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The Philippine Criminology Curriculum through the Lens of the Program Advisory Board: An Exploratory Qualitative Research

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Abstract

This exploratory qualitative research sought to examine the Philippine Criminology curriculum through the unique and often underexplored lens of the Program Advisory Board (PAB). By engaging seven experienced PAB members in semi-structured interviews, the study facilitated in-depth, reflective conversations that reached data saturation, allowing the researcher to construct a "thick description" of participants' insights, values, and experiences. The use of thematic analysis provided a structured yet flexible approach to identifying patterns and meanings across the interviews, leading to the emergence of four key themes: "Vanguard Counsel Beyond the Meeting Room," "Navigating Modern Criminology with Technology, Practice, and Ethical Policing," "Igniting Learning Through Experience," and "Synergy for Success." These themes collectively underscore the indispensable role of the PAB in shaping and enriching the criminology curriculum. Far from being passive consultants, PAB members see themselves as active contributors who bring industry-aligned perspectives that help bridge academic theory with practical realities. The research findings stress that regular and meaningful engagement with the PAB is crucial in ensuring that the curriculum remains responsive to the evolving demands of law enforcement, criminal justice systems, and societal expectations. Moreover, the study reveals a growing consensus among PAB members on the urgency of embedding modern technological tools and ethical frameworks into criminology education. These elements are critical to preparing graduates for the complex challenges of contemporary policing and investigative work. Equally significant is the emphasis on experiential learning—such as fieldwork, simulations, and practitioner-led training—which was viewed as vital to enhancing student competence and confidence. Lastly, the findings highlight that strong collaboration and synergy between the academe and advisory boards are key drivers of sustained curricular relevance, innovation, and professional alignment, ensuring that criminology graduates are well-equipped for real-world demands.

Keywords: *Criminology Program Advisory Board, Philippines*

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INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Criminology curriculum operates within a dynamic and ever-evolving landscape. Rapid societal and technological advancements, the emergence of new crimes, and the increasing demand for skilled and adaptable professionals necessitate a constant re-evaluation and adaptation of the curriculum to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. This study recognizes the crucial role of Program Advisory Boards (PABs) in this process. PABs, comprised of industry professionals, academicians, and community representatives, provide valuable insights and expertise that are essential for ensuring the curriculum remains aligned with the evolving needs of the profession (Mello, 2019; Xu et al., 2023) and the demands of the contemporary criminal justice system (Moriarty & Parsons-Pollard, 2024). However, while the importance of PAB input is acknowledged, existing literature may not fully capture the diverse perspectives and recommendations of these key stakeholders. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the perspectives of PAB members on the Philippine Criminology curriculum. By delving into their insights and concerns, this research seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement within the current curriculum.

This study will focus on understanding the PAB's perceptions of the curriculum's relevance to contemporary challenges, its effectiveness in preparing graduates for the demands of the professional world, and the adequacy of current teaching and learning methodologies. The research will also investigate the PAB's recommendations for curriculum enhancement, including the integration of new technologies, the development of essential skills (such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication), and the strengthening of industry linkages.

By examining the perspectives of PAB members, this study will provide valuable insights for higher education institutions, policymakers, and other stakeholders involved in Criminology education. The findings will inform curriculum development, faculty training, and resource allocation, ultimately leading to a more relevant, effective, and responsive Criminology curriculum that better prepares graduates for success in the 21st-century criminal justice system.

This research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on Criminology education in the Philippines. By providing a deeper understanding of the PAB's perspectives, this study will bridge the gap in existing literature and offer valuable insights for improving the quality and relevance of Criminology programs across the country.

Hence, this study will provide valuable insights into the perspectives of Program Advisory Boards on the Philippine Criminology curriculum. By addressing the identified gaps in existing literature and providing valuable recommendations for curriculum improvement, this research will contribute significantly to the enhancement of Criminology education in the Philippines and ensure that graduates are well-prepared to meet the challenges of the evolving criminal justice system.

The study of Criminology education extends beyond national borders, with international organizations playing a significant role in shaping global standards and best practices. Organizations like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) play a crucial role in promoting international cooperation in criminal justice, including the development of effective crime prevention strategies and the strengthening of criminal justice systems worldwide (Canton, 2021; Citaristi, 2022). These efforts often involve enhancing the capacity of criminal justice professionals through education and training programs.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also contributes to the development of quality education, including higher education programs (Akther, 2020; Shava, 2020). UNESCO promotes the importance

of quality education for all and emphasizes the role of education in fostering peace, sustainable development, and human rights. While UNESCO's focus may be broader, its principles of quality education and lifelong learning are highly relevant to the improvement of Criminology education programs.

However, while international organizations provide valuable frameworks and guidelines, there is a need for more localized research and adaptation to specific national and regional contexts. Existing literature may lack in-depth analyses of how international best practices and standards are being implemented and adapted within specific countries, such as the Philippines.

Furthermore, research focusing specifically on the perspectives of industry stakeholders, such as Program Advisory Boards, within the context of national curriculum development is limited. While international organizations may provide general guidelines, the specific needs and priorities of the local context often require tailored approaches and solutions.

This study aims to address these gaps by focusing on the perspectives of PAB members within the Philippine context. By understanding their unique insights and challenges, this research will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how international best practices can be effectively adapted and implemented within the Philippine setting. By bridging the gap between international best practices and the specific needs of the Philippine context, this study will contribute to the development of a more effective and globally competitive Criminology curriculum that equips graduates with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to address the complex challenges of the 21st-century criminal justice system.

In the Philippine context, criminology education has evolved significantly over the years, with an emphasis on addressing the growing need for qualified professionals to handle the complexities of the criminal justice system. The Philippines' criminology curriculum has been shaped largely by local concerns, particularly those related to crime prevention, law enforcement, and the administration of justice. However, the Philippine criminology curriculum often faces challenges in adapting to international standards and trends, despite the increasing global interconnectedness of crime. While the curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated, there remains a gap in the extent to which the input of international organizations influences the development of criminology education in the country. This gap is particularly evident when examining the role of PABs in integrating global norms into the curriculum.

One of the main gaps in the Philippine criminology curriculum is its limited incorporation of international best practices and global perspectives (Howes, 2019). While the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) oversees the accreditation and evaluation of criminology programs, the emphasis of the program has traditionally been on addressing local issues such as drug-related crimes, local insurgencies, and poverty-driven offenses. The inclusion of global concerns, such as transnational crime, terrorism, and human trafficking, in the curriculum has been slow and inconsistent (Barus, 2024). Despite the Philippines' active participation in international initiatives, such as the UNODC's regional programs and the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), there remains a gap in understanding how to effectively incorporate international standards into the local criminology curriculum. PABs could play a crucial role in addressing this gap by advising academic institutions on how to integrate such international perspectives into criminology education.

Another gap in the Philippine criminology curriculum is the lack of systematic engagement with Program Advisory Boards in shaping the educational direction of criminology programs. While advisory boards are often

comprised of experienced law enforcement officers, academics, and practitioners, their role in directly influencing curriculum reforms remains under-researched. Internationally, advisory boards are recognized for their ability to bring in external expertise and ensure that academic programs are responsive to the changing needs of the criminal justice system. However, in the Philippines, the extent to which these boards take into account international criminology standards and issues in their recommendations is unclear. This lack of research on the advisory board's role in curriculum development highlights a significant gap in the study of criminology education within the national context, as well as its alignment with international trends.

Furthermore, while the Philippines has several formalized partnerships with international organizations such as the UNODC and ASEAN, the integration of international criminology research and policies into local curricula is not as robust as it could be. For example, the UNODC's promotion of restorative justice practices and its focus on human rights in criminal justice processes (Marder, 2020; Sweidan, 2024) are concepts that have not been deeply embedded in the Philippine criminology curriculum. The Philippines' heavy focus on punitive justice systems and law enforcement strategies (Deinla et al., 2024) overlooks the increasing emphasis on rehabilitation and reintegration in international criminology frameworks. Advisory boards, if more actively engaged, could be instrumental in guiding local educational programs to reflect these global shifts in criminal justice approaches, yet research in this area remains scarce.

