

# **A Study on the Lived Experiences of Bagong Silang Residents towards Philippine National Police (PNP) on their Perceived Safety from 2018 to 2024**

**Irish Stephanie C. Macanang**  
**San Beda University- Department of Political Science**

## **ABSTRACT**

Known to be one of the hotspots during the War on Drugs, the harsh conditions of Bagong Silang became a critical site for examining how residents internalize and respond to law enforcement. While current research on safety predominantly focuses on quantitative approach, the study explores the lived experiences of the residents in Bagong Silang concerning their encounters and perceived safety with the Philippine National Police (PNP) performance and efforts in safety as well as the administration's policies in peace and order from 2018 to 2024. Drawing from the grounded qualitative narratives of 15 participants, it reveals that perceptions of safety remain highly shaped by social cohesion across Class A and long-term residents wherein communal intimacy and the culture of *pakikisama* foster a sense of collective security in the area. Moreover, it suggests that safety is rooted not solely in the success of crime reduction but in the continued recognition of PNP's mandate "to serve and protect". Through the lens of procedural justice theory, the legitimacy of police presence is reinforced among the aged 38-47 even amid inadequacies and extrajudicial killings associated during the previous administration. This reflects a desensitization to violence, considering it as justified enforcement in the name of order. Notably, respondents aged 19 to 22 articulated ethical concerns about police misconduct and the apparent lack of accountability within the Philippine National Police (PNP). Thus, this paper underscores the imperative to prioritize safety in ways that are just and effective to the complexities of lived realities.

**Keywords:** Perceived Safety, War on Drugs, Pakikisama, PNP, Communal Intimacy, Anti-crime Policies

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Public safety constitutes a core obligation of law enforcement agencies as part of their mandate in public service to safeguard citizens from the ills of society. As the primary security agents, police's efforts and services in crime reduction take a role in shaping public's perception of safety. In 2016, the extrajudicial killings and police impunity under the Duterte administration drove a wedge with many citizens fearing the very authorities tasked with protecting them.<sup>1</sup> Although Duterte's "War on Drugs" gained traction for its apparent effectiveness in reducing crime, it cast doubt on the legitimacy of the police and highlighted the administration's role in endorsing state violence. With the transition to a new administration, President Marcos distanced himself from his predecessor's harsh tactics, directing the Philippine National Police (PNP) to intensify crime-fighting efforts through a "bloodless" initiative. Still, extrajudicial killings persist with an average number of deaths per day remaining steady at 0.8 to 0.9.<sup>2</sup> This continuity signals that the legacy of Duterte's stringent anti-crime tactics remains potent, shaping the current political and law enforcement climate. It is crucial to assess the ongoing effects of these policies on residents' current perception of safety, especially in communities that have historically borne the brunt of such practices.

The enforcement of harsh anti-crime policies is commonly observed in impoverished neighborhoods and areas with high population density as these regions typically experience higher crime rates.<sup>3</sup> Barangay 176, also referred to as Bagong Silang, has endured the devastating effect of Duterte's drug war. With 373 drug-related deaths, it was labeled the "ground zero" due to its high profile cases.<sup>4</sup> Bagong Silang was created under Marcos Sr.'s "New Society" program to accommodate displaced and marginalized populations.<sup>5</sup> Its reputation as a relocation site fuels widespread crime and gang violence as it houses individuals grappling with poverty and unemployment. This brings up a concern about how residents perceive their safety in relation to police encounters in areas where crime is a normalized aspect of daily life. Existing studies have largely concentrated on the broad effects of Duterte's anti-crime policies. Residents are highly traumatized as a result of frequent executions and arbitrary arrests. In Steffen Bo Jensen and Karl Hapal (2022) ethnographic work, they argue that the close-knit nature of the area creates a paradox called "communal intimacy" where relationship between residents and authority is weaponized.<sup>6</sup> Existing social hierarchies are exploited to identify and target individuals for extrajudicial killing through collaboration with police and other authorities. This contributes to the intensified fear of crime and/or victimization which reveals the gap in understanding how these concepts and policies continue under Marcos Jr., particularly in urban communities with a history of tension and where safety may be further compromised.

---

<sup>1</sup> Grace Medriano and Eric Awi. "Politics of 'I Will': Penal Populism of Duterte's War on Drugs, Political Polarization, and the Perceptions of the Working Class."

<sup>2</sup> Nikka Valenzuela, "Under Marcos, the Philippines Drug War Drags On," 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Celia Sanidad-Leones, "The Current Situation of Crime Associated with Urbanization: Problems Experiences and Countermeasures Initiated in the Philippines," 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Palatino "Tokhang in North Caloocan: Weaponizing Local Governance, Social Disarticulation, and Community Resistance - Violence, Human Rights, and Democracy in the Philippines." 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Steffen Bo Jensen and Karl Hapal, *Communal Intimacy and the Violence of Politics*, 2-3.

<sup>6</sup> Jensen and Hapal. 145.

Although securitization and extrajudicial killings are legitimized as necessary for improving public safety, perceived safety is a multifaceted concept that requires qualitative assessment as quantitative data cannot fully reflect the complexities of social reality.<sup>7</sup> Thus, this study aims to explore these discrepancies and examine how residents of Bagong Silang perceive PNP's effort in maintaining peace and order, mainly the factors that shape their perception of safety during the heights of War on Drugs until the current Marcos Jr. administration. It offers substantial insights on the function of institutions and basis to evaluate current systems to enhance policing in the context of public service. As such, increasing perceived safety with law enforcement should be just as important as decreasing crime rates.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Despite Marcos Jr.'s efforts to distance himself by asserting that his administration's approach on the matter is "bloodless", the remnants of Duterte's zero-tolerance policing in crime reduction remains apparent. Negative perceptions of public safety have significant political consequences, with the police often blamed for rising crime and declined in perceived safety. The latter is not only influenced by direct interactions with the police but also by citizens' interpretations and experiences of policies.

