



Public Perception and Effectiveness of AFP Community Service Initiatives Programs in Cebu

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Abstract

This study assessed the implementation of community service programs conducted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and evaluate the level of satisfaction among community members across key service dimensions. Specifically, it explored perceptions in terms of accessibility and responsiveness, relevance and usefulness, coordination with local government and agencies, AFP personnel conduct and professionalism, and the sustainability and follow-through of programs. The research also examined whether demographic factors such as age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, length of residency influenced satisfaction levels and previous involvement. Using a descriptive research design and quantitative analysis through chi-square testing, the findings revealed that respondents were generally satisfied with AFP-led services. Notably, significant associations were found between satisfaction and specific demographic factors: civil status was linked to perceptions of service relevance, age affected views on coordination with LGUs, and both age and educational attainment influenced satisfaction with AFP personnel conduct. Education level also impacted perceptions of program sustainability. Additionally, key challenges identified in program delivery included limited resources, geographical barriers, natural disasters, weak coordination, and low community awareness. Based on these findings, the study recommends implementing targeted improvement strategies such as enhanced coordination, tailored program design, improved logistics, and increased community engagement. These actions aim to address identified barriers and strengthen public satisfaction. The proposed improvement plan is designed to support the AFP in delivering more effective, inclusive, and sustainable community services. Overall, the study provides valuable insights to guide future AFP initiatives and contribute to more responsive civil-military operations.

Keywords: Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Community service programs, Public satisfaction, Accessibility, Relevance, Responsiveness.

1. Introduction

Peace is a cornerstone of social stability, economic growth, and democratic governance (Shah et al., 2023). In conflict-prone areas, maintaining peace becomes not only a political goal but also a humanitarian necessity (Espesor, 2019). The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) play a critical role in promoting peace and development, especially in insurgency-affected and disaster-prone regions through its community-based civic actions and non-combat programs. Under initiatives like the Internal Peace and Security Plan "Bayanihan", the AFP has transitioned towards peacebuilding by engaging local communities in collaborative activities (Bognalbal & Rehal, 2024).

Despite these efforts, AFP-led programs often face multiple challenges. These include limited civilian involvement in planning, uneven coordination with local government units, and persistent perceptions of the AFP as a coercive force rather than a development partner (Yuson, 2021). Issues of professionalism and trust also emerge, especially in areas with histories of military abuse or poor conduct (Schulzke, 2010). Furthermore, coordination between the military and civilian agencies during relief and development operations remains inconsistent (Bollettino & Manzanero, 2022). Additionally, coordination between AFP units and local government agencies is often fragmented and inconsistent, resulting in duplication of services or resource misallocation. Some local government units may lack the capacity or political will to fully engage with AFP efforts, while in other cases, jurisdictional disputes or unclear mandates delay program rollout and monitoring (Hall, 2016).

Community perceptions of AFP-led services are mixed and often depend on the quality of implementation. In many barangays, residents express appreciation for the military's involvement in medical missions, infrastructure development, and disaster relief, particularly when these services fill critical gaps left by local government units

(Hall, 2016). However, satisfaction is closely linked to how accessible, relevant, and responsive these services are to community needs. Programs that are consultative and well-coordinated with local stakeholders tend to build trust and generate positive feedback. Conversely, when initiatives are seen as top-down, militaristic, or detached from grassroots priorities, communities often respond with skepticism or disengagement (Espesor, 2019). Therefore, genuine collaboration and local alignment are essential to sustaining public satisfaction.

