This results in a situation where the approach, system, and priorities of one region are comparably different from another region and province. There is no uniformity nor harmony in general. There was also an instance, as narrated by one of the participants, where a regional drug enforcement operative buy busted a provincial drug operative while also performing his duty. This almost led to a bloody mis encounter. This should also be taken into consideration because unfortunate incident such as this may lead to bloody sacrifices. Thus, this study sought to improve anti-Illlegal drug operations to have an increased success in drug our battle against drugs.

The present research, thus, provides bases for the restructuring of the present framework. This study encourages the strategic shift from the existing framework to a restructured framework incorporating the improvements suggested as necessary by the participants. Further, labyrinths for development must be taken to ensure the success of the drug operations, which can be translated into a ground free of drugs and a country nurturing of people’s dreams and ambitions. This study will help in providing basis for reconstitution of a new policy more responsive to the needs of the policemen and community.

3 METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researchers used generic qualitative research, utilizing a grounded theory. It is a type of qualitative research conducted descriptive of methodology and the purpose is to understand how participants make meaning of phenomenon or situation. The findings are grounded on participant’s own explanations, experiences, and interpretations. Grounded theory is generally used to discover emerging themes or patterns in data. Interview was done with the aid of validated guide questions for collecting the data on the participant’s experiences, history in administrations and operations, and their various perspectives. Purposive sampling technique was employed in the study in selecting and identifying the participants of the study. A total of eight (8)
participants were selected to describe the administrative and operational functions of the selected DEU. They were chosen according to the needs of the study. Participants who did not meet the profile were not included. The criteria for the police officers are: a) police officer currently assigned or has been assigned either at National Drug Enforcement Group (DEG) Special Operation Unit (SOU), Regional DEU or Provincial DEU or Station SEU, b) has been in such assignment for not less than 5 years; and c) was willing to voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, each participant was provided a pseudonym. Example P1, P2, P3, etc. The participants’ ages ranged from 30-50 years old. The participants were asked to answer questions during the interview, and these underwent thorough analysis and interpretation to further support the validity of the study. After the interview, the researchers transcribed, encoded, and analyzed the responses to create themes.

3.1 PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

**Participant 1** is over 40 years of age, male, a Police Commission Officer (PCO), and was assigned as the head of DEU in a certain municipality and a certain city within CALABARZON unit for a collective period ten (10) years. It was during his stint as DEU head of municipality that such municipality recorded a very high number of deaths resulting from armed confrontation.

**Participant 2** is in his mid-40’s, male, a PCO, and was assigned as head of DEU in certain municipalities within CALABARZON unit for a collective period twelve (12) years. His assignments at DEU include the years when he was assigned as deputy of the DEU in cities within and outside CALABARZON.

**Participant 3** is in his early 50’s, male, a PCO, and was assigned as head of DEU at a certain municipality within CALABARZON. He was also assigned at head of DEU of two cities within CALABARZON successively and he was also a head of the Provincial Drug Enforcement Unit of Cavite PPO. The total number of his assignments to DEU is twelve (12) years.

**Participant 4** is in her late 40’s, female, a PCO, and was assigned as head of DEU at different municipalities within CALABARZON. The total number of her assignments to DEU is seven (7) years.
Participant 5 is in his early 40’s, male, a former PNCO who rose to PCO through lateral entry and promotion and was assigned as head of DEU of certain municipalities within CALABARZON. Prior to his being head of DEU, he was assigned as a PNCO at the anti-illegal drug units within Cavite PPO. The total number of his assignments to DEU is fifteen (15) years.

Participant 6 is in his late 40’s, male, a PCO, and formerly head of DEU at Dasmarinas City, Cavite and it was during his stint as COP of Dasmarinas that the city recorded the most number of arrest where the number of drug incidents significantly reduced at Brgy. Datu Esmael. Including his assignments from other cities, the total number of his assignments to DEU is fifteen (15) years.

Participant 7 is in his early 50’s, male, a PCO, and was assigned as head of DEU at different municipalities within CALABARZON. The total number of his assignments to DEU is eight (8) years.

Participant 8 is in his late 30’s, male, a PNCO, and was assigned as member of DEU at a certain municipality within CALABARZON. The total number of his assignments to DEU is six (6) years.