In addition, while the CHED and other educational authorities in the Philippines are responsible for overseeing the quality of criminology programs (CHED Memorandum Order No. 5, series of 2018), the involvement of international stakeholders and organizations in curriculum design remains limited. The Philippines is a member of several international crime-fighting conventions, including those related to drug control, human trafficking, and transnational organized crime. However, the implementation of international norms into criminology curricula often lags behind due to a lack of coordination between local and international stakeholders. The role of Program Advisory Boards in mediating this relationship between global standards and local realities is largely unexplored, and there is little research into how these boards could facilitate the integration of international perspectives into the criminology curriculum.

Lastly, the disparity in criminology curricula across different regions and institutions in the Philippines exacerbates the challenge of creating a cohesive national framework that incorporates global perspectives. While some universities have begun to address international crime concerns through specialized courses on cybercrime or international law, many other institutions continue to focus primarily on domestic issues. This fragmentation in criminology education reflects a broader gap in how the Philippines approaches the globalization of criminology as an academic field. A more systematic study of how Program Advisory Boards can contribute to harmonizing curricula at both the local and national levels—while also integrating international criminology trends—is needed. By addressing this gap, the Philippine criminology curriculum could evolve to better prepare graduates for the increasingly global nature of crime and justice, ensuring that they are equipped to address both local and international challenges effectively.

Objectives

The researcher aims to explore the Philippine Criminology program through the lens of the Program Advisory Board. Specifically, the researcher intends to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What meaning do Criminology Program Advisory Board members derive from their involvement and

engagement in the criminology program?

2. What insights can the Criminology Program Advisory Board provide to make the teaching-learning activities of Criminology faculty members more efficient and effective?

3. What recommendations can the Criminology Program Advisory Board provide to enhance students' creativity and problem-solving skills within the criminology program?

4. What advocacy strategy can be formulated in partnership with the Criminology Program Advisory Board to address the concerns highlighted in this study?

METHODS

2.1 Research Design

Exploratory qualitative research is a flexible and iterative approach employed to investigate phenomena with limited prior understanding (Lim, 2024). When researchers possess minimal prior knowledge about a specific topic, this design proves invaluable in generating initial insights and formulating new research questions. This approach prioritizes the collection of rich, in-depth data through methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, and document analysis.

Primarily, exploratory research aims to uncover novel perspectives, identify key themes, and cultivate a profound understanding of a particular phenomenon, rather than test hypotheses or generalize findings (Aspers & Corte, 2019). It empowers researchers to delve into complex issues, explore diverse viewpoints, and uncover unexpected discoveries.

The exploratory research process is often iterative (Kapiszewski et al., 2022), with initial findings guiding subsequent data collection and analysis. Researchers may refine their research questions, adjust data collection methods, and explore new avenues of inquiry as their understanding of the phenomenon deepens.

Key characteristics of exploratory qualitative research encompass flexibility, adaptability, and a profound focus on in-depth understanding. It serves as a valuable tool for researchers seeking to gain a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of complex social and human phenomena.

2.2 Research Method

Qualitative research method is an approach that prioritizes in-depth exploration and understanding of human experiences, perspectives, and social phenomena (Awasthy, 2019). In contrast to quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research delves into the complexities of human behavior and meaning-making. Its primary objective is to uncover rich, nuanced data that provides insights into the "why" and "how" of human experiences (Hennink et al., 2020).

Common data collection methods employed in qualitative research include in-depth interviews (Eppich et al., 2019), focus group discussions (Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021), participant observation (Kang & Hwang, 2021), and document analysis (Morgan, 2022). These methods enable researchers to gather detailed information about individuals' perspectives, beliefs, and experiences in their own words. Qualitative researchers often adopt an iterative approach (Kapiszewski et al., 2022), where initial findings guide subsequent data collection and analysis. This flexibility allows for the exploration of emerging themes and the refinement of research questions as the study

progresses.Key characteristics of qualitative research include its emphasis on depth rather than breadth, its focus on understanding context and meaning within a specific social and cultural milieu, and its recognition of the subjective and multifaceted nature of human experiences. Qualitative research is particularly valuable in fields such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, education, and healthcare, where understanding human behavior and social interactions is paramount.

2.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises seven (7) members of the Criminology Program Advisory Board in selected higher education institutions across Nueva Ecija. The Criminology Program Advisory Board plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality and relevance of the Criminology curriculum by providing expert guidance and feedback.

The inclusion criteria for participant selection include membership in the Criminology Program Advisory Board in a higher education institution in Nueva Ecija, at least three years of experience as a member of the Criminology Program Advisory Board, and willingness to participate in the study and provide informed consent. Individuals who do not meet these criteria will be excluded from the study.

Participants were categorized into two groups based on their professional background: industry practitioners and academicians. The industry practitioners included law enforcers from the Philippine National Police and Bureau of Fire Protection. The academicians included deans and faculty members from Criminology schools in Nueva Ecija. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants from each of these groups. This sampling technique ensured the inclusion of individuals with diverse perspectives and experiences, providing a rich and comprehensive understanding of the issues and challenges facing Criminology education in the Philippines.

2.4 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Nueva Ecija, Philippines, a province characterized by a diverse socio-economic landscape. Known for its significant agricultural production, Nueva Ecija also exhibits a growing educational sector, with a notable concentration of higher education institutions. This diverse context, encompassing both rural and urban areas, provides a rich ground for investigating the perspectives of various stakeholders within the educational system, particularly those involved in Criminology programs.

The presence of a significant number of higher education institutions offering Criminology programs within Nueva Ecija makes it an ideal setting for this research. This concentration allows for a diverse sample of participants from various institutions, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the perspectives of Criminology Program Advisory Board members across different contexts and institutional settings.

Furthermore, the socio-economic and cultural diversity of Nueva Ecija, with its blend of rural and urban communities, offers valuable insights into how local factors influence the needs and priorities of the Criminology curriculum. For instance, the prevalence of agricultural activities may necessitate a focus on rural crime prevention and community policing within the curriculum.

By selecting Nueva Ecija as the study locale, this research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the specific challenges and opportunities faced by Criminology programs within this unique and dynamic context. The findings of this study may have significant implications for curriculum development and improvement not only within Nueva Ecija but also in other provinces with similar socio-economic and cultural characteristics.

2.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focused on exploring the perspectives of Criminology Program Advisory Board members on the Philippine Criminology curriculum. The study was specifically confined to Criminology Program Advisory Board members in selected higher education institutions within the province of Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The study utilized a qualitative research design, employing in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data, focusing on identifying and interpreting key themes related to the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement of the Criminology curriculum.

This study was limited to the perspectives of Criminology Program Advisory Board members in Nueva Ecija and may not necessarily reflect the views of Criminology Program Advisory Board members in other regions of the Philippines. Furthermore, the findings may be influenced by the specific characteristics and contexts of the participating institutions and their respective Criminology Program Advisory Boards. The study is also limited by the inherent subjectivity of qualitative research, where researcher bias and interpretation may influence the findings. Finally, the study may not capture all the nuances and complexities of the Philippine Criminology curriculum due to the inherent limitations of any single research study.

2.6 Data Gathering Tool/s

This study recognizes the researcher as the primary research instrument, acknowledging the inherent subjectivity and interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry. The researcher's unique perspectives, experiences, and interactions with participants significantly influence the data collection and analysis process.

As the primary instrument, the researcher actively engages with participants, fostering rapport, and interpreting their responses within the specific sociocultural context of the study. The researcher's active listening, keen observation, and intuitive understanding of human behavior are crucial for capturing the nuanced expressions of participants' experiences and perspectives.

To enhance data collection and ensure accurate representation, audio and video recordings will be utilized. These recordings capture both verbal and non-verbal communication, including body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice, providing a richer and more comprehensive dataset. This multi-modal approach facilitates a deeper understanding of participant perspectives and the underlying motivations behind their responses.

By utilizing audio and video recordings, the researcher can revisit and meticulously analyze interactions, ensuring that subtle nuances and crucial details are not overlooked. Furthermore, these recordings enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings by providing an auditable record of the research process.

The developed interview guide for exploring the Philippine Criminology curriculum focuses on gathering rich, qualitative data from members of the Criminology Program Advisory Board (C-PAB). It is structured around five key Standards of Professional Practice (SOPs), designed to elicit detailed insights into the current state of Criminology education and recommendations for improvement.