This paper aims to explore the lived experience of the residents of Barangay Bagong Silang concerning their encounters and perceived safety with the Philippine National Police (PNP). While current research predominantly focuses on quantitative approaches, this study strives to explore the experiences and subjective perceptions of residents as it aims to analyze the factors that shape their view on safety, the PNP and the policies relating to peace and order.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Public safety represents a foundational element of law enforcement's duty within the broader context of public service. In the Philippines, the perception of safety has become increasingly fragile following past administrations anti-crime policies. It becomes susceptible to fluctuating fears and decline in satisfaction when residents feel that their essential needs remain unaddressed; a dynamic underscored by the political science concept of the social contract. However, residents may perceive such policies as justifying extrajudicial killings, viewing them as a necessary trade-off for improved overall security. This explains why people tend to overlook the issue due to their ambiguous stance on such acts.

In Nathan Quimpo's article, he emphasized *securitization* as a critical process through which political leaders transform societal issues into urgent security threats that require exceptional measures.<sup>8</sup> This process can shape public perceptions of safety as individuals may begin to view harsh policing as necessary for the protection even at the cost of civil liberties. In the Philippines, public dissatisfaction with the government's inability to ensure fundamental security has led to an increasing demand for new leaders who are committed to implementing

---

<sup>7</sup> Shreya Dubey et al., "Women's Perceived Safety in Public Places and Public Transport: A Narrative Review of Contributing Factors and Measurement Methods," 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Nathan Quimpo, Duterte's War On Drugs: The Securitization of Illegal Drugs and the Return of National Boss Rule, 141-151.

more decisive measures to enhance security.<sup>9</sup> The portrayal of drugs during the Duterte administration as a grave threat to national security has strengthened public trust in law enforcement and enhanced perceptions of safety among individuals who viewed these securitization measures as effective in restoring order and deterring criminal activities.

More so, areas are labeled as “war zones” and/or “ground zero” which reinforce the idea that heavy policing is necessary. Although this may be considered appropriate to eliminate crime, the over-policing approach can also foster a sense of insecurity among civilians as communities are perceived as threats by security actors. This resulted in the securitization of police interactions. Putra and Darwis (2022) critically examined the literature on securitization theory, arguing that government policies aimed at addressing domestic security threats often have the unintended consequence of increasing insecurity and fear among the population.<sup>10</sup> This creates a security paradox which stands in contrast to the previously discussed concept. This entails the need to evaluate residents' subjective perceptions of whether harsh anti-crime policies actually contribute to their sense of safety, especially in high-crime rate areas.

In the context of examining perceived safety during police interventions, the concept developed by Tom Tyler (1980), Procedural Justice Theory, highlights the fundamental concepts of neutrality, respect, and trust, and impartiality which links to enhancing overall sense of safety. The underlying premise of the experience with this theory is that individuals' attitudes toward law enforcement are shaped by the nature of their previous interactions with the police and the behavior exhibited by officers during those encounters.<sup>11</sup> With this, it entails that when police follow fair and transparent procedures, it can contribute to increased safety and trust even if the outcome is not in their favor.

Moreover, Jensen and Hapal (2022) introduced the concept of "communal intimacy" to analyze the paradoxical role of close-knit relationships in densely populated areas.<sup>12</sup> They argue that it fosters solidarity but also enables the exploitation of social ties and hierarchies, allowing the War on Drugs to use gossip, rumors, and community dynamics to identify and target individuals for extrajudicial killings. Through their analysis, they contend that the drug war exposes the evident class disparities within Philippine society.

---

<sup>9</sup> Nathan Quimpo, 151.

<sup>10</sup> Putra and Darwis, “The Paradoxical Security Implications of Duterte’s War on Drugs: Emergence of a Domestic Security Dilemma,” 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Darren Wheelock et al., “Disentangling the Relationship between Race and Attitudes toward the Police: Police Contact, Perceptions of Safety, and Procedural Justice, (November 23, 2018): 941–68.

<sup>12</sup> Jensen and Hapal, 59.

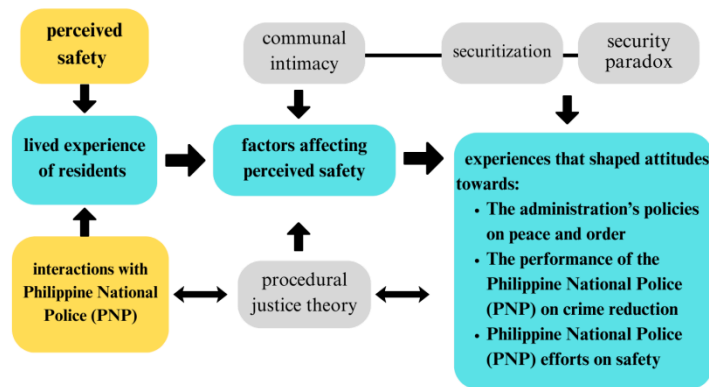


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The concepts drawn from the works of Quimpo (2017), Putra and Darwis (2022), Tyler (1980) Jensen and Hapal (2022) offer an explanation as to how police efforts become a key factor influencing perceived safety. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework, highlighting the independent and dependent variables, while also establishing the theoretical foundations discussed through which the study's objectives will be explored and analyzed.

Considering the focus on perceived safety, the lived experience of Barangay 176 residents will be the subject of the study with particular emphasis on their interactions with the Philippine National Police (PNP). This study will examine the factors that influence residents' perceptions of safety and how their experiences inform their attitudes toward the administration and law enforcement's strategies and policies aimed at crime reduction and ensuring public safety. The efforts of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in ensuring public safety have significantly shaped the lived experiences of local residents. Consequently, their interactions with law enforcement serve as the independent variable in this study as these experiences are pivotal in shaping how residents perceive and make sense of police interventions. Perceived safety serves as the dependent variable, as it is the primary outcome under investigation, influenced by various factors that may arise during the process, as well as by the theoretical frameworks of communal intimacy, procedural justice theory, security paradox and securitization theory that explain the phenomenon. These concepts will be analytically integrated since they are interconnected and collectively influence perceptions of safety, offering valuable insights into the issue being investigated.

