



Analyzing the Prevalence of the Eight Focus Crimes in Albay Province: Basis for Sustainable Crime Prevention Framework

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ABSTRACT

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The prevalence of crimes globally is a complex and varied phenomenon, with different regions and countries experiencing vastly unequal rates across various types of offenses. To prevent these, the Philippine legal system addresses criminality primarily through two main bodies of law: the Revised Penal Code, which defines traditional crimes that target modern offenses. This study determined the statistical profile of Eight Focus Crime in the province of Albay, analyzed the prevalence, identify the problems encountered

and propose an Sustainable Crime Prevention Framework that will suppress the commission of Eight Focus Crimes. This study was conducted in the province of Albay, specifically in the Legazpi, Ligao and Tabaco City, covering the period from CY 2022 to 2024. This study used the descriptive qualitative method research design. The respondents of the study are Intelligence, Investigators, Operations and PCAD personnel from the three CPS. The study reveals that Albay's crime landscape is a structural byproduct of socio-economic strain and geographic



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isolation, where policing deserts and seasonal economic droughts sustain a cycle of survivalist criminal behavior. Data confirms that while Legazpi City remains the urban epicenter for property crimes, a critical shift toward lethal violence has emerged in jurisdictions like Ligao, requiring a move from reactive enforcement to multi-sectoral, restorative justice.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of crimes globally is a complex and varied phenomenon, with different regions and countries experiencing vastly unequal rates across various types of offenses. Furthermore, the overall picture of criminality is complex in many developed nations, there have been steep long-term declines in both property and violent crime rates, yet emerging threats like cybercrime, financial fraud, and online sexual exploitation are on an alarming upward trajectory worldwide. The actual extent of crime is notoriously difficult to measure due to variations in reporting, legal definitions, and data collection methods, but its impact remains a critical concern for public safety, socio-economic stability, and international security. The criminality in the Philippines is multifaceted, encompassing both traditional street crimes and complex organized issues, with significant efforts made in recent decades to reduce overall crime volume, though challenges remain in specific areas.

The legal framework for addressing the 8 Focus Crimes in the Philippines is anchored primarily in the Revised Penal Code (RPC) and several critical Special Penal Laws. Crimes against persons, such as Murder in Art. 248 and Homicide in Art. 249, are prosecuted based on the presence or absence of qualifying circumstances like treachery or premeditation, while Physical Injury in Arts. 262–266 is categorized by the severity of medical incapacitation. The prosecution of Rape is governed by RA 8353 or the Anti-Rape Law of 1997, which notably reclassified it from a crime against chastity to a crime against persons, and was recently strengthened by RA 11648 to raise the age of sexual consent to 16. On the other hand, crimes against property such as Robbery in Arts. 293–305 and Theft in Arts. 308–311 are distinguished by the use of violence or force, while Carnapping and Motornapping are strictly penalized under RA 10883 or the The New Anti-Carnapping Act of 2016. These laws provide the Legazpi City Police Station with the necessary statutory teeth to ensure that offenders are held accountable under the specific elements defined by Philippine jurisprudence. In addition, the PNP MC No. 2017-021 or the Enhanced Police Managing Operations prescribes the guidelines to be strictly followed by all units in managing police operations with the primary goal of reducing prevalent crimes

and improving public safety in their respective areas.

From 2022 to 2024, crime in Albay was heavily concentrated in Legazpi City, which consistently served as the region's crime hub with totals peaking at 287 incidents, driven primarily by high volumes of Theft, Physical Injury, and Motorcycle Carnapping. While Tabaco City and Ligao City maintained significantly lower overall crime totals rarely exceeding 66 incidents they both faced a persistent and disproportionate challenge with Rape, which frequently emerged as the leading or second-most prevalent crime in those jurisdictions. By 2024, the data confirms a distinct geographic divide: Legazpi remains the epicenter for property and urban-density crimes, whereas Tabaco and Ligao present a crime profile dominated by sensitive personal offenses and opportunistic theft, necessitating localized, offense-specific police interventions.

Focusing intervention efforts on the Focus Crimes in Albay province would directly address the offenses that most seriously impact public safety and serve as indicators of the overall crime situation. Effectively reducing these serious crimes, particularly Theft, which was the most frequent index crime reported in the province, would lead to a substantial improvement in the security and perception of safety for residents and businesses across Legazpi, Ligao, and Tabaco Cities.

FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Routine Activity Theory, Differential Association Theory and Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) Theory. The Routine Activity Theory, advanced by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson in 1979, provides an explanation for the changes in the number and profile of crimes by shifting focus from the offender's motivation to the situational factors and opportunities created by the patterns of everyday life. Likewise, this study is anchored with Differential Association Theory, developed by Edwin H. Sutherland in 1939. It explains why individuals become criminals, which in turn contributes to the persistent prevalence of crime. This theory asserts that criminal behavior is learned through interaction with others, primarily within intimate, personal groups. Lastly, this study is supported with Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) Theory, developed by Herman Goldstein in 1979 which highlights the core problems in traditional police practices. Goldstein argued that the primary problem encountered by law enforcement is their over-reliance on reactive policing and the criminal law, which treats symptoms rather than underlying causes.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study described the prevalence of Focus Crimes in Legazpi City, Ligao City, and Tabaco City to assess the state of public safety. Specifically, this study analyzed the prevalence of the Eight Focus Crimes in Albay Province along Individual & Developmental Risk Factors; Socioeconomic Determinants & Strain; Community & Social Disorganization; Situational & Spatial Determinants; and Criminal Justice System Efficacy & Legitimacy. It also identified the problems encountered by the respondents in addressing the prevalence of the Eight Focus Crimes in Albay Province and proposed a Sustainable Crime Prevention Framework that will suppress the commission of Eight Focus Crimes.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design, an approach specifically engineered to provide a comprehensive and straightforward summary of events. Drawing on the journalistic framework identified by Foye (2024), this design prioritizes answering the fundamental questions of who, what, where, and how. It is particularly well-suited for investigating areas that remain under-researched, as it focuses on gathering broad insights rather than dissecting a single, narrow phenomenon. In applying this methodology, the research analyzed the prevalence of eight focus crime in Albay Province. The descriptive qualitative approach ensures a rigorous, transparent, and auditable transition from raw narrative data to the final analysis. This approach allows for a deep-dive analysis of the eight focus crimes through the expert testimony of key personnel, ensuring that the resulting crime prevention framework is grounded in practical, frontline reality rather than just abstract figures. Ultimately, this choice of design allows for a deeper understanding of the core human experiences and professional realities of officers in the field, providing a clear and grounded description of the technology's impact on local policing.