SOP 1 aims to establish the meaning C-PAB members derive from their involvement and engagement in the criminology program beyond advisory board meetings. Crucially, it probes the extent of their involvement and engagement in the criminology program beyond formal advisory board meetings, seeking to understand the depth of their connection and contribution.

SOP 2 shifts the focus to insights for improving the teaching-learning activities of Criminology faculty. This section also has three sub-sections. The first explores recommendations for practice opportunities and field experiences, including specific types and effective facilitation strategies. The second focuses on modern investigative procedures, identifying which procedures should be emphasized and how technology and modern tools can be integrated into learning. The third sub-section investigates activities to increase creativity and problem-solving skills, seeking suggestions for activities and pedagogical approaches, as well as assessment methods.

SOP 3 addresses recommendations for improving assessment strategies. This section is divided into three sub-sections. The first explores evaluating students' readiness for licensure exams, seeking specific assessment strategies and methods for integrating exam preparation into the curriculum. The second focuses on assessing field-specific competencies, such as investigative skills and report writing, and explores alternative assessment methods. The third sub-section examines ensuring alignment of assessments with industry standards, seeking mechanisms for regular review and updates based on stakeholder feedback.

Finally, SOP 4 explores the formulation of an advocacy strategy in partnership with the C-PAB to address the concerns highlighted throughout the study. This section focuses on leveraging the C-PAB's expertise and influence to advocate for policy changes, resource allocation, and community support. It also seeks specific advocacy initiatives that can be undertaken in partnership with the C-PAB to improve the quality of Criminology education. This comprehensive interview guide promises to provide valuable data for understanding and improving the Philippine Criminology curriculum.

2.7 Data Gathering Procedure

The following is a detailed data gathering procedure for the exploratory qualitative study focusing on the Philippine Criminology curriculum, utilizing in-depth semi-structured interviews with members of the Criminology Program Advisory Board. Prior to these, the researcher secured letters from the Dean of the Graduate School, from the Heads of the Participating HEIs, and all other relevant stakeholders involved in the study.

Phase 1: Preparation and Planning

The first phase involved refining the semi-structured interview guide. The researcher reviewed the initial guide to ensure that the questions were clear, logically sequenced, and comprehensive in covering the key areas of inquiry. These areas included perceived strengths and weaknesses of the current Criminology curriculum, its relevance to industry demands and societal needs, suggestions for improvement such as the inclusion of new courses, skill development, and industry linkages, and perspectives on the Program Advisory Board's (PAB) role in curriculum development and review. Probing questions were developed for each area to allow for deeper exploration during interviews.

Participant selection was carried out using purposive sampling. A list of potential participants was compiled, targeting members of the Criminology Program Advisory Board from selected higher education institutions in Nueva Ecija. The selection aimed for diversity, ensuring representation from both the industry and academe. Contact details of potential participants were gathered in preparation for recruitment.

Recruitment and scheduling followed, wherein potential participants were contacted through email or phone to explain the purpose of the study, their expected role, and the interview process. Those who agreed to participate were scheduled for interviews at mutually convenient times and locations. A participant information sheet and

consent form were also prepared and shared accordingly.

Logistical preparations included securing quiet and comfortable locations for interviews, ensuring the proper functioning of audio recording equipment (such as digital recorders and external microphones), and printing copies of the interview guide, participant information sheet, and consent form. A secure system was developed to organize and store interview data on a password-protected computer.

Phase 2: Data Collection

At the beginning of each interview, participants were reminded of the study's purpose and their rights, including confidentiality, anonymity, and the freedom to withdraw at any time. They were then asked to review and sign the informed consent form.

Interviews were conducted in a conversational, respectful, and non-threatening manner to build rapport. While the semi-structured interview guide served as the framework, flexibility was maintained to explore emergent themes and unexpected insights. Probing questions helped elicit more detailed responses, and the interviewer actively listened while taking brief notes throughout the session.

After each interview, a post-interview debriefing was conducted. The interviewer documented reflections on key themes, notable observations, and initial impressions to inform the subsequent phases of analysis.

Phase 3: Data Analysis and Interpretation

The first step of data analysis involved transcribing the interviews verbatim. This task was carried out either by a professional transcription service or by a trained research team member. The researcher ensured the accuracy and completeness of the transcripts through careful review.

Transcribed data were then organized manually, often using spreadsheets or other tools. To ensure anonymity, participant identifiers were removed. Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns, recurring themes, and meaningful insights. The process included multiple readings of the transcripts, coding of text segments with keywords or labels, grouping codes into broader themes and categories, and exploring the relationships among those themes.

The interpretation of findings was conducted in the context of the research questions. Interview excerpts were included to support identified themes and offer rich, descriptive insights into participant perspectives. The final report presented a clear summary of results, emphasizing the strengths and weaknesses of the current Criminology curriculum and proposing evidence-based recommendations for its enhancement.

Phase 4: Validation

To enhance the credibility of the findings, member checking was employed. Participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts or a summary of the key findings. This allowed them to confirm the accuracy of the data and offer additional feedback, thereby ensuring that their views were faithfully represented.

2.8 Treatment of the Data

This study employed reflexive thematic analysis as the primary method for data analysis. Thematic analysis involves a systematic process of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns (themes) within the qualitative data collected from interviews with Criminology Program Advisory Board members. This approach facilitates a deep and nuanced understanding of the participants' perspectives on the Philippine Criminology curriculum.

The data analysis process proceeded in several stages. Initially, researcher meticulously reviewed all interview

transcripts and other relevant documents. This initial immersion in the data facilitated a preliminary understanding of the key concepts and issues raised by the participants.

Subsequently, the researcher commenced the process of coding the data. This involves identifying and labeling key concepts, ideas, and themes within the data. Codes were assigned to specific words, phrases, or segments of text that represent significant ideas or patterns.

Next, the researcher grouped similar codes together to form broader themes. These themes were reviewed and refined iteratively, ensuring that they accurately reflect the data and provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives.

Finally, the researcher interpreted the identified themes within the broader context of Criminology education, industry trends, and societal needs. The findings were presented in a clear, concise, and insightful manner, highlighting the key strengths and weaknesses of the current Criminology curriculum and providing recommendations for improvement.

Thematic analysis provides a flexible and adaptable framework for analyzing qualitative data. It allows the researcher to identify and interpret meaningful patterns while acknowledging the inherent subjectivity and complexity of human experiences. By carefully applying thematic analysis techniques, the researcher was able to generate valuable insights into the perspectives of the Criminology Program Advisory Board and contribute to the ongoing improvement of the Philippine Criminology curriculum.

2.9 Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to the highest ethical standards throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, process consent was obtained from all participants. A process consent form was developed, which clearly explained the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and participants' rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants were given ample time to review the process consent form and ask any questions before providing their written consent.

Participants who were unwilling to participate in the study were not pressured or coerced in any way. Their decision was respected, and their refusal to participate did not affect their academic standing or any other aspect of their relationship with the researcher or the institution.

Data collection involves the use of a semi-structured interview guide. This guide was carefully developed to ensure that all participants were asked the same core questions while allowing for flexibility and exploration of emergent themes. The researcher maintains a respectful and non-judgmental approach during the interviews, ensuring participant comfort and confidentiality.

This study did not involve minors, persons deprived of liberty, or persons with disabilities. These safeguards would include obtaining appropriate ethical approvals from relevant committees, ensuring the involvement of qualified and experienced researchers, and taking extra precautions to protect the rights and well-being of vulnerable participants.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

3.1. What meaning do Criminology Program Advisory Board members derive from their involvement and engagement in the criminology program?



Figure 2. Theme 1: Vanguard Counsel Beyond the Meeting Room

Theme 1: Vanguard Counsel Beyond the Meeting Room

The theme perfectly encapsulates the C-PAB's dynamic role. It signifies that these advisory board members are not passive participants confined to scheduled meetings, but rather active, forward-thinking guides who deeply invest in the program's success (Wilkerson, 2024). Their commitment transcends the formalities of board gatherings, permeating the very fabric of the criminology curriculum and student development. This ensures that the program remains relevant, responsive, and aligned with the evolving demands of the criminology field, effectively positioning the C-PAB as a crucial vanguard in shaping the future of aspiring criminologists.