## METHODOLOGY

### RESEARCH DESIGN

Given the focus on examining residents' perceived safety towards Philippine National Police (PNP), a qualitative methodology is deemed most appropriate for this study as it provides a nuanced exploration of the psychological and lived experiences of the respondents, which are integral to addressing the core aspects of the research problem. Qualitative research is a type of social inquiry that focuses on understanding how individuals interpret and make sense of their

experiences, offering a deeper insight into their social reality.<sup>13</sup> This methodology adopts a holistic approach to inquiry, involving substantial researcher engagement in both data collection and interpretation. The researcher acts as the primary instrument, gathering data through observations or one-on-one interviews with open-ended questions which allows for probing inquiries that can lead the interview in various directions.

As this study is endowed with an aim to explore the factors shaping the residents' views on the PNP and policies related to safety, the data gathered in the process consisted of narratives, perspectives, and personal reflections from the participants' own language. Through interviews, it enables the researcher to uncover nuanced insights into how residents interpret and respond to the PNP's policies and actions. This approach is particularly suitable given that the research seeks to analyze not just the direct experiences of the residents, but also their broader interpretations of political and policing policies. A qualitative methodology is ideal for addressing the research gap, as it allows for an inquiry of the subjective and psychological aspects of perceived safety that quantitative methods cannot fully capture.

Reflecting the locus of this study, a comparative case study is employed. Generally, a case study is a research approach that involves an extensive investigation of a contemporary phenomenon, addressing "how" or "why" questions, especially when the researcher has limited control over the events being studied.<sup>14</sup> The nature of comparative case study can be understood through the convergence of comparative and case study methodologies, wherein multiple cases are systematically examined and contrasted to uncover emergent patterns. Researchers utilize multiple case studies to develop and assess theories or to explain specific phenomena through the application of theories and causal mechanisms. It is grounded in the thorough examination of lived human experiences through on-site fieldwork, utilizing a combination of methods such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis.<sup>15</sup>

Given the focus of the study, a comparative case study will be used to examine an in-depth exploration of the specific context of police encounters between residents that significantly influence their perceptions of safety from 2018 to 2024. By investigating this specific case, it allows for comprehensive analysis of police encounters within two distinct yet consecutive political administrations— those of former President Rodrigo Duterte and President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. It seeks to understand the case from various perspectives, thereby uncovering insights that can contribute to theory development and provide a deeper understanding of real-life events that may not be captured through generalized data. The comparative aspect in this study also enables a nuanced understanding of how differing governance styles and policy emphases may influence perceived safety. Through collecting participants' viewpoints to interpret the meanings of a phenomenon from their own perspectives, the researcher "brackets" personal biases, preconceived notions, and existing knowledge while also considering the diverse "subjective experiences" that emerge during the data gathering process.<sup>16</sup> To enhance credibility of the findings, incorporating various types of data, such as

---

<sup>13</sup> Haradhan Kumar Mohajan, “Qualitative Research Methodology in Social Sciences and Related Subjects,” (March 30, 2018): p.23.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Yin, “Case study research: Design and methods (4th ed.).” 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Yanow, D, P. Schwartz-Shea, and M.J Freitas. 2025. “Case Study in Political Science.” 108–13.

<sup>16</sup> Ameer Buriro, et al., “Philosophical Underpinning and Phenomenology Approach in Social Science Research,” 2021.

official reports, media coverage and secondary literatures, are utilized to ensure a more balanced and comprehensive account of lived experiences of the residents under both administrations. Thus, gathering their lived experiences can provide understanding on the case and the factors that shape their attitudes towards law enforcement's policies and the administration itself.

## **DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

In obtaining the respondents' lived experience, Yin (2014) identifies sources of evidence in a case study which includes interviews and observations.<sup>17</sup> In case study design, conducting interviews by asking "how" and "why" questions allows participants to share their experiences in their own words. One-on-one interviews offer participants the opportunity to express their emotions, biases, views, aspirations, and attitudes toward various phenomena and help uncover how people attribute meaning to their social experience.<sup>18</sup> As such, it offers a comprehensive understanding of unexplored circumstances that cannot be fully explained by pre-established hypotheses or the relationships between specific variables.

To address the problem, a one-on-one interview will be utilized to uncover the lived experiences of the residents with their encounters with PNP from 2018-2024. This personal focus unveils how each participant interprets and attributes meaning to their experiences that shed light on the factors that influence their perceived safety. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, residents are likely to feel more at ease expressing their genuine concerns in this private setting. Interviews provide an appropriate environment for discussing potentially sensitive and personal matters to minimize the risk of harm and ensure that responses are not biased or influenced by others. This approach is also well-suited for asking follow-up questions, allowing participants to elaborate on their feelings regarding specific issues and enabling a deeper exploration of these topics in their own language.<sup>19</sup>

To facilitate the execution of the study, the researcher initially constructed self-made questions given the limited and absence of prior studies directly related to perceived safety. These questions were meticulously formulated from previous studies that closely aligned with the research problem, ensuring that the instrument was both contextually appropriate and methodologically accurate. Most importantly, the data collection process prioritized availability and confidentiality, and ensured that consent forms were distributed and signed prior to the interview. The session will be divided into two parts: the first part will focus on the residents' overall perceived safety over a specific period (2018-2024), while the second part will include more specific questions about the factors that influence their feeling of safety towards the police, PNP's performance and efforts, and administration's policies on peace, order, and crime reduction. All of which align with both the main and sub-research questions of the thesis. Since the study employs a comparative case study, it necessitates the application of triangulation to ensure credibility as the complexity of analyzing multiple cases across different political contexts required validation through diverse data sources and methodological approaches. Figure 2 shows the triangulation procedure that includes integrating data from the in-depth interviews, document analysis and secondary literature review. By cross-verifying findings from these diverse sources,