The interviews were conducted based on the given time that the interviewees and the researchers agreed upon. In gathering pertinent information, the researchers used ten (10) guided questions which were used as interview questions. These guide questions were validated by experts in the field. Thereafter, the researchers proceeded to schedule the interviews. The interview commenced on April 20, 2022, and lasted on May 20, 2022. The interview was generally conducted via face-to-face and oral conversation, except for two operatives who opted for zoom meeting. To achieve data saturation after the actual interviews, clarifications were made through repeated questions either via voice call, viber call, and messenger calls. When the researchers already heard the same answers over and over again and no more new information was offered by the participants, it was considered that data saturation had been achieved and they ceased the collection of data to proceed to transcription.

After collecting the data using the interview, the researchers then proceeded to the next part which was the transcription of the responses. After the transcription, the researchers encoded the transcribed responses, and these were subjected to analysis for the subsequent formulation of themes.
Initially, a letter of intent, which was approved by the De La Salle University Dasmariñas (DLSU-D) Ethics Review Committee, was given to respective PNP DEU operatives to seek for necessary permissions to conduct the study and to schedule the interview. Prior to the actual interview, an informed consent was obtained and explained to the participants. This was done to inform them of the purpose of the study, as well as the assurance that all information to be gathered from the participants would be dealt with strict confidentiality according to the ethics of research. Upon approval and consent of the participants, the researchers scheduled the interview session. The researchers prepared the self-made, validated interview guide/questionnaire. Data collected were subjected to appropriate transcription, conversion, and coding.

The qualitative data were analyzed by organizing first the data from the transcribed interviews. The researchers analyzed the transcripts by reading and identifying the keywords related to the study to compose the key concepts of the participants’ answers. These were later categorized by themes, codes, and clusters. The emerging themes were extracted from the similar responses per line of the clear verbatim transcription [also known intelligent verbatim or non-verbatim, a lightly edited version of original audio which removes stutters, fillers, non-speech sounds, and false starts].

Colaizzi’s (1978) strategy of data analysis was used in the data analysis. The steps are as follows: (1) reading and re-reading the informant’s transcript to obtain the sense of the content and to highlight significant statements, (2) selection of significant statements that are meaningful for the research purposes, (3) formulation of meanings from highlighted and selected statements and creation of phrases, (4) grouping into cluster themes to reflect a peculiar structure of a theme, (5) provision of a definition on all emergent themes derived from the cluster themes of formulated meanings and incorporation of all themes as a whole structure to extrapolate the phenomenon on the lived experiences of informants, (6) rechecking of the relationship of the extracted cluster themes and emergent themes to toughen the description of formulated meanings, and (7) validation of the findings based from informants feedback. The data analysis resulted in a textual and structural description of the participants’ experiences.
4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part presents the result and discussion of the data derived from the eight participants. The general objective of the study was to assess how the Drug Enforcement Unit of the PNP carries out its mandated operational functions to be used as basis for restructuring its framework.

The data gathered from the interviews underwent Thematic Analysis method by Braun & Clarke (2022). Thematic Analysis is best thought of as an umbrella term for a set of approaches for analyzing qualitative data that share a focus on identifying themes otherwise known as patterns of meaning in a qualitative data.

The analysis of the data revealed five major themes. They are the following:

1. Personnel

Concept or Theme: Conundrums of insufficient personnel

The eight participants of the study claimed that they are underman considering the tasks they execute. The following excerpts support this claim of the participants:

Not sufficient. The present composition of DEU is not sufficient in performing their tasks. They carry out their mission with very limited personnel. That is why the operations suffer because of poor intelligence, poor preparation, and poor execution. This in the end, leads to dismissal of cases filed."

The number of personnel in the unit are never enough to undertake the multitude of tasks given. Especially, in the operation. They also have no time to sleep, to train, and to be better in this field.

Regardless of the number of personnel, we are still able to accomplish the assigned tasked. Yet, it feels inconvenient but still good.

Out of eight (8) participants in the study, 8 members of the Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU) answered in unison that the number of personnel under the existing set-up is insufficient to carry-out its administrative and operational functions.

