ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 6| June 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

ASSESSING THE CAPABILITIES AND CHALLENGES OF BARANGAY TANODS AS FIRST RESPONDERS: A STUDY IN SELECTED BARANGAYS IN CABANATUAN CITY

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra22884
DOI No: 10.36713/epra22884

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in selected barangays of Cabanatuan City and focused on the roles and responsibilities of Barangay Tanods as first responders in various emergency situations, including crimes, natural disasters, and medical incidents. It also examined the challenges they face in carrying out their duties. Using a quantitative research approach, data were gathered from Barangay Tanods to assess their performance and the community's level of trust and satisfaction in their services.

Findings revealed a strong level of community confidence in the tanods' ability to apprehend suspects during criminal activities and effectively manage traffic during emergencies and public events. However, the study also identified significant challenges, with inadequate resources and equipment, as well as limited legal knowledge, as the most vital problems that hinder their effectiveness and safety.

Based on these findings, the study recommends targeted interventions such as specialized training, legal education, and the provision of essential equipment to enhance the capabilities and performance of Barangay Tanods as frontline responders in their respective communities.

KEYWORDS: *Barangay Tanods, First Responders, Capabilities, Challenges, Cabanatuan City*

INTRODUCTION

Barangay Tanods play a critical role in maintaining peace and order within their respective communities. They are the front liners who are responsible for keeping the barangay's peace and good relations and responding to emergencies and disasters (Cruz R. et al., 2021). The establishment of the barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT) serves a pivotal entity responsible for implementing a community-focused policing and public safety system. Barangay Tanods are civilian volunteers tasked with protecting communities from lawless elements and demonstrating a significant dedication to deterring crime, particularly in areas with limited police presence (Austria-Cruz, 2020). Usually, they are the first to respond during emergencies, whether they are criminal incidents, natural disasters or health crises. Further, the barangay tanods' duties and responsibilities include: supporting barangay officials in crime prevention and promoting public safety through patrolling, reporting to the offices concerned of any disruptions or unfair events, tracking the presence and actions of criminals and illegal elements, assisting the Philippine National Police and "lupong tagapayapa" (De Asis, J., et al., 2020). However, despite their vital role, little is known about their actual capabilities and the challenges they face in executing their duties. This research aims to assess the capabilities and difficulties encountered by the barangay tanods as first responders in selected barangay in Cabanatuan City. By identifying their challenges and assessing their capabilities, the findings of the study will serve as a baseline in designing an Extension Program that will offer evidence-based recommendations for local government units in enhancing the ability of the barangay tanods.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to assess the capabilities and challenges faced by the barangay tanods as first responders. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine the roles and responsibilities of barangay tanods as first responders;
2. Identify the challenges faced by the barangay tanods in performing their roles; and
3. Provide recommendations for improving the efficiency of barangay tanods as first responders

METHODOLOGY

The study focused on selected barangays in Cabanatuan City. The respondents were the barangay tanods. The research focused on their roles and responsibilities as first responders in dealing with crimes, natural disasters and medical emergencies. Likewise, the study tackled the challenges faced by the barangay tanods in performing their duties as first responders. This study also used a quantitative data collection technique.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Roles and Responsibilities of Barangay Tanods as First Responders

INDICATOR	WM	VI
1.Barangay tanods mediate minor disputes within the community to prevent escalation into more serious conflicts. This includesresolving family, neighbor or community related issues.	3.3	A
2. Barangay Tanods can apprehend individuals caught committing crimes in their presence and hand them over to the police for proper legal procedures.	3.52	A
3.BarangayTanods assist initial fact-finding or investigation, gathering witness statements and preserving crime scene until authorities arrive.	3.22	A
4. Barangay tanods assist in firefighting and help evacuate residents to safety areas.	3.27	A
5. BarangayTanods are often trained in basic first aid and can provide initial care to injured or ill persons until professional medical responders arrive.	3.13	A
6. BarangayTanods help manage and direct traffic to ensure the safety of pedestrians and motorists in cases of road accidents, heavy traffic or community events.	3.52	A
7. BarangayTanods prepare incident reports that document what transpired, which can be used as evidence in further investigations or legal actions after responding to incidents.	2.86	A
8. BarangayTanods inform residents of important barangay directives, advisories and announcementsrelated to health, safety and security.	2.90	A
9. Barangay tanods are involved in disaster preparedness response, including evacuation procedures, search and rescue.	3.10	A
10. Barangay tanodplay an essential role in enforcing quarantine protocols, ensuring compliance with health guidelines and distributing essential supplies to households during public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.	2.90	A

As can be seen from the table, Barangay Tanods can apprehend individuals caught committing crimes in their presence and hand them over to the police for proper legal procedures (3.52) obtained one of the highest scores, showing strong community trust in tanods' capacity to act decisively in crime prevention and immediate response. Intertwined with indicator number 2 is the BarangayTanods help manage and direct traffic to ensure the safety of pedestrians and motorists in cases of road accidents, heavy traffic or community events (3.52) this score reflects strong community satisfaction with how tanods ensure safety during traffic-related incidents or events.