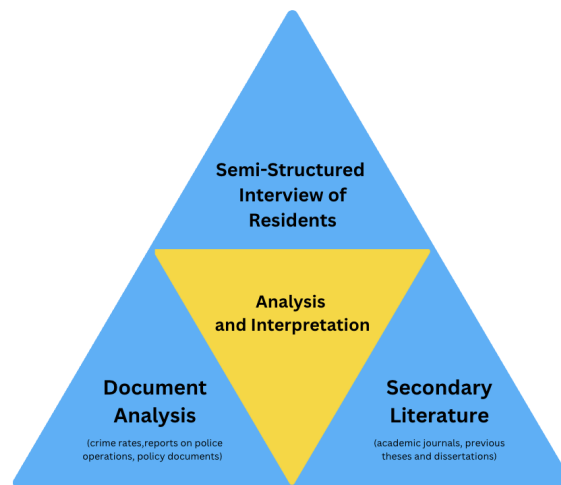
---

<sup>17</sup> Robert Yin. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Karen Dunwoodie, Luke Macaulay, and Alexander Newman, "Qualitative Interviewing in the Field of Work and Organisational Psychology: Benefits, Challenges and Guidelines for Researchers and Reviewers."

<sup>19</sup> Dunwoodie et al.

it ensures that observed patterns in police encounters are not the product of isolated data points but reflect broader trends across different contexts and perspectives.



*Figure 2. Triangulation*

## **DATA ANALYSIS METHOD**

Following the data collection process, the study advanced to a rigorous analysis of the acquired information to synthesize insights and derive well-founded conclusions. This study adopts a thematic analysis to capture the overarching themes that will emerge from the data. In regard to this thesis, thematic analysis allows for the systematic identification and analysis of recurring themes or codes that emerge from these narratives. In qualitative data analysis, “clustering” involves grouping similar items into categories, often emerging from the data rather than pre-existing classes.<sup>20</sup> As the analysis progresses, patterns are identified which allows themes to be consolidated into broader categories or constructs. This process of merging themes, similar to data reduction techniques like factor or cluster analysis, simplifies the summarization of research findings.

This study will adhere to the thematic analysis process specified by Braune and Clarke: (1) familiarizing with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) identifying potential themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) compiling the final report.<sup>21</sup>

## **PARTICIPANTS**

The respondents form another central foundation of a thesis as they supply the primary data that underpins the research. Their experiences and perspectives are integral to generating meaningful insights and drawing conclusions that address the research questions. This study will

---

<sup>20</sup> David E McNabb, *Research Methods for Political Science* Second Edition, 290.

<sup>21</sup> Saraswati Dawadi, “Thematic Analysis Approach: A Step by Step Guide for ELT Research Practitioners,” no. 1-2 (2020): 62–71.

use a purposive sampling technique that chooses participants based on the criteria set by the researcher. In pursuit of exploring the factors that shaped residents' perceived safety towards the police, the data will emanate from the residents of Barangay 176 with police encounters experience. These police encounters entail direct interactions with PNP, such as being questioned by the police, experiencing first hand exposure to police operations, and observing police presence within their area. Additionally, participants must have lived in the barangay for more than seven years. This is because long-term residents offer a more profound understanding of the community's dynamics and are more likely to have observed shifts in policing and policy changes, making their insights invaluable for understanding the evolution of public safety with the PNP. This is also essential as the study will examine the experiences spanning from 2018 to 2024, a period that encompasses transition between different administrations. Participants must be 18 years old and above. This is due to the fact that younger participants may lack the necessary context to fully grasp the social and political dynamics from 2018, which is critical for the objectives of this study. More so, participants will be selected and divided according to their economic classifications to ensure a broad range of perspectives on the topic being examined. Table 1 below outlines the income grouping that will be used in this study, derived from data provided by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS).<sup>22</sup>

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>RANGE OF MONTHLY FAMILY INCOME</b>
Class A (Poor)	Less than Php 10,957
Class B (Low Income)	Between Php 9,520 to Php 21,194
Class C (Lower Middle Class)	Between ₱21,194 to ₱43,828
Class D (Middle Class)	Between ₱43,828 to ₱76,669
Class E (Upper Middle Income)	Between ₱76,669 to ₱131,484
Class F (High Income)	Between ₱131,484 to ₱219,140
Class G (Rich)	At least ₱219,140 and up

*Table 1. Income Bracket*

The study will include fifteen (15) participants from varying socioeconomic backgrounds to provide a more in-depth and comprehensive exploration of perceived safety. This selection is methodologically sound based on key factors such as the nature of the research design, scope of the study, and complexity of the topic. As emphasized by Kindsiko and Politimae (2019), the required number of respondents depends on the sample's diversity.<sup>23</sup> Since this study involves

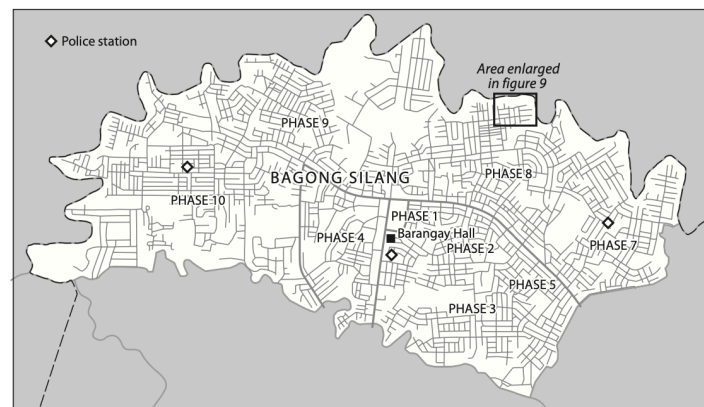
<sup>22</sup> Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) Income Classes for an Average Household of Five. <https://www.pids.gov.ph/details/news/in-the-news/who-are-the-middle-class-in-the-philippines>.

<sup>23</sup> Wasihun Bezabih Bekele and Fikire Yohanes Ago, "Sample Size for Interview in Qualitative Research in Social Sciences: A Guide to Novice Researchers," p.46.

participants from a single barangay with shared cultural and social backgrounds, a sample size of 15 is sufficient to reach data saturation despite some variation in age and socio-economic status. The inclusion of a range of genders are also noted to ensure that all perceptions are represented and to mitigate gender bias. The relatively small sample size is appropriate for an in-depth case study given the limited time and it is already deemed suitable in gaining rich narratives for providing meaningful data.