This "vanguard" function is manifested through their multifaceted involvement in curriculum refinement, career mentorship, and research collaboration (Kayyali, 2024). C-PAB members leverage their real-world expertise to scrutinize and enhance course content, ensuring it reflects current trends and practical applications (Garst et al., 2021). They act as bridges between academia and industry, opening doors for students through internship opportunities and career guidance (Gashahun, 2020). Moreover, their willingness to collaborate on research projects and participate in community engagement initiatives underscores their dedication to fostering a holistic learning environment that extends beyond theoretical knowledge. This active participation cultivates a dynamic educational experience that prepares students for the complexities of professional practice.

The C-PAB's commitment to extending their counsel beyond the meeting room signifies a profound investment in the program's long-term viability and the success of its students. They are not merely advisors, but active stakeholders who contribute their time, expertise, and networks to ensure the criminology program remains at the forefront of education and practice. This proactive and comprehensive engagement transforms the C-PAB from a formal advisory body into a vital, ongoing resource, shaping the future of criminology education and ensuring that graduates are well-equipped to meet the challenges of the profession.

Sub-Theme 1.1. Curriculum Development Enhancement

The C-PAB's involvement in curriculum development and enhancement is a vital function that ensures the criminology program remains dynamic and responsive to the ever-evolving landscape of the field (Jonbekova et al., 2020). By providing valuable input, they act as a crucial link between academic theory and practical application. Their insights are not merely theoretical; they are grounded in real-world experiences and a deep understanding of the current demands of law enforcement and related professions. This collaborative approach allows the program to adapt and stay relevant, ensuring that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in their chosen careers.

One of the key aspects of this involvement is the C-PAB's ability to offer feedback on new subjects and suggest updates to existing courses. Their expertise allows them to assess the relevance and practicality of the curriculum, identifying gaps and suggesting improvements. This collaborative process ensures that the program remains aligned with industry standards and addresses the current needs of the field. By incorporating the C-PAB's insights, the curriculum becomes more than just a collection of theoretical concepts; it transforms into a practical guide that prepares students for the challenges they will face in their professional lives.

Furthermore, the C-PAB plays a critical role in keeping the curriculum updated with current crime trends and challenges. The field of criminology is constantly evolving, with new technologies, techniques, and criminal behaviors emerging regularly. By staying abreast of these developments, the C-PAB can ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and prepares students for the realities of modern crime. Their involvement helps to bridge the gap between academia and the field, ensuring that students are not only well-versed in theoretical concepts but also equipped to address the practical challenges of contemporary criminology.

"Hindi lang meetings ang trabaho namin. Actually, malaki ang role ng C-PAB sa criminology program. Depende rin kasi sa school, pero usually, involved kami sa curriculum development and enhancement. Halimbawa, nagbibigay kami ng feedback sa mga bagong subjects or kung kailangan i-update yung mga existing courses para mas relevant sa industry needs. Kumbaga, tinitignan namin kung aligned ba yung curriculum sa current trends sa criminology field." ("We don't just have meetings for our job. Actually, the C-PAB plays a big role in the criminology program. It also depends on the school, but usually, we're involved in developing and improving the curriculum. For example, we give feedback on new subjects, or if existing courses need to be updated to be more relevant to what the industry needs. Basically, we check if the curriculum matches the current trends in the criminology field.")

"Well, for one, we provide input on course content. We look at what's being taught and ask, "Is this truly relevant to what's happening in law enforcement today?" Or, "Does this address the current issues in our communities?" We're constantly trying to bridge the gap between classroom learning and the real world."

Sub-Theme 1.2. Career Development and Placement Assistance

The C-PAB's dedication to career development and placement assistance plays a pivotal role in bridging the often-daunting gap between academic study and the real working world. Their involvement extends far beyond simply imparting theoretical knowledge; they actively cultivate pathways for students to transition smoothly into professional roles. By leveraging their extensive networks and industry connections, C-PAB members open doors to valuable career opportunities, providing students with a tangible advantage in a competitive job market (Finkelstein et al., 2021). This

proactive approach ensures that students are not only academically prepared but also strategically positioned for successful careers in criminology.

A cornerstone of their assistance lies in facilitating internships, organizing career fairs, and providing personalized mentorship (Carpenter et al., 2021). These initiatives offer students invaluable hands-on experience and direct exposure to potential employers. By sharing their own professional journeys and offering tailored career advice, C-PAB members empower students to navigate the complexities of job searching and career planning. This mentorship creates a supportive environment where students can gain insights, build confidence, and develop the necessary skills to thrive in their chosen field. The C-PAB's efforts transform the career development process from a passive experience to an active, guided journey.

Therefore, the C-PAB's commitment to career development and placement assistance is a testament to their dedication to student success. They understand that academic excellence alone is not enough; students need practical experience, industry connections, and personalized guidance to launch successful careers. By actively facilitating these opportunities, they ensure that graduates are well-equipped to make meaningful contributions to the field of criminology. Their efforts not only benefit individual students but also strengthen the program's reputation and contribute to the overall advancement of the profession.

"Pangalawa, Career Development and Placement Assistance. Marami sa mga C-PAB members ay galing sa iba't ibang law enforcement agencies, government offices, and private security firms. Tumutulong kami sa paghahanap ng internship opportunities para sa mga estudyante natin. Minsan, kami pa mismo nag-ooffer ng trabaho pagkatapos ng graduation." ("Secondly, we help with Career Development and Placement. A lot of the C-PAB members come from different law enforcement agencies, government offices, and private security firms. We help our students find internship opportunities. Sometimes, we even offer jobs ourselves after they graduate.")

Sub-Theme 1.3. Research Collaboration and Community Engagement

The involvement of C-PAB members in research collaboration and community engagement serves as a crucial bridge between academic inquiry and practical application (Carpenter et al., 2021). By actively participating in research projects, they provide invaluable access to real-world data, resources, and their own specialized expertise. This collaboration not only enriches the research process but also exposes students to the complexities of criminological investigations and the challenges of data analysis in real-world settings. This hands-on experience allows students to move beyond theoretical understanding and develop practical skills that are essential for future careers in research or law enforcement.

Furthermore, the C-PAB's engagement in community outreach programs and activities demonstrates the tangible impact of criminological knowledge on society. By participating in seminars, trainings, and other community initiatives, they showcase the real-world application of the theories and concepts learned in the classroom. This engagement not only benefits the community but also provides students with opportunities to apply their knowledge in practical settings, fostering a deeper understanding of the social implications of crime and the role of criminologists in addressing community concerns. The integration of practical experience within a community context allows students to see the direct effects of their studies, and helps the program to stay connected to the needs of the community it serves.

Hence, the C-PAB's dedication to research collaboration and community engagement reinforces the program's commitment to producing well-rounded and socially responsible criminologists. By fostering a culture of active

participation and collaboration, they create a dynamic learning environment that encourages students to think critically, engage with their communities, and contribute to the advancement of criminological knowledge. This integrated approach ensures that graduates are not only academically proficient but also equipped with the practical skills and social awareness necessary to make meaningful contributions to the field and to the communities they serve.

"Exactly! And another thing, we also encourage and sometimes participate in research collaboration and community engagement. Halimbawa, kung may research project ang school na related sa criminology, pwede kaming tumulong, lalo na kung may expertise kami sa specific area (For example, if the school has a research project related to criminology, we can help, especially if we have expertise in that specific area.). Tapos, we also try to connect the criminology program with the community through outreach programs or activities. Para naman makita ng mga estudyante yung real-world application ng kanilang pinag-aaralan (So the students can see the real-world application of what they're studying)."

3.2. What insights can the Criminology Program Advisory Board provide to make the teaching-learning activities of Criminology faculty members more efficient and effective?



Figure 3. Theme 2: Navigating Modern Criminology with Technology, Practice, and Ethical Policing

Theme 2: Navigating Modern Criminology with Technology, Practice, and Ethical Policing

This theme encapsulates the essential evolution required within contemporary criminology education. The theme acknowledges the rapid technological advancements that have fundamentally altered the landscape of crime, demanding that future law enforcement professionals be adept in digital forensics, cybersecurity, and the utilization of data analytics (Wall, 2024). This necessitates a curriculum that transcends traditional methods, incorporating practical, hands-on experiences with cutting-edge tools and software (Padda, 2024). By prioritizing technological integration, the theme aims to equip students with the necessary skills to effectively address the growing complexities of cybercrime and digital investigations, ensuring they remain at the forefront of modern policing.

