Challenges in the Police Gender and Development Initiatives

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Abstract:
Explicitly outlined under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, the United Nations aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Furthermore, it has enumerated initiatives to achieve gender equality in police forces. Guided by the UN call, member countries have instituted Gender and Development (GAD) programs within their police forces. In the Philippines, laws, such as Republic Act 9710 or the Magna Carta for Women, were enacted to enforce gender equality in the police force. Section 15 of the law stipulates the fair treatment of women in the police service. But despite these developments, gender issues are still evident in the police force. Hence, it is the objective of the study to determine the challenges encountered by the police force relative to GAD initiatives. The study adopted a qualitative research design, given the involvement of qualitative data and the absence of experimental manipulations. Thematic analysis served as the chosen method for data examination. The results reveal that budget constraints, involvement constraints, speaker competence, and GAD personnel continuity are the challenges experienced by police in their GAD initiatives. Hence, strategic resource management such as cultivating networks with other government and non-government agencies is necessary to address these issues and guarantee that GAD initiatives are focused and accommodating.

Keywords: gender and development, gender equality, police gender and development initiatives.

Introduction
The United Nations, in its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has embedded a commitment to address gender equality. Explicitly outlined in SDG 5 is the goal of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (United Nations [UN], 2023). In the context of police forces, the UN has detailed gender and development initiatives including augmenting the presence of women in uniformed roles, enhancing the representation of female police officers, and integrating gender-sensitive policing practices (UN, 2022).

Hence, in response to the call of the United Nations for gender equality, member countries have instituted gender equality programs within their police forces. Notably, strategies encompassing the integration of a gender perspective into recruitment, retention, and training processes have been implemented. Additionally, initiatives such as establishing women's groups and dedicated police desks specifically designed for women and girls have become evident (Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance [DCAF] et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, concerns have been raised regarding the implementation of gender and development programs, citing challenges such as insufficient and inconsistent programs (Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP, 2022), facilities within police stations and barracks that do not conform to gender-sensitive standards (United Nations [UN], 2023).
Development Programme, 2019), and a lack of commitment to implementing gender policies (Njoka, 2017).

In the Philippines, significant advancements in gender equality are visible making the country the leader in Asia in the pursuit of gender equality (Setianto, 2020). The country has passed several laws that support gender equality and development objectives. Specifically, Section 15 of RA 9710 or the Magna Carta for Women stipulates the fair treatment of women in the police service. But despite these developments, there are still gender problems in the police. The issue of inadequate representation is particularly apparent, as only 19% of police officers are female (Quismorio, 2023). Moreover, policewomen are frequently restricted to desk and administrative positions, with infrequent chances to oversee tactical or front-line teams (Severo, 2022).

Given the persistence of gender issues within the police force, even in the presence of legal mandates, this study aims to discern the challenges influencing the success of gender and development initiatives of the police force in the country.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a qualitative research design, given the involvement of qualitative data and the absence of experimental manipulations. Thematic analysis served as the chosen method for data examination. The participants comprised fifteen (15) Gender and Development Focal Point Persons (GDFPs) from the Benguet Provincial Police Office (PPO), selected using purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria mandated a minimum of three years of assignment and involvement in gender and development within Benguet PPO.

Data collection involved face-to-face interviews facilitated by an interview guide. Before gathering data, communication, necessary approvals, and consultations with relevant offices were diligently sought. Also, Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the process, ensuring adherence to principles of informed consent and voluntary participation.

Results and Discussion

The challenges affecting police GAD initiatives as identified by the participants are the following.

Budget Constraints

The primary challenge identified by participants revolves around budget constraints. Despite the assurance of allocating the mandatory 5% fund for Gender and Development (GAD) initiatives by Benguet PPO, the respondents express that this allocation falls short of meeting the demands for additional GAD initiatives. Consequently, the allocated fund contributes to the limited GAD-related initiatives across different police units under Benguet.

However, the budget constraints also highlight the active engagement of their GAD Focal Point System in conducting GAD-related activities. This realization emphasizes that the allocated fund is no longer sufficient, compelling them to curtail other activities.

Furthermore, the 5% allocation is grounded in the Gender and Development (GAD) budget policy, introduced under the General Appropriations Act (GAA) in 1995 and reinforced by RA 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women (Philippine Commission on Women [PCW], n.d.). This discovery mirrors the funding challenges experienced by PNP Cagayan as documented by Dulin et al. in 2017.