In relation to the aspect, Hudson & Shen (2015) mentioned that workers often identify understaffing or insufficiency of personnel as a major stressor in their work lives. As far as the number of personnel is concern from the participants’ perspective, majority of PNP Drug Enforcement Group (DEG) officers mentioned that the present composition of their unit is not sufficient especially in undertaking the different tasks.
All the answers from the interviews among the different PNP DEU mean that in terms of sufficiency of personnel, it can be assessed as “less sufficient”. Participants expressed the difficulties brought about by the insufficient personnel based on the existing set-up of the DEU. They experience these causes negative impact because they are heavily loaded with cases under their shoulder, and these are sometimes the reason why some drug cases are dismissed for failure to appear in court.

Some participants viewed it in a positive manner. Some officers shared that the present DEU, even if limited in number, can still deliver drug accomplishments in their area of responsibility.

P2, likewise, narrated the effects of number of personnel to the execution of duties. He stated the following during the interview:

The number of personnel greatly affects the execution of its duties based on the division of labor principle because. There is separation of work process into a number of tasks in which each task is performed by a separate person or group of persons, thus the greater the number of personnel, the higher the effectiveness of the DEU.

P1 also added the following statements based on his experiences:

Having insufficient personnel creates confusing command and direction of DEU and it manifests weak framework/operation of DEU."

The significant statements of the participants clearly and categorically define the relationship between the number of personnel and the execution of duties. In a nutshell, the participants separately stated that the greater the number of personnel, the greater the accomplishments would be. The number of personnel is directly proportionate to its accomplishments.

Since the number of DEU personnel is insufficient, it negatively affects the execution of their duties. The less the number of people, the less the number of operations and the less the accomplishments. This dilemma of understaffing negatively affects both the administrative and operational functions of the DEU.

2. Resiliency

Concept or Theme: Resiliency reverberates effectiveness

Although there is insufficient number of personnel, the members of the Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU) can carry-out their functions by rising to the occasion and
meeting the target out-put assigned to them. This is shown by the following accounts of the participants.

*We cannot act conveniently but it feels good, we complied with the target.*

*Due to the lack of personnel assigned in DEU, it seldom shortens the overall unit capabilities; also, members are pushed to learn other tasks or do dual functions respectively.*

Unanimously, the eight (8) participants affirmed that the DEU performs less effectively due to stated insufficiency.

P2 further elaborated why he considered the DEU as less effective by responding thus:

*The rate of effectiveness of the DEU in carrying out its function is at 60% depending on compromising factors like planning, execution, fiscal, and equipment capability against the subject of operation. But this requires personnel, good number of personnel.*

Law enforcement is broadly considered one of the most stressful occupations. This factor can negatively affect officers’ motivation and productivity (Fortenbery, 2015). Quain (2018) discussed in his article that low levels of productivity are often the result of a number of internal issues that have boiled over and require immediate attention. Unfortunately, low levels of productivity at any organization or unit can affect employee’s morale, hinder efficiency, and affect profit margins. Considering this, the issue of the cause of effectiveness or ineffectiveness should be addressed to boost the efficiency of the unit.

According to Tengpongsthorn (2017), imbalance between workload and manpower is considered as an obstacle in work performance. Heavy workload versus little manpower negatively affects work productivity and performance of police work. This is specifically true considering the narratives of the participants. Indeed, if they have a lot of work at hand, and only a very few hands can work; hence, the mission cannot be delivered well. This issue must be addressed in order to maximize the work output of the Drug Enforcement Unit.

### 3. Competence of Personnel

*Concept or Theme: Competence breeds efficiency and effectiveness*

Caught in a web of disadvantages due to insufficient number of personnel, the DEU members not only lose sleep, strength, and time. More than that, they lose a very
valuable opportunity to grow, to train and develop their competency. This is due to the fact that their situations deprive them of the opportunity to enter a room where professional growth and competency will be possible.

The perception of the participants that DEU is less efficient stems from lack of training and lack of knowledge in different areas relevant to the battle against drugs. The following are the quoted exemplar of the participants:

*Not really sufficient. The present composition of DEU is not sufficient in performing their tasks. They carry out their mission with very limited personnel. That is why the operations suffer because of poor intelligence, poor preparation, and poor execution. This, in the end, leads to dismissal of cases filed.*

*Less capable. DEU members should be trained & knowledgeable in court presentation of evidence, surveillances, arrests, etc. Less capable due to lack of resources. Lack of logistics support such as personnel firearms, body protectors and others. Vehicles are needed in police operations.*

*Among others, lack of skills and experience of operatives. This is very important to operations. We can only trust one another if we know that we can defend our life to our co-DEU members and the life of the operations. It is this trust which is the secret recipe for the success of the operation. If there is a tiniest doubt, I am sure there is a mistake in the operations.*

*In the scale of 10, the present level for me is 6 and this is because of the series of the internal problems encountered by the station involving their operatives and the operational accomplishments which are not in the peak of effective delivery of positive result.*

Competence of the members of the DEU is extremely important in the government’s battle against illegal drugs. It is a yardstick of success in the drug war. To be competent is to be both efficient and effective.

