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Dimensions of Community Safety in Rural Areas as Perceived by Community Members

John Lloyd Dacalanio[1], Rhea Dupla[1], Jibreel Niel Roman[1], Tomas Jr Diquito[1*]

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ABSTRACT

Community safety is a vital aspect of sustainable development, influencing individual well-being, collective trust, public engagement, and the effective functioning of local governance. This study examines the dimensionality of community safety in rural areas as perceived by community members. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine the dimensions of community safety. To contextualize, the use of in-depth interviews with ten community members were conducted first to capture the significant statements to be used in the study. A total of 27 unique statements were extracted and transformed into a questionnaire. Pilot testing was conducted prior to implementing the developed survey questionnaire to 280 respondents. Data analysis includes data reduction techniques to determine the dimensions and thematic analysis to name the created dimensions. Based on the result, three dimensions were: Policy and Ordinance, Participation and Collaboration of the community and LGU, and Implementation of checkpoints and curfew. These dimensions show the multidimensional efforts undertaken to enhance community safety and resilience. 'Policy and Ordinance' reflects the institutional frameworks and legal mandates that guide behavior and set expectations. 'Participation and Collaboration of the community and LGU highlights the shared responsibility and the importance of grassroots engagement, while 'Implementation of checkpoints and curfew' demonstrates the operational strategies used to deter crime and maintain order. Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive picture of both preventive and responsive safety mechanisms at the local level.

INTRODUCTION

Community safety is a universal right that every member should have. To achieve this, a shared responsibility among various sectors is necessary to maintain a community secure, healthy, and free from harm. Environmental design interventions reduced crime rates by fostering defensible spaces that deter illicit activities (Rupp *et al.*, 2025; Wen *et al.*, 2025; Yang & Koizumi, 2025). Research underscores that well-maintained public areas correlate with heightened community attachment, indirectly mitigating vandalism and disorder (Wallis *et al.*, 2021). However, uneven participation in safety initiatives remains a critical barrier, the need for stronger community engagement, trust-based partnership, and transparent communication is needed (Alehegn *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, understanding the dimensionality of community safety grounded in the participants' viewpoint is crucial in building long-lasting impact.

Local crime and violence worldwide are addressed through programmatic community-based approaches, community organization, and crime-prevention initiatives. For a long time, crime and violence have been among the most urgent and unsolvable issues facing communities, particularly as inequality and inequities between communities continue to rise (Soska & Ohmer, 2018). Although research has been slow to uncover and thoroughly analyze these violence-reduction strategies, interventions that address environmental and social factors can potentially yield larger population-wide benefits (Hohl *et al.*, 2019). Community policing programs such as the Brangay Peacekeeping Action Teams (BPATs) have shown promise in enhancing local safety through collaborative efforts between law enforcement and residents (Taganas & Gupit, 2025)

Moreover, community policing initiatives like Ronda Patrol and Barangay Peacekeeping Action Teams emphasize decentralized collaboration, yet resource constraints limit their reach (Blair *et al.*, 2021). A 2023 study found that barangay-led dispute resolution systems reduce petty crimes by 30%, though corruption risks persist (Le *et al.*, 2022). The lack of consistent community participation and communication with law enforcement is an issue when researching the roles of community engagement in improving local safety and lowering crime (Modise, 2023). Crime prevention initiatives may be less successful if community members do not actively participate. Addressing these gaps requires further investigation into how varying levels of community involvement and the implementation of diverse crime prevention strategies influence crime rates and public safety outcomes (Nubani *et al.*, 2023). These insights advocate for hybrid models that merge traditional practices with modern governance tools.

Local studies found that residents rely on the police for their security and services. However, some are unsure about the police's services (Lagunsay *et al.*, 2016). Neighborhood

[1] University of Mindanao - Digos College, Philippines
[*] Corresponding author's e-mail: tomasdiquito@umindanao.edu.ph

crime has been a major problem worldwide, and it is getting worse over time. To know the effectiveness and impact of police visibility and community ordinance as a crime prevention tool or neighborhood crimes in selected barangays in Davao City (Escriba *et al.*, 2024). While residents generally rely on the police for security and essential services, uncertainty regarding the full scope and effectiveness of police services suggests a gap in awareness, visibility, or engagement. As neighborhood crimes continue to increase, strengthening crime prevention strategies becomes imperative. Ultimately, enhancing police presence, improving community awareness, and reinforcing ordinance implementation may serve as key mechanisms in fostering safer and more secure communities.