## RESEARCH LOCALE

Barangay 176 or Bagong Silang is located in the Northern Part of Caloocan City. In 1971, President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. signed Presidential Decree 843 that established a 575.5-hectare Resettlement Project that houses informal settlers in the area.<sup>24</sup> Situated at the edge of the metropolitan area, Bagong Silang primarily served as the frontier between the New People's Army (NPA) and the government.<sup>25</sup> According to the 2020 census, it is considered the most populated barangay in the country with 261,739 residents.<sup>26</sup> This shows that the population grew at an annual rate of 1.27%, reflecting an increase of 15,214 individuals from the 2015 population of 246,515. Following the initial years of chaos, the area eventually stabilized into its current state: rife with criminality, poverty and growing population. Although Caloocan recorded fewer drug-related killings (373) than Manila (463) and Quezon City (400) as of June 2018, it gained notoriety as the "ground zero" of Tokhang due to high-profile cases such as the deaths of Kian Delos Santos, Jee Ick Joo, and Carl Arnaiz, which provoked national outrage and led to the temporary suspension of the campaign.<sup>27</sup> It yielded a disproportionately high number of drug surrenderers, reflecting a more aggressive local police approach.



*Figure 3 . Map of Bagong Silang<sup>28</sup>*

Given the fact that it is vastly populated, President Marcos Jr. signed the Republic Act No. 11993 on April 3, 2024 that grants the division of Bagong Silang in six (6) different barangays named 176-A, 176-B, 176-C, 176-D, 176-E, and 176-F. According to the certificate of

<sup>24</sup> Platino, "Tokhang in North Caloocan: Weaponizing Local Governance, Social Disarticulation, and Community Resistance".

<sup>25</sup> Jensen and Hapal, 25.

<sup>26</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, "National Capital Region (NCR): Total Population by Province, City, Municipality, and Barangay," Census of Population (2020).

<sup>27</sup> Raymond Palatino, "Tokhang in North Caloocan: Weaponizing Local Governance, Social Disarticulation, and Community Resistance - Violence, Human Rights, and Democracy in the Philippines."

<sup>28</sup>Jensen and Hapal, 21.

canvass released by Commission on Elections (COMELEC) Chairman George Garcia, 22,854 residents voted in favor of the division, while 2,584 opposed it.<sup>29</sup> The Barangay Plebiscite Board of Canvassers, thus, officially declared the measure as ratified and approved.<sup>30</sup> As previously mentioned, this study will continue to draw data from Barangay Bagong Silang as a whole, rather than from the newly partitioned entities, as the research was already in progress before the division took place.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Public safety is the moral heartbeat of the political order. It gives substance to the promise of the police to secure and protect people from harm as mandated by the constitution. In areas that are active sites of survival and political structure, the residents of Bagong Silang show how policies and policing made in the name of order can breed objective indicators of safety. This thesis explores the lives of experiences of residents of Bagong Silang, focusing on their encounters with the Philippine National Police, the real-world impact of administration policies from 2018-2024, and the performance of PNP concerning perceived safety.

The findings foreground the resident's interaction with the PNP, demonstrating how it informs their understanding of safety amid changing policing efforts. Participants recounted police encounters, especially during the peak of Duterte's War on Drugs, wherein they were stopped and asked for identification. These interactions lead to widespread anxiety due to the psychological burden stemming not only from direct police actions but from the normalization of surveillance and strict enforcement. Several participants shared secondhand accounts where they witnessed extrajudicial killings within their community or among relatives. Others described their interactions with the police as nonviolent and routine. Despite their seemingly innocuous nature, residents perceived such encounters as a part of larger architecture of control where PNP functioned as a guardian of public safety and agent of enforcement.

Marked by a high prevalence of criminality and a disorderly community, this environment influences how residents interpret safety with physical, social, and institutions playing a vital role in shaping these perceptions. Based on the data, adequate street lighting and surveillance systems give importance to their function as deterrents of crime. The physical characteristics of their neighborhood can affect perceived safety where the absence of disorder signals increased public safety. Variations in the perception of environmental risks were evident across both age and gender lines where female participants tended to articulate fear and anxiety in response to physically insecure areas. Younger respondents, particularly those aged 18-19 share similar sentiments especially when traversing unsafe environments en route to school. On the other hand, social cohesion emerged as another vital component of safety. The communal intimacy, shared norms, familiarity and collective sense of belonging becomes a source of emotional psychological safety as echoed in Jensen and Hapal (2022) ethnographic work. Due to the normalization of the harsh reality in their area, the practice of *pakikisama* is embraced, serving as an important social currency essential for their safety. Those from Class A and B who

---

<sup>29</sup> In a plebiscite held on August 31, a majority of the 22,000 registered voters in Barangay Bagong Silang, Caloocan City, approved the division of the barangay into six independent units.

<sup>30</sup> Giselle Ombay, "Caloocan Voters Divide PH's Most Populated Barangay into 6 Villages," GMA News Online, September 1, 2024.

have resided in the area for more than 25 years expressed stronger sentiments of this factor. Long-term residents appear to foster deeper familiarity, which contribute to more cohesive neighborhood dynamics amidst issues related to urban poverty.

Another important factor that emerged is the absence of visible threats that leads residents to a state of complacency. This subjective feeling of safety is created by the perceived low probability of harm. This false sense of security, however, may be disrupted by sudden spikes in crime. Lastly, police visibility was consistently considered as the most influential in enhancing perceived safety since the presence of uniformed officers serves as a symbolic function and legitimate safety actors in protecting the community from threats. However, contrasting sentiments emerged among male participants aged 18 to 27 with concerns around issues of discrimination and selective enforcement. Residents whose encounters with police did not align with their expectations of protection often viewed the police as ineffective in perceived safety. These findings corroborate existing articles outlined in which underscores that safety is not monolithic but a complex interplay between physical conditions, social relations and symbolic representation of authority.