If these implementation challenges persist, AFP’s peacebuilding initiatives may fail to achieve lasting impact. Without community trust and local integration, military-led efforts risk being viewed as temporary or self-serving, undermining broader goals of security and social cohesion (Schulzke, 2010). This could further widen the civil-military gap and fuel local resistance or apathy toward future state interventions (Hall, 2016). Scholars have approached this issue through various lenses: institutional analysis of AFP reform (Carlos, 2003), civil-military coordination in disaster zones (Bollettino & Manzanero, 2022), and the role of military in peacebuilding in Mindanao (Espesor, 2019). Many have highlighted the need for inclusive, bottom-up approaches that build local ownership of peace efforts. This study offers several key benefits to both academic research and practical policy-making. First, it provides valuable insights into how AFP-led community service programs are perceived by local residents, helping to assess their effectiveness in fostering peace and development. These findings can guide the AFP and local government units in designing more inclusive, needs-based, and sustainable civic programs. Second, the study contributes to the body of literature on civil-military relations in the Philippines by highlighting the role of the military beyond traditional security functions. Lastly, it empowers communities by amplifying their voices in evaluating public services, ensuring that future interventions align more closely with their priorities and improve trust in state institutions.

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design to assess the implementation of community service programs conducted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and evaluate the satisfaction levels of community members in selected barangays of Cebu Province. The design was appropriate as it aimed to systematically describe current conditions and perceptions regarding AFP-led initiatives. Data were gathered through a structured survey questionnaire, which collected information on respondents’ demographic profiles, satisfaction levels across various service dimensions, and perceived challenges in program implementation. The research followed the Input–Process–Output (IPO) framework. The Input included the demographic characteristics of respondents, their previous involvement with AFP programs, and their satisfaction levels in five key areas: accessibility and responsiveness, relevance and usefulness, AFP personnel conduct and professionalism, coordination with local government and agencies, and sustainability of programs. The Process involved survey distribution, data collection from selected barangays, and statistical analysis using descriptive methods and chi-square tests to identify relationships between demographic factors and satisfaction levels. The Output was the development of proposed strategies and recommendations to enhance AFP service delivery and community engagement. Respondents were 86 community members selected through purposive sampling to ensure familiarity with AFP-led activities. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) following standard satisfaction measurement practices (Joshi et al., 2015; Boone & Boone, 2012). The instrument, adapted from established frameworks on public service and civil-military relations (Brinkerhoff, 2003; Jensen, 2020), was validated for content and clarity. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation were strictly observed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3. Results

The study analyzed the demographic profile and prior involvement of 86 community members from selected barangays in Cebu Province to understand their perceptions of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) community service programs. Results revealed that the majority of respondents were 30 years old and below (27.91%), followed by those aged 31–35 (23.26%), indicating a predominantly young population. In terms of gender, female respondents (52) outnumbered males (34), suggesting that women were more actively engaged in or aware of AFP initiatives. Most respondents were married (63.95%), showing that family-oriented individuals formed the bulk of participants and may prioritize community programs that benefit households, such as livelihood and health services. Regarding education, a significant number had attended college (41.86%), followed by those who completed high school (26.74%) and bachelor’s degrees (22.09%). This reflects a relatively educated community capable of critically assessing AFP services. In terms of residency, 31.40% had lived in their community for 11–15 years, while 20.93% had stayed for 16–20 years, demonstrating strong local roots and familiarity with AFP-led initiatives. Participation in AFP programs was widespread, with the highest involvement in relief operations (65) and community development and livelihood programs (61). Medical and dental civic actions (45) and youth leadership programs (36) were also well-represented, highlighting the AFP’s broad engagement in both humanitarian and developmental efforts. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents were experienced, long-term residents with diverse educational backgrounds and substantial exposure to AFP community services, providing valuable perspectives on program effectiveness and impact.

Table 1. Accessibility and Responsiveness of Services.