Thus, this study is developed to determine the dimensions of community safety as perceived by the local community members. This study is important to various parties involved in formulating ordinances for initiatives aimed at improving local safety and reducing crime by focusing on the crucial dimensions identified. Moreover, this study is guided by the following objectives: first is to determine significant statements that highlights community safety, and second is to create dimensions of community safety based on the first objective of the study. By doing this, the community is situated in a local setting and grounded in the perceptions of its members.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study used mixed-methods, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The study began with qualitative data collection, followed by quantitative data collection. As outlined by Creswell (2005), the qualitative phase provides in-depth insights into participants' thought processes. In this study, extracting significant statements from qualitative data is crucial for defining the dimensions of community safety. In addition, quantitative analysis is used to generate the dimensions derived from the significant statement identified. Therefore, the need to use both qualitative and quantitative analysis is crucial in this study.

Participants/Respondents

This study was conducted in Digos City, Davao del Sur, Philippines. The participants in this study are citizens of the area. For the qualitative phase, 10 participants participated in the study. In selecting the participants, the following inclusion criteria are strictly followed: (1) a resident in Digos City for at least 20 years and (2) willing to be interviewed. The criteria are based on the principle that they can provide meaningful experience, as they have been residents of Digos City for 2 decades. As for the quantitative phase, 280 respondents participated in the study. Moreover, a simple random sampling technique was used to determine the number of respondents. As noted by Elfil and Negida (2017), this is used when the whole population is accessible. The inclusion criteria for selecting respondents are the same as those in the qualitative phase. This survey was conducted on April 5th, 2025, in Digos City, Davao Del Sur, Philippines

Research Instrument

In the qualitative phase of the study, the researcher utilized a semi-structured interview guide to gather in-depth insights from selected community members regarding their perceptions of community safety. In addition, the researcher used an audio recording device (with participants' consent) and took supplementary notes by hand to highlight significant statements and emerging themes during the conversations. In the quantitative phase, a survey instrument was developed from the significant statements from the qualitative phase. A total of 27 significant items were created and transformed into a questionnaire. This questionnaire then underwent a reliability test and was deployed to 30 respondents. Based on the results, the questionnaire had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.897. Based on the Cronbach's alpha of 0.897, this indicates good reliability. Thus, the questionnaire is deemed valid and reliable (George & Mallery, 2019)

Data Analysis

Moreover, exploratory factor analysis was used to determine the dimensions of community safety as perceived by community members. The following technique were used in determining the dimensions; data reduction analysis is used to reduce the multidimensionality of the data (Reddy *et al.*, 2020), use of Keiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) to determine the sampling adequacy (Shrestha, 2021), Bartlett's test of Sphericity was used to the null hypothesis (Tobias & Carlson, 1969), Initial Eigenvalue above 1.0 was set to reduce the factors (Kuczyński & Woźniakowski, 1992), Varimax Rotation using Kaiser Normalization was used to reduce the number of factors with significant loading (Kaiser, 1959), factor loading of 0.60 is used to reduced cross-loading of items and to generate more reliable dimensions (Hair *et al.*, 2010) and Cattell-Scree plot was used to have a visualization of how many factors are created (Horn & Engstrom, 1979), and thematic analysis to name the dimensions created (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaire from the Significant Statements

The researchers conducted an In-depth interview (IDI) with 10 participants who were willing to participate in the study. The IDI results were analysed, and significant statements were used to develop the study's questions (see Table 1). In addition, to determine the reliability of the developed questionnaire, the researchers conducted a pilot test on 30 respondents. Based on the analysis, the questionnaire has an overall reliability index of 0.897, indicating that the questionnaire has a "good" internal consistency; thus, it can be implemented with the target respondents (George & Mallery, 2003).

Table 1: Transformed questionnaire from significant statements

Item	Transformed Significant Statements	5	4	3	2	1
1	I feel safe if our local officials are visible all the time					
2	I feel safe if law enforcers are present all the time.					
3	I feel safe if local ordinances are implemented thoroughly.					
4	Curfew hours makes me feel safe during nighttime.					
5	I believe that minors should be prohibited to go out during curfew hours.					
6	I believe community safety can be achieved if there is a sense of collaboration among community members.					
7	Presence of Brgy. Tanod can significantly enhance community safety.					
8	Presence of 24/7 hotlines is crucial to ensure community safety.					
9	Regular meetings with local government units and community can enhance community safety.					
10	Installation of more solar lights can increase community safety during nighttime.					
11	Implementing programs that centers on community safety is must.					
12	Presence of CCTV in different areas can enhance community safety.					
13	Youth involvement is crucial in building a safe community.					
14	Checkpoints can increase community safety.					
15	Providing livelihoods to community members can increase community safety.					
16	Presence of volunteers can promote community safety.					
17	Presence of emergency response team can enhance community safety.					
18	Investment of security equipments can increase community safety.					
19	Development of new technologies that centers on community safety is crucial.					
20	Creating a specific-policy/guidelines towards community safety is a must.					
21	Development of websites that contains crucial information about community safety is a must.					
22	Educating community members is the foundation of community safety					
23	Involvement of different sectors in the community can enhance community safety.					
24	Creating programs that addresses specific problems in the community is crucial to address community safety.					
25	Creating contingency plans on community actions is crucial to increase community safety.					
26	Immediate actions to a community problem/s can increase community safety.					
27	Maintaining safe public spaces is crucial in building community safety.					