Research Site

This research was conducted within the Province of Albay, specifically focusing on the three cities of Legazpi, Tabaco, and Ligao. As the regional center and a chartered city, Legazpi City serves as a strategic hub on Albay's eastern seaboard, where the local government prioritizes urban development and essential service delivery to its coastal and inland residents. Similarly situated along the eastern coast facing the Philippine Sea, Tabaco City is characterized by a robust economy

driven by agriculture, trade, and a significant fishing sector, sharing its borders with the municipality of Malinao. Completing the study's geographic scope is Ligao City, located in the province's eastern interior; it features a diverse landscape of urban centers, agricultural plains, and hilly terrain. Operating as a component city, Ligao's local government unit is dedicated to fostering community initiatives and maintaining the infrastructure necessary for its unique topographical layout.

Respondents

The primary participants of the study are the 8 PNP personnel such as the 3 personnel from the Operations Section, 1 in Intelligence Section, 2 in Investigation Section and 2 Police Community Affairs and Development (PCAD) Section. The selection is limited to these eight participants because they are the personnel who exercise direct functions related to the management and analysis of the eight focus crimes. The group size is confined to eight to ensure that every participant possesses specialized, first-hand involvement in the operational and tactical execution of crime prevention strategies. The participants for a study on analyzing the prevalence of eight focus crime are chosen based on their unique roles and perspectives, which together provide a comprehensive understanding of the program. Specifically, the Operations personnel, including patrol and investigative units, contribute the raw data necessary for statistical analysis and are directly involved in implementing the crime prevention strategies that the analysis informs. Intelligence units gather, analyze, and interpret information to identify crime patterns, hotspots, and emerging threats, which is essential for understanding prevalence. The Investigators offer a tactical, ground-level understanding of crime patterns, victimology, and the challenges of crime solution, providing crucial detail on how and why specific crimes occur. Finally, the PCAD personnel contribute a community-focused, preventative perspective, detailing issues related to police-community trust, intelligence gathering, and the effectiveness of social programs aimed at crime prevention, thereby creating a comprehensive, three-dimensional analysis of crime prevalence. This study was conducted in strict adherence to established ethical research protocols, ensuring that all participant data is handled with the utmost confidentiality through coding to guarantee respondent anonymity and the securing of all records in password-protected digital files accessible only to the researcher.

Instrumentation

The study utilized a semi-structured Interview Guide as its primary research instrument. To ensure that the guide effectively captured the specific themes and operational nuances required by the study, the items underwent a rigorous expert

validation process. This included both face and content validity standardized techniques used to ensure the instrument is both accessible to the general public and technically sound according to subject matter experts. In refining the guide through these methods, the researcher was able to systematically gather precise, relevant data from the participants. Ultimately, the interview guide was administered to selected PNP personnel who possess firsthand experience and direct involvement from prevention before a crime happens to response and investigation after it occurs.

Sampling Technique

To identify the most qualified participants for this study, a purposive sampling method—a non-probability technique also referred to as selective or subjective sampling was employed. This approach relies on the researcher's professional judgment to handpick specific units or individuals who possess unique insights into the study's objectives. In focusing on a purposive subset rather than a random sample, the research can concentrate on specific characteristics within the population that are most relevant to answering the research questions. Consequently, this method was used to select PNP personnel who are directly involved in field operations, intelligence, investigation and police community relations.

Data Analysis

To ensure a systematic and reliable interpretation of the findings, this study utilized Thematic Analysis, a qualitative data processing method that identifies, analyzes, and reports recurring patterns of meaning within a dataset. This approach was applied to the participants' responses to analyze the prevalence of eight focus crime. Furthermore, this method provided a structured framework for analyzing the challenges encountered by police officers. In categorizing raw narrative data into these distinct themes, the study was able to draw meaningful conclusions regarding the problem.

Research Ethics Protocol

This study was conducted in strict adherence to established ethical research protocols, ensuring the protection and rights of all participants. A cornerstone of this approach was informed consent, where participation remained entirely voluntary and was formalized through signed consent letters. To protect the professional and personal reputations of the officers involved, respondent anonymity was guaranteed through the use of alphanumeric coding instead of names, ensuring that individual responses cannot be traced back to specific

personnel. All collected data was handled with the utmost confidentiality, stored in password-protected digital files and physical lockers accessible only to the researcher, with a formal commitment to destroy all raw interview records upon the completion of the study. Furthermore, the dignity of the participants was prioritized by crafting interview questions that were professional, respectful, and non-intrusive. Throughout the process, the researcher maintained a firm commitment to objectivity and impartiality, ensuring that all collected data was presented independently and without bias to reflect the true nature of the findings.

The authors used AI-assisted tools, including Gemini, ChatGpt and Writeless during the preparation of this manuscript. These tools were utilized solely for language refinement, grammar checking, paraphrasing, and improving the clarity and organization of the manuscript. The use of AI assistance was limited to editorial support and did not influence the research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of findings, or conclusions of the study. All final content, interpretations, and scholarly responsibility remain with the authors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings and their criminological interpretation derived from the analysis of the Eight Focus Crimes in Albay Province.