Efficiency and effectiveness are two distinct and different ideas. Nepomuceno, Daraio, & Costa (2021) distinguished inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the following lines:

*Efficiency can be defined as the capacity to avoid wasting materials, resources, efforts, or time to produce a result or outcome. This concept is strictly related to sustainability. On the other hand, effectiveness can be defined as the ability to produce a desired result. This concept is strictly related to quality. In the simple words of Peter Drucker, efficiency is doing things right, while effectiveness is doing the right things. These two perspectives are not always walking in the same direction and their potential conflict can jeopardize some of the promising prospects of sustainable service provisions, especially considering public administrations.”*
It is to be noted that some participants stated that PNP DEG personnel cannot deliver the best result because some of them are neophyte in the service and prior to being thoroughly trained and subjected to intensive competency trainings, they are immediately thrown to work. Notably, in terms of conducting operations, they cannot generate quality accomplishments because of the enumerated issues above pertaining to lack of competence. Generating increased productivity through competency training and stimulating individual motivation are, therefore, important factors for the members of the units. The profession of law enforcement is no different from others that require ambitious and productive employees to serve effectively, but some aspects of competency training and motivation are unique to the professional police officer.

The issue of lack of competence inevitably affects their execution of duties. This issue should be managed. According to the National Institute of Justice (2016), current research finds that the management and culture of a department are the most important factors influencing police behavior. How the department is managed will dramatically affect how officers behave toward citizens. And how officers behave toward citizens will affect whether citizens view law enforcement as an institution with integrity. Naturally, the community desires professional protection from competent police organizations. In this regard, the efficiency of drug enforcement unit is largely dependent upon the competence of its members.

The ability of law enforcement officers to meet current and long-range goals and objectives in effective and efficient manner is largely dependent on the level of skills, knowledge, and abilities of the officers to carry out their assignments, duties, and responsibilities. Therefore, proper degrees and trainings should be provided to continue professional development.

The cause of lack of training and skills of personnel was explained by P8:

*The saddest part here is this, it is difficult to develop the full potentials of the individual. Because you can train them, whether administrative or operational functions, after you trained them, if they have a boss who transferred to another stations, they will also transfer to go with their boss. Thus, same situations happened again and again. Hoping that transferring to another unit/stations should be difficult because DEU training is also specialized. To ensure that all the members of the DEU are well trained and have experienced.*

How well an employee performed a task in the past is the most important determinant for self-efficacy, according to Albert Bandura, a psychologist and a professor
at Stanford University who specialized in self-efficacy. By not coaching them properly, by not clearly defining goals, and by not showing support, employees may be set-up for failure. This can lead to low self-efficacy and staff members who are not confident in accomplishing future tasks.

A study conducted in Thailand’s Metropolitan Police by Tengpongsthorn (2017) discussed that a good level of knowledge and ability in the Metropolitan Police could help them achieve greater effectiveness in their work performance more easily, especially in the General Investigation. Hence, members of the Inquiry Divisions suggested that their knowledge and skills should be improved by additional training before initiating or doing new tasks because criminals and the crimes today are much more various and complicated than in the past. Hence, the PNP DEG involved in anti-illegal drugs campaigns needs adequate and contemporary equipment and work tools. Police education and in-service training are of primary consideration in the professionalization of police organizations (Baker, Holcomb, & Baker, 2017).

Eight out of eight participants expressed hope for change in the existing set-up and even suggested rooms for development and professional development pathways as labyrinth for development. According to the National Institute of Justice (2016), management and culture of a department are the most important factors influencing police behavior. How the department is managed will dramatically affect how officers behave toward citizens. And how officers behave toward citizens will affect whether citizens view law enforcement as an institution with integrity. Naturally, community desires professional protection from police organizations and elected officials who need funding to support the police department.