Dimensions of Community Safety as Perceived by Community Members

To determine the dimensions of community safety, data reduction and analysis were performed, and the initial Eigenvalue above 1.0 was used to reduce the generated factors. In addition, the varimax rotation is set to 25 iterations. However, it is found that 10 iterations are enough to get reliable dimensions. Table 2 shows the result of the KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of Sphericity. The KMO obtained a value of 0.938, and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity (Chi-Square=2181.891; p=0.000) was significant, according (Beavers *et al.*, 2019) that a KMO of above 0.60 with a significant value signifies appropriateness to conduct a factor analysis. Thus, the study's findings validate the assumption, therefore, analysis of the created dimensions is possible.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test Sphericity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.938
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Chi-Square	2181.891
	df	351
	Sig.	0.000

After ensuring the created dimensions are suitable for analysis, the next stage is to assess the suitability of the developed dimensions against the set parameters. Using the Eigenvalue greater than 1.0, five dimensions are suitable for extraction (see Table 3). These findings show that the items are not all loaded onto the same

Table 3: Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			**Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings**			**Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings**		
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% o f Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.823	32.677	32.677	8.235	30.500	30.500	3.815	14.130	14.130
2	1.578	5.844	38.521	1.021	3.783	34.283	2.882	10.676	24.806
3	1.135	4.203	42.724	.526	1.946	36.229	1.792	6.638	31.444
4	1.083	4.011	46.735	.467	1.730	37.959	1.670	6.186	37.630
5	1.016	3.764	50.499	413	.413	1.530	.502	1.859	39.489
6	.983	3.643	54.142						
7	.949	3.515	57.657						
8	.822	3.045	60.701						
9	.783	2.899	63.601						
10	.757	2.802	66.40.						

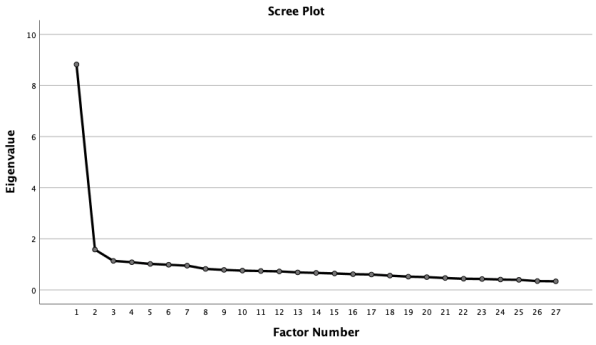

Figure 1: Scree Plot of the Developed Dimensions

dimension. Following the analysis, a scree plot was used to provide a visualization of the study's developed dimensions. Figure 1 shows the graph of the eigenvalues for all dimensions generated, and based on this, it can be seen that the graph starts to flatten as it approaches the 5th dimension. After ensuring that the sample is large enough and that dimensions can be generated, the next stage is to determine which dimensions are suitable for inclusion. Based on (Raubenheimer, 2004)suggestion that dimensions with fewer than three items are not suitable for inclusion. This is based on the assumption that dimensions with fewer than three items can yield misleading results and lower reliability. Following this suggestion, a total of 3 dimensions can be extracted (see Table 4).

Based on the study's findings, three dimensions are generated. Discussion of each generated dimension is as follows:

Dimension 1: Planning and Policy

Dimension 1 consists of nine items (item_27, item_26,item_19, item_23, item_21, item_24, item_25, item_22, and item_20) with a factor loading ranges from 0.659 to 0.410. In addition, this dimension has an eigenvalue of 8,823, a total variance explained of 32.677, and an internal consistency of 0.852. After confirming the items and the literature associated with this dimension, this dimension is then named "Planning and Policy". The planning and policy are about keeping the community safe and secure. It identifies potential dangers, develops risk-management plans, and suggests ways to make things safer in the future. It also explains key terms and concepts related to risk management, ensuring that policies are clear and effective at reducing threats. Additionally, to analyze how future risk management should be implemented, the plans should include ideas, tactics, and enhancements related to risk management, all intended to establish a community that is safer, healthier, and more secure. Expanding the planning procedure in relation to risk management from a wider range of viewpoints is also necessary (Johansson *et al.*, 2006). It is important to ask how the community safety agenda has evolved and developed within local crime and disorder prevention strategies. It will also be of interest to community safety and crime prevention practitioners who need a critical understanding of the development and likely future direction of community safety programs (Squires, 2006).