1. Prevalence of the Eight Focus Crimes in Albay Province

The prevalence of the Eight Focus Crimes (Murder, Homicide, Physical Injury, Rape, Robbery, Theft, Car Theft, and Motorcycle Theft) in Albay Province is a complex phenomenon that must be understood through a multi-faceted etiological lens that extends far beyond simple statistical reporting.

a. Individual & Developmental Risk Factors

These factors encompass psychological, behavioral, and experiential deficits originating from early life, which increase an individual's propensity to engage in criminal behavior later on; therefore, addressing issues like early childhood trauma and impulsivity is critical to prevention.

a.1. The Cycle of Personal Crisis and Crime

The Cycle of Personal Crisis and Crime describes a self-perpetuating feedback loop where individual hardship leads to criminal behavior, which in turn deepens the initial crisis, making further crime more likely. This

cycle is a primary driver for high crime prevalence, as it traps individuals in a pattern of recidivism and systemic failure.

Based on the responses of the participants on the individual factors, Investigator 1 says that, *“In my own experience, the most common personal reasons are poverty, vices, lack of education and job, they also engage in illegal activities as source of income to triggered individuals to commit crime”*. Investigator 2 also says that, *“Sometimes it’s because of poverty, then it’s the influence of other people”*.

PCAD 1 also says that, *“Some persons are addicted to drugs because of curiosity, financial difficulties, lack of family attention”*. This is also similar to the response of Intelligence 1, *“Poverty, lack of education and lack of social interaction”*. Similarly, PCAD 3 also says, *“Jealousy, curiosity, revenge (for crime), jealousy, stress and depress”*.

In addition, Operation 3 says that, *“Poverty and family problem”*. Likewise, Operation 2 says that, *“One of the most common reasons for the commission of crime is the mental health which leads to the commission of crime”*.

The Vicious Cycle of Personal Crisis and Crime in Albay functions as a self-perpetuating loop where chronic poverty and lack of education force individuals into criminal survival strategies. This cycle is intensified by family instability and deteriorating mental health, which lower impulse control and make criminal acts a rational response to extreme psychological and financial strain. This implies that Vicious Cycle of Personal Crisis and Crime in Albay is that criminal behavior is rarely an isolated choice, but rather a survivalist response to a collapsing social and economic infrastructure. The insights from local PNP personnel suggest that as long as root causes such as poverty, family fragmentation, and unaddressed mental health struggles persist, punitive measures will remain ineffective at lowering long-term crime prevalence.

The literature emphasizes that personal crimes are often the culmination of long-term psychological distress and unresolved emotional trauma. According to Kjærvik et al. (2025), childhood maltreatment establishes a foundation for social isolation and violent tendencies in adulthood, creating a cycle where early life crises manifest as aggressive criminal behavior later on. This cycle is particularly evident in high-stakes interpersonal conflicts, where Burrascano et al. (2024) and Petreca et al. (2025) note that intense emotional entanglements,

perceived betrayals, and psychological distress can escalate into extreme violence or homicide-suicide.

a.2. The Inverse Correlation of Educational Attainment

The inverse correlation between educational attainment and crime, suggesting that as formal education levels rise, the overall prevalence of criminal behavior in a society declines. Beyond economic incentives, educational environments provide an incapacitation effect by keeping high-risk youth off the streets and fostering pro-social behaviors such as increased patience, self-discipline, and risk aversion.

Investigator 1 and PCAD 1 have similar response on the Correlation of Educational Attainment. They stated that, *“Some of them have difficulty finding a job because they did not finish school. Their families need support, so they get involved in crime”*. Investigator 2 also says that, *“Based on my observation, those who are not educated crime are street crimes while those who are educated, so large stafa and fraud”*. PCAD 2 also says that, *“For me, those with low education are the ones involved in crimes. Because they have little awareness and understanding of the law then the consequences”*. Similarly, PCAD 3 also says, *“Street crimes especially gambling are done by the unschooled”*.

In addition, Intelligence 1 says that, *“In crime, the victims are those who sometimes do not understand, so it is difficult to guide in situations, because there is a lack of understanding”*. Likewise, Operation 3 says that, *“Educational attainment is related to crime, both to the victim and the perpetrator”*.

In Albay, educational attainment serves as a decisive factor in both the type of offense committed and the risk of victimization, creating a clear divide between street crimes and white-collar fraud. Personnel insights reveal that a lack of formal schooling traps individuals in a cycle of poverty where, unable to access the legal labor market, they turn to theft and gambling as survivalist measures for their families. Furthermore, this literacy gap results in a diminished understanding of the law and its systemic consequences, making the unschooled harder to guide and more susceptible to recidivism, while higher education shifts criminal behavior toward complex, large-scale financial crimes.

The prevalence of crimes driven by personal motivations is a complex phenomenon deeply intertwined with psychological, socioeconomic, and social factors that require a multifaceted approach to prevention. Economically, financial strain and the interaction of greed and opportunity drive white-collar

crimes like fraud (Singh and Rawal, n.d.), a reality even perceived among public servants facing prevailing economic conditions (Awale, Abdullahi, and Kulmie, 2025).

b. Socioeconomic Determinants & Strain

This factor addresses how poverty, inequality, unemployment, and the resulting stress from the gap between aspirations and legitimate opportunities can pressure individuals into committing crimes, highlighting the need for economic and educational interventions.

b.1. Poverty, Unemployment, and Propensity for Crime

Poverty and unemployment act as primary push factors for property crimes like theft and robbery, as individuals resort to illegal means to meet basic survival needs.

Based on the responses of the participants on Socioeconomic Determinants & Strain, Investigator 1 says that, *“Poverty and unemployment is the reason why they are involved in crime especially in theft and robbery to provide for their families”*. In addition, Investigator 2 says that, *“It really has an impact and influence on the commission of crimes, especially theft or robbery”*. PCAD 2 says, *“Poverty and unemployment have a big impact, if poverty, unemployment, crime is high”*. Similarly, PCAD 3 also says, *“It is easier for them to meet the needs, but others to support their vices such as drugs, gambling”*.

Moreover, Operation 2 says that, *“Albay has a lot of natural resources to earn income but the laziness of people becomes a problem”*. Likewise, Operation 3 says that, *“The lack of education and employment can lead to crime for their survival. Because of the limited opportunities even don in the left or low wages, commit crimes for their needs”*. In addition, Intelligence 1 says that, *“Poverty and unemployment are the main reasons why people are involved in theft and robbery. They are the ones who support the family, that’s what they should do rather than beg”*.