Involvement Constraints

Involvement constraints have surfaced as another distinct theme identified as a challenge within the GAD initiatives of Benguet PPO. These constraints encompass limited engagement in GAD-related activities, branching into two subthemes: limited personnel involvement and constrained community participation.

Limited Personnel Engagement. Limited personnel engagement emerges as a challenge identified by participants in the GAD
implementation. Personnel engagement encompasses a commitment to and consistent participation in GAD-related initiatives. These constraints in personnel involvement are attributed to the demanding workload inherent in the diverse functions of the police profession. The multifaceted nature of police duties results in divided attention, restricting the time and availability of police personnel for GAD-related activities.

Considering the dual role of police officers as both part of the community and a representative of the government, they bear the dual responsibility of being duty bearers and service providers. These adhere to the Peelian Principles that "The police are the community and the Community is the Police" ("Role of Police in America," 2019).

**Community-Limited Engagement.** Within the context of Involvement Constraints, another pertinent theme that surfaces is Community-Limited Engagement. This signifies that the active participation of the public in GAD initiatives led by Benguet PPO is not consistently forthcoming. The intricacies of individual schedules and business commitments often clash with the designated time and day allocated for scheduled GAD activities. Concurrently, the community members are preoccupied with their daily pursuits, presenting a challenge for GAD Focal Persons to convene them for GAD initiatives.

This echoes a challenge faced by female peacekeepers in the UN Mission in Liberia, as highlighted by Karim (2018). The inability to fully engage with the local population in Liberia impeded their capacity to protect and prevent violence. This exemplifies the impact of limited interaction on the effectiveness of GAD initiatives.

However, recognizing limited participation as a hurdle underscores that Benguet PPO has proactively designed and executed GAD-related activities for the public. Essential to Gender and Development, the active involvement of stakeholders aligns with the true essence of GAD, as defined under Republic Act 9710. GAD encompasses the transformation of societal structures to uphold the human rights of both men and women. Encouraging increased community participation remains a pivotal aspect in ensuring the success and meaningful impact of GAD initiatives.

**Speaker Competence**

A critical challenge affecting the effective implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) Benguet PPO GAD Focal Point Persons is Speaker Competence. This aspect involves the ability of speakers to influence the audience effectively. While GAD Focal persons undergo seminars and training to enhance their capabilities, their competence may not always match that of seasoned speakers. Consequently, there arises a necessity for GAD focal persons to engage external speakers to facilitate their GAD-related activities.

As highlighted by the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) in 2023, the GAD focal system within each government agency should undergo comprehensive training. This includes gender sensitivity training, basic GAD orientation, gender analysis (GA), and the utilization of GA tools, as well as GAD planning and budgeting. By incorporating these training components, agencies can equip their focal persons with the necessary skills and knowledge, bridging the gap in speaker competence and fortifying their ability to effectively convey GAD-related messages to diverse audiences.

**GAD Personnel Continuity**

GAD Personnel Continuity was considered a challenge because of the attached repercussions it may bring. Such modifications may cause specialized information to disappear, disrupting or causing inconsistencies in GAD initiatives. Furthermore, new personnel necessitate the initiation of a new cycle of capacitiation.

This challenge is linked to the standardized staffing pattern adhered to by the Philippine National Police. In this system, promotion is deemed mandatory for all eligible police personnel. This systematic and steadfast approach is purposefully designed to ensure the ongoing progression of careers for all qualified personnel.
**Conclusion**

Budgetary restrictions and limits on speaker and participant availability and involvement affected the successful execution of gender and development activities in the Philippine National Police particularly within the jurisdiction of Benguet Provincial Police. Financial constraints limit the breadth and impact of gender and development initiatives by making it difficult to allocate sufficient money to them. The inclusive and significant implementation of gender and development plans is further hampered by difficulties in obtaining the active participation of qualified speakers and a variety of stakeholders. Managing resources strategically, focusing advocacy efforts, and cultivating networks with other government and non-government agencies are necessary to address these issues and guarantee the accomplishment of gender-sensitive goals and objectives.

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**Conflict of interests**

No conflict of interest.

**References**


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