

COMMUNITY PERCEPTION TOWARDS LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST RESURGENCE OF ILLEGAL DRUGS

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the resurgence of illegal drug activities despite the implementation of various anti-drug laws, highlighting a gap between expected outcomes and actual community experiences regarding law enforcement effectiveness. It aimed to determine the relationship between the reemergence of illegal drugs and the perceived effectiveness of law enforcement. A descriptive-correlational research design was used to assess community perceptions in terms of police visibility, intelligence and operations, and community engagement and trust. The findings revealed that law enforcement was perceived as very effective in operational aspects such as patrol visibility and intelligence-driven operations. However, community engagement and trust were rated only as effective, indicating the need for improvement in police-public interaction. The results also showed that illegal drug use remains a serious concern in the community. Furthermore, intelligence and strategic operations were significantly associated with reduced drug availability and frequency, while patrol visibility and community involvement showed no significant relationship. The study concludes that although law enforcement efforts in intelligence and patrol are effective, stronger community engagement is necessary to address the continuing problem of illegal drugs.

Keywords: law enforcement effectiveness, community perception, police visibility, intelligence, operation

I. Introduction

Illegal drugs were defined as substances that were prohibited because of their high potential for abuse, addiction, and harm to individuals and society (Syedet al., 2022). Illegal drugs had severe negative effects on an individual's physical health, mental state, and social conduct. The use of illegal drugs often resulted in criminal prosecution, serious health problems, and social consequences, including increased crime and violence (Zhong & Fazel, 2020). The resurgence of methamphetamine (shabu), along with other illicit drugs, continued to pose a serious challenge to public health and law enforcement in the Philippines and other regions (Johnson et al., 2022). Law enforcement agencies played a crucial role in addressing drug-related offenses through prevention, enforcement, and rehabilitation efforts (Putraetal.,2022). Police officers aimed to dismantle trafficking organizations, apprehend offenders, enforce drug-related laws, and collaborate with international agencies and local communities to limit drug trafficking and distribution (Machette & Mofokeng, 2022). They also conducted intelligence operations, undercover missions, and public awareness campaigns to prevent drug abuse and its associated crimes. However, law enforcement agencies faced significant challenges, including corruption, limited resources, and the constantly evolving tactics of drug syndicates, which increasingly relied on sophisticated technology to evade detection (Ali, 2020).

Community perception referred to how the general public and local communities viewed illegal drug use, trafficking, and related activities (Urbaniketal.,2022). Such perceptions influenced societal responses to the drug problem, shaping both public opinion and policy direction. Law enforcement effectiveness was defined as the ability of police and other agencies to deter, detect, and disrupt illegal drug activities. The effectiveness of law enforcement influenced the ease with which illegal drugs entered communities and the overall maintenance of public safety (Owens & Ba, 2021). The resurgence of illegal drugs described an increase in drug-related activities, including trafficking, possession, and distribution, often accompanied by rises in associated crimes such as theft, assault, and homicide (Sharma, 2022). This resurgence and community crime were closely interconnected, as increased drug activity fueled criminal behavior, while rising drug consumption further intensified the resurgence.

This study sought to address a practical knowledge gap by examining the relationship between community perception and law enforcement effectiveness in relation to the resurgence of illegal drugs (Stanton Sr. et al., 2022). While numerous anti-drug policies and enforcement strategies had been implemented, their effects on specific communities remained inconsistent and poorly understood. A significant gap existed between the intended outcomes of these strategies and how they were perceived or experienced at the grassroots level. Existing research largely focused on national or theoretical perspectives, with limited attention given to localized contexts where community trust, public cooperation, and perceived law enforcement performance played critical roles (Ibrahim, 2024). By analyzing how communities perceived law enforcement effectiveness in addressing illegal drug activities and how these perceptions correlated with crime trends, the study aimed to generate actionable insights. The findings were intended to guide law enforcement agencies and policymakers in developing more targeted, evidence-based strategies responsive to community needs and capable of enhancing crime prevention and public trust (Awoyemi et al., 2025).

II. Methods and Materials

The research utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational type of research design to analyze the interrelations of community perception, effectiveness of the law enforcement agency, in conjunction with the resurgent illegal drugs in the Philippines. Quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was a type of research methodology that sought to describe characteristics of a population and examine relationships between variables without manipulating them. Through this research design, the study hoped to present empirical information on how far community trust of the police and the efficiency of anti-drug operations helped address illegal drug operations and crimes thereof. The outcome was hoped to provide insights into policymakers and police agencies to improve more efficient policy and program implementations that incorporated people-oriented approaches, rehabilitation, and prevention measures alongside strict enforcement to address the illegal drug menace better. The research was carried out in one of the cities of Misamis Occidental, where the community members perceiving the actions of law enforcement officials, and government officials taking part in activities to control illicit drug operations were the respondents. Being a fast-developing urban area, this location presented an appropriate backdrop for investigating the specific issues and challenges of drug crime management. The research covered 377 community members through stratified random sampling. These community members were selected based on their participation in community-based anti-drug programs, involvement in local safety initiatives, or previous experiences with drug-related crimes. The data collected in this study were analyzed using several statistical methods to address the research objectives. Frequency and percentage were used to determine the academic performance of the students.