Dimension 2: Support from LGU and Community

The second dimension has a total of six items (item_6, item_16, item_1, item_7, item_15, and item_3) with a factor loading ranges from 0.615 to 0.404. In addition, this dimension has an eigenvalue of 1.578 with a % of

Table 4: Rotated Factor Matrix

Item	Statement	Dimensions		
		1	2	3
27	Maintaining safe public spaces is crucial in building community safety.	0.659		
26	Immediate actions to a community problem/s can increase community safety.	0.632		
19	Creating a specific policy/ guidelines towards com- munity safety is a must.	0.592		
23	Involvement of different sectors in the community can enhance community safety.	0.519		
21	Development of websites that contains crucial information about community safety is a must.	0.512		
24	Creating programs that addresses specific problems in the community is crucial to address community safety.	0.497		
25	Creating contingency plans on community actions is crucial to increase community safety.	0.483		
22	Educating community members is the foundation of community safety	0.449		
20	Creating a specific policy/guidelines towards community safety is a must.	0.410		
6	I believe community safety can be achieved if there is a sense of collaboration among community members.		0.615	
16	Presence of volunteers can promote community safety.		0.552	
1	I feel safe if our local officials are visible all the time		0.529	
7	Presence of Brgy. Tanod can significantly enhance community safety		0.449	
15	Providing livelihoods to community members can increase community safety.		0.408	
3	I feel safe if local ordinances are implemented thoroughly		0.404	
2	I feel safe if law enforcers are present all the time			0.648
5	I believe that minors should be prohibited to go out during curfew hours			0.525
4	Curfew hours makes me feel safe during nighttime			0.457
14	Checkpoints can increase community safety.			0.455
Eigenvalue		8.823	1.578	1.135
% of Variance		32.677	5.844	4.203
Reliability by Cronbach Alpha		0.852	0.792	0.820

variance explained of 5.844 and an internal consistency of 0.792. After confirming the items and the literature associated with this dimension, this dimension is then named "Support from Local Government Unit (LGU) and Community". The citizen participation and citizen satisfaction in local governance aims to explore the dynamic interplay between citizens' satisfaction with the conduct of participatory local governance. Citizens' participation and satisfaction should be followed by regular feedback mechanisms (Arrabaca & Base, 2020). With the help of the community and the LGU community becomes safer. This underscores that the development of the community through the program and policies of local government units depends on residents' participation. Participation improves policy insights for designing strategies in local governance matters (Caparas & Agrawal, 2016)

Dimension 3: Implementation of Checkpoints and Curfew

Dimension 3 has a total of four items (item_2, item_5, item_4, and item_14) with factor loadings ranging from 0.648 to 0.455. In addition, this dimension has an eigenvalue of 1.135 with % of variance explained of 4.203 and an internal consistency of 0.820. After confirming the items and the literature associated with this dimension, this dimension is then named "Implementation of Checkpoints and Curfew". The presence of law enforcers plays a crucial role in enhancing community safety. Studies have shown that community policing systems, which emphasize police visibility and collaboration with residents, significantly reduce crime rates and foster a sense of security (Braga *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, curfew hours have been identified as a preventive measure against risky environments (Soriano, 2024). These strategies collectively contribute to a safer and more harmonious community. Curfew hours, particularly for minors, have been widely recognized as an effective tool for maintaining public safety. Moreover, checkpoints have been proven to enhance security by detecting contraband and preventing administrative offenses (Weisburd *et al.*, 2023). These measures, when implemented effectively, create a safer environment for residents, especially at night, and strengthen community-police relations.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the dimension of community safety as perceived by community members, with the goal of providing a basis for the formulation of appropriate community ordinances. A mixed-methods approach was employed, semi- structured interviews for the qualitative phase. And utilizing a surveys for the quantitative phase. Through thematic analysis and statistical interpretation, the study identified four major findings that reflect the key areas contributing to a safe community environment. The first identified dimension is planning and policy, which emphasizes the need for structured and proactive safety measures through local governance. Second dimension is participation and collaboration between the community and the local government unit (LGU), highlighting the importance of shared responsibility and active involvement in safety initiatives. Third dimension is implementation of checkpoint and curfew which serve as both a preventive and responsive mechanism in maintaining public order and emerged as a practical measure perceived to help reduce crimes and promote discipline, especially during nighttime hours. The implications of these findings suggest that community safety is best addressed through a multi- dimensional and participatory approach. Policies developed should not only be rooted in formal planning and enforcement but must also foster strong partnerships between residents and local authorities. These findings serve as a concrete foundation for crafting ordinance that are community-driven, contextually relevant, and responsive to the real safety concerns for the people they are intended to protect.

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