4. Structure

**Concept or Theme: Structure or framework as the labyrinth for development**

The participants perceived the Drug Enforcement Unit to be less capable. The perceived incapability can also be attributed to the structure of Drug Enforcement Group. All the dilemma resulting from the present structure or framework were thus enumerated. The following are the quoted answers of the participants:

“Insufficient personnel, the eight personnel are insufficient to operate daily, and case build up cannot be done by the eight personnel in an instant. We cannot operate it simultaneously as we have difficulties in attending hearings simultaneously as we also act as a witness. Administrative is also a problem, because the DEU is insufficient and under the control of each Regional Director...”
or Provincial Director, hence even we are all the same DEU we have different style and priorities because there is no uniformity, and it depends on the Regional Director or Provincial Director. Hoping we can get a command from one DEU for us to have a uniform activity.”

By strengthening the operational framework of the DEG, which leads to successful operations and a drug-free nation.

Maybe to avoid mis-encounter or to have a proper framework. Maybe the territorial unit is at least under the national supervision. To have a one command, one instruction and direction. If the instructions come from different supervisors, mistakes sometimes happened. Since we have a one goal and the same target, why there is a different style and instructions?

Framework is a problem. If the system improves, all the issues and concerns can be resolved.

Hoping there is a clear framework to separate the tasks for the operative and administrative personnel. In winning the hearts and minds of the community, it must be administrative functions. It should be advocacy. However, the operative should be in drug operations. It is not proper that the personnel who conduct community works for the police community relations can also be the one to conduct operative, their life will be put in danger and increased their risks in that set-up.

One of the saddest parts here is, it is difficult to develop the potential of the personnel. Because after they were trained, whether in administrative or operations, and their boss were transferred to another office, they will go with their boss to transfer too. So, training becomes an ending process, once the personnel was already trained, they will leave the DEU to transfer to another unit/office and will be replaced by the new personnel to be trained again. Hoping leaving and replacing the personnel in the DEU will become difficult process because the training for the operatives and administrative personnel are specialized too. It will also ensure that the personnel assigned to this unit is really specialized as they were already trained.

Having insufficient personnel creates confusing command and direction of DEU and manifests weak framework/operation of DEU. Less capable because of fatigue. If you can remember D - - - a, he was killed because he was hit by a bullet because of the number of operations he was unable to wear a bullet proof vest to respond immediately. One more thing, the ordinary operatives maybe confused about the DEU and DEG. These two were different. They don’t have any relationship to one another. Hoping the territorial units will be under the one and only organized group. Because if we are under the territorial units, we received a lot of commands and directions, hence, strategies are more too, it will result that the uniform personnel have no uniformity to their strategies and directions, and the priority is to fight against drugs. Hence, mis encounter is also possible to the regional operatives and police station because they don’t know each other, they are targeting the assets of one another. Because they have not communication and coordination to one another.

Hoping for additional personnel, and additional budget for the operatives and administrative requirements to uplift the capability of the DEU. This pandemic, we really felt that insufficiency. If someone in the team got positive for covid-19, all the members of the team will be quarantine. The operation will be paralyzed. Hoping there is a clear framework or guidelines of what to do, and what to act of the different units most especially this pandemic. Almost all units and departments
were able to adjust but the DEU doesn’t have any adjustment or changes. We just continue living our life, but we are also human that can be infected by the covid 19. In fact, I am a covid survivor.”

P5 explained his hope about the present capability of the DEU. To increase the capability was his words, especially during these times of pandemic when there is strict social isolation protocol. This, according to him, should be encapsulated in a framework. DEU’s young framework is not prepared for any eventuality of the pandemic and despite nearly 3 years after the pandemic, the framework is still unable able to respond. The operative cited that they are only operating on a single team consisting of eight personnel. Each time, any member of the team becomes suspect or tested positive, the team would also be “paralyzed”. The framework should be responsive to the needs of time. It should adapt to the fast-changing world. It must be dynamic.

A participant, likewise, emphasized, we cannot really operate but we’re still okey, we can still accomplish the target, and comply with it.

It is very clear from the excerpts of the narratives that the participants’ hands are tied by the existing framework. “Cannot operate” indicates that they know that they have to do something, but they cannot do it because of the limitations prescribed by the existing framework and this inability leads to less efficient performance of duty which is merely reduced to “compliance only”. To borrow the words of one participant, “still complying with the target”. A framework which encourages efficiency and effectiveness must be established.