Beyond technological proficiency, the theme emphasizes the crucial role of practical application in criminology

education (Dickety, 2024). Students must transition from theoretical understanding to real-world competency through immersive simulations, laboratory work, and crime scene investigation training. This hands-on approach bridges the gap between academic knowledge and operational effectiveness, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills vital for successful careers in law enforcement. By providing opportunities to apply their knowledge in realistic scenarios, students develop the confidence and expertise needed to navigate the challenges of modern criminal justice. Moreover, the focus on practice ensures that students are not only technically skilled but also adept at adapting to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of crime.

Underpinning both technological integration and practical application is the unwavering commitment to ethical policing (Loader, 2024). The theme recognizes the profound impact of technology on privacy and civil liberties, demanding that students develop a strong ethical compass. This includes understanding the importance of data protection, responsible surveillance, and the delicate balance between security and individual rights. By instilling ethical principles and professional conduct, the theme ensures that future law enforcement professionals uphold the highest standards of integrity, building trust with the communities they serve. This holistic approach, combining technological prowess, practical expertise, and ethical awareness, is essential for navigating the complex and ever-evolving field of modern criminology.

Sub-Theme 2.1. Technological Integration in Criminology

This theme stems from the undeniable shift in criminal activity towards the digital realm (Holt et al., 2022). Traditional criminology curricula, often rooted in physical crime scenarios, struggle to adequately prepare students for the complexities of cybercrime, digital forensics, and the ever-evolving landscape of online threats. Incorporating modern technology is not merely about introducing new tools; it's about fundamentally reshaping the educational approach to reflect the reality of contemporary crime. The specific areas highlighted by the C-PAB, such as digital forensics and cybersecurity, represent the core competencies needed to investigate, prevent, and mitigate crimes that leave digital footprints. This integration ensures that graduates possess the technical acumen to navigate the intricate world of digital evidence, network security, and online criminal behavior.

The inclusion of threat surveillance and the use of AI and data analytics in policing further underscores the need for a technologically advanced criminology education (Haley & Burrell, 2025). Threat surveillance, when conducted ethically and legally, allows law enforcement to proactively identify and address potential criminal activities before they escalate. AI and data analytics provide powerful tools for analyzing vast datasets, identifying patterns, and predicting criminal trends, enabling more efficient and effective policing strategies. However, these technologies also raise significant ethical considerations, requiring students to understand the delicate balance between security and privacy. By integrating these advanced technologies into the curriculum, institutions can equip future criminologists with the skills to leverage these powerful tools responsibly and effectively, while also understanding their potential implications.

The emphasis on technological integration is about ensuring that criminology education remains relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of the criminal justice system (wa Teresia, 2024). As crimes increasingly migrate online, the ability to investigate, prevent, and prosecute these offenses hinges on the proficiency of law enforcement professionals in digital domains. This sub-theme is not simply an add-on; it represents a fundamental shift in the way criminology is taught and practiced. By embracing technology, institutions can prepare students to become leaders in the fight against crime in the 21st century, ensuring that they are equipped to address the challenges posed by a rapidly changing technological landscape.

"Kailangan talagang mag-shift ang criminology education from outdated, traditional investigative techniques to modern, technology-driven methods. Hindi na kasi sapat yung mga luma. Kailangan ma-expose na ang mga estudyante sa mga bagong pamamaraan." ("Criminology education really needs to shift from outdated, traditional investigative techniques to modern, technology-driven methods. The old ways just aren't enough anymore. Students need to be exposed to the new methods.")

Sub-Theme 2.2. Practical Application and Hands-on Experience

The sub-theme underscores the critical need to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world competency in criminology education (Padda, 2024). A curriculum heavily reliant on lectures and textbooks, while valuable, often fails to adequately prepare students for the complexities of actual law enforcement and criminal investigation. The C-PAB members' concerns regarding the lack of laboratory work, simulations, and crime scene investigation techniques highlight a fundamental disconnect between academic learning and the practical skills required in the field. This deficiency can lead to graduates who possess a strong understanding of criminological theories but lack the practical ability to apply them effectively in real-world scenarios.

The emphasis on hands-on training is not merely about learning specific techniques; it's about developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills in realistic contexts (Lamaro et al., 2024). Laboratory work allows students to apply forensic science principles, analyze evidence, and interpret findings, fostering a deeper understanding of the scientific aspects of criminal investigation. Simulations provide a safe environment for students to practice various law enforcement scenarios (Jenkins et al., 2021), such as interviews, arrests, and crisis management, enhancing their ability to respond effectively under pressure. Crime scene investigation techniques, when taught through practical exercises, enable students to develop the skills necessary to document evidence, reconstruct events, and maintain the integrity of a crime scene. These practical experiences are essential for building confidence and competence, ensuring that graduates are prepared to handle the diverse challenges they will encounter in their careers.

The focus on practical application is about creating a more immersive and engaging learning experience (Beck et al., 2020). By moving beyond theoretical knowledge and providing opportunities for students to apply their skills in realistic scenarios, institutions can better prepare them for the demands of the criminal justice system. This sub-theme recognizes that criminology is not just an academic discipline; it's a practical profession that requires a combination of knowledge, skills, and experience. By prioritizing hands-on training, institutions can ensure that their graduates are not only knowledgeable but also capable of making meaningful contributions to the field, equipped to navigate the complexities of modern law enforcement with confidence and proficiency.

"Napaka-importante ng Scenario-Based Learning. Kailangan nilang ma-experience yung mga totoong sitwasyon, kahit sa simulation lang. Halimbawa, mock crime scenes, case studies, at crime reconstruction challenges. Para ma-apply nila yung kanilang knowledge sa isang realistic setting." (Scenario-Based Learning is super important. They need to experience real-life situations, even if it's just in simulations. For example, mock crime scenes, case studies, and crime reconstruction challenges. That way, they can apply their knowledge in a realistic setting.)

"Halimbawa, pwede silang mag-participate sa mga simulated crime scene investigations kasama ang mga forensic experts. Pwede rin silang mag-observe ng actual court proceedings kasama ang mga lawyers at judges. At pwede rin silang mag-volunteer sa mga victim advocacy groups para ma-experience ang pakikipag-interact sa mga biktima ng krimen." (For example, they could participate in simulated crime scene investigations with forensic experts. They

could also observe actual court proceedings with lawyers and judges. And they could even volunteer with victim advocacy groups to experience interacting with crime victims.)

Sub-Theme 2.3. Ethical Considerations and Professional Conduct

The sub-theme recognizes that the practice of criminology, particularly in the modern era, is fraught with complex moral dilemmas. Law enforcement and criminal justice professionals wield significant power, and their actions have profound consequences for individuals and society. Therefore, instilling strong ethical values and a commitment to professional conduct is not just desirable but essential (Zabidi et al., 2020). The C-PAB members' emphasis on addressing ethical dilemmas in the digital world highlights the unique challenges posed by technology. The ease with which data can be collected, analyzed, and disseminated raises concerns about privacy, surveillance, and the potential for abuse. Students must be equipped to navigate these complexities, understanding the ethical implications of their actions and adhering to principles of fairness, justice, and respect for human rights.

The emphasis on integrity and responsibility in law enforcement underscores the importance of upholding the public trust (Mukherjee & Mathew, 2024). Law enforcement professionals are expected to act with honesty, impartiality, and accountability. They must be committed to upholding the law, protecting the rights of all individuals, and serving the community with integrity. This requires a deep understanding of ethical principles, a commitment to professional standards, and the ability to resist pressures that could compromise their integrity. The C-PAB members' focus on balancing security with privacy highlights the delicate equilibrium that must be maintained in a democratic society. While security is essential, it must not come at the expense of fundamental rights and freedoms. Students must understand the importance of respecting privacy, adhering to legal safeguards, and ensuring that surveillance and data collection practices are proportionate, necessary, and transparent.

