ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 5| May 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

THE EFFECTIVENESS AND CHALLENGES OF SQUAD WEEKLY INTERACTIVE MEETINGS (SWIM) AT A MUNICIPAL POLICE STATION

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra21629
DOI No: 10.36713/epra21629

ABSTRACT

The research aimed to identify factors affecting Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) at a Municipal Police Station's effectiveness, strategies ensuring effectiveness, perceived challenges, and measures to improve SWIM implementation. The primary goal of the PNP SWIM program is to foster favorable connections between law enforcement agencies and the community through active participation of volunteer church leaders, irrespective of their religious affiliations, in cooperation with the police. The program includes an evaluation of station commanders and regional directors to assess their compliance with SWIM. It was recommended that the program be conducted weekly, involving one life coach, one squad leader, and at least seven to eight participants. Utilizing a case study method, data was collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document reviews, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Participants included 20 police officers actively engaged in SWIM meetings. Findings highlighted key factors influencing effectiveness, such as well-defined objectives, community engagement, effective facilitation, and comprehensive participation. Challenges included scheduling difficulties, limited discussion time, and the need for improved facilitation. Recommended measures for enhancing SWIM effectiveness included clear agenda, consistent scheduling, effective facilitation training, active participation promotion, goal-setting, accountability systems, feedback mechanisms, technology integration, and inclusivity in meetings.

KEYWORDS: *Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings, SWIM, police effectiveness, meeting facilitation, thematic analysis, Municipal Police, police collaboration, community engagement, qualitative research.*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine National Police (PNP) has implemented an internal cleansing procedure to promote accountability and eradicate corruption within its ranks. The system consists of three tactics: preventive, punitive, and restorative (Lungarazo et al., 2014). The preventive method aims to proactively eliminate corrupt conduct through the establishment of a Code of Ethics, ethics training, and a zero-tolerance stance towards corruption. The punitive approach administers disciplinary measures, including suspension, dismissal, and criminal prosecution, to officials involved in unethical behavior (Lingaro et al., 2014). The restorative strategy focuses on rehabilitating officers through counseling, mentorship, and education programs (Ayapana et al., 2017). These measures aim to restore trust and integrity within the organization (Herrera & Paredes, 2021).

The PNP is implementing a comprehensive internal cleansing mechanism to maintain ethical and professional behavior. This involves a tripartite strategy of prevention, punishment, and restoration to address officer misconduct, offenders, and rehabilitation. The PNP is implementing the Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) program, led by Police Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Azurin Jr., in partnership with the "Kasimbayanan" program. The KASIMBAYANAN program aims to strengthen relationships between the police force and the community, involving volunteer church leaders. The SWIM program also includes spiritual counseling sessions for PNP personnel, which has led to a decrease in dismissals, suspensions, and demotions of PNP personnel responsible for administrative offenses.

During the SWIM program, members of the PNP are provided with the assistance of life coaches from the religious sector. These life coaches engage PNP personnel in reading and interpreting Bible verses, drawing connections between the teachings of the Bible and their professional duties as well as personal experiences. The initiation of our internal cleansing program involved a comprehensive framework encompassing preventive, punitive, and restorative measures. Over time, there has been a noticeable decrease in dismissals, suspensions, and demotions of PNP personnel who have been proven culpable of administrative offenses, indicating that the PNP initiatives are effective.

The main goal of the PNP SWIM program is to promote the development of favorable connections between law enforcement agencies and the community. This is achieved through the active involvement of volunteer church leaders in cooperative endeavors with law enforcement agencies. The program includes a thorough evaluation of station commanders and regional directors to gauge their compliance with the SWIM program, which is suggested to be conducted weekly with a single life coach, one squad leader, and a minimum of seven to eight participants (PNP, 2023).

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The SWIM program fosters camaraderie and stronger interpersonal connections among participants by engaging in discussions about spiritual or personal matters. These groups create an environment for engaging discussions on subjects like prayer, study, and individual development, with relationships formed within these groups being more intense, intimate, and long-lasting compared to relationships formed through conventional church activities (Oscarsson & Emmelin, 2009). Additionally, the SWIM program provides valuable support and encouragement to participants, especially during times of adversity or hardship. Overall, the SWIM program is seen as an effective method for fostering interpersonal connections, providing mutual support, and facilitating spiritual development.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study examined the effectiveness and challenges of the Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) within the Municipal Police Station.

