

## Sustaining Service: An Appreciative Inquiry into Exemplary Long Term Law Enforcement Career

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### ABSTRACT

In law enforcement, retirement frequently signifies the change from a career of committed service to a much-deserved moment of rest and contemplation. The study aimed to understand the factors that contribute to the success and longevity of law enforcement professionals with exemplary careers. The study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically appreciative inquiry (AI), conducted in a city within the province of Misamis Occidental, located in northern Mindanao, Philippines. Participants included nine retired uniform personnel from the Philippine National Police, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and Bureau of Fire Protection. Data collection relied on an interview guide questionnaire as the primary instrument for gathering relevant study data. There were four (4) themes in the study, namely Commitment to Service and Upholding the Law, Personal Strengths and Professional Goals, Integrating Experiences into Training Programs, Communication, Empathy, and Community Engagement. The findings highlighted that the retired officers attributed their career longevity to personal resilience, adaptability, and a clear sense of professional purpose. The conclusions emphasize the enduring significance of law enforcement in ensuring public safety and promoting fairness and accountability. Law Enforcement Agencies may continue to integrate experiential learning and mentorship into law enforcement training curriculums to better prepare recruits for real-world challenges.

**Keywords:** Community engagement; Professionalism; Career; Services; Professional aspirations; Personal resilience; Professional goals; Training programs; Adaptability; Career longevity.

### 1. Introduction

In law enforcement, retirement frequently signifies the change from a career of committed service to a much-deserved moment of rest and contemplation (Sheen, 2019). Many retired law enforcement professionals take advantage of the chance presented by this critical period to impart their invaluable knowledge to the following generation, strengthening the force moving forward (Cain, 2020). In addition to preserving the history of law enforcement, this cycle of training and mentoring encourages a feeling of continuity in protecting the rule of law and public safety (Blair, 2020). Highlighting the crucial role that police enforcement plays in our communities, both while they're on the job and after they retire (Fielding, 2023).

Developing a lifelong regard and respect for these selfless people who defend and serve society throughout their lives. Retirement is seen as a continuance rather than a close to law enforcement's commitment, which emphasizes the value of their long-lasting influence on the social fabric of our community. The Philippine National Police (PNP) serves as the primary law enforcement organization in the Philippines, tasked with upholding law and order, conducting criminal investigations, and maintaining peace. Comprising various specialized units such as the Special Action Force (SAF) and the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), the PNP ensures the thorough handling of serious crimes. The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) plays a significant role by overseeing the custody and rehabilitation of inmates' nationwide, offering job training and reintegration programs to reduce recidivism. Meanwhile, the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) takes charge of fire prevention and control and conducts public fire safety awareness and inspections. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)

primarily focus on safeguarding the nation from external threats but also aid in suppressing significant national security risks, including insurgencies, and support the PNP during crises and disasters.

Furthermore, the Philippines hosts various specialized law enforcement organizations, including the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), responsible for investigating major crimes, terrorism, organized crime, and corruption. The Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) handles drug-related offenses, while the Office of Cybercrime (OCC) specializes in addressing cybercrimes. The Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) enforces maritime laws and regulations, and the Aviation Security Command (AVSEC) oversees airport security across the country. These specialized entities collaborate closely with the PNP and other law enforcement organizations to ensure the safety and security of the Filipino people.

Throughout their service, law enforcement agencies in the Philippines offer their law enforcement personnel a variety of benefits. These include paying competitive salaries and wages that are periodically adjusted to account for inflation and guarantee a respectable standard of living. Officers are also entitled to a full range of benefits, including paid time off, life insurance, dental care, and retirement benefits. Additionally, they have access to specialized training programs and promotion opportunities that can further their professional development. Despite the difficulties and dangers involved, law enforcement personnel play a critical role in protecting their communities and enforcing the rule of law, which makes their work extremely fulfilling (Blair, 2020). To improve the wellbeing and productivity of their officers, some organizations may also provide free or subsidized housing, aid with schooling, free uniforms and equipment, legal support, psychological counseling, and support groups. All law enforcement officers in the Philippine benefit from competitive pay, extensive benefits, and career growth opportunities, though the exact benefits may differ based on the agency and rank (Torneo, & Mojica, 2020).