Based on the accounts of Albay’s law enforcement personnel, socioeconomic strain creates a coerced choice environment where criminal behaviour specifically theft and robbery s adopted as a pragmatic survival strategy. The analysis suggests that crime prevalence is less a moral failing than a structural symptom; when the legal labor market remains inaccessible due to chronic unemployment and lack of education, the incentive to provide for one’s family consistently outweighs the

fear of legal sanctions. This cycle is further complicated by the fact that poverty often fosters secondary social problems like drug use and gambling, which serve as vices that further bind individuals to a criminal lifestyle, making it difficult to exit the loop even when opportunities arise.

The literature consistently identifies a direct link between severe economic hardship and the increased likelihood of criminal involvement. Sultan et al. (2024) observe that high poverty rates force individuals to struggle for basic needs, often leading them toward illegal activities as a survival mechanism. This is further supported by Hussain et al. (2024), whose quantitative analysis reveals that economic disenfranchisement exerts a significant psychological and social toll, pushing individuals toward violent crime as a desperate response to their circumstances. Together, these studies suggest that when poverty and unemployment coincide, they create a high-pressure environment that significantly raises an individual's propensity for both property and violent offenses.

b.2. Economic Opportunities and the Decision to Offend

In relation to the prevalence of crime, the lack of viable economic opportunities functions as a primary driver that lowers the “opportunity cost” of illegal acts, making the decision to offend a survivalist logic for those excluded from the legal labor market.

Investigator 1 and 2 says that, *“Yes, when it comes to the correlation of livelihood and increase in crime, it depends on livelihood and the crime itself”*. In addition, PCAD 1 says that, *“They think that’s the reason they’re alive. It’s their way to get rid of their problems. There is a correlation because most likely if you don’t have a job, you become a way”*. Similarly, PCAD 3 also says, *“Yes, crime has increased, usually depending on social media so scam has increased”*.

Operation 2 also says, *“Maybe it’s just a lack of skills why you don’t use natural resources”*. Likewise, Operation 3 says that, *“Yes, there is a relationship because if there is economic activity, there is planting for example, it reduces property crimes because they have sources”*.

The correlation between livelihood and crime is an inverse relationship where the presence of productive economic activity, such as farming or fishing, acts as a natural stabilizer against property offenses. Insights from law enforcement suggest that when legitimate livelihood sources are available, the incentive to engage in theft or robbery diminishes; however, in the absence of specialized skills to harness

local natural resources, individuals turn to crime as a rational mechanism for survival. Furthermore, as traditional economic opportunities remain stagnant, there is an emergent shift toward digital innovation in deviance, where the proliferation of social media has facilitated a rise in scams and fraudulent activity.

The decision to engage in criminal acts is often influenced by the accessibility of legitimate pathways to financial stability, such as education and job prospects. Paul et al. (2025) and Mughal et al. (2024) argue that limited educational attainment restricts employability, leaving individuals with few legal options for advancement. This lack of opportunity is particularly critical for youth; Atrey and Singh (2024) emphasize that educational achievement serves as a primary deterrent against juvenile delinquency. When vocational training and job creation are absent, as highlighted by Daniel et al. (2024) and Susuman and Sithole (2024), the “rational choice” for marginalized groups often shifts toward crime as the only perceived viable means of securing a livelihood.

c. Community & Social Disorganization

This refers to the breakdown of informal social controls in neighborhoods characterized by high transience, poverty, and weak institutional presence, consequently diminishing the community’s collective capacity to prevent and police itself.

c.1. Social Cohesion

Social Cohesion serve as the bedrock of informal social control, directly reducing the prevalence of crime by creating an environment where criminal acts are difficult to commit and hide. This theme is best understood through Collective Efficacy, which is the combination of mutual trust and a shared willingness to intervene (vigilance).

Based on the responses of the participants on Community & Social Disorganization, Investigator 1 says that, *“In our barangay, there are still relatively few crimes. People know each other, there is a good relationship. So sometimes if you suspect someone, you’ll help each other and talk. Barangay officials and tanods patrol”*.

PCAD 1 also says that, *“In our barangay we have a good relationship. There is interaction, high request to barangay officials and police”*. Similarly, PCAD 3 also says, *“Now it’s easier for the community to take action because of social media”*.

Moreover, Operation 2 says that, *“Here in our area, people have really*

high support when it comes to law enforcement". Likewise, Operation 3 says that, *"Social cohesion is probably moderate because even if there are activities, but there is a need, mostly, economic crimes"*.

Based on the responses of the participants, a high degree of social cohesion acts as a robust informal barrier against crime in Albay's barangays. Officers note that when residents share strong interpersonal bonds and trust in their local leaders, they naturally engage in mutual surveillance and proactive reporting, creating an environment where suspicious activity is quickly neutralized by the community. Furthermore, the integration of social media has empowered these neighborhoods to organize and respond to threats faster than ever before, effectively turning residents into force multipliers for formal law enforcement.

The literature underscores that the safety of a community is heavily dependent on the strength of its social fabric and the efficiency of its urban management. As noted by Forouhar et al. (2025) and Ceccato and Brantingham (2024), inefficient service delivery and poor urban planning can exacerbate vulnerabilities, creating environments where crime flourishes due to a lack of collective oversight. This suggests that in a Barangay setting, social cohesion acts as an informal policing mechanism; when family units are stable and supportive, as discussed by Rosenfeld (2024) and Paul et al. (2025), they serve as a primary deterrent against delinquency. However, external shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic (Hassan et al., 2024) can disrupt these traditional support systems, proving that community vigilance must be a sustained, collaborative effort between residents and local leaders to remain resilient against criminal escalations.

c.2. Local Cultural Norms

Local cultural norms function as an informal regulatory system that significantly dictates the prevalence and perception of crime. These unwritten codes of conduct can either act as protective factors, such as communal spirit and extended family oversight that discourage deviance, or as risk factors, such as concepts of honor that may justify interpersonal violence.