Public safety in Bagong Silang has been also shaped by the community's everyday realities with evolving modes of policing and shifting state policies between 2018 to 2024. Drawing from their lived realities, it becomes clear that resident's perceived safety are deeply tied to the nature of administrative governance and its approach to crime control. Despite its harsh and violent approach, the majority of the residents explicitly reinforced a preference for the former administration's War on Drugs due to its perceived effectiveness in reducing crime and reestablishing public order. This is often justified through recollections of pre-intervention conditions in Bagong Silang, which residents described as chaotic and marked by widespread petty crimes and drug-related activities. This suggests that the implementation of Duterte's War on Drugs does not engender the typical climate of fear which runs counter to Putra and Darwis (2022) "security paradox". Instead, this policy cultivated a culture of discipline under fear. The threat of punitive actions makes individuals to either withdraw or alter their behavior to evade state surveillance. The concept of Ciochinni's "punitive paternalism" is articulated in this finding wherein fear functions as both regulatory mechanism and social tool that legitimize coercive policing. For instance, the normalization of state violence as seen in War on Drugs is framed by residents under Class A as a means of community cleansing driven by apathy toward Tokhang victims. Resident's reveal a pronounced desensitization to extrajudicial killings, reflecting a psychological distancing from the moral gravity of these deaths. Nevertheless, persistent concerns about victimization and risk of collateral damage are present due to the unpredictability of police operations during the period. This is further reflected across age cohorts, demonstrating that both younger and older generations express ethical dissonance as the pursuit of harsh policy conflicts with fundamental human rights and moral principles. With the area now under a "bloodless" initiative, killings continue to occur; however, these are not attributed to Tokhang but to the reemergence of crime, as reported in media and local accounts. The obtained data emphasized that the current public safety approach is perceived less effective and inadequate compared to 2018, particularly as safety appears to be deprioritized in favor of diplomatic efforts under the Marcos Jr. administration. Feelings of disillusionment and uncertainty with the police are likewise affirmed by the residents, whose sense of safety has been undermined by crime resurgence.

Against the backdrop of evolving policies, understanding the PNP's performance in crime reduction becomes essential in assessing how these changes influence resident's perceived safety. As reiterated, Duterte's "license to kill" mandate resulted in a more aggressive and proactive police approach that has been shown to yield significant effectiveness in reducing criminal activity and deterring unlawful conduct within the community. The tangible outcome of these performances highlights the PNP's success in fulfilling its institutional role and enhancing perceived safety as seen in reported crime statistics. The procedural justice was reframed through the lens of order and deterrence. This is also reinforced by the resident's lack of reports regarding mistaken identity, leading to the view that police operations are conducted in a fair and justifiable manner. Contrary to existing literature that emphasizes residents' fear of police due to trauma and instances of impunity, the findings suggest that it contributes to a sense of safety. Although concerns about selective policing "*tamang hinala*" and discriminatory profiling persists. These are particularly evident among younger respondents aged 19 to 22 and female respondents, who are more likely to articulate experiences of perceived bias and unequal treatment during the period.

The transition to a new administration has been marked by an alteration towards a more laxer and passive approach to policing, which has engendered perceptions among residents of diminished efficacy and disengagement. This ineffectiveness of police performance is particularly salient across Classes A and B in light of the reported resurgence of killings and drug-related activities within the area. However, crime statistics stand in contrast with these narratives as the Philippine National Police (PNP) emphasize a significant decline in crime and suggest improvements in public safety under recent law enforcement strategies. Consequently, the data indicates ambivalence towards PNP and reduced sense of safety, reflecting Mitchell's (2004) argument that the police often become the focal point of public accountability due to negative perception of safety and increased crime rate.

Finally, perceived safety and sentiments towards PNP's efforts across the 38-47 age bracket exhibits that safety remains stable, largely grounded in their acknowledgement in the institution's constitutional mandate "to serve and protect". Evidenced from the analysis, residents understand that police operations are seen as adherence to protocols dictated by higher authorities. The "Okay lang" sentiments from the residents is further elucidated with the insights of Jensen and Hapal (2022) who argue that such expression signifies resignation, adaptation to systemic realities or internalization of state discourses on order and discipline. In fact, residents also recognize the collaborative efforts between police, barangay officials and purok leaders which serve as clear evidence that police continue to prioritize and actively engage in ensuring community safety.

On the contrary, residents belonging to Classes A and B conveyed persistent unease about the effectiveness of police efforts between 2018 and 2024, questioning the consistency and prioritization of crime prevention efforts. Respondents aged 19 to 22, in particular, expressed ethical concerns related to police misconduct and lack of accountability, shaped by both personal encounters and media portrayals of systemic impunity and corruption within the Philippine National Police (PNP). Still, a sense of nostalgia and preference for stringent policing persists,

reflecting the resident's appreciation for the urgent efforts to transform a previously disorderly and dangerous area into a safer and peaceful community.

## CONCLUSION

The evolving paradigms of policies and policy emphasized the contingent nature and obligation of Philippine National Police (PNP) in cultivating public safety. The dialectics emerging from the lived experiences of Bagong Silang residents reveal that police performance, efforts and policies is not solely reducible to the metrics of crime reduction rather it is situated within a broader socio-cultural framework shaped by procedural fairness and communal intimacy. The quest for an equitable balance necessitates a critical reflection on how policies not only govern the conduct of law enforcement but also shape the very meanings of safety and justice within a community entangled with desensitization to violence.