The integration of ethical considerations and professional conduct into criminology education is about shaping responsible and accountable professionals. It's about ensuring that graduates not only possess the technical skills and knowledge required for their roles but also the moral compass to guide their actions. By instilling a strong ethical foundation, institutions can prepare students to make sound judgments, uphold the rule of law, and contribute to a just and equitable society. This sub-theme is not merely an academic exercise; it's a fundamental aspect of preparing future criminologists to serve as guardians of justice and uphold the principles of a democratic society.

"Tapos, bukod sa technical skills, dapat din bigyang diin yung ethical considerations. Kasi, sa field ng criminology, napaka-importante ng ethics. Dapat ma-instill sa mga estudyante yung tamang values at professionalism. Kailangan ma-realize nila yung bigat ng responsibilidad nila bilang future law enforcers." (And, besides the technical skills, they also need to really focus on ethical considerations. Because, in the field of criminology, ethics is super important. They need to instill the right values and professionalism in the students. They need to realize the weight of their responsibility as future law enforcers.)

"Dapat mas idiin natin ang importance ng ethics and integrity. Ang daming temptations sa law enforcement, kaya kailangan matibay ang moral compass nila. Pang-apat, kailangan din silang maturuan ng stress management techniques. Ang daming pressure sa trabaho na ito, kaya kailangan marunong silang alagaan ang sarili nila." (We really need to emphasize the importance of ethics and integrity. There are so many temptations in law enforcement, so their moral compass needs to be strong. Fourth, they also need to be taught stress management techniques. There's a lot of pressure in this job, so they need to know how to take care of themselves.)

Sub-Theme 2.4. Community Policing and Relations

The sub-theme underscores the fundamental shift in modern law enforcement philosophy, moving away from a purely reactive, enforcement-driven approach towards a proactive, collaborative model. The C-PAB members' emphasis on stronger community engagement (Pinto et al., 2021) reflects a recognition that effective crime prevention and public safety are best achieved through partnerships between law enforcement and the communities they serve. This approach acknowledges that communities are not passive recipients of policing services but active stakeholders in their own safety. The need for better communication skills, conflict resolution skills, and trust-building is paramount (Drif, 2024), as these skills are the cornerstones of successful community engagement. By fostering open dialogue, addressing community concerns, and building positive relationships, law enforcement can create a sense of shared responsibility for public safety.

The focus on community-based crime prevention strategies highlights the importance of addressing the root causes of crime at the local level (McGuire et al., 2021). This approach recognizes that crime is often a symptom of underlying social problems, such as poverty, inequality, and lack of opportunity. By working collaboratively with community members, organizations, and stakeholders, law enforcement can develop targeted interventions that address these root causes, reducing crime and improving community well-being. This includes initiatives such as youth outreach programs, neighborhood watch groups, and community-led problem-solving projects. These strategies empower communities to take ownership of their safety and contribute to a more just and equitable society.

The emphasis on community policing and relations signifies a fundamental shift in law enforcement philosophy, moving away from an isolated, reactive approach towards a proactive, collaborative model. This transformation aims to dismantle the traditional barrier between law enforcement and the community, fostering a sense of shared ownership in public safety by integrating officers into the fabric of the neighborhoods they serve, thereby cultivating trust and mutual respect that extends beyond mere enforcement actions. The C-PAB members' conviction that law enforcement should function as a partnership, rather than solely focusing on arrests and investigations, underscores their dedication to building enduring relationships, promoting collaborative problem-solving, and cultivating a culture of shared responsibility for the well-being of the community, ultimately preparing future law enforcement professionals to be multifaceted leaders who are as adept at building bridges as they are at upholding the law. By embracing community-oriented policing principles, institutions can equip future officers with the skills and mindset necessary to not only enforce laws but also serve as vital community leaders, adept problem solvers, and trusted partners, thereby contributing to the creation of safer, more resilient, and harmonious communities.

"Dapat din silang ma-expose sa community policing activities—outreach programs with barangays or NGOs working on crime prevention initiatives. Matutunan nila kung paano mag-build ng trust between law enforcers and the community they serve." ("They should also be exposed to community policing activities—like outreach programs with local neighborhoods or NGOs working on crime prevention. They'll learn how to build trust between law enforcers and the community they serve.)

"Binabanggit din ang importance ng community policing and relations. Feeling ng ilan, minsan nakakalimutan natin na ang pulis ay dapat partner ng komunidad. Kailangan daw mas tutukan natin ang pagtuturo ng communication skills, conflict resolution, at building trust sa pagitan ng pulis at ng mga mamamayan." (They're also talking about the importance of community policing and relations. Some people feel that we sometimes forget that police officers

should be partners with the community. They say we need to focus more on teaching communication skills, conflict resolution, and building trust between the police and the citizens.)

3.3. What recommendations can the Criminology Program Advisory Board provide to enhance students' creativity and problem-solving skills within the criminology program?

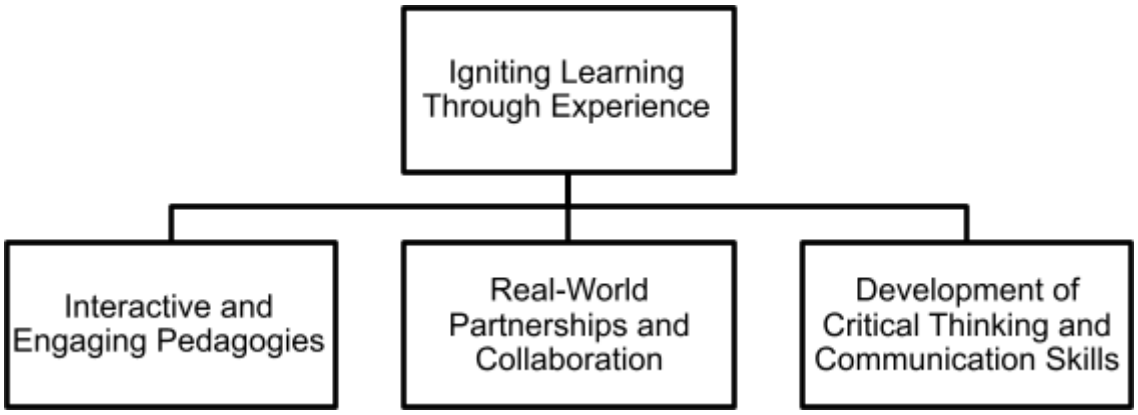

Figure 4. Theme 3: Igniting Learning Through Experience

Theme 3: Igniting Learning Through Experience

The imperative to transform criminology education through active and experiential learning stems from the recognition that traditional, lecture-based approaches often fail to adequately prepare students for the complexities of the field (Thurgood, 2020). The modern criminologist must be more than a repository of theoretical knowledge; they must be adept at critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical application. This transformation necessitates a fundamental shift in pedagogical strategies, moving away from passive absorption of information towards active engagement with real-world scenarios. The goal is to cultivate a learning environment where students are not merely recipients of knowledge but active participants in its creation and application.

Active and experiential learning in criminology involves immersing students in realistic simulations, case studies, and hands-on activities (Halford et al., 2024). This approach fosters a deeper understanding of criminological principles and their practical implications. By engaging in mock crime scene investigations, role-playing exercises, and collaborative projects, students develop crucial skills such as data analysis, critical evaluation, and effective communication. These experiences not only enhance their problem-solving abilities but also cultivate creativity and adaptability, essential qualities for navigating the dynamic challenges of the criminal justice system. Moreover, this approach allows students to experience the ethical dilemmas and complex decision-making processes inherent in the field, preparing them for the moral and professional responsibilities they will encounter.

The transformation of criminology education through active and experiential learning aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice. By providing students with opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, educators can cultivate a new generation of criminologists who are not only knowledgeable but also skilled, ethical, and capable

of making meaningful contributions to society. This shift represents a commitment to preparing students for the evolving landscape of crime and justice, ensuring they are equipped to address the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century. By fostering a learning environment that prioritizes engagement, collaboration, and practical application, criminology programs can empower students to become effective agents of change in their communities.

Sub-Theme 3.1. Interactive and Engaging Pedagogies

The implementation of interactive and engaging pedagogies in criminology education marks a departure from conventional teaching methods, recognizing that passive learning often fails to ignite genuine interest and foster deep understanding (Richard, 2024). By incorporating elements of gamification, design thinking, and project-based learning, educators create a dynamic learning environment that stimulates curiosity and encourages active participation. Gamification, for instance, transforms complex criminological concepts into interactive challenges, such as crime-solving board games and forensic puzzles, making learning enjoyable and memorable. This approach not only enhances student motivation but also promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills in a fun and engaging manner.