1. What are the factors that affect the effectiveness of the Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) within the Municipal Police Station?
2. What strategies help to ensure the effectiveness of Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) within the Municipal Police Station?
3. What are the perceived challenges in the effectiveness of the Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) within the Municipal Police Station?
4. What proposed measures can be made to improve implementation and effectiveness of the Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) within the Municipal Police Station?

METHODS

The study investigated the effectiveness and challenges of the Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) at the Municipal Police Station. The qualitative narrative analysis method was chosen for its ability to provide an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon within its real-life context. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document reviews. This method allowed for a contextual understanding of the unique dynamics and constraints within the station. Recommendations were developed to address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of SWIM meetings, tailored to the specific context of the Municipal Police Station.

Participants of the Case Study

The participants in the study were 20 police officers who personally experienced and participated in the Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) at the Municipal Police Station.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The study used semi-structured interviews and narrative analysis to gather data on the effectiveness and challenges of SWIM meetings at the Municipal Police Station. The participants were selected based on their roles and active participation in meetings. An interview guide was developed with key questions related to the effectiveness and challenges of SWIM meetings. Data saturation was achieved, and observations were conducted to document the structure, dynamics, and interactions during meetings. Document reviews were conducted to supplement the data. Narrative analysis was employed to analyze the transcripts, observations, and document reviews, identifying themes, coding, refining, mapping, and reporting findings. This systematic exploration of SWIM meetings within the police station provided a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives and contextual factors influencing them.

Ethical Considerations

The study on the effectiveness and challenges of the Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) within the Municipal Police Station was conducted with several ethical considerations. These included obtaining informed consent from participants, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality, minimizing harm, voluntary participation, transparency and honesty, data security, recognizing researcher bias, and considering the potential benefits of the study. Participants were informed about the purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality of their data. Researchers also minimized harm and discomfort to participants, providing support or referrals to counseling services if necessary. Data security measures included securely storing records, limiting access to authorized personnel, and employing encryption and password protection. Researchers acknowledged their own biases and aimed to contribute positively to the organization while upholding ethical standards. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board or ethics committee. Participants were offered feedback on the study's results and a debriefing session after data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of SWIM

The effectiveness of Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) within the Municipal Police Station is influenced by several factors. These include the clarity and alignment of the meeting's purpose with the station's overall objectives, the structure of the meeting agenda, frequency and duration of meetings, level of attendance and participation, effectiveness of facilitators, community engagement, communication, feedback mechanisms, and organizational culture.

Clarity and Alignment of Objectives: The effectiveness of SWIM meetings largely depends on having clear and well-defined objectives. Meetings that lack a distinct focus or have poorly defined goals tend to be less productive. Effective religious programs within police work often have well-defined objectives and goals. For example, Johnson (2015) found that programs with clear aims, such as fostering interfaith understanding or providing emotional support to officers, tend to be more successful.

Structured Agenda: A well-structured agenda is essential for productive meetings. It should specify topics, discussion points, and time allocations. Meetings with disorganized or excessively long agendas can result in unproductive discussions. Effective facilitation requires the use of structured agendas to keep meetings focused and productive.

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Frequency and Duration of Meetings: The frequency and duration of SWIM meetings must balance the needs for timely communication and the potential for meeting fatigue. Infrequent meetings can result in communication gaps, while overly frequent meetings may cause fatigue. Balancing the work schedule of police personnel with SWIM activities is necessary to avoid stress and fatigue.

Attendance and Participation: The level of attendance and participation from squad members and leadership is crucial. Consistently low attendance or lack of engagement from participants can hinder the effectiveness of meetings. Active participation is necessary for productive discussions and decision-making. Encouraging participation from all members is essential for the success of SWIM meetings.

Effectiveness of Facilitators: The skill of the meeting facilitator significantly impacts the effectiveness of SWIM meetings. Skilled facilitators can keep discussions on track, manage conflicts, and ensure that all voices are heard. The religious leaders involved in SWIM are viewed as effective mentors and facilitators, which enhances the discussions.