The findings agrees to the study of Monte et al. (2023) stating that the efficacy of BPAT in keeping peace and order, demonstrating exceptional proficiency in various areas such as safety for society, law enforcement, environmental preservation, dispute settlement, and catastrophe readiness. This implies that barangay tanods are generally perceived as fulfilling their duties effectively in their multifaceted roles as first responders in the community.

Likewise, the indicator that obtained the lowest are; BarangayTanods prepare incident reports that document what transpired, which can be used as evidence in further investigations or legal actions after responding to incidents (2.86), this implies that tanods need capacity-building in administrative duties and crisis response coordination and Barangay Tanods inform residents of important barangay directives, advisories and announcements related to health, safety and security (2.90) also indicate a need for more specialized training or equipment support.

The findings agrees to the study of Aydinan (2021), stating that in understanding barangay tanods duties and obligations as initial responders, emphasizing the importance of training programs to enhance their competencies is very essential.

Table II. Challenges faced by the Barangay Tanods in performing their roles and responsibilities as first responders

INDICATOR	WM	VI
1. Limited Legal Knowledge May not fully understand the legal framework which can lead to improper handling of incidents such as unlawful arrests or poor documentation of events.	3.6	SA
2. Inadequate Resources and Equipment Lack of basic first aid kits or training in using them effectively.	3.7	SA
3. Low Compensation and Benefits Receive low allowances or honoraria which may not be enough to motivate them or compensate for the risks they take on the job.	2.5	A
4. High Personal Risk Exposed in hazardous environments with limited resources to protect their selves, increasing the risk of injury or even death.	2.5	A
5. Limited Authority and Enforcement Power Have limited authority when it comes to making arrests, conducting searches or investigating crimes. They must rely on law enforcement officers for follow up actions which can delay responses and reduce their effectiveness.	2.5	A
6. Workload and Coverage area Have limited number of tanods available to patrol or respond to emergencies making it challenging to cover the entire barangay.	2.6	A
7. Public Perception Community members may not view barangay tanods as legitimate enforces of the law which can hinder their ability to mediate disputes or enforce rules.	2.5	A
8. Limited Community Engagement	1.45	SD

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	Making it difficult to gather information or mobilize community support in maintaining peace and order.		
9.	Political Interference Barangay tanods are often appointed by barangay officials and in some cases, they are expected to show loyalty to certain political leaders. This can lead to biases in enforcing laws or handing disputes.	2.25	D
10.	Psychological Stress The stress of handling conflicts and being exposed to potential violence can lead to burnout or mental health issues of the barangay tanods.	2.4	D

As can be inferred from the table, inadequate resources and equipment (3.7) ranked first among the challenges faced by the Barangay Tanods, this directly affect the ability of tanods to perform effectively and safely. Next in rank is the Limited Legal Knowledge (3.6), this implies limitations in their day to day operations.

The findings agrees to the study of Sumad-on (2020) stating that the difficulties barangay tanods have in preventing crime, including inadequate resources like vehicles for patrol, training in self-defense techniques, and essential equipment for effective crime prevention.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. It can be conclude a strong level of community trust and satisfaction in the performance of Barangay Tanods, particularly in two critical areas of their duties: apprehending individuals caught in the act of committing crimes and managing traffic during emergencies and community events. Both indicators underscore the public's confidence in the tanods' ability to respond swiftly and effectively to maintain peace and order.
2. It can be clearly conclude that inadequate resources and equipment and limited legal knowledge are the most vital challenges faced by Barangay Tanods. These issues significantly hinder their ability to perform their duties effectively and safely. Without the proper tools and a clear understanding of legal procedures, their capacity to respond to emergencies, enforce laws, and protect the community is compromised

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, the following are recommended:

1. Conduct specialized training in traffic control, accident scene management, and basic first aid to elevate their preparedness in high-pressure situations.
2. Organize regular seminars and workshops in collaboration with the PNP, local prosecutors, or law schools to educate tanods on laws related to arrest, search and seizure, rights of the accused, barangay ordinances, and citizen's arrest procedures.
3. Develop simplified legal handbooks or quick reference guides tailored for Barangay Tanods, written in Filipino or local dialects for better comprehension.
4. Encourage participation in accredited training programs like those offered by the DILG, TESDA, local colleges or Universities focusing on community safety and legal processes.

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