Investigator 1 says that, *"Sometimes participation in barangay activities is not consistent. But in the eyes of other people who seem to normalize crime, they don't even bother to report. Because sometimes, they don't want to report because they're ashamed because sometimes the crimes they're involved in are like sexual assault, theft in the family, and domestic violence"*.

PCAD 1 also says that, *“Effective and our local dispute resolution. When it comes to local culture, it is important to understand especially in sensitive crimes. There should be strategies and building community trust in the formal justice system”*. Similarly, PCAD 3 also says, *“Influences the reporting of crime, because it will not be incriminated especially in minor offenses because of gratitude”*.

Moreover, Operation 2 says that, *“Currently, this kind of culture or norms is not tolerated. The PNP is doing the right thing and doing everything for the job”*. In addition, Intelligence 1 says that, *“There are witnesses who saw the crime but they are afraid to report or testify that if they come back”*.

Based on the accounts of Albay’s law enforcement personnel, cultural values such as shame, gratitude, and the fear of retaliation act as significant informal barriers that suppress the reporting of crimes. These norms create a culture of silence, particularly in sensitive cases like sexual assault and domestic violence, where families choose to normalize or internally resolve offenses rather than face social disruption or perceived public humiliation. While local dispute resolution through the Katarungang Pambarangay is effective for minor issues, its reliance on community harmony often prevents the legal incrimination of offenders, leaving high-impact family-based crimes hidden from formal statistics.

The effectiveness of the justice process is deeply intertwined with the level of trust and cooperation established between the community and formal institutions. Xie, Ortiz Solis, and Chauhan (2024) highlight that an erosion of trust in law enforcement leads to a decline in crime reporting, which effectively creates an environment where criminal activity can persist unchallenged by the legal system. Furthermore, as Kajiita and Kang’ethe (2024) and Hall and Ratcliffe (2024) argue, the educational and socioeconomic climate of a neighborhood dictates how residents interact with the law; where education is high, there is typically a greater alignment with formal justice processes and a lower engagement in illicit activities, whereas deprived areas may develop subcultural norms that resist police intervention.

d. Situational & Spatial Determinants

This perspective focuses on the immediate environmental context, geographic hot spots, and opportunity structures that make specific places and times more conducive to the commission of crimes, underscoring the importance of target hardening and directed policing.

d.1. Geographical Hotspots of Focus Crimes

In Albay, focus crimes are not evenly distributed but cluster in geographical hotspots where urban density and high mobility provide both a wealth of targets and an environment for anonymity. These hotspots function as deviant places where physical layout, such as proximity to major highways and ports, allows for quick escape routes after crimes like carjacking or robbery.

Based on the responses of the participants, Investigator 1 says that, *“Based on WCPD cases, rape is one of the highest, mostly in coastal and upland areas. Ages 16 years old and the perpetrator is a neighbor and father and relative of the victim”*. In addition the participant says that, *“There are also robbery and theft cases, mostly happening in the poblacion. Their target is residential and establishments”*.

Similarly, PCAD 3 also says, *“Focused crime occurs (theft and robbery) in busy, crowded areas”*. Moreover, Operation 2 says, *“Sometimes there is no place, crime happens because of lack of knowledge of the laws and the consequences of their actions”*. Likewise, Operation 3 says that, *“In remote areas even in isolated areas in rural, especially in the weak infrastructure, that’s the limit stolen because it’s easy to break”*. In addition, Intelligence 1 says that, *“Yes, like in remote areas where rape and pina-common”*.

Based on the professional accounts of Albay’s law enforcement, spatial and environmental characteristics dictate the specific type of criminal opportunities available. In isolated coastal and upland areas, the lack of natural surveillance and social anonymity creates a vulnerability trap for personal crimes, particularly rape, where victims (often minors) are targeted by relatives or neighbors within the privacy of remote households. In contrast, the high-density poblacion (urban centers) acts as a magnet for property offenses like theft and robbery, as offenders leverage the concentration of commercial establishments and residential anonymity to strike high-value targets.

The literature indicates that criminal activity is not randomly distributed but is concentrated in specific “hotspots” shaped by spatial dynamics and urban facilities. Jiang et al. (2024) emphasize that the spatio-temporal characteristics of crimes are often influenced by the presence of commercial service facilities, which create high-traffic environments conducive to illegal acts. Furthermore, as noted by Basto-Pereira et al. (2024), urban expansion often results in increased anonymity and social disorganization, turning certain neighborhoods

into persistent hubs for focus crimes. These spatial patterns, modeled through advanced point processes by Dong et al. (2024), demonstrate that understanding the “where” and “when” of crime is essential for predicting where the eight focus crimes are most likely to cluster.

d.2. Environmental Features and Location Vulnerability

This theme, central to Environmental Criminology, suggests that crime prevalence is heavily influenced by criminogenic settings locations characterized by poor lighting, high foot traffic, and lack of security infrastructure that provide offenders with anonymity and easy egress.

Investigator 1 says that, “*Environmental features play a big role especially when it comes to incidents of carnapping and robbery. There is no permanent address so you can hide your identity. In these crimes because the speed of movement of criminals*”. Specifically, Investigator 2 says that, “*With Barangay Sto. Cristo and San Roque have many crimes*”. PCAD 1 says that, “*The area is really giving opportunities so there is crime*”. Similarly, PCAD 3 also says, “*The perpetrator. It’s in a place where no one can see or hear or where it’s easy to catch*”. Moreover, Operation 2 says that, “*Sometimes in carnapping and robbery, it happens because of the negligence of the owner*”.

Based on the accounts of Albay’s investigators and operations officers, the physical environment of specific barangays, functions as a silent accomplice to property crime. The lack of permanent addresses and defined urban layouts provides offenders with the anonymity and speed required for carnapping and robbery, effectively creating blind spots that neutralize formal police patrols. This suggests that the landscape itself dictates the threshold for criminal success; when an area lacks natural visibility and clear mapping, it minimizes the perceived risk of being heard or caught, making it a high-utility target for motivated offenders.