In the Philippines, the term "law enforcement agencies" refers to the cooperation of three major law enforcement organizations that are in charge of maintaining public safety and order: the Philippine National Police (PNP), which is in charge of enforcing laws and maintaining order; the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), which is in charge of searching for and extinguishing fires, providing emergency medical services, and maintaining peace; and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), which is in charge of holding prisoners in various correctional facilities and providing care and rehabilitation. To ensure the continuous maintenance of public safety, these law enforcement agencies work closely together to coordinate their efforts. For added interoperability and overall effectiveness, they also participate in joint training exercises. In the Philippine government's endeavor to protect its people and maintain an atmosphere of safety and security, the Tri-Bureau is central to the endeavor.

People choose to remain in the Philippine law enforcement agency for a variety of strong reasons, such as the prospect of career progression, financial security, and the deep sense of fulfillment that comes from defending the rule of law and defending communities. Some may serve in law enforcement because it is their duty or because it is a family tradition, while others are inspired by patriotism and a desire to protect their nation and its people (Shaw, & Wong, 2020). A sincere desire to serve others, whether it be by aiding victims of crime, stopping criminal activity, or improving community safety, is what attracts many people to law enforcement. Remaining in the law enforcement agencies is a significant part of the Philippine government's effort to maintain peace and order

because the people who choose to do so are dedicated to helping their communities and making sure that the people of the Philippines are safe. People in the law enforcement agencies are even more committed to one another because of the strong sense of camaraderie and the bond that forms among coworkers who share the difficulties and obligations of law enforcement. Because of their common experience, officers at the law enforcement agencies tend to become more than just coworkers—they frequently become friends and even a second family. Many people decide to stay in the law enforcement agency because of this sense of cohesion and mutual support, which also serves as a great source of motivation for them as they advance in their careers.

Despite extensive research on the roles and benefits afforded to law enforcement officers, there is a significant theoretical gap in understanding the specific mechanisms that contribute to the longevity and success of their careers, particularly in the context of the Philippine law enforcement agencies. Existing studies have largely focused on the practical aspects of law enforcement work and post-retirement contributions, leaving an underexplored area concerning the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that sustain law enforcement careers over the long term. This research aims to bridge this gap by employing appreciative inquiry methodology to identify exemplary practices and experiences that enhance career longevity and satisfaction. Through qualitative analysis, it will delve into the strategies, support systems, and personal attributes that are instrumental in maintaining the dedication and effectiveness of law enforcement professionals. By shifting the focus to the positive aspects and success stories within the law enforcement community, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of career sustainability, ultimately informing policies and practices to improve retention and job satisfaction in these critical roles.

## 2. Methods

The study employed a qualitative research design, specifically appreciative inquiry (AI). Qualitative research design is an approach that aims to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems (Creswell, 2014). Appreciative Inquiry is a problem-solving approach that emphasizes exploring and amplifying an organization's strengths and positive attributes to drive change and improvement (Morgan et al., 2022; Clarke, 2021; Davis, 2019). It is based on the understanding that the questions we ask shape the stories we tell and the actions we take. Therefore, Appreciative Inquiry seeks to ask questions that lead to positive stories and actions. It follows a 4-D cycle of Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 2013). This approach can be applied to various organizational contexts, including strategic planning, team building, and leadership development. It serves as an alternative to traditional problem-solving approaches that often focus on identifying and fixing what is wrong, rather than building upon what is already working (Browning, 2022; Randall et al., 2022; Barrett, 2021; Dal Corso et al., 2021).