III. Results and Discussions

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presented the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of gender, educational attainment, and work status. A total of 377 respondents participated in the study, providing a diverse representation across the identified profile variables. The distribution of respondents provided a clear picture of the demographic characteristics relevant to interpreting the study's findings. In terms of gender, the results showed that the majority of respondents were female (208,55.17%), while 169 respondents (44.83%) were male. This indicated a slightly higher representation of females compared to males. The distribution suggested a relatively balanced gender composition, which helped ensure that the perspectives gathered were not overly skewed toward a single gender group. Regarding educational attainment, most respondents were at the undergraduate level, accounting for 156 individuals (41.38%). This was followed by respondents with graduate-level education, comprising 141 individuals (37.40%), while those with senior high school education comprised 80 respondents (21.22%). The data indicated

that a substantial proportion of the respondents possessed higher educational qualifications, which may have influenced their capacity to provide informed and reflective responses to the study instruments. Regarding work status, the majority of respondents were unemployed, with 212 individuals (56.23%). Those who were self-employed accounted for 110 respondents (29.18%), while employed respondents comprised 55 individuals (14.59%). This distribution highlighted that more than half of the respondents were not formally employed at the time of the study, which may have had implications for how work-related experiences and perspectives were reflected in their responses.

Table 1
Respondent's Profile

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	169	44.83
Female	208	55.17
<i>Educational Attainment</i>		
Senior High School	80	21.22
Undergraduate	156	41.38
Graduate	141	37.40
<i>Work</i>		
Employed	55	14.59
Self-Employed	110	29.18
Unemployed	212	56.23

IV. Law Enforcement

Table 2 presented the level of law enforcement effectiveness across key operational dimensions: patrol visibility and prevention, intelligence and strategic operations, and community engagement and trust. Overall, the findings indicated that law enforcement performance was generally highly effective, with mean ratings clustered at the upper end of the scale and low standard deviations, suggesting consistency in respondents' perceptions (Weisburd et al., 2024). This reflected a favorable assessment of policing efforts to maintain peace, prevent crime, and address public safety needs.

Patrol Visibility and Prevention obtained a high mean rating and was interpreted as highly effective, indicating that regular patrols and visible police presence were perceived as strong deterrents to crime (Weisburd et al., 2024). The very low standard deviation suggested that respondents consistently recognized patrol activities as effective in enhancing public safety and ensuring quick responses to incidents (Empinado et al., 2023). This finding supported existing literature, which emphasized that visible patrols contributed significantly to crime prevention and increased citizens' sense of security, particularly in community-based policing contexts (Modise, 2023).

Similarly, Intelligence and Strategic Operations were rated as highly effective, reflecting confidence in law enforcement agencies' ability to gather, analyze, and use information for informed decision-making. The effectiveness of intelligence-led operations suggested that police units were able to plan targeted interventions, identify crime patterns, and allocate resources strategically (Kissorio, 2022). The low variability in responses suggested shared recognition of the importance of intelligence-driven policing in addressing complex and emerging criminal activities (Ezeji, 2024). In contrast, Community Engagement and Trust, while still rated positively, was interpreted as merely effective rather than highly effective. This suggested that although efforts to build community partnerships were present, there was room to strengthen public trust and collaboration. Community engagement was identified as a critical component of effective policing, as trust and citizen cooperation enhanced information sharing and compliance with the law (Imam, 2022). The slightly lower effectiveness rating highlighted the need for law enforcement agencies to further invest in transparent communication, community outreach programs, and participatory initiatives to deepen police–community relations and sustain long-term public support.

The findings implied that while law enforcement agencies demonstrated strong operational effectiveness, particularly in patrol visibility and intelligence-driven strategies, sustained public safety outcomes depended on strengthening community engagement and trust (Okoru et al., 2024). Highly effective patrol and intelligence

operations suggested that police institutions were well-equipped to prevent and respond to crime; however, the relatively lower effectiveness of community relations indicated a need to balance enforcement-oriented approaches with people-centered policing. Enhancing community engagement through consistent dialogue, transparency, and collaborative problem-solving was found to foster greater public cooperation, improve information flow, and legitimize police actions (Modise, 2023). Therefore, law enforcement agencies were encouraged to integrate operational efficiency with trust-building initiatives to ensure that effectiveness was measured not only by crime-control outcomes but also by the quality of police–community relationships that supported long-term peace and social stability.