The trend of police agencies to move from a paramilitary type of organization toward a community-focused organization requires more critical decision-making skills in the de-escalation of dangerous confrontations (Sereni-Massinger, Bawden, & Rowe, 2015). When citizens believe that officers are utilizing unnecessary levels of force to effectuate arrests, the legitimacy of the police is called into question by the citizens, resulting in civil disorder and civil lawsuits filed against the police officers and the organization (Shjarback & White, 2016). It is in this regard that winning the hearts and minds of the community becomes relevant to the battle against drugs. This, according to the participants, should also be encapsulated in the framework or structure of Drug Enforcement Unit.

To this, P7 & P8 emphasized:
Hoping there is a clear framework to separate the tasks for the operative and administrative personnel. In winning the hearts and minds of the community, it must be administrative functions. It should be advocacy. However, the operative should be in drug operations. It is not proper that the personnel who conduct community works for the police community relations can also be the one to conduct operative, their life will be put in danger and increased their risks in that set-up.

P7 and P8 stressed that DEU members should not jump from doing administrative work to performing job operations so that their duties could be more focused. This will help them acquire administrative and operational expertise immediately without any distractions.

P4 cited a number of challenges and problems he had encountered in his 11 years of being a member of Drug Enforcement Unit. This he attributed to the present set-up of the unit. Along this line of thought, Ahmady, Mehrpour, & Nikooravesh (2016) studied the relationship between organizational structure and performance. It was no surprise that participants pointed to framework or structure in order to remedy the challenges. This is contained on the following exemplar.

Framework is the problem. If the system will be improved, almost all of the issues and concerns will be resolved.

Based on the accounts of the participants, there is an ocean of problem in the existing framework of Drug Enforcement Unit.

All DEU members voiced out that by employing sufficient number of personnel, having sufficient logistical support, having sufficient training of personnel, having focused command and direction, and strengthening/developing the framework/operation of DEU, the current problems and challenges on their unit can be minimized.

5. Police Community Relations

Concept or theme: The taming of the flock: Winning the hearts and minds of the Community

Just like any other battle in the community, particularly in a democratic society, popular support is necessary. Moreover, community, as one of the pillars of the Philippine criminal justice system, is a very important weapon in the government’s drug war. This is revealed in the following quoted answers from the participants:
If we carry out our duties faithfully, even without a direct interaction with the community, they will know that they are well-taken care of because we can give peace and security by eliminating the risks of illegal drugs. Let’s just do our duties and responsibilities for the community. After all, they are the end user of our main functions. We are relevant to the community as we appropriately deliver our responsibilities as police officers. We don’t need recognition to be known as relevant in the community.

The DEU is already relevant to the community; it can be improved by setting as a good example and making its personnel more trustworthy. It is also important to explain to the community the concept of drug operations, the goals, and how illegal drugs crumble family and nation. This way, the community will be our ally in the battle against drugs. In this battle, the community is at the forefront. They will be informants of the drug crimes. They will be witnesses and there is a possibility that they will become victims. Community is also part of the criminal justice system. Considering these, we could be more relevant to the community if we continue to engage them in our battle against illegal drugs.

Hoping there is a clear framework to separate the tasks for the operative and administrative personnel. In winning the hearts and minds of the community, it must be administrative functions. It should be advocacy. However, the operative should be in drug operations. It is not proper that the personnel who conduct community works for the police community relations can also be the one to conduct operative, their life will be put in danger and increased their risks in that set-up.

The relationship between the police and community has long been settled. As stated by P5, the community is the ally and at the forefront of battle against illegal drugs. Crowl (2017) stated that community policing is important to increase partnership between police and community and to create problem-solving approaches. The community, as one of the pillars of the criminal justice system, surely holds a lot of stakes in the drug war. The community can be a witness and a victim at the same time. Their perception to police operations affects the success of this battle against illegal drugs. It is for this reason that winning the hearts and minds of the community finds importance to the Drug Enforcement Units.