The discursive accounts expose the explicit comparison between the Duterte and Marcos Jr administration in assessing their perceived safety from 2018-2024. The continued preference for a harsh and stringent tactic during the War on Drugs manifested not only a pragmatic orientation towards security and safety but a deeper normalization to violence from Class A and B as an accepted and justifiable tactic of policing. This may be attributed to their long-term residence of 31 to 40 years, which has likely contributed to their familiarity with and adaptation to the local environment. The apathy and the sense of authoritarian nostalgia in Bagong Silang due to inadequacy and reports of crime resurgence signals a form of moral compromise where the promise of order outweighs concerns over rights and due process. Perhaps this sentiment can be understood as a response deeply rooted in the normalization of the area's harsh and disorderly reality and an urgent desire to eradicate addicts and criminals. In fact, dehumanization of these groups has been entrenched across Class A residents calling their lives as "*patapon*" and "*salot sa lipunan*". This language reflects a deep desensitization to extrajudicial killings where it blurs empathy and signals a deviation from procedural justice to punitive authoritarianism. However, residents within the age brackets of 18-27 and those aged 58 and above express pronounced concerns regarding extrajudicial killings. Younger individuals in the 18-27 group may be particularly sensitive to these issues due to their heightened awareness of human rights and exposure to social and digital media that highlight such abuses. Meanwhile, older residents, aged 58 and above, often carry lived experiences and historical perspectives that make them wary of state violence and the potential erosion of legal protections. Together, these age groups underscore a collective apprehension about the consequences of aggressive policing tactics, reflecting broader anxieties about justice, accountability, and the protection of fundamental human rights within their community.

Additionally, a recurring yet fragile sentiment of "okay lang" towards safety and PNP appears to be continually unfolding. This fragile acquiescence entails a negotiated sense of safety that remains vulnerable to shifts in everyday realities. Among the obtained data, their perception of safety is largely anchored in a form of passive normalcy. If safety is understood primarily through personal absence of harm and risk, then its perceived safety is inherently unstable.

All things considered, perceived safety is deeply intertwined with enforcement style, authority, and social order impact. Concerns regarding policy and police conduct vary across

demographic lines. This perspective opens up ethical and political questions about what it means to feel safe, who is granted that feeling, and at cost. One thing remains clear that public safety should always be prioritized. In communities where perception of safety is shaped by lived experiences and fluctuating crime patterns, the necessity for sustained and proactive safety efforts cannot be overstated. The grassroots mechanism of collaborating with barangay officials serve as a critical mediator of safety, especially as the threat of crime resurgence looms prior. As expressed by a participant, the responsibility to maintain public safety does not depend on the resident but instead be upheld by PNP and the administration, whose roles as public servants entail active engagement and trust-building with the communities they serve. Without such mutual connection and accountability with inefficiency and abuse, safety may falter. This acceptance risks overreaching fundamental human rights as the desire for crime reduction can eclipse critical awareness, leading communities to embrace authoritarian practice without fully noticing its ethical and democratic implication. With the crime reportedly resurging and safety no longer perceived as a central priority of the current administration it seems to make people fear about their lives in the country in the long run.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

“Bagong Silang | Philippine Statistics Authority | Republic of the Philippines.” 2024. Psa.gov.ph. October 18, 2024. <https://psa.gov.ph/classification/psgc/brgydetail/1380500002>.

Basco-Galangco, RB, and D.L. Chinayo. 2022. “View of the State of Police Legitimacy through the People’s Trust and Satisfaction in the Performance of the Police of Their Duties.” E-Palli.com. 2022.

Bekele, Wasihun Bezabih, and Fikire Yohanes Ago. “Sample Size for Interview in Qualitative Research in Social Sciences: A Guide to Novice Researchers.” *Research in Educational Policy and Management* 4, no. 1 (September 18, 2022): 42–50.

Borovec, Krunoslav, Iva Balgač, and Irena Mraović. 2019. “Police Visibility as an Influencing Factor on Citizens’ Perception of Safety.”

Bouckaert, Peter. 2017. “License to Kill.” Human Rights Watch. March 2, 2017.

Buenaventura, Tomas, and Roudabeh Kishi. 2021. “The Drug War Rages on in the Philippines: New Data on the Civilian Toll, State Responsibility, and Shifting Geographies of Violence.” ACLED. November 18, 2021.

Buriro, Ameer, Noraida Ednut, and Zohra Khatoon. 2021. “Philosophical Underpinning and Phenomenology Approach in Social Science Research.” *Asia-Pacific - Annual Research Journal of Far East & South East Asia* 38 (February): 237–54. <https://doi.org/10.47781/asia-pacific.vol38.iss0.2526>.

Butina, Michelle. 2015. “A Narrative Approach to Qualitative Inquiry.” *American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science* 28 (3): 190–96. <https://doi.org/10.29074/ascls.28.3.190>.

Cimene, Francis Thaise, Ma Eliza Santander, Mary Ann Telen, and Lailyne Onyot. 2022. "A 2022 Community Engagement Satisfaction Survey on Safety and Security, Respect and Trust in the Philippine National Police Region X." *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)* 5 (4): 128–35.

Ciocchini, Pablo Leandro. 2024. "The Neocolonial Logics Underpinning the 'War on Drugs' in the Philippines." *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* 14 (1): 9–32. <https://doi.org/10.35295/osls.iisl.1677>.

CMFR. "On the Supposed Gains of Duterte's 'War on Drugs': Did Bloody Policy Bring down Crime Rate? | CMFR." CMFR, September 17, 2022. <https://cmfr-phil.org/in-context/for-the-record-in-context/on-the-supposed-gains-of-dutertes-war-on-drugs-did-bloody-policy-bring-down-crime-rate-2/>.

Curato, Nicole. 2017. *A Duterte Reader*. Cornell University Press.

Czech, Franciszek. 2022. "Between Legitimation and Support of Rodrigo Duterte. Understanding Enduring Popularity of the President of the Philippines." *Polish Sociological Review* 218 (2): 208–24. <https://doi.org/10.26412/psr218.04>.

Debbaut, Steven, and Sofie De Kimpe. 2023. "Police Legitimacy and Culture Revisited through the Lens of Self-Legitimacy." *Policing and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080//10439463.2023.2183955>.

Dubey, Shreya, Ajay Bailey, and Jinwoo Brian Lee. 2024. "Women's Perceived Safety in Public Places and Public Transport: A Narrative Review of Contributing Factors and Measurement Methods." *Cities* 156 (November): 105534–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2024.105534>.