Community Engagement: Community engagement in religious programs is essential. Successful programs, such as the police chaplaincy programs reported by The New York Times (2018), actively engage with local religious communities to build trust and cooperation.

Communication and Information Sharing: Effective communication of information, updates, and priorities during SWIM meetings is crucial. Using vernacular language during discussions helps in more open communication. The station's willingness to collect participant feedback and make continuous improvements is also critical for the success of SWIM meetings.

Organizational Culture: The culture and organizational dynamics of the police station can significantly impact the effectiveness of SWIM meetings. A culture that values open communication, collaboration, and accountability is conducive to effective meetings. Providing training and development opportunities in communication, leadership, and problem-solving can enhance the effectiveness of SWIM meetings.

External Factors: External factors such as community events, emergencies, or changes in local crime patterns can influence the relevance and scheduling of SWIM meetings. Regular evaluation and modification of the meeting procedure in response to participant feedback and changing requirements can help maximize their effectiveness over time.

Strategies for Ensuring the Effectiveness of SWIM

To ensure the effectiveness of Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) within the Municipal Police Station, several strategies can be implemented based on data. These strategies aim to enhance communication, collaboration, and overall productivity during SWIM meetings.

Clear Meeting Objectives and Agenda: Establishing specific and measurable objectives for each SWIM meeting and developing a well-structured agenda that outlines discussion topics, time allocations, and responsible parties can enhance their effectiveness. Participants should know the purpose of the meeting, the topics to be discussed, and the expected outcomes (Tuckman, 1965).

Regular and Consistent Schedule: Holding SWIM meetings on a regular and predictable schedule ensures consistency. Meetings should be held on a consistent schedule, such as weekly or bi-weekly, to establish a routine and ensure that important issues are addressed promptly (Allen, 1977).

Effective Facilitation: Appointing a skilled and impartial meeting facilitator who can guide discussions, keep participants on track, and ensure that all voices are heard is crucial. Encouraging open dialogue and managing conflicts constructively are also important. Research by Bens (2005) and Lencioni (2002) highlights the importance of a skilled facilitator who can guide discussions, keep the meeting on track, and ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute.

Attendance and Participation: Setting expectations for attendance and participation, emphasizing the importance of active engagement, and implementing measures to track attendance and hold team members accountable for their presence and contributions can ensure participation. Encouraging active participation and engagement of all team members is vital. Research by Hackman and Vidmar (1970) emphasizes that fostering a culture of open communication and participation leads to more productive meetings.

Technology and Resources: Ensuring the necessary technology and resources are readily available and functional is important. Action items and decisions made during meetings should be documented and followed up on. Research by Rogelberg et al. (2007) highlights the importance of accountability to maintain meeting effectiveness.

Preparation and Documentation: Requiring participants to prepare in advance by reviewing meeting materials and relevant data, and assigning someone to take minutes and document action items, decisions, and follow-up tasks during the meeting are crucial for preparation and documentation.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement: Encouraging feedback from SWIM participants on meeting structure, content, and overall effectiveness, and using feedback to make continuous improvements to the SWIM process, addressing any identified issues promptly, is important for continuous improvement. Establishing mechanisms for collecting feedback from participants regarding the quality and effectiveness of the meetings can help in making continuous improvements (Rogelberg et al., 2013).

Timely and Relevant Information Sharing: Ensuring that all critical updates, information, and priorities are communicated during SWIM meetings and emphasizing the importance of

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sharing timely and relevant information that affects squad operations is crucial for information sharing.

Training and Skill Development: Investing in training and skill development programs for squad members and leaders to enhance their communication, leadership, and problem-solving abilities, and offering workshops or coaching sessions to improve meeting etiquette and collaboration skills, are important. Providing training and development opportunities for team members and leaders to improve meeting skills and collaborative behaviors (Rogelberg et al., 2007).

Accountability and Follow-Up: Holding participants accountable for action items and commitments made during SWIM meetings, and establishing a system for tracking progress on action items and reporting on their status during subsequent meetings, is crucial for accountability.