The physical design and ecological health of an area directly impact its vulnerability to criminal behavior. Ecological degradation and a lack of effective governance in remote or protected areas can facilitate specific crimes, such as encroachment and illegal resource exploitation (Clerici et al., 2024). Mara and Cutini (2024) argue that viewing crime through an “environmental security lens” is necessary because the physical context whether it is an abandoned urban lot or a dense forest dictates the level of surveillance and the opportunity for criminal elements to operate undetected.

e. Criminal Justice System Efficacy & Legitimacy

This final factor assesses the extent to which the public perceives the police, courts, and correctional systems as fair, responsive, and effective, which critically impacts deterrence and adherence to the law; a loss of trust can thus lead to higher rates of self-help justice or impunity.

e.1. Effectiveness of Current Police Programs and Strategies

The effectiveness of police programs is heavily tied to the omnipresence effect created by high-visibility patrols and randomized checkpoints, which significantly lower crime prevalence by increasing the perceived risk of apprehension.

Investigator 1 and PCAD have seminal responses on the Effectiveness of Current Police Programs and Strategies. They says that, *“Of course that’s because of the PNP’s intensified policing and crime prevention efforts, so some crime is reduced or not too high”*. Investigator 2 says that, *“Yes, very effective (PCAD Activities) for preventing and solving crime”*. Similarly, PCAD 3 also says, *“Initiatives are a big help to pre-empt and reduce criminality”*.

Moreover, Operation 2 says, *“Recently we have a comprehensive deployment plan, very effective when it comes to crime prevention”*. Likewise, Operation 3 says that, *“Police visibility and police presence help to prevent crime and provide safety to the people. The checkpoint for smuggling, and the community partnership, collaboration effort of the police and the people can foster trust and improve communication”*. In addition, Intelligence 1 says that, *“Very effective are the initiatives where the police are visible, because criminals are hesitant if the police are present or visible”*.

The transition from reactive investigating to proactive guardianship through high police visibility and strategic deployment acts as the most potent psychological deterrent in the province. Officers indicate that intensified presence such as comprehensive deployment plans, checkpoints, and high-visibility patrols directly disrupts the Rational Choice process of motivated offenders, particularly in property crimes where the perceived risk of immediate apprehension forces a hesitancy that prevents the crime from occurring.

The literature highlights that the effectiveness of police programs depends on a shift from traditional, surveillance-based tactics to collaborative and multi-institutional frameworks. Gryshchenko et al. (2024) and Stager et al. (2024) argue

that participatory models and public control mechanisms are superior to isolated enforcement because they allow police to tailor their approaches to specific local contexts. This effectiveness is further enhanced through inter-institutional collaboration, where Frunză and Țurcanu (2024) emphasize that integrating social services, education, and health organizations into crime prevention strategies addresses the root causes of criminal behavior more holistically. Ultimately, the research suggests that for strategies to be truly effective in reducing the eight focus crimes, they must be grounded in a sociological understanding of the community's economic and social disparities (Gupta, 2024).

e.2. Community Trust and its Influence on Cooperation

Community Trust is the critical fuel for the justice system; where trust is high, residents act as the extended eyes and ears of the PNP, leading to a direct decrease in the prevalence of focus crimes through rapid reporting and evidence sharing.

Investigator 1 and PCAD 1 says that, *“The trust and confidence of the community in the police and local justice system helps especially in reporting of crimes, cooperation in investigation, because of the activities of PCAD, helps us get closer to the people. We ensure that we have good camaraderie through our services like the campaign against VAWC, RA 9165, and crime prevention”*. Likewise, Investigator says that, *“The incidents are actually reported and recorded, then, during investigation, there is cooperation from the perpetrator”*. Similarly, PCAD 3 also says, *“Indispensable in solving crimes, humans help in gathering information and evidence”*.

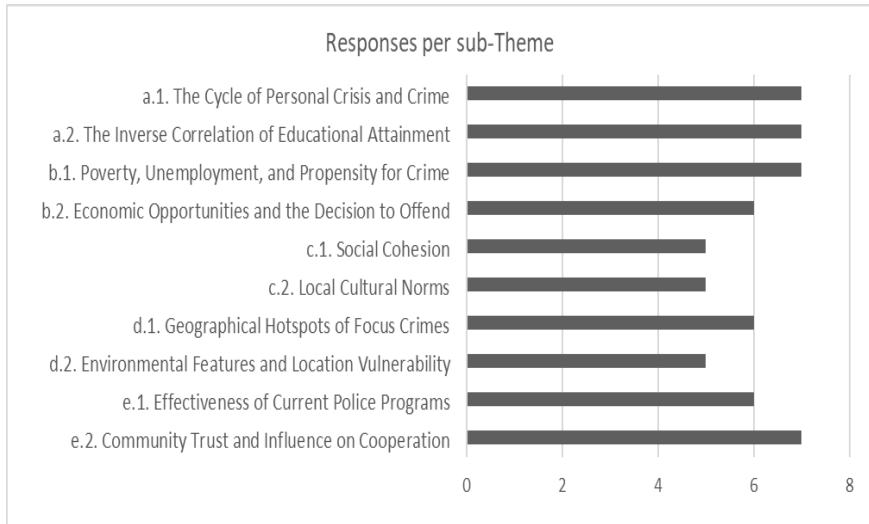
Moreover, Operation 2 says that, *“So police in the barangay and the Barangay Justice are helping the PNP”*. Likewise, Operation 3 says that, *“Their cooperation is very helpful especially in reporting crime. Because they also expect that their concerns will be given time and appropriate actions”*. In addition, Intelligence 1 says that, *“The cooperation of the community with the police helps to solve and prevent crimes”*.

The effectiveness of the Philippine National Police is not anchored in force, but in the voluntary trust and active partnership of the community. Officers highlight that successful specialized campaigns such as those addressing Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) and anti-drug initiatives (RA 9165) serve as catalysts for building the camaraderie necessary for residents to transition

from silent observers to essential intelligence assets. This trust bridges the gap between the formal law and the public, transforming cooperation from a legal obligation into a social commitment that directly enhances crime clearance rates and evidence gathering.