Design thinking for crime prevention introduces students to a human-centered approach to addressing societal challenges (Seigfried-Spellar et al., 2022). By engaging in hands-on urban safety and policy innovation projects, students learn to analyze complex problems, generate creative solutions, and consider the ethical implications of their interventions. This pedagogical approach fosters a sense of agency and empowers students to become active contributors to community safety. Project-based learning further enhances this experience by allowing students to delve into real-world issues, conduct research, and develop innovative solutions. This method encourages collaboration, communication, and the application of theoretical knowledge to practical situations, preparing students for the collaborative nature of the criminology profession.

Interactive and engaging pedagogies aim to cultivate a learning environment where students are not only knowledgeable but also passionate and resourceful (Ndiangui et al., 2025). By encouraging creativity, collaboration, and active participation, educators empower students to think critically, solve complex problems, and contribute meaningfully to the field of criminology. This approach recognizes that learning is most effective when it is enjoyable and relevant, fostering a deep and lasting understanding of criminological principles and practices. By embracing these innovative teaching methods, criminology programs can inspire a new generation of professionals who are not only skilled but also driven to make a positive impact on society.

"Pwede rin silang gumamit ng Gamification and Competitions. Halimbawa, crime-solving board games, forensic puzzles, at hackathons. Para mas maging enjoyable ang pag-aaral at mas ma-encourage silang mag-isip nang creative." (They could also use Gamification and Competitions. For example, crime-solving board games, forensic puzzles, and hackathons. This would make learning more enjoyable and encourage them to think creatively.)

Sub-Theme 3.2. Real-World Partnerships and Collaboration

The cultivation of real-world partnerships and collaboration is paramount in modern criminology education, as it bridges the critical divide between theoretical understanding and practical application (Strudwick & Young, 2023). By forging alliances with law enforcement agencies, victim advocacy groups, and forensic laboratories, educational institutions provide students with invaluable opportunities to immerse themselves in the realities of the field. These partnerships transcend the limitations of classroom instruction, offering students firsthand exposure to the complexities and nuances of criminal justice. This direct engagement allows students to observe and participate in

activities such as court proceedings, crime scene investigations, and victim support services, fostering a deeper appreciation for the multifaceted nature of criminology.

These collaborative experiences provide students with a unique perspective, enabling them to witness the practical application of criminological principles and the challenges faced by professionals in the field. By conducting interviews alongside experienced investigators, analyzing forensic evidence in laboratory settings, and volunteering with victim advocacy groups, students develop essential skills such as critical thinking, communication, and ethical decision-making. Moreover, these partnerships foster a sense of professional responsibility and social awareness, encouraging students to consider the impact of their work on individuals and communities. The ability to network and learn from professionals already working in the field provides the students with a clear advantage upon graduation.

Furthermore, the emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly with fields like psychology and sociology, enriches the students' understanding of crime and its underlying causes (Nasir et al., 2021). By working alongside students and professionals from diverse disciplines, criminology students gain a broader perspective on the complex factors that contribute to criminal behavior. This collaborative approach fosters a holistic understanding of crime, recognizing that it is influenced by a multitude of social, psychological, and environmental factors. This broader perspective allows the students to create more well rounded and effective solutions to the problems they will encounter in the field. Ultimately, real-world partnerships and collaboration are essential for preparing students to become competent, ethical, and socially responsible criminologists who can effectively address the challenges of the 21st century.

"Dapat din silang makaranas ng collaborative learning—group work na may iba't ibang disciplines involved. Halimbawa, pwede mag-collaborate with psychology or sociology students para mas malawak ang perspective nila sa pag-solve ng crimes." (They should also experience collaborative learning—group work with different fields involved. For example, they could collaborate with psychology or sociology students to get a broader perspective on solving crimes.)

Sub-Theme 3.3. Development of Critical Thinking and Communication Skills

The development of critical thinking and communication skills stands as the bedrock of effective criminology practice (Abreu, 2020), permeating every facet of the field. These skills are not merely supplementary; they are foundational, enabling criminologists to navigate the intricate landscape of crime, justice, and societal impact. Critical thinking empowers students to dissect complex situations, evaluate evidence objectively, and formulate well-reasoned conclusions. It allows them to move beyond surface-level observations and delve into the underlying causes and consequences of criminal behavior. This ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information is indispensable for accurate investigation, effective crime prevention, and the development of sound policy recommendations.

Communication skills, equally vital, facilitate the effective transmission of information and the building of collaborative relationships (Kikerpill, 2023). Criminologists must be able to articulate their findings clearly and persuasively, whether in written reports, courtroom testimony, or community presentations. They need to communicate empathetically with victims, suspects, and diverse community members, fostering trust and understanding. Furthermore, effective communication enables collaboration with professionals from various disciplines, including law enforcement, social work, and psychology. The ability to listen actively, engage in constructive dialogue, and resolve conflicts is essential for navigating the complex interpersonal dynamics inherent in the criminal justice system.

The cultivation of critical thinking and communication skills equips students to become effective agents of change in their communities. These skills empower them to analyze societal problems, develop innovative solutions, and advocate for evidence-based policies (Servaes, 2022). By fostering a learning environment that prioritizes these skills, criminology programs can prepare students to address the multifaceted challenges of crime and justice with competence, integrity, and empathy. The ability to think critically and communicate effectively is not only essential for professional success but also for contributing to a more just and equitable society.

"Tama ka. Kailangan nilang matutunan kung paano mag-analyze ng mga complex situations, kung paano mag-develop ng creative solutions, at kung paano mag-communicate effectively sa iba't ibang tao. Kailangan din nilang matutunan kung paano mag-adapt sa mga unexpected challenges." (You're right. They need to learn how to analyze complex situations, how to develop creative solutions, and how to communicate effectively with different people. They also need to learn how to adapt to unexpected challenges.)

3.4. What advocacy strategy can be formulated in partnership with the Criminology Program Advisory Board to address the concerns highlighted in this study?

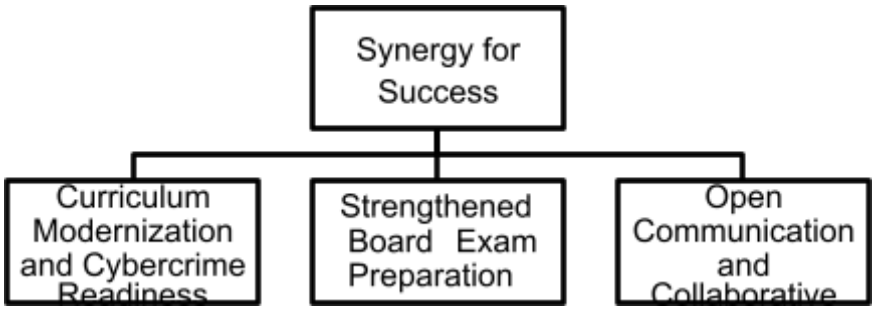

Figure 5. Theme 4: Synergy for Success

Theme 4: Synergy for Success

This theme encapsulates the essential principle that meaningful improvement in criminology education hinges upon a united front (Amoo et al., 2024). This theme underscores the necessity of breaking down silos and fostering a culture of shared responsibility among all stakeholders. Educational institutions, law enforcement agencies, students, and policymakers must converge, bringing their unique perspectives and resources to the table. By creating platforms for open communication and collaborative problem-solving, a powerful synergy emerges, capable of addressing the multifaceted challenges facing criminology education.

This collaborative approach transcends mere information sharing, demanding active participation and shared ownership of reform initiatives. It envisions a dynamic ecosystem where curriculum modernization is driven by the real-world needs of law enforcement, where practical training is co-designed and delivered by experienced practitioners, and where board exam preparation is bolstered by collective expertise. Furthermore, it necessitates the establishment of

robust feedback loops, ensuring that initiatives are continuously evaluated and refined. This commitment to collaborative action fosters a sense of collective purpose, empowering stakeholders to drive sustainable change and elevate the overall quality of criminology education (Lima, 2021).