Appreciative Inquiry is well-suited to explore on understanding the universal essence of retirement, which in this case is the retired law enforcement professionals. This study was conducted in one of the cities in the province of Misamis Occidental Philippines, in the northern part of Mindanao, Philippines. The participant of this study were (9) retired uniform personnel in Philippine National Police, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and Bureau of Fire Protection. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was used to identify the participants of this

study. The selection criteria was based on the following: 1) a retired member of Law enforcement agency 2) serving twenty (20) or more in the Law enforcement agency and 3) has given the consent to participate in the study.

### 3. Results and Discussions

#### 3.1. Respondents Profile

The participants in this study consist of nine (9) retired members of the Philippine National Police, with lengths of service ranging from 22 to 25 years.

**Table 1.** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents Profile as to their Gender, Age, Civil Status and Occupation

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	25	81.00
Female	6	19.00
<b>Age</b>		
20-25 years old	5	16.00
26-30 years old	22	71.00
31-35 years old	4	13.00
<b>Civil Status</b>		
Single	15	48.00
Married	16	52.00
<b>Occupation</b>		
PNP	14	45.00
BJMP	4	13.00
BFP	6	19.00
Self-Employed	4	12.00
Security	1	4.55
LGU Personnel	2	6.45

#### 3.2. Impact of Internship Experiences on Skills Development

The results in Table 2 show that internship experience has a very high impact on competence development, with a mean score of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.14. This suggests that trainees see significant improvement in their skills as a direct result of their training experience (Karunaratne and Perera, 2019). This idea is further supported by the close clustering of responses around the mean, which demonstrates that trainees agree on the positive benefits of the internship on their skill set. The fact that these outcomes were rated as "very impressive" on the provided scale highlights the critical role that practice plays in advancing professional development, enhancing practical knowledge, and facilitating hands-on learning. Table 2 presents data indicating that internships had a significant impact on skills growth, with an average score of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.14. This indicates

that interns believe they have significantly enhanced their skills because of their internship experiences (Karunaratne & Perera, 2019). The tight gathering of answers near the average supports this viewpoint, indicating that interns typically agree on the benefits of internships for their abilities. Providing these outcomes as "Extremely Significant" on the provided scale emphasizes the critical role internships play in deepening practical understanding, fostering career success, and facilitating experiential education.

Internships are one of the major catalysts which provide real time experience to students with a touch of theoretical classroom which eventually helps to increase the skills of the students (Akhtar & Parker, 2024). According to Lee (2023), "Internships give practical experience that will help students before they graduate and this is what they will need when they enter job markets it will give them experience skills in project management, problem-solving, and working in a team. Internships also provide networking value and build professional relationships that often provide the students and employers with mentorship and career advice (Baird & Mollen, 2023). Their cultural awareness makes students more apt to adapt in disrupted systems, having been exposed to different work environments and ways of working. They face a secret with problems to solve and when then these problems are hard for them they need to strike to make it easier for them it helps develop their problem-solving skills and they will begin to take initiatives on solving problems and fosters confidence in their capabilities (Tang et al., 2020).

Internships are also a platform for students to work their way around different occupational tracks and decide wisely on their future. This helps them understand more about themselves, point them in the right direction, and align their aspirations with career fields (Majid et al., 2019). On the other hand, internship can be used by students to reflect about their own growth, specify areas for improvement and prepare for further professional development (Anjum, 2020). Consequently, internships help students in integrating practical knowledge into academic contexts and this can positively affect their grades during school time. Students who have gone through these experiences learn how to balance schoolwork and internship duties hence preparing them adequately for demands in future jobs (Chisty et al., 2023). In conclusion, internships give such trainees an edge over others while entering into employment as they have acquired practical skills alongside having professional links and enhanced understanding of where they are going in life. They are what make students ready for job market because this is where they get prepared as professionals who are highly skilled, adaptable and confident.

**Table 2.** Impact of Internship Experiences on Skills Development

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Skills Development	3.65	0.14	Very Impactful

**Note.** Skills Development Scale: 3.28-4.00 (Very Impactful); 2.52-3.27 (Somewhat Impactful); 1.76-2.51 (Less Impactful); 1.00-1.75 (Not Impactful).