Indicators	VD	SD	VD
AFP community service activities are conducted regularly in our area.	4.02	0.64	A
It is easy for residents to access AFP services when needed.	4.00	0.65	A
AFP responds quickly to urgent needs during emergencies or crises.	4.06	0.63	A
Service locations and schedules are convenient for most community members.	4.20	0.59	A
The AFP is proactive in reaching underserved or remote areas.	4.20	0.59	A
Grand Mean	4.10	0.62	A

Table 1 presents the respondents' level of satisfaction regarding the accessibility and responsiveness of AFP community services. All items received a Verbal Description of “Agree”, indicating a generally positive perception. The highest mean scores of 4.20 were recorded for the statements “Service locations and schedules are convenient for most community members” and “The AFP is proactive in reaching underserved or remote areas”, showing strong appreciation for AFP’s efforts in planning and outreach. The item “AFP responds quickly to urgent needs during emergencies or crises” also scored high with a mean of 4.06, reflecting timely responses during critical situations. The lowest, though still positive, score was 4.00 for “It is easy for residents to access AFP services when needed”. With a grand mean of 4.10, the results suggest that the AFP’s services are generally accessible, timely, and well-received by the community. The findings imply that the AFP’s community service programs are perceived as accessible, timely, and well-coordinated by the respondents. The consistently high mean scores suggest that the AFP has successfully established a visible and dependable presence in the barangays, especially in terms of reaching remote areas and responding during emergencies. This level of accessibility and responsiveness can lead to increased public trust and stronger civilian-military relations, which are essential in promoting peace, development, and disaster resilience. However, the slightly lower score on ease of access to services points to a possible need for enhancing communication, transport support, or local coordination to ensure all residents can fully benefit from these services.

Table 2. Relevance and Usefulness of Services Provided.

Indicators	Mean	SD	VD
The services provided by AFP match the actual needs of our community.	4.20	0.59	A
AFP programs contribute to improving health, safety, or livelihood in our barangay.	4.18	0.60	A
The community benefits from the educational and outreach efforts of AFP.	4.52	0.45	SA
Relief and civic programs address both short-term and long-term concerns.	4.18	0.60	A
AFP services are well-planned and have lasting positive impact.	4.32	0.54	SA
Grand Mean	4.28	0.56	SA

Table 2 shows the respondents’ assessment of the relevance and usefulness of AFP-provided services. The overall grand mean is 4.28, which falls under the “Strongly Agree” category, indicating a high level of satisfaction. The highest-rated item is “The community benefits from the educational and outreach efforts of AFP” with a mean of 4.52, suggesting that information campaigns and learning initiatives are highly valued. The statement “AFP services are well-planned and have lasting positive impact” also scored strongly with a mean of 4.32, reflecting a belief in the long-term effectiveness of these programs. Other items, such as matching community needs and improving health, safety, or livelihood, received mean scores between 4.18 and 4.20, all categorized as “Agree,” further confirming the programs' practical value to the community. These results imply that the AFP's community services are not only timely and well-executed but also relevant and impactful in addressing the real concerns of the people. The high ratings reflect the community’s recognition of AFP efforts in improving quality of life through health, education, relief, and livelihood programs. This strong alignment between services and community needs can enhance program effectiveness, participation, and long-term support. To maintain and further improve this perception, the AFP should continue to conduct needs-based assessments and consultations with local stakeholders to ensure that future initiatives remain meaningful and sustainable.

Table 3. AFP Personnel Conduct and Professionalism.

Indicators	Mean	SD	VD
AFP personnel treat community members with respect and courtesy.	3.56	0.70	A
They are well-organized and professional during service events.	4.00	0.65	A
The AFP listens to the concerns or suggestions of residents.	3.96	0.66	A
AFP staff maintain discipline and order while delivering services.	4.18	0.60	A
I feel safe and comfortable interacting with AFP personnel.	4.02	0.64	A
Grand Mean	3.94	0.65	A

Table 3 presents the respondents’ perception of AFP personnel conduct and professionalism during community service delivery. The overall grand mean is 3.94, which falls under the “Agree” category, indicating a generally positive view of AFP personnel. The highest-rated item, with a mean of 4.18, is “AFP staff maintain discipline and order while delivering services,” highlighting the public's appreciation for structured and orderly service delivery. The lowest score, though still in the “Agree” category, is “AFP personnel treat community members with respect and courtesy” with a mean of 3.56, suggesting that while the overall behavior is viewed positively, there may be room for improvement in interpersonal communication and empathy. The results imply that AFP personnel are generally seen as professional, disciplined, and approachable, which helps foster community trust and cooperation. However, the relatively lower score on respect and courtesy suggests a need for enhanced training in soft skills and community relations, particularly in culturally sensitive or diverse areas. Strengthening respectful and courteous engagement can further improve public perception and promote a more inclusive and supportive environment during AFP community programs.