The theme signifies a commitment to leveraging the collective strength of diverse stakeholders to achieve a shared goal. It acknowledges that no single entity can effectively address the complexities of criminology education reform in isolation. By embracing collaboration, fostering open dialogue, and implementing data-driven strategies, a powerful force for positive change is unleashed. This theme serves as a call to action, urging all stakeholders to join forces and build a future where criminology graduates are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding necessary to serve their communities effectively.

Sub-Theme 4.1. Curriculum Modernization and Cybercrime Readiness

In the contemporary landscape of law enforcement, this sub-theme stands as a critical imperative. This sub-theme acknowledges the dynamic nature of crime, where traditional methods are increasingly intertwined with digital technologies. To maintain relevance and effectiveness, criminology education must adapt, integrating emerging crime trends, particularly the pervasive threat of cybercrime, into its core curriculum (McAlister & Campbell-West, 2022). This involves more than simply adding a module on computers; it requires a fundamental shift in pedagogical approaches to encompass digital forensics, cybersecurity protocols, and the evolving tactics of cybercriminals.

The key informants' emphasis on equipping students with the skills to handle digital forensics and cybersecurity issues underscores the practical necessity of this modernization (Zaman et al., 2024). Graduates entering law enforcement must be proficient in navigating the digital realm, capable of analyzing digital evidence, understanding network vulnerabilities, and responding to cyberattacks. This requires not only theoretical knowledge but also hands-on experience with relevant software, hardware, and methodologies. Integrating practical training, simulations, and case studies into the curriculum ensures that students are prepared to address the real-world challenges posed by cybercrime.

Furthermore, the need to keep up to date with new technology and methodologies highlights the ongoing nature of curriculum modernization (Frolova et al., 2020). Law enforcement is constantly evolving, driven by technological advancements and the ingenuity of criminals. To ensure that criminology education remains relevant, institutions must establish mechanisms for continuous curriculum review and adaptation. This includes fostering partnerships with industry experts, investing in state-of-the-art training facilities, and promoting research into emerging crime trends. By embracing a culture of continuous improvement, criminology programs can empower graduates to effectively combat crime in an increasingly digital world.

"Una, kailangan natin ng Modernized Curriculum and Cybercrime Readiness. Kailangan i-align ang criminology education sa modern law enforcement demands. Dapat kasama na sa curriculum yung mga bagong crime trends, lalo na yung cybercrime. Kailangan i-equip ang mga estudyante para ma-handle ito." (First, we need a Modernized Curriculum and Cybercrime Readiness. Criminology education needs to be aligned with modern law enforcement demands. The curriculum should include new crime trends, especially cybercrime. Students need to be equipped to handle it.)

Sub-Theme 4.2. Strengthened Board Exam Preparation

This theme recognizes that the criminology licensure examination (CLE) serves as a critical gateway for aspiring law enforcement professionals. While a robust curriculum lays the foundation, dedicated support is essential to ensure

students can translate their knowledge into successful exam performance. This sub-theme emphasizes the need to go beyond standard classroom instruction and provide targeted resources that directly address the demands of the CLE. By offering comprehensive review sessions, mock exams, and up-to-date study materials, institutions can equip students with the tools and strategies necessary to navigate the exam's challenges with confidence.

The key informants' suggestions highlight a proactive approach to exam preparation. Review sessions provide opportunities for students to consolidate their understanding of key concepts, clarify doubts, and practice applying their knowledge to exam-style questions (Guilding et al., 2021). Mock exams simulate the actual exam environment, enabling students to familiarize themselves with the format, time constraints, and pressure of the CLE. Moreover, providing high-quality study materials ensures that students have access to accurate and relevant information, allowing them to focus their study efforts effectively.

Beyond tangible resources, the sub-theme also encompasses comprehensive support. This involves creating a supportive learning environment where students feel encouraged and motivated. Mentoring programs, peer study groups, and individual consultations can provide personalized guidance and address individual learning needs. By fostering a culture of academic excellence and providing holistic support, institutions can empower criminology graduates to confidently pursue their professional aspirations and contribute meaningfully to the field of law enforcement.

"Kailangan din ng Progressive CLE Review Approach. Kailangan i-embed yung CLE-style tests and case studies throughout the four-year program. Hindi lang dapat sa last year lang mag-review. Dapat simula pa lang ng first year, may mga ganitong activities na." (We also need a Progressive CLE Review Approach. We need to embed CLE-style tests and case studies throughout the four-year program. It shouldn't just be review in the last year. These kinds of activities should start from the very first year.)

"Oo, tama ka. Tapos, kailangan din ng Enhanced Board Exam Preparation. Kailangan natin i-improve ang CLE performance. Dapat may mga programs na tutulong sa mga estudyante para mas mahanda sa board exam. Halimbawa, mga review sessions, mock exams, at study materials." (Yes, you're right. And, we also need Enhanced Board Exam Preparation. We need to improve the CLE performance. There should be programs to help students be better prepared for the board exam. For example, review sessions, mock exams, and study materials.)

"Napaka-importante ng Mock Board Exams. Kailangan nilang ma-experience yung totoong conditions ng CLE, yung time-limited, full-length exams. Para masanay sila sa pressure at mas ma-familiarize sa format ng exam." ("Mock Board Exams are really important. They need to experience the real conditions of the CLE, like the time-limited, full-length exams. This helps them get used to the pressure and become familiar with the exam format.)

Sub-Theme 4.3. Open Communication and Collaborative Platforms

This theme underscores the fundamental principle that progress in criminology education is intrinsically linked to the ability of stakeholders to engage in meaningful dialogue and collaborative action (Chouinard & Cousins, 2021). This sub-theme recognizes that the complexities of modern law enforcement demand a multifaceted approach, one that leverages the diverse perspectives and expertise of all involved. Establishing robust platforms for communication, such as forums, workshops, and conferences, creates vital avenues for sharing ideas, raising concerns, and collectively

identifying solutions. These platforms serve as catalysts for fostering a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing criminology education.

The recommendation to encourage active participation from law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, and students highlights the importance of inclusivity (Hassan & Jiang, 2021). By ensuring that all voices are heard, a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the issues emerges. Law enforcement agencies bring practical insights from the field, educational institutions provide pedagogical expertise, and students offer valuable perspectives on their learning experiences. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of shared ownership and empowers stakeholders to actively contribute to the development of effective solutions. Moreover, the creation of clear action plans ensures that dialogue translates into tangible outcomes.

The theme is about building a culture of transparency and mutual respect (Lansing et al., 2023). It recognizes that effective collaboration requires more than just occasional meetings; it demands ongoing communication, active listening, and a commitment to shared goals. By fostering a collaborative environment, stakeholders can break down silos, build trust, and work together to create a more responsive and effective criminology education system. This sub-theme emphasizes that lasting change is achieved through collective effort, where open communication serves as the cornerstone of progress.

"Para sa amin, ang pinaka-crucial na advocacy initiative ay ang pagkaroon ng open communication at collaboration. Kasi, kung walang maayos na usapan at pagtutulungan, mahirap ma-solve ang mga challenges." (For us, the most crucial advocacy initiative is having open communication and collaboration. Because, without good communication and teamwork, it's hard to solve the challenges.)

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study successfully identified four (4) key themes that illuminate the multifaceted nature of contemporary criminology education. The findings revealed a paradigm shift beyond traditional teaching roles, with faculty actively engaging in curriculum development, career guidance, and community outreach, as evidenced by "Vanguard Counsel Beyond the Meeting Room." Furthermore, "Navigating Modern Criminology with Technology, Practice, and Ethical Policing" underscored the critical integration of technological advancements, practical experience, and ethical considerations into the curriculum, reflecting a commitment to preparing well-rounded professionals. The emphasis on experiential learning, as highlighted in "Igniting Learning Through Experience," demonstrated a move towards interactive pedagogies and real-world collaborations, fostering critical thinking and communication skills. Ultimately, the study concluded that "Synergy for Success" is paramount, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts in driving academic excellence. This theme underscored the need for continuous curriculum modernization, particularly in addressing emerging threats like cybercrime, and the implementation of robust board exam preparation strategies. The establishment of open communication and collaborative platforms further solidified the importance of a supportive learning environment. In essence, this research highlights a comprehensive and dynamic approach to criminology education, one that prioritizes holistic student development, practical application, ethical awareness, and collaborative success.

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