Table 2

Level of Law Enforcement Effectiveness

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Patrol Visibility and Prevention (Patrol)	4.28	0.03	Highly Effective
Intelligence and Strategic Operations (Intelligence)	4.25	0.09	Highly Effective
Community Engagement and Trust (Community Relations)	4.23	0.07	Effective

Legend: 1.00-1.80 Very Low Effectiveness; 1.81-2.61 Low Effectiveness; 2.62- 3.42 Fair Effectiveness; 3.43-4.23 Effectiveness; 4.24-5.00 Highly Effectiveness

V. Resurgence of Illegal Drugs

The findings in Table 3 highlighted the community's perception regarding the resurgence of illegal drugs, focusing on frequency and visibility, availability and access, and the impact on safety and order. The variable Frequency and Visibility received a mean score of 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.02, indicating a highly positive perception. This suggested that respondents consistently observed or noticed illegal drug activities within their communities, pointing to a visible presence that could not be overlooked. The low standard deviation emphasized uniformity in perceptions, showing that the community largely agreed on the noticeable frequency of these activities.

The variable Availability and Access received the highest mean score of 4.29 with a standard deviation of 0.07, reflecting a very highly positive perception. This indicated that respondents perceived illegal drugs as being highly accessible and readily available (Savonen et al., 2023). Such perceptions may have stemmed from ease of purchase, widespread distribution networks, or insufficient enforcement in local areas. The slightly higher standard deviation compared to other variables suggested some variation in experiences, but overall, the consensus pointed to a significant concern about the accessibility of illegal substances.

Regarding the Impact on Safety and Order, the mean score of 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.02 aligned with perceptions of frequency and visibility, both falling within the highly positive category. This indicated that respondents recognized the resurgence of illegal drugs as a substantial factor affecting community safety and public order. The uniformity in responses demonstrated a shared understanding that the presence of illegal drugs disrupted social stability, increased crime potential, and created an environment in which law enforcement and safety measures were continually challenged (Dandurand, 2021). Overall, the data suggested that the community perceived the resurgence of illegal drugs as both highly visible and readily accessible, with significant implications for safety and public order. These perceptions underscored the need for targeted intervention strategies, increased law enforcement visibility, and community-based programs to mitigate the effects of illegal drug proliferation (Boller-Piol et al., 2024). Addressing both availability and its impact on safety was found to potentially strengthen community resilience and restore public trust in local governance and policing efforts (Mukherjee & Mathew, 2024).

Table 3 Resurgence of Illegal Drugs

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Frequency and Visibility	4.21	0.02	Highly Positive perception
Availability and Access	4.29	0.07	Very Highly Positive

Impact of Safety and Order	4.21	0.02	perception Highly perception	Positive
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Legend: 1.00-1.80 Negative Perception; 1.81-2.61 Less Positive Perception; 2.62- 3.42 Fairly Positive Perception; 3.43-4.23 Highly Positive Perception; 4.24-5.00 Very Highly Positive perception

Significant Relationship between the Law Enforcement Effectiveness and the Resurgence of Illegal Drugs

The analysis of the relationship between Patrol Visibility and Prevention and the resurgence of illegal drugs across different dimensions—frequency and visibility, availability and access, and impact on safety and order—revealed weak and non-significant correlations. Specifically, the r-values ranged from -0.178 to -0.18, with p-values between 0.623 and 0.76. These results indicated that patrol visibility, while a fundamental component of law enforcement, did not show a statistically significant relationship with how often illegal drugs were observed, how accessible they were, or their impact on community safety. This suggested that mere visibility of patrols was not sufficient to deter drug-related activities or significantly influence public perceptions of safety.

In contrast, Intelligence and Strategic Operations exhibited a mixed pattern of relationships. While correlations with frequency and visibility ($r = 0.99$, $p = 0.04$) and availability and access ($r = 0.97$, $p = 0.001$) were positive and statistically significant, the relationship with impact on safety and order was weak and non-significant ($r = 0.23$, $p = 0.66$). These results implied that intelligence-driven initiatives and strategic operations were closely associated with the detection and accessibility of illegal drugs, demonstrating effectiveness in tracking and understanding the drug landscape. However, these measures alone were not sufficient to directly influence broader community perceptions of safety and order, highlighting a gap between operational success and perceived public safety.