Etopio, Aubrey, and Emily Berthelot. 2022. "Defining and Measuring Fear of Crime: A New Validated Scale Created from Emotion Theory, Qualitative Interviews, and Factor Analyses." *Criminology Criminal Justice Law & Society* 23 (1): 46–67. <https://doi.org/10.54555/ccjls.4234.34104>.

Flores, Helen. "DILG: Crime Rate Lower under President Marcos Compared to Duterte." *Philstar.com*, April 26, 2024. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/27/2350822/dilg-crime-rate-lower-under-president-marcos-compared-duterte>.

Frechette, Julie, Vasiliki Bitzas, Monique Aubry, Kelley Kilpatrick, and Mélanie Lavoie-Tremblay. 2020. "Capturing Lived Experience: Methodological Considerations for Interpretive Phenomenological Inquiry." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 19 (January): 160940692090725-160940692090725. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920907254>.

Fusch, Patricia, Gene Fusch, and Lawrence Ness. "Denzin's Paradigm Shift: Revisiting Triangulation in Qualitative Research." *Journal of Social Change* 10, no. 1 (2018): 19–32. <https://doi.org/10.5590/JOSC.2018.10.1.02>.

Jensen, Steffen Bo, and Karl Hapal. 2022. *Communal Intimacy and the Violence of Politics*. Cornell University Press.

Kattouw, Iris . 2018. “Philippines’ War on Drugs: The Impact of Duterte’s War on Drugs on the Perceived Safety of Filipino Inhabitants and the Impact on the Regime’s Legitimacy .”

Krueger, Richard. 2002. “Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews.”

McNabb, David E. 2015. *Research Methods for Political Science*. Routledge EBooks. Informa. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315701141>.

Medriano, Macxine Grace P., and Eric N. Awi. 2022. “Politics of ‘I Will’: Penal Populism of Duterte’s War on Drugs, Political Polarization, and the Perceptions of the Working Class.” *ASR Chiang Mai University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.12982/cmujasr.2022.007>.

Mitchell, Alvin. 2024. “Determinants of Safety in Urban and Suburban Areas on JSTOR.” *Jstor.org*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/43496821>.

Nalla, Mahesk , and Anna Gurinskaya. 2022. “Police Legitimacy or Risk-Avoidance: What Makes People Feel Safe?” *Journal of Crime and Justice*.

Ochoa, Danielle P, and Michelle G Ong. 2022. “Negotiated Harms in Moralized Policies: The Case of Duterte’s War on Drugs.” *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 10 (2): 554–69. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.5623>.

Ombay, Giselle. “Caloocan Voters Divide PH’s Most Populated Barangay into 6 Villages.” *GMA News Online*, 1 Sept. 2024, [www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/metro/918915/caloocon-voters-divide-ph-s-most-populated-barangay-into-6-villages/story/](http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/metro/918915/caloocon-voters-divide-ph-s-most-populated-barangay-into-6-villages/story/). Accessed 10 Feb. 2025.

Palatino, Raymond. 2019. “Tokhang in North Caloocan: Weaponizing Local Governance, Social Disarticulation, and Community Resistance.” *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 34 (1-2): 15–42.

Patalinghug, Mark Erana, John Dexter, Ronilo Seronio Bustamante, Katreen Glimada Melecio, Junrey Maglangit Mangubat, and Haidee Fuentes Patalinghug. 2023. “Correlates of Crime Prevention and Perception of Safety Using the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behavior (KAB) Model.” *Pertanika Journal of Social Science & Humanities* 31 (2): 607–35. <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.31.2.09>.

Pids.gov.ph. “Who Are the Middle Class in the Philippines?,” 2019. <https://www.pids.gov.ph/details/news/in-the-news/who-are-the-middle-class-in-the-philippines>. “Poverty Archives.” 2024. National Economic and Development Authority. August 13, 2024. <https://neda.gov.ph/poverty/>.

Putra, Bama Andika, and Darwis. 2022. "The Paradoxical Security Implications of Duterte's War on Drugs: Emergence of a Domestic Security Dilemma." *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies* 4 (3): 01–7. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jhsss.2022.4.3.1>.

Rufino, Rodne, and Marnie Besas. 2024. "The Mediating Effect of Community Safety on the Relationship between the Crime Prevention and Resident's Satisfaction." *Psych Educ* 2024 (4): 436–54. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13375772>.

Sanidad-Leones, Celia. 2010. "The Current Situation of Crime Associated with Urbanization: Problems Experiences and Countermeasures Initiated in the Philippines."

Sun, Ivan Y, and Ruth A Triplett. 2008. "Differential Perceptions of Neighborhood Problems by Police and Residents." *Policing an International Journal* 31 (3): 435–55. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13639510810895795>.

Talamayan, Fernan. 2024. "The Durability of Populism and Authoritarian Practices in Duterte's Philippines." *Asia Review* 14 (1): 237–74.

Ungria, Bong De. "SEC Socio Economic Classes in the Philippines ABCDE: Where Are You? BiZ CoACH." BiZ CoACH | Atomic Transformation with ZYX Thinking, January 12, 2023. <https://bongdeungria.com/sec-socio-economic-classes-in-the-philippines-abcde-where-are-you/>.

Valenzuela, Nikka. 2024. "Under Marcos, the Philippines Drug War Drags On." Dw.com.

Deutsche Welle. March 21, 2024. <https://www.dw.com/en/philippines-drug-war-what-changed-under-president-marcos/a-68635719>.

Warburg, Anna Bræmer, and Steffen Jensen. 2018. "Policing the War on Drugs and the Transformation of Urban Space in Manila." *Environment and Planning D Society and Space* 38 (3): 399–416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775818817299>.

Wheelock, Darren, Meghan S Stroshine, and Michael O'Hear. "Disentangling the Relationship between Race and Attitudes toward the Police: Police Contact, Perceptions of Safety, and Procedural Justice." *Crime & Delinquency* 65, no. 7 (November 23, 2018): 941–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128718811928>.

Worden, Robert, and Sarah McLean. 2017. "Police Legitimacy from Mirage of Police Reform: Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy on JSTOR." *Jstor.org*. <https://doi.org/10.1525/j.ctt1w8h1r1.7>.