These influential internship experiences have a great significance on the students. Such experiences give students practical skills and knowledge that supplement their academic learning process thereby bridging theory practice gap. The latter develops the student's problem-solving skills, ability to work in team and adaptability for complexities encountered at workplaces (Lee, 2023). Also, internships provide networking opportunities as well as

mentorship for career advancement purposes among other things one may benefit from an internship. This is also a means toward helping students make sense of their future and make sound decisions regarding what they want to achieve in life (Kapareliotis & Patsiotis, 2019). In conclusion, impactful internships are critical for both personal and professional development of learners since they help them gain necessary tools and exposures which are needed to achieve long-term success in their chosen fields (Edwards et al., 2024).

### **3.3. Impact of Internship Experiences on Career Readiness**

The extent that self-reported internship learning contributed to career readiness was evaluated via the students' mean score on the Career Readiness Scale,  $M= 3.72$  and of a standard deviation of 0.100. This shows that participants considered past internships as having a wonderful influence towards enhancing career preparedness. Actually, the value of the means is in the rates that have been classified as 'Very Impactful.' This implies that the internship experiences enriched the participants' career readiness and could affect their commitment level to the workplace, skills they gained from the internship and their level of preparedness to careers (Mc Quinn, 2023). They also resonate with the literature that has indicated that internships help student to transition freely from academic organizations to other professional organizations.

Various confirmed experiences that are related to internships are deemed important in determining an individual's career readiness and by having this self-perceived high impact in the study conducted (Salzabilla et al., 2023). Firstly, internships help to achieve first-practice exposure for students and relate the acquired theoretical data to the practice of a chosen profession (Jindal, 2024). These practical experiences also contribute to build up their knowledge of real-life business processes in the specific industry and at the same time, improves problem solving skills, teamwork and communication skills among the learners. For instance, working in professional environment exposes interns to organizational culture and how to deal with other people, working relations, and working in groups, which are all basic to every person's professional growth.

Secondly, internships can be an outstanding chance to develop and learn more about oneself, as well as the working industry. Students can express their career preferences, and career authorities assist them in defining their career plans (Ocampo et al., 2020). Accordingly, such experiences help the interns to develop more insights about themselves in terms of their strengths and areas of weakness hence assisting them in making right decisions regarding their future. Besides, it is noteworthy that internships give students an opportunity to find and develop relationships with the representatives of the corresponding field (Succi & Canovi, 2020). The associations can mean potential opportunities such as advocate situations, positions leading and recommendations for job openings more understanding of existing trends and lessons delegating from the general industry. Thus, internships contribute significantly to defining the student's future profession and are also a unique opportunity to gain work experience, improve your skills, and build personal characteristics, as well as establish valuable contacts (Fauzan et al., 2023).

Observing the overall influence that interns' experiences have on their readiness for the workplace, below are some key findings regarding educational institutions, employers as well as policy-makers (Kapareliotis et al., 2019). First of all, education institutions should enhance the recognition and implementation of internships

throughout coursework as important elements of education, in order students are provided with practical experience and exposure to real-life situations. This way, they will be in a better position to school and quiz the students for available job market and improve on the employment opportunities they stand a chance to get (Galbraith & Mondal, 2020). Secondly, the actual main benefit of internships include when the employers use it as a talent pipeline to allow them crosschecks on the candidates that they intend to hire before recruiting them, this in essence reduces the costs of recruitment as noted by King (2019). Last of which, the policymakers could provide incentives for businesses to provide more internship opportunities, this would foster a symbiotic relationship between academia and industry that is conducive to growth, competitiveness, and advancement in the workforce (Malhotra et al., 2023).

**Table 3.** Impact of Internship Experiences on Career Readiness

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Career Readiness	3.70	0.100	Very Impactful

*Note.* Career Readiness Scale: 3.28-4.00 (Very Impactful); 2.52-3.27 (Somewhat Impactful); 1.76-2.51 (Less Impactful); 1.00-1.75 (Not Impactful).