Similarly, Community Engagement and Trust showed consistently weak and non-significant correlations across all dimensions of the resurgence of illegal drugs. The r-values ranged from 0.08 to 0.12, with p-values between 0.05 and 0.83. This suggested that, within the context of the study, community engagement initiatives did not demonstrate a measurable impact on drug frequency, accessibility, or perceived safety. These findings underscored the need for more targeted or integrated strategies that combined community relations with operational enforcement to achieve tangible effects on drug-related outcomes.

Overall, the findings indicated that not all components of law enforcement effectiveness equally influenced the resurgence of illegal drugs. Strategic intelligence and operations showed clear and significant relationships with certain measurable aspects of drug activity, particularly frequency and availability. In contrast, patrol visibility and community engagement did not exhibit statistically significant effects. These results suggested that law enforcement agencies needed to prioritize intelligence-led strategies, complemented by visible patrols and community-based initiatives, to develop a holistic approach that both disrupted drug networks and enhanced public confidence in safety and order.

Table 4

Test of Significant Relationship between the Law Enforcement Effectiveness and the Resurgence of Illegal Drugs

Variables	<i>r</i> value	<i>p</i> value	Decision
Patrol Visibility and Prevention (Patrol) and Frequency and Visibility	-0.178	0.623	Not significant
Patrol Visibility and Prevention (Patrol) and Availability and Access	-0.18	0.23	Not significant
Patrol Visibility and Prevention (Patrol) and Impact of Safety and Order	-0.18	0.76	Not significant
Intelligence and Strategic Operations (Intelligence) and Frequency and Visibility	0.9	0.04	Significant

Variables	<i>r</i> value	<i>p</i> value	Decision
and Availability and Access	9	0.00	
Intelligence and Strategic Operations (Intelligence) and Impact of Safety and Order	7	0.9	Significant
Community Engagement and Trust (Community Relations) and Frequency and Visibility	3	0.66	Not Significant
Community Engagement and Trust (Community Relations) and Availability and Access	2	0.82	Not Significant
Community Engagement and Trust (Community Relations) and Impact of Safety and Order	0	0.1	Not Significant
	8	0.05	Significant
	0	0.0	

Legend:

VI. Conclusions

Based on the quantitative descriptive-correlational analysis that was conducted in selected barangays of Ozamiz City, this study finds that while law enforcement is perceived generally as effective, particularly in terms of intelligence enforcements, resurgence into illegal drugs still prevails in a highly visible and accessible manner. This suggests that enforcement remains acquitted from actual crime control, particularly that patrol visibility and community engagement do not surface as significantly influencing reduced drug resurgence, unlike strategic intelligence. In local parlance, this awareness of disparity between effective operational scale and continued resurgence of operationally effective but sustainability-needing drug paraphernalia portends the dire need for paradigm shift—focusing from merely an enforcement-oriented approach toward a balanced one, with strong, intelligence-driven policing tempered with genuine community collaboration, trust-building, and transparency in order to attain true sustainability of the reduction of illegal drug activities and comprehensive public safety, and thus offering actionable evidence-based insights to inform policy makers worldwide.

VII. Recommendations

On the basis of the result that law enforcement is viewed as effective only within intelligence and patrol functions, but community engagement is low, and the rise in law enforcement does not deter drug use, a complementary approach that combines multiple strategies is required. Thus, it is suggested that law enforcement services need to enhance intelligence-driven policing capacity significantly with the aim of undermining drug trafficking networks discreetly through enhanced information analysis, which is backed by the fact that intelligence positively correlated strongly with reducing drug frequency and availability. At the same time, it is fundamental that law enforcement services need to evolve community engagement deeply, shifting the focus towards developing programs that entail citizens' collective participation for crime prevention, supported by the fact that community engagement ranked lower, which implies that community development programs could cover the difference between effective services and improved public safety. Just like intelligence, which aims to target drug trafficking, improving

community engagement, which aims to gain support, collectively helps law enforcement strategize effectively regarding the ever-occurring issue of illicit drug use.

VIII. DECLARATION OF AI TOOLS

I acknowledge the use of Grammarly in assisting me to review the spelling, grammar, spacing and sentence construction in my whole paper during the final stage of writing.

I used the following prompt: "Suggest ways to improve the flow of words, clarity and concision. Provide suggestions with examples."

I used the output to correct the grammar and sentences, and revised the writing to improve my whole paper.

I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT [<https://chat.openai.com/>] to help create the schematic diagram subconstructs of my study.

I entered the following prompt: "Identify the possible sub-constructs of my variables."

I used the output as a starting point for generating ideas in my schematic diagram.

I acknowledge the use of ChatPDF [<https://www.chatpdf.com/>] to help us improved our work.

I acknowledge the use of humanize ai [<https://humanize.ai/>], it helped us humanized the words taken from the AI tools above.

I acknowledge the used of the TinyURL [<https://tinyurl.com/>], it helped us shortened the URL's that we used on our reference.

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