Recognition and Celebration: Recognizing and celebrating squad achievements and milestones during SWIM meetings to boost morale and motivation can enhance the effectiveness of the meetings. Community involvement is also important. Consider involving the community or relevant stakeholders in select SWIM meetings to foster transparency and community policing efforts.

Emergency Response Protocols: Developing clear protocols for addressing emergencies or urgent matters during SWIM meetings ensures a swift and coordinated response. Regularly evaluating the effectiveness of SWIM meetings through surveys, feedback forms, or post-meeting discussions, and using the evaluation results to make data-driven adjustments to meeting processes and content, is important for evaluation and adjustment.

Supportive Organizational Culture: Fostering an organizational culture that values teamwork, open communication, and continuous improvement, aligning with the objectives of SWIM meetings, is crucial for a supportive organizational culture.

Perceived Challenges in the Effectiveness of SWIM

Perceived challenges in the effectiveness of Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) within the Municipal Police Station, based on data, may include low attendance rates, lack of active participation, inadequate preparation, poor time management, communication barriers, resistance to change, and cultural and organizational factors.

Low Attendance Rates: Analysis of attendance records over several months reveals that attendance rates at SWIM meetings are consistently acceptable, with many squad members frequently present, while some members are not attending due to their preoccupation with work. Low attendance can hinder effective communication and collaboration, as key participants may not be present to provide input or make decisions.

Lack of Active Participation: Observations and feedback indicate that some attendees tend to be passive during SWIM meetings, rarely contributing to discussions or providing insights. Inactive participation can lead to unproductive meetings where valuable perspectives are not shared, potentially resulting in uninformed decisions.

Inadequate Preparation: Surveys and self-assessments reveal that squad members often feel unprepared for SWIM meetings, with many indicating that they do not have sufficient time to review materials beforehand. Inadequate preparation can lead to disjointed discussions and a lack of focus during meetings, reducing their overall effectiveness.

Poor Time Management: Analysis of meeting minute's shows that SWIM meetings frequently exceed their allocated time, often running longer than scheduled. Poor time management can cause frustration among participants, disrupt daily operations, and deter squad members from fully engaging in future meetings.

Communication Barriers: Feedback from squad members highlights challenges in effective communication during SWIM meetings, with some reporting difficulty in conveying their thoughts or concerns. Communication barriers can hinder the exchange of important information and ideas, impeding problem-solving and decision-making.

Resistance to Change: Interviews and surveys indicate that some squad members and leaders are resistant to changes proposed or discussed during SWIM meetings. Resistance to change can slow down the implementation of necessary improvements and innovations, limiting the station's ability to adapt to evolving circumstances.

Cultural and Organizational Factors: Interviews with squad members and leaders suggest that certain aspects of the station's organizational culture may discourage open communication and participation. Cultural and organizational factors can create a hostile or unproductive environment during SWIM meetings, discouraging engagement and transparency.

Addressing these perceived challenges would require a multifaceted approach, including training, cultural change initiatives, and process improvements to enhance the effectiveness of SWIM meetings within the Municipal Police Station.

Proposed Measures for Improvement

Several proposed measures can be considered to enhance the implementation and efficacy of Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) at the Municipal Police Station. The objective of these measures is to improve communication, participation, and overall productivity during SWIM meetings by addressing the previously mentioned perceived challenges.

Clearly Define Meeting Objectives: Ensure that each SWIM meeting has well-defined objectives and outcomes, emphasizing their alignment with the station's overall goals and priorities.

Regularly Communicate Meeting Importance: Continuously emphasize the importance of SWIM meetings and their role in decision-making, information sharing, and

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squad cohesion to encourage better attendance and participation.

Attendance Tracking and Accountability: Implement a system to track attendance, and establish consequences for frequent absences without valid reasons, such as reporting to immediate supervisors.

Participation Expectations: Set clear expectations for active participation during SWIM meetings, encouraging squad members to contribute ideas, feedback, and solutions.

Training and Skill Development: Offer training and skill development programs focused on effective meeting participation, communication, and leadership skills to enhance the capabilities of squad members and leaders.