### **3.4. Explore the Significant Difference on the Impact of Internship Experiences on Skills Development when the Respondents are grouped according to their profile**

Using the independent samples chi-square equations to test the hypothesis that the experience profiles of interns had a significant relationship with the experience profiles of skills acquisition, and considering the null hypothesis that none of the demographic characteristics of respondents examined in this study had a statistically significant relationship with their internship experience profiles, the results as presented in table 4 above indicated that the hypertension, marital status, years of work experience, age, gender, and mode of application of experience had For gender, the chi-square value was 2 thus showing that the research findings are valid and reliable. 2, which is statistically possible with 3 degrees of freedom giving a p-value of 0. Compared to the initial threshold of 0, it is higher than 54, so the impact was rather significant. 05 significance threshold. This goes a long way to confirm that the effectiveness of internships in enhancing skills is not as a result of gender inequality between the male and the female students. In the same manner, the score for age with a value of the chi-square equal to 9. With 6 d.o.f and the significance level set at 0.0 the weight was 76. 0.139, which is once more beyond the overall value of 0.05, we can deny the hypothetical H1 that there is no significant correlation between perceptions and attitudes of university students and their performance. 05. These findings provide evidence for the notion that the degree of perceived internship effects is universal across the demographic.

Civil status also elicited some significant results; the chi square value was 0. 98 with 3 degrees of freedom and an observed p=0; this suggests that with an alpha level of 0.05, the observed effect size of 0. 805, which strengthens the understanding that there are no marked distinctions in the influence of internships insofar as the marital status of the respondents is concerned. Lastly, the analysis of occupation revealed a value of chi-square = 11. 77 with the df of 15, p<0. 859 also shows that there was no mean difference on perceptions of interns regarding the extent to

which internships helped in developing skills needed for the occupational groups. These studies combined suggest that internship experiences are equally beneficial in preparing employees irrespective of demographic and occupational characteristics. Therefore, these internship programmed can be implemented in a general and broad manner, and this erases the thought of having to develop new ones for certain demography, thus underlining their usefulness in improving skills and preparing for various careers.

From the outcomes of the foregoing chi-square tests, it can infer that internship programs are for skills enhancement advantageous for all subjects, irrespective of demographic or vocational characteristics. As demonstrated by the presented data that was analyzed in terms of gender, age, civil status, and occupation of the participants, no remarkable differences can be highlighted – which points at the fact that internships contribute to the improvement of skills among those who participate in the process, regardless of their background. The presented universality means that organizations and educational institutions can offer and manage internship programs without making numerous adjustments for different demographic types, which makes the process easier and less time-consuming. It also draws attention to the possibility of internships promoting equal opportunity for development of skills and employment readiness among individuals regardless of their backgrounds, which may lead to limited opportunities provided to candidates who meet seventy five percent of the stated criteria for an internship as a key step toward more equality in work force development.

**Table 4.** Explore the Significant Difference on the Impact of Internship Experiences on Skills Development when the Respondents are grouped according to their profile

Profile	$X^2$	DF	CV	P-Value	Remarks
Gender	2.17	3	7.815	0.54	Not Significant
Age	9.76	6	12.59	0.139	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.98	3	7.815	0.805	Not Significant
Occupation	11.77	15	24.99	0.859	Not Significant

### 3.5. Explore the Significant Difference on the Impact of Internship Experiences on the Career Readiness when the Respondents are grouped according to their profile