Table 4. Coordination with Local Government and Agencies.

Indicators	Mean	SD	VD
AFP works collaboratively with our barangay or LGU during activities.	4.38	0.51	SA
Community leaders are involved in planning or implementing AFP programs.	4.19	0.60	A
There is no duplication of services due to good coordination with other agencies.	4.19	0.60	A
AFP coordinates effectively with schools, health centers, and NGOs.	4.19	0.60	A
Joint efforts between AFP and local units improve service outcomes.	4.34	0.52	SA
Grand Mean	4.26	0.57	A

Table 4 shows the respondents' assessment of the coordination between the AFP and local government units (LGUs) or other agencies during community service activities. The grand mean is 4.26, which falls under the "Agree" category, though two items received "Strongly Agree" ratings. The highest-rated statement is "AFP works collaboratively with our barangay or LGU during activities" with a mean of 4.38, followed closely by "Joint efforts between AFP and local units improve service outcomes" at 4.34, both indicating strong community appreciation for teamwork and cooperation. The other indicators, such as coordination with schools and NGOs, involvement of community leaders, and avoiding duplication of services, all scored 4.19, showing consistent agreement across various aspects of coordination. These findings imply that strong collaboration between the AFP and local stakeholders including LGUs, schools, health centers, and NGOs play a crucial role in the success of community programs. The high ratings suggest that coordination helps ensure services are efficient, relevant, and well-targeted, while also avoiding overlap with other efforts. To sustain and enhance these positive outcomes, the AFP should continue to strengthen partnerships and communication channels with local units, ensuring that community needs are addressed through a united and well-coordinated approach.

Table 5. Sustainability and Follow-through of Programs.

Indicators	Mean	SD	VD
The AFP revisits or follows up on past community service projects.	3.46	0.72	A
Programs are not only short-term events but part of a continuing plan.	4.20	0.59	A
There are visible improvements in the community after AFP interventions.	3.42	0.72	A
The AFP helps capacitate local volunteers for future service delivery.	4.12	0.61	A
Programs are evaluated and improved based on community feedback.	4.20	0.59	A
Grand Mean	3.88	0.65	A

Table 5 presents the respondents' views on the sustainability and follow-through of AFP community service programs. The grand mean is 3.88, interpreted as "Agree" (A), indicating a generally positive perception but with room for improvement. The highest-rated items, both with a mean of 4.20, are "Programs are not only short-term events but part of a continuing plan" and "Programs are evaluated and improved based on community feedback". These suggest that respondents recognize efforts to make programs ongoing and responsive to local input. The item "The AFP helps capacitate local volunteers for future service delivery" also received a strong score of 4.12, reflecting support for sustainability through local empowerment. However, lower mean scores were observed for "The AFP revisits or follows up on past community service projects" (3.46) and "There are visible improvements in the community after AFP interventions" (3.42), suggesting some concerns regarding long-term impact and monitoring. The results imply that while AFP programs are generally viewed as planned and responsive, there is a perceived need for stronger follow-up and more visible, lasting results in the community. To enhance sustainability, the AFP may consider establishing regular post-activity visits, impact assessments, and continued engagement with local volunteers. Doing so can help reinforce the community's trust and ensure that projects do not end as one-time events, but evolve into long-term solutions with measurable benefits.

