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CAUGHT IN THE ACT: BODY-WORN CAMERA DURING POLICE OPERATIONS OF DAGUPAN CITY PNP

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INTRODUCTION

Body-Worn Cameras or BWC are small audio-video recorders that are 'mounted' on the law enforcement officers. The shapes and types vary but in general, all models aim to achieve two overarching goals (Reinhardt & Sykes, 2014). They are believed to prevent violence or new crimes by capturing police-public interactions from the officer's perspective. On the other hand, they aid in the prosecution of criminals. When the cameras are visible to suspects, and officers are aware that the devices are turned on and capturing their behavior, a signal is transmitted to individuals present in the encounter: 'Look out! You're on camera' (Ariel et. al., 2016).

In addition, Body-Worn Cameras claim they can provide a great variety of benefits, including increased transparency and accountability, reductions in officer use of force, citizen complaints, and crime, officer and citizen compliance, enhanced police legitimacy, better evidence collection and documentation, training benefits, and assistance in court processes (Headley et al., 2017). Body-worn cameras have been considered as one way to improve law enforcement practice more generally and an approach to solve the issues of trustworthiness, commitment, and public perception. These are the challenges that the Police Agency and the community must confront and understand. As a result of enforcing the law, police are vulnerable to unexpected events during police operations. For example, if an apprehended individual resists arrest, they could fight back, and it can affect the outcome if the police act appropriately. In that regard, the body-worn camera is a solid proof by the police since there is no question to deny and reverse the police action when there is an actual footage. When utilized by law enforcement officers on patrol or other operations that put them into contact with people of the community, this technology, which may be installed on an officer's eyeglasses or chest area, provides real-time information. Another advantage of body-worn cameras is that they give law enforcement with a surveillance tool that promotes officer safety and efficiency while also preventing crime (Chapman, 2018).

The prevalence of crime is common in all the societies, whether it is rural or urban. It is important to implement operative crime prevention strategies, to lessen the crime happening in the community. There are certain points that need to be understood when a person is observing crime prevention strategies. These are all levels of the government specifically the PNP should contribute leadership role towards the prevention of crime by formulation proper rules and advancing the use of modern technologies that could be in big help. As people are facing the modern technology, the Philippine National Police also never falls behind the trend. They use body-worn camera for operation to be conducted by the selected personnel of PNP during its operation. Therefore, the researchers became interested of the concept of utilizing body-worn camera which the Dagupan PNP uses as a direct evidence tool, to stop unneeded incidents from occurring while operations are being conducted, reduce crime, and protect the integrity and safety of all events.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employs a Qualitative research approach, specifically a Case Study research design. With the help of this research methodology, the researchers will gain more in-depth understanding about the body-worn cameras used by the PNP.

Population and Locale of the Study

The study will be conducted at the City of Dagupan, one of the independent component cities in the Ilocos Region (Pas and Cities, n.d.). The participants was provided by Police Major Apollo Calimlim and further verified through the logbook or the duty details document. Furthermore, they were selected as the participants of this study because of their personal experience in using the body-worn camera during police operations in the said city.

Data Gathering Instrument

The primary sources of data were taken from the responses of the participants using semi- structured guide interview. According to George T. (2022), semi-structured interview guide is a data collection method that relies on asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework. However, the questions are not set in order or in phrasing. The interview guide was created in response to the problems identified in the study

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers will first establish rapport with the participants and formally seek their consent to participate in the study. Upon receiving approval, the researchers will provide each participant with a consent form explaining the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Scheduled interviews and FGDs will then be conducted, with the discussions recorded (with participant permission) and supplemented by field notes. This process will ensure an accurate and detailed representation of the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding workplace gadget use.

Data Analysis

Data from interviews and FGDs will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The collected data will be systematically coded to identify recurring themes and patterns, providing insights into employees' gadget-related behaviors, challenges, and benefits.

Ethical Considerations

Consideration of ethical issues is necessary to guarantee the participants' privacy as well as their safety. Among the significant ethical issues that were considered in the research process includes plagiarism, voluntariness, confidentiality, and consent. The researchers also presented informed consent form and communicated all important details of the study, including the objective and purpose, to secure the consent of all participants. Furthermore, the documents acquired and managed with the

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utmost confidentiality.

All the information and the data obtained used for research purposes only. The provisioning agency/office were fully informed of the study's goals and objectives. Texts by other authors that was utilized in any aspect of the study was thoroughly referenced, and the researchers followed standard citation and acknowledged sources.

RESULTS

Base on the data gathered, the following results were drawn:

1. The most common police operations that Dagupan City PNP uses body-worn camera with are drug-buy bust operation and serving of warrants which was themed as “Arrest and Search Operations”.
2. The importance of using body-worn camera in police operation as perceived by the respondents is to preserve evidentiary value and ensure the compliance of officers in standard procedure.
3. The most common problems encountered by the respondents in the use of body- worn camera during police operation are easily drained battery and slipping of body worn camera which is caused by its improper positioning which was themed as “Technical Problem”.
4. The researchers developed and proposed intervening measures that may help to address the challenges encountered by the respondents in the use of body-worn camera during police operations.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study present important insights into the use of body-worn cameras (BWCs) by the Dagupan City PNP in police operations. BWCs were found to be used mainly during "Arrest and Search Operations," more specifically drug-buy bust operations and serving warrants. This observation highlights the significance attached to deploying BWCs in risky and legally sensitive operations where recording police behavior and maintaining evidence is of the highest priority. Such applications are consistent with international trends emphasizing transparency and accountability in policing, particularly in context-specific operations.

The respondents saw evidentiary value maintenance and compliance with standard operating procedure as the most important role of BWCs. This twofold function of BWCs—protecting the integrity of evidence and encouraging professional behavior—underscores their worth not merely in supporting operational effectiveness but also in establishing public confidence in law enforcement. Nevertheless, the research further disclosed serious hindrances in the field application of BWCs, specifically technical problems like easily depleted batteries and incorrect positioning, which tend to make the devices slide throughout operations. These are labeled as "Technical Problems," suggesting that what is needed is better technology, ergonomics, and officer training.

In order to mitigate these challenges, the researchers set out intervention measures that could help mitigate the outlined problems. While interventions were not specified, the possible solutions may involve acquiring newer BWC models with enhanced battery life, creating more secure and adjustable mounts, and offering standard training in correct use and care. These interventions can increase the efficiency and reliability of BWCs to ensure continued use in fostering accountability and operational effectiveness.

The results have important policy and practice implications. Policymakers and law enforcement executives should consider incorporating these interventions into resource planning and operational procedures. Ongoing monitoring of BWC use and regular consultation with officers could also further adapt practices and respond to emerging issues. Future studies would be able to investigate long-term effects of these interventions and other wider socio-political dimensions of BWC application in Dagupan City as part of more informed knowledge about their position in contemporary policing.

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