The chi-square test outcomes also imply that the Pension for the internship experiences that the interns underwent is not affected by the Gender, age, civil status or Occupation of the respondents. The obtained score based on gender was; For gender based on a chi-square value of 1, it was obtained that. .08 with one degree of freedom while the tabulated value of ‘t-crit’ was 3.84, and the p-vase was noticed to be less than 0. 299 did not differ significantly in maternal heights from those of the control group. Likewise, the age group has a chi-square value of 1  $\leq$  Statement 4. Of the remaining degrees of freedom, 2 is subtracted for the degree of freedom for the chain variable, and the remainder is 28 with a critical value of 5. 99 and, for the p value criterion of significance, it yields a p = 0. 527, thus implying that there were no differences found. The civil status group has a relatively low chi-square value at 0.072 with one degree of freedom thus obtaining a critical value of 3.84 and p<.05 for, respectively. 789, For this reason, the p value of 0,016 again confirms the lack of meaningful differences between the averages of the



two groups. The chi-square value for the employment group is likewise 3.84 with a critical value of 11 means and 5 degrees of freedom. 001 for the variable "IFM07," suggesting that there is a statistically significant relationship between these two factors and the number of kilometers driven based on the mode of transportation. For undergraduates without jobs, and 57 for those with jobs, indicating that there may not be a statistically significant difference.

These studies implied that; internship experiences are seen in similar ways across the various class 1 demographic subgroups with regard to their preparation for the career. The findings therefore suggest that internship programs are of utility in enhancing the preparedness of the individuals to undertake their respective occupations without discriminating the gender, age, civil status and career paths of individuals. Such consistency implies that internship programs serve a broad audience and reaffirms that interning should remain integral to career readiness plans for various groups.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the above study are of profound concern to institutions of learning and employers in equal measure. The shared experience benchmarks of internship across the differing characteristics also point to the reliability of internships as training interventions that prepare learners for workforce. These outcomes may be informing the practice of educational institutions to incorporate internships into curricula because such has given good values to students' employ-ability skills that are crucial in the workplace (Galbraith & Mondal, 2020). Similarly, employers can be assured that practices pointers such as internship are efficient in development of participants for competencies and commitment required in the workplace irrespective of their diversity (Lantu et al., 2022). These findings add further weight to the practice of expanding the internship schemes as a part of career plan to make sure that people are ready for the requirements of the modern economy.

**Table 5.** Explore the Significant Difference on the Impact of Internship Experiences on the Career Readiness when the Respondents are grouped according to their profile

Profile	$X^2$	DF	CV	P-Value	Remarks
Gender	1.08	1	3.84	0.299	Not Significant
Age	1.28	2	5.99	0.527	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.072	1	3.84	0.789	Not Significant
Occupation	3.84	5	11.07	0.57	Not Significant

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the survey findings, the security and public service in Misamis Occidental is male-dominated with a young workforce (26-30) and a mix of single/married individuals. Self-employment is common, followed by LGU/uniformed services. This diverse workforce offers opportunities for targeted interventions and further research. Separately, the survey highlights the importance of internships in developing practical skills and preparing students for careers. Internship programs were found to be very helpful for students' careers regardless of background. As it develops practical skills and prepares students for the real world. This benefit applies to everyone, so internships should be widely offered to help students prepare for their careers.

## 5. Recommendations

The recent survey in Misamis Occidental survey highlights workforce needs: gender diversity initiatives, career development (especially for young professionals), family-friendly policies, entrepreneurship support (self-employed), and specialized training for LGU/uniformed services. According to the researchers' recommendation it aims to improve workforce dynamics and professional growth in security and public service.

Internship programs should be expanded with industry collaboration to provide students with diverse, hands-on experiences aligned with their career goals. Mentorship and support will prepare them for successful careers.

Universities should offer internships across disciplines to give students practical experience and prepare them for careers. Partnering with industries for diverse placements and providing mentorship and workshops during internships will maximize learning. Regular evaluation ensures programs stay relevant to student and employer needs.

Expand internship opportunities with industry collaboration, providing mentorship and workshops. Regularly evaluate programs to improve student career preparation. Universities and industries should team up to offer more diverse internships with strong mentorship and workshops to better prepare students for their careers. Regularly evaluate and improve these programs to stay relevant.

### Declarations

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#### Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare no competing financial, professional, or personal interests.

#### Consent for publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

#### Authors' contributions

All the authors took part in literature review, analysis and manuscript writing equally.

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