Figure 1

Responses per Sub-Theme



The relationship between law enforcement, crime, and community dynamics is paradoxical: agencies can both inadvertently perpetuate crime through systemic failures while also actively preventing it through proactive community engagement. Systemic issues such as racial bias, inadequate training, and corruption (Suhartono et al., 2024) can exacerbate criminal behavior and instability, with poorly conceived responses to crime potentially increasing fear and perpetuating cycles of violence (Fikri, Mursyid, and Ramadhan, 2024). Furthermore, when police strategies prioritize surveillance over support, they risk heightening public fear and alienating communities, leading to reduced cooperation in prevention efforts (Qollakaj and Muharremi, 2024).

2. Problems encountered by the respondents in addressing the prevalence of the Eight Focus Crimes in Albay Province

Albay Province currently faces significant problems in effectively addressing the pervasive issue of the Eight Focus Crimes, where efforts to curb offenses are complicated by a combination of factors.

2.a. Human Resource Constraints

The respondents face significant operational gaps due to a shortage of personnel, which limits their ability to conduct thorough investigations and maintain a consistent patrol presence. Based on the interview conducted:

Both Investigator 1 and PCAD 1 says that, *“Our problem is manpower”*. Likewise, Operation 3 says that, *“There is a lack of personnel for effective patrol and investigation”*.

The shortage of personnel creates a critical bottleneck where law enforcement is forced to choose between proactive crime prevention and reactive criminal investigation. When manpower is spread thin, the omnipresence of the police which serves as a primary deterrent for the eight focus crimes. The direct implication of these human resource constraints is a potential decline in public safety and institutional credibility; if the police cannot maintain a consistent presence or resolve cases effectively, it may embolden offenders and discourage citizens from reporting crimes.

Recent research underscores that human resource constraints are a primary barrier to effective crime response. Nandi et al. (2026) highlight that limited staffing, inadequate training, and insufficient resources directly decrease operational efficiency and hinder proactive crime prevention. This issue is compounded by a negative organizational climate, which Nandi et al. also link to increased personnel burnout and diminished motivation. Such internal struggles have external consequences; Dhillon (2026) notes that public confidence erodes when enforcement law appears overwhelmed by these resource gaps.

2.b. Logistical and Resource Limitations

Insufficient budgets and outdated equipment hinder the force's ability to navigate Albay's difficult terrain and utilize the modern technology required to solve heinous crimes.

Both Investigator 1 and PCAD 1 says that, *“Our problem is resource limitation”*. Likewise, Operation 3 says that, *“Poor logistical resources because Albay has diverse terrain, mountainous areas and coastal community. The budget is also limited, so the station cannot buy its own equipment, there is a lack of personnel for effective patrol and investigation”*.

This is similar to the response of Investigator, *“Limited sources”*. Similarly, PCAD 3 also says, *“As crime almost heinous crimes, the problems like solving crime need technology”*.

The persistent resource limitation and poor logistical resources described by the respondents reveal a critical mismatch between the PNP's operational needs and their current financial and technical capabilities. In a province like Albay, where the diverse terrain of mountains and coastal communities demands specialized transport and communication gear, the lack of a sufficient budget forces stations to operate with substandard equipment.

Research from 2026 emphasizes that logistical and resource deficits create a ripple effect across the entire criminal justice system. Yercan et al. (2026) argue that limited funding and manpower directly weaken response times, which in turn diminishes public trust in law enforcement. On the technical side, Zada et al. (2026) points out that a lack of advanced technology and proper training slows evidence processing, resulting in significant case backlogs. These financial pressures often force departments to sacrifice community engagement and prevention initiatives (Tad-Awan & Lapitan, 2026).

2.c. Legal and Inter-Agency Challenges

The lack of immediate legal support and strained relationships with prosecutors create procedural delays that obstruct the smooth transition from investigation to prosecution.

Moreover, Operation 2 says that, *“None harmonious relationship with some prosecutors. Then sometimes there is no lawyer on standby to support the conduct of the investigation”*.

The non-harmonious relationship and the absence of standby lawyers highlight a significant breakdown in the collaborative framework between law enforcement and the legal system. In the context of the eight focus crimes, where

legal technicalities can determine the success or failure of a case, the lack of immediate legal guidance during the conduct of investigation puts the validity of evidence and the filing of charges at risk. This friction shows that the police are often left to navigate complex legal procedures in isolation, creating a systemic gap where investigative efforts may be undermined by procedural errors or a lack of synergy with the prosecution.

Similarly, Febriansyah et al. (2026) highlight that digital transformation requires robust legal strategies to close existing gaps in national cybersecurity. On a global scale, Khanh and Thao (2026) point to the need for harmonized legal frameworks to improve cross-border cooperation against drug-related crimes, while Nusanto and Wisnubroto (2026) advocate for innovative legal approaches to address the emerging challenges and opportunities presented by artificial intelligence.

2.d. Information and Public Perception

The prevalence of misinformation within the community acts as a barrier, complicating the gathering of accurate leads and slowing down the resolution of focus crimes.

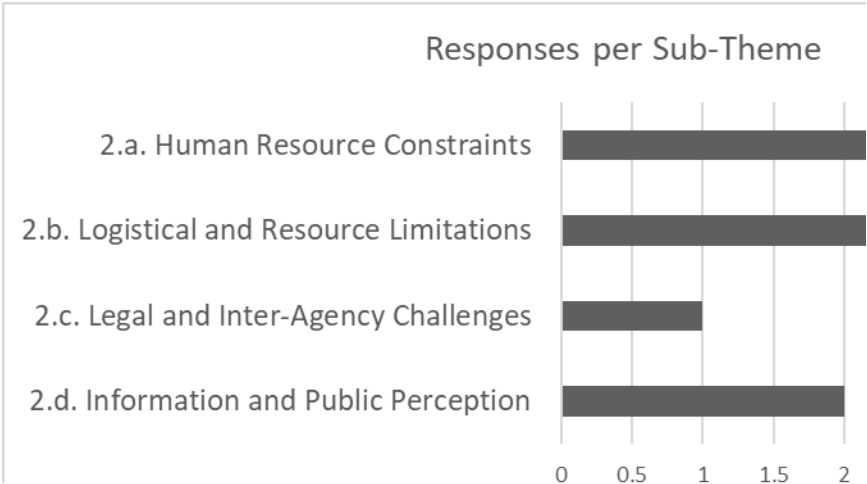
Both Investigator 1 and PCAD 1 says that, “*Our problem is misinformation.*”

The identification of misinformation as a core problem by both Investigator and PCAD personnel suggests a significant breakdown in the flow of reliable intelligence between the community and law enforcement. When the information provided to the police is inaccurate, biased, or intentionally misleading, it diverts limited manpower and resources toward false leads, thereby stalling the progress of legitimate investigations into the eight focus crimes. This challenge points to a gap in public trust or awareness, where the lack of verified data hampers the ability of the police to form a clear and actionable picture of criminal activity within the jurisdiction.