Meeting Preparation Guidelines: Provide guidelines for meeting preparation, including the distribution of meeting materials well in advance, ensuring participants have sufficient time to review them.

Effective Facilitation: Train meeting facilitators in effective facilitation techniques, including how to manage discussions, encourage participation, and keep meetings on track.

Time Management Tools: Use time management tools and techniques, such as timers and agenda timers, to ensure that SWIM meetings adhere to their scheduled durations.

Agenda Prioritization: Prioritize agenda items based on their importance and relevance, focusing on critical issues and allowing sufficient time for discussion and decision-making.

Communication Skills Training: Provide communication skills training to address communication barriers and improve the ability of squad members to convey their thoughts and concerns effectively.

Change Management Initiatives: Implement change management strategies to address resistance to change, including clear communication of the reasons for proposed changes and their expected benefits.

Action Item Tracking and Follow-Up: Establish a systematic process for tracking action items, assigning responsibility, and setting deadlines, with regular follow-up and reporting on progress during SWIM meetings.

Feedback Mechanisms: Create avenues for participants to provide feedback on the effectiveness of SWIM meetings and use this feedback to make continuous improvements.

Streamlined Documentation: Simplify and standardize meeting documentation to ensure that minutes and action items are clear, concise, and easy to follow.

Inclusive Culture Promotion: Promote an inclusive and open culture within the station, where all squad members feel valued and encouraged to contribute during SWIM meetings.

Recognition and Rewards: Recognize and reward squad members for their active participation, innovative ideas, and contributions to SWIM meetings to boost motivation and engagement.

Emergency Response Protocols: Develop clear protocols for addressing emergencies or urgent matters during SWIM meetings, ensuring that they can be handled efficiently.

Regular Review and Adaptation: Conduct regular reviews of SWIM meeting processes and content based on data and feedback, making adjustments as needed to improve effectiveness.

By implementing these proposed measures and tailoring them to the specific needs and context of the Municipal Police Station, SWIM meetings can become more effective tools for promoting collaboration, communication, and decision-making among squad members and leadership. Regular monitoring and adaptation based on real data and feedback will be key to ensuring their long-term success.

CONCLUSIONS

The study identified several important factors that influence the effectiveness of Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) at the Municipal Police Station. These factors include well-defined objectives and goals, community engagement, effective facilitation, the participation and involvement of all team members, and discussions centered on achieving the team's objectives. Additionally, agenda prioritization, accountability and follow-up, feedback mechanisms, technology integration, and training and development play crucial roles in determining the success of these meetings.

The research revealed a variety of strategies that can improve the effectiveness of SWIM meetings. These strategies encompass setting clear agendas, regular scheduling, effective facilitation, encouraging participation, outcome-oriented discussions, agenda prioritization, follow-up and accountability, feedback mechanisms, technology integration, and training and development for team members and leaders.

The study also identified a number of perceived difficulties in the efficacy of SWIM meetings at the Municipal Police Station. Common obstacles included scheduling difficulties, limited time for discussions, the need for improved facilitation to ensure that all voices are heard, and the requirement to maintain an inclusive environment that respects the officers' diverse religious and cultural beliefs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study suggests several recommendations to improve the effectiveness of Squad Weekly Interactive Meetings (SWIM) at the Municipal Police Station. These include clear and structured agendas, consistent scheduling, effective facilitation training, fostering active participation, setting specific goals and objectives, prioritizing agenda items based on relevance, implementing accountability and follow-up systems, establishing feedback mechanisms for participants, exploring technology integration for virtual meetings and document

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sharing, providing training and development opportunities for team members and leaders, and ensuring diversity and inclusivity in meetings.

The recommendations aim to improve the effectiveness of SWIM meetings, improve communication and collaboration among officers, and address the challenges identified in the study. Clear and structured agendas will help participants understand the purpose of the meetings, while consistent scheduling ensures regular communication. Effective facilitation training will enhance the skills of meeting facilitators, and fostering a culture of active participation will allow diverse perspectives to be heard. Implementing these recommendations will help the station enhance the effectiveness of SWIM meetings, improve communication and collaboration among officers, and address the identified challenges.

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