The following major themes emerged on the qualitative analysis of data performed: conundrums of insufficient personnel, resiliency reverberates effectiveness, competence breeds efficiency and effectiveness, structure or framework as labyrinth for development, and taming of the flock: winning the hearts and mind of the community. Figure 1 provides the visual representation of the themes.
This study palpably shows that the present framework of the existing Drug Enforcement Unit is not sufficient to carry-out its mandated tasks. The conundrums of insufficiency of personnel - insufficient number; insufficient logistical resources; insufficient training, experience, and skills; and insufficient command and direction - also lead to decreased effectivity and decreased efficiency. Further, it is ideal that the framework or set-up of the DEU be crafted in such a way that the operatives from PNP-wide would get their command and direction of operation from only one commander from Drug Enforcement Group (DEG). Presently, the DEUs in regions and provinces are under the direction and command of their regional directors and provincial directors; therefore, there are as many commands, priorities, and directions as the number of regional and provincial directors. This results in a situation where the approach, system, and priorities of one region are comparably different from another region and province. There is no uniformity nor harmony in general. There was also an instance, as narrated by one of the participants, where a regional drug enforcement operative buy busted a provincial drug operative while also performing his duty. This almost led to a bloody mis encounter. This should also be taken into consideration because unfortunate incident such as this may lead
to bloody sacrifices. Thus, this study sought to improve anti-illegal drug operations to have an increased success in drug our battle against drugs.

The present research, thus, provides bases for the restructuring of the present framework. This study encourages the strategic shift from the existing framework to a restructured framework incorporating the improvements suggested as necessary by the participants. Further, labyrinths for development must be taken to ensure the success of the drug operations, which can be translated into a ground free of drugs and a country nurturing of people's dreams and ambitions. This study will help in providing basis for reconstitution of a new policy more responsive to the needs of the policemen and community.

5 CONCLUSION

The participant’s verbatim accounts mean that having insufficient members of officers in the Drug Enforcement Unit negatively affects the overall performance of their unit and the same is also the cause of other problems in terms of operational and administrative duties. There are times when this insufficiency leads to death. Drug operations are exceedingly difficult and having insufficient personnel adds to the difficulty of DEUs. But even so, they can deliver their functions even with these limitations. The police can make more arrests than prosecutors can prosecute, courts can adjudicate, and prisons can hold. Having insufficient number of personnel and logistics support leads to decreased effectivity and efficiency. The community itself has resources to deploy against drug trafficking and use. However, without the community’s own efforts at self-defense, it is hard to see how the police can possibly succeed, there is a need to tame the flock. Addressing clamors in relation to personnel, logistics support, budget, framework, discipline, training, experience, and knowledge can also contribute to improve the current performance of the DEU. The PNP DEU within their territorial jurisdiction are generally considered the center of the police response to drug trafficking and use. Thus, they must mount the most sophisticated investigations techniques against drug traffickers. It is for this reason that they should have continuing trainings which are essential for their development.

To address the issues and findings on this research, higher authorities are encouraged to restructure the legal framework of DEU in such a way as would: (a)
increase the composition of personnel of DEU in order to have enough number of personnel, assigned in the administrative work and operations. (b) the restructured framework should be crafted in such a way that the Regional and Provincial Enforcement Units will work according to only one command and direction, that is coming from the DEU, from national headquarters not from their respective regional and provincial directors so that there will be uniformity and harmony of movement resulting from focused command and direction. (c) The restructured framework should ensure the sufficiency of logistical resources such as vehicle, vest, firearms, magazines, bullets, body worn camera, recorders, operational funds, other equipment, etc. to ensure over-all effectiveness and efficiency. (d) The restructured framework must encourage professionalization in the organization by having a roll of eligible in the Unit who are specially and specifically trained in drug related tasks, by setting the qualifications for being a member in the roll, and by making it difficult for superior officers to cause their reassignment at whims. (e) Part of that professionalism in the restructured framework should deal with mandatory continuing trainings and seminars, local or abroad, for police officers develop a mature and well-rounded understanding of their work. This also will keep them abreast with the latest trends and techniques in drug investigations and operations. (f) The restructured framework should include provisions for continuous police-community relations listing priorities and active programs which would help, to borrow the words of the participants, to win the hearts and minds of the community.

More in-depth research must be conducted. This study provides a basis for the restricting the DEU, but many aspects of it remain rather superficial. More in-depth research needs to be carried out on a range of issues related to situation in the country. The researchers hopes that this study will generate more debates and reflections as the PNP DEU initiates its restructuring.

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