The flow of information and public perception are critical determinants of law enforcement success and community cooperation. Chadderton (2026) notes that public-private intelligence collaboration can bridge the gap between agencies and citizens, yet Ferrill et al. (2026) warn of a paradox where increased information flow can inadvertently spread misinformation and heighten fear, ultimately damaging trust. The importance of communication is further emphasized by Zulmasyhur (2026), who argues that proactive strategies are essential for encouraging crime reporting, while Sianipar and Debora (2026) highlight that a lack of operational transparency can erode confidence in an

agency’s ability to identify and process suspects.

Figure 2
Responses per Sub-Theme



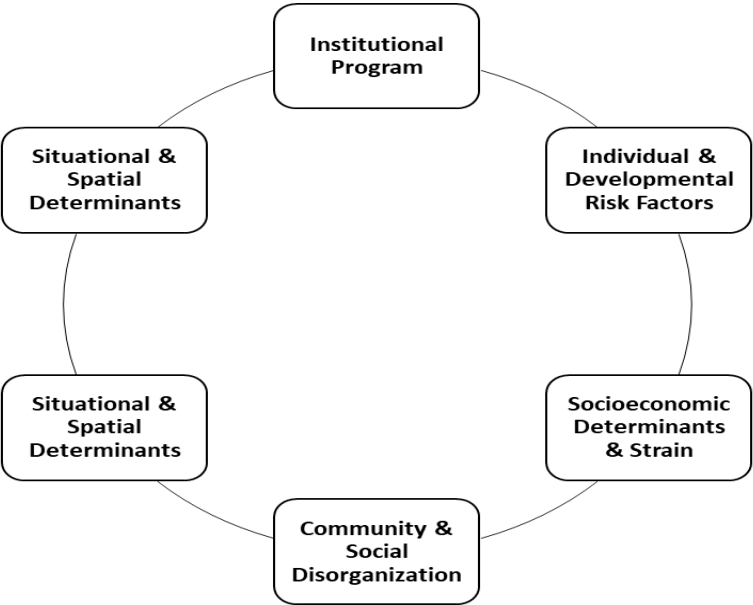
Despite these barriers, solutions point toward enhancing community policing strategies to foster cooperation and trust (Lud-ayen et al., 2024), addressing systemic issues like corruption and misconduct (Manubag, 2024), and adopting a multidimensional approach that integrates crime control with community development and respects human rights (Santos & Macabeo, 2024), ultimately requiring an integrated strategy to modernize the force and enhance its legitimacy.

3. Proposed Sustainable Crime Prevention Framework that will suppress the commission of Eight Focus Crimes

A Proposed Sustainable Crime Prevention Framework for suppressing the commission of the Eight Focus Crimes is vital for moving beyond reactive law enforcement and establishing a durable foundation for community safety. The purpose of this framework is to integrate evidence-based practices from multiple sectors including justice, education, social welfare, and urban planning to holistically address the multi-faceted root causes of crime in a coordinated manner. The anticipated impact is a measurable and sustained reduction in the volume and severity of the Eight Focus Crimes (Murder, Homicide, Physical Injury, Rape, Theft, Robbery, Car Theft, and Motorcycle Theft), leading to

increased public trust in the criminal justice system, enhanced community cohesion, and tangible improvements in the overall quality of life and local economic security. The core objectives are threefold, to reduce criminal opportunity through situational design and target hardening; to intervene early by mitigating individual and developmental risk factors, especially among youth; and to strengthen institutional legitimacy and capacity through data-driven policing, cross-agency partnerships, and ensuring accountability in the entire judicial process.

Figure 3
Sustainable Crime Prevention Framework



CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that the prevalence of the Eight Focus Crimes in Albay is a structural challenge driven by the volatile interaction between the province’s challenging physical landscape and post-disaster vulnerabilities, such as persistent darkness and urban disorder. These factors, combined with deeply rooted cultural silos like supog (shame), create hidden crime zones and

significant reporting gaps that neutralize traditional police efficacy. Furthermore, the interplay between Albay's rugged terrain, limited logistical resources, and fragmented legal coordination with prosecutors results in policing deserts and procedural vulnerabilities where crimes persist despite the PNP's strategic intent.

To address these systemic gaps, the implementation of a Sustainable Crime Prevention Framework serves as the study's primary practical output, providing a comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategy. This framework shifts law enforcement from reactive responses to proactive prevention by directly targeting the underlying social and situational drivers of crime. By prioritizing target hardening in geographical hotspots, bridging cultural barriers through anonymous reporting, and harmonizing inter-agency legal support, the framework ensures a more resilient and legitimate security environment for Albay Province.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of this study offer significant insights for translational research, aiming to bridge the gap between academic conclusions and the practical application of law enforcement strategies in Albay. Specifically, the identified challenges and socio-economic drivers can be directly translated into a sustainable crime prevention framework designed to lower the prevalence of the 8 Focus Crimes. Specifically, the research converts insights on socioeconomic drivers and logistical constraints into actionable policies, such target hardening in geographical hotspots and harmonized inter-agency legal coordination. Finally, this translational approach ensures that scholarly data is converted into a high-impact blueprint for maintaining public safety and dismantling the structural cycles of recidivism within the province.

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