Table 6. Significant Association Between Respondent Profiles and level of Satisfaction in terms of Accessibility Responsiveness

Profile	Chi-square Test	Degrees of Freedom	p-value	Results
Age	6.12	5	0.30	Not Significant
Gender	2.59	1	0.11	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.09	1	0.76	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	3.99	4	0.41	Not Significant
Years of Residency	2.8	5	0.73	Not Significant

Based on the data presented in Table 13, there is no significant association between the respondents' demographic profiles such as age ($\chi^2 = 6.12, p = 0.30$), gender ($\chi^2 = 2.59, p = 0.11$), civil status ($\chi^2 = 0.09, p = 0.76$), educational attainment ($\chi^2 = 3.99, p = 0.41$), and years of residency ($\chi^2 = 2.80, p = 0.73$) and their satisfaction with the accessibility and responsiveness of community service programs implemented by the AFP. All p-values are greater than 0.05, indicating that satisfaction levels do not significantly differ among these groups. This suggests that the AFP's community services are perceived to be equally accessible and responsive to all members of the community, regardless of their personal backgrounds. The uniform satisfaction across demographic groups reflects consistent and inclusive service delivery, which is essential in fostering trust and participation in AFP-led initiatives. The findings imply that the AFP is effectively reaching a broad and diverse population with its community programs. Maintaining this level of accessibility and responsiveness can help strengthen public confidence and ensure continued support for AFP initiatives across all sectors of society.

In Table 7, the chi-square test results show that among the respondent profiles, civil status ($\chi^2 = 4.24, p = 0.04$) has a significant association with the level of satisfaction in terms of the relevance and usefulness of community service programs implemented by the AFP. This suggests that marital status may influence how respondents perceive the impact or benefit of the programs. For instance, married individuals might prioritize different community needs compared to single individuals. Other profiles such as age ($\chi^2 = 7.83, p = 0.17$), gender ($\chi^2 = 1.55, p = 0.08$), educational attainment ($\chi^2 = 3.53, p = 0.47$), and years of residency ($\chi^2 = 3.25, p = 0.35$) did not show significant associations, indicating relatively consistent perceptions of usefulness across these groups.

Table 7. Significant Association Between Respondent Profiles and level of Satisfaction in terms of Relevance and Usefulness of Services Provided.

Profile	Chi-square Test	Degrees of Freedom	p-value	Results
Age	7.83	5	0.17	Significant
Gender	1.55	1	0.08	Not Significant
Civil Status	4.24	1	0.04	Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	3.53	4	0.47	Not Significant
Years of Residency	3.25	5	0.35	Not Significant

The AFP should consider civil status when planning and delivering community programs, as this may affect how relevant or useful the services are perceived. Customizing initiatives based on family or household needs can enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of AFP-led community efforts. This may include tailoring programs that specifically address the concerns of both single individuals and families, such as livelihood support, child-focused services, or senior care. A more segmented approach can improve satisfaction, increase engagement, and ensure that the diverse needs of the community are properly addressed and sustained.

Table 8. Significant Association Between Respondent Profiles and level of Satisfaction in terms of Coordination with Local Government and Agencies.

Profile	Chi-square Test	Degrees of Freedom	p-value	Results
Age	13.64	5	0.01	Significant
Gender	2.97	1	0.08	Not Significant
Civil Status	3.71	1	0.16	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	3.83	4	0.43	Not Significant
Years of Residency	4.36	5	0.50	Not Significant

Table 8. presents the association between respondent profiles and their satisfaction with the coordination between the AFP and local government units (LGUs) and agencies. The data shows that among all the profiles, only age has a significant association ($\chi^2 = 13.64$, $p = 0.01$), indicating that satisfaction with inter-agency coordination varies across different age groups. Meanwhile, other profiles such as gender ($\chi^2 = 2.97$, $p = 0.08$), civil status ($\chi^2 = 3.71$, $p = 0.16$), educational attainment ($\chi^2 = 3.83$, $p = 0.43$), and years of residency ($\chi^2 = 4.36$, $p = 0.50$) showed no significant association, suggesting uniform perceptions among these groups. This finding implies that age plays a key role in how community members perceive the AFP's coordination with LGUs and agencies. Younger or older respondents may have differing expectations or levels of exposure to joint initiatives, which can influence their satisfaction levels. The AFP should consider age-specific strategies in coordinating with local government units, ensuring that programs and communications are relevant, inclusive, and understandable across age groups. This can help strengthen public engagement and improve the effectiveness of AFP-led community initiatives.

Table 9. Significant Association Between Respondent Profiles and level of Satisfaction in terms of AFP Personnel Conduct and Professionalism.

Profile	Chi-square Test	Degrees of Freedom	p-value	Results
Age	11.55	5	0.04	Significant
Gender	2.64	1	0.10	Not Significant
Civil Status	3.37	1	0.06	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	9.77	4	0.04	Significant
Years of Residency	1.77	5	0.88	Not Significant

Table 9 presents the statistical relationship between respondents' profiles and their level of satisfaction regarding the conduct and professionalism of AFP personnel. The results show that two respondent profiles age ($\chi^2 = 11.55$, $p = 0.04$) and highest educational attainment ($\chi^2 = 9.77$, $p = 0.04$) have significant associations with satisfaction levels. This indicates that perceptions of AFP personnel's conduct and professionalism differ meaningfully across age groups and education levels. In contrast, gender ($p = 0.10$), civil status ($p = 0.06$), and years of residency ($p = 0.88$) did not show significant associations, suggesting similar satisfaction levels among those groups. These findings suggest that people's experiences and expectations of AFP personnel conduct may vary depending on their age and educational background. For example, those with higher education may have stricter expectations for professionalism, while age-related factors may influence perceived credibility or behavior of AFP staff. The AFP should consider age- and education-sensitive approaches in training and deploying personnel, particularly in community service roles. Ensuring that conduct and professionalism meet the expectations of diverse groups can enhance public trust and improve the overall effectiveness of AFP programs.

Table 10. Significant Association Between Respondent Profiles and level of Satisfaction in terms of Sustainability and Follow-through of Programs.

Profile	Chi-square Test	Degrees of Freedom	p-value	Results
Age	1.73	5	0.92	Not Significant
Gender	3.55	1	0.17	Not Significant
Civil Status	3.37	1	0.09	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	11.18	4	0.03	Significant
Years of Residency	5.67	5	0.34	Not Significant

Table 10 shows the association between respondent profiles and their level of satisfaction regarding the sustainability and follow-through of community service programs implemented by the AFP. Among the five profiles, only highest educational attainment shows a statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 11.18$, $p = 0.03$). This

means that satisfaction levels differ significantly depending on the respondents' level of education. In contrast, age ($p = 0.92$), gender ($p = 0.17$), civil status ($p = 0.09$), and years of residency ($p = 0.34$) do not have significant associations, indicating that respondents across these categories generally share similar views about program sustainability. The significance of education suggests that individuals with different educational backgrounds may have varying expectations or understanding of what constitutes a sustainable and well-followed-through program. Those with higher education may be more critical or informed about program continuity and impact. The AFP should tailor its community communication and program implementation strategies to address the expectations of more educated individuals, ensuring transparency, long-term planning, and visible follow-up activities. This can help boost confidence in program sustainability across all educational levels.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the community service programs implemented by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are generally well-received by the respondents, with high levels of satisfaction observed across key areas such as accessibility, relevance, coordination, professionalism, and sustainability. While most socio-demographic profiles did not significantly affect satisfaction levels, certain factors like age, civil status, and educational attainment showed meaningful associations in specific service aspects. This highlights the importance of considering demographic differences when designing and implementing programs. Additionally, key challenges such as limited resources, geographical barriers, and weak coordination with local agencies were identified as barriers to effective service delivery. These findings suggest that while the AFP is performing well in its community service efforts, there is still room for improvement. Addressing these challenges and adopting more targeted approaches can help further enhance the reach, inclusivity, and long-term impact of AFP-led programs.

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