

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cross-Cultural Competence and public service motivation of police officers in Davao Oriental, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this paper was to determine which domain of public service motivation (PSM) best influences the cross-cultural competence of police officers. Employing a non-experimental quantitative research design with a descriptive-correlational technique, the study included 120 police officers assigned in Mati City, Davao Oriental. Purposive sampling was used for respondent selection. Statistical analyses using mean, Pearson correlation and multiple regression were applied on the data following checks for normal distribution. Results indicated that the Philippine National Police (PNP) in Mati exhibited a very high level of public service motivation, with an average weighted mean (AWM) of 4.48, and respondents reported a high level of cross-cultural competence. Furthermore, the study disclosed a positive correlation between public service motivation and the cross-cultural competence of Mati City PNP. However, when regressed independently, the compassion indicator of public service motivation emerged as a significant predictor of cross-cultural competence ($p \leq .05$). Since compassion is the primary driver of cultural competence, it should be highly prioritized in training and evaluation, leveraging this innate motivational factor to strengthen operational skills. In addition, PNP officers can begin training simulations on ambiguous tolerance situations such as prayer rallies, violent rallies or benevolent suspect cases like bribery or asking favors.

Keywords: Criminal justice, cross-cultural competence, public service motivation, regression, Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

Culture is one of the most potent forces in the world. It is central to what people see, how they make sense of the world, and how they express themselves. But today, this is also one of the problems people face. Thus, it is a must that the cross-cultural competence of police officers be given attention and taken into consideration for better service to their clientele (Palma, 2017).

Irrespective of the industry or workplace where an individual was employed, cultural competence is important to daily activities and interaction. Whether in a leadership role or as part of a team, acknowledging and effectively addressing cultural distinctions contributes to a more productive work environment and fostered overall well-being for all those present. In the contemporary world, cultural competence is a fundamental requirement for everyone (Rasmussen and Sieck, 2015). Professionals in various business sectors understood that achieving cultural competence was imperative for success in the global economy. Consequently, it was essential to move beyond mere acceptance and tolerance of differences (Sieck, 2018).

Moreover, recognizing police officers' cultural backgrounds and experiences do not just foster an inclusive environment

but also expedites the learning process. This underscores the significance of educators enhancing their cross-cultural competence. Consequently, the study of cross-cultural competence is pivotal, as it is vital for effective teamwork in diverse settings (Rettig, 2017). Cross-cultural competence offers significant advantages by providing individuals with the necessary knowledge, abilities, skills, and personal attributes to excel in culturally diverse situations, mainly when driven by a commitment to the public interest (Vandenabeele, 2007). It also imparts an understanding of when and how to transition from a default home-culture management approach to one more culturally appropriate and adaptable in the workplace or environment (Zakaria, 2000). As a result, it helps avoid unfavorable and expensive outcomes by strengthening crucial abilities like resolving conflicts, communicating effectively, managing stress, acquiring language, embracing ambiguity, and adapting to diverse cultural settings (McDonald et al., 2008).

Kim (2017) suggests that cultural tendencies such as masculinity, indulgence, and collectivism have a significant positive influence on individuals' public service management (PSM). Organizational education and socialization can enhance these cultural values which will likely foster employees' PSM.

Furthermore, ongoing training and education are essential for law enforcement personnel to develop the necessary skills and understanding to effectively interact with diverse communities, thereby improving community relations and ensuring more culturally sensitive policing practices (Sereni-Massinger and Wood, 2016).

In the context mentioned above, the researcher observed that public service motivation and cross-cultural competence are vital for effective policing, yet the direct link between an officer's service drive and their cross-cultural skills is underexplored. This gap is particularly evident in diverse areas like Mati City, Davao Oriental, which lacks specific research on its police force. This study aims to fill this void by investigating how public service motivation influences cross-cultural competence in Mati City police officers, offering new insights for local policing and policy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized a non-experimental quantitative research design, applying the descriptive correlational technique. This design is most used when seeking to find statistical relationships between two variables without manipulating the data themselves

(Alexander, 2012; Creswell, 2008; Kim, 2013). In this study, the variables, cross-cultural competence and public service motivation, will not be manipulated. The data are based on perceptions, and from the data, relationships between independent and dependent variables were checked and interpreted to see emerging trends and patterns.

Description of the study area

This research was conducted in Mati City, Davao Oriental, which is a capital city, and it shares its borders with Davao de Oro to the west, as well as Agusan del Sur and Surigao del Sur to the north. Davao Oriental is traditionally inhabited by the Mandaya and Kalagan (or Kaagan) ethnic groups and holds the distinction of being the easternmost province in the Philippines, with Pusan Point in the Municipality of Caraga as its easternmost point. The Philippine Sea lies to the east of the province, and a portion of it is on an unnamed peninsula that encircles the Davao Gulf to the west. This research was conducted in the area because the authors are familiar and socially connected in this study site, enabling him to be able to conduct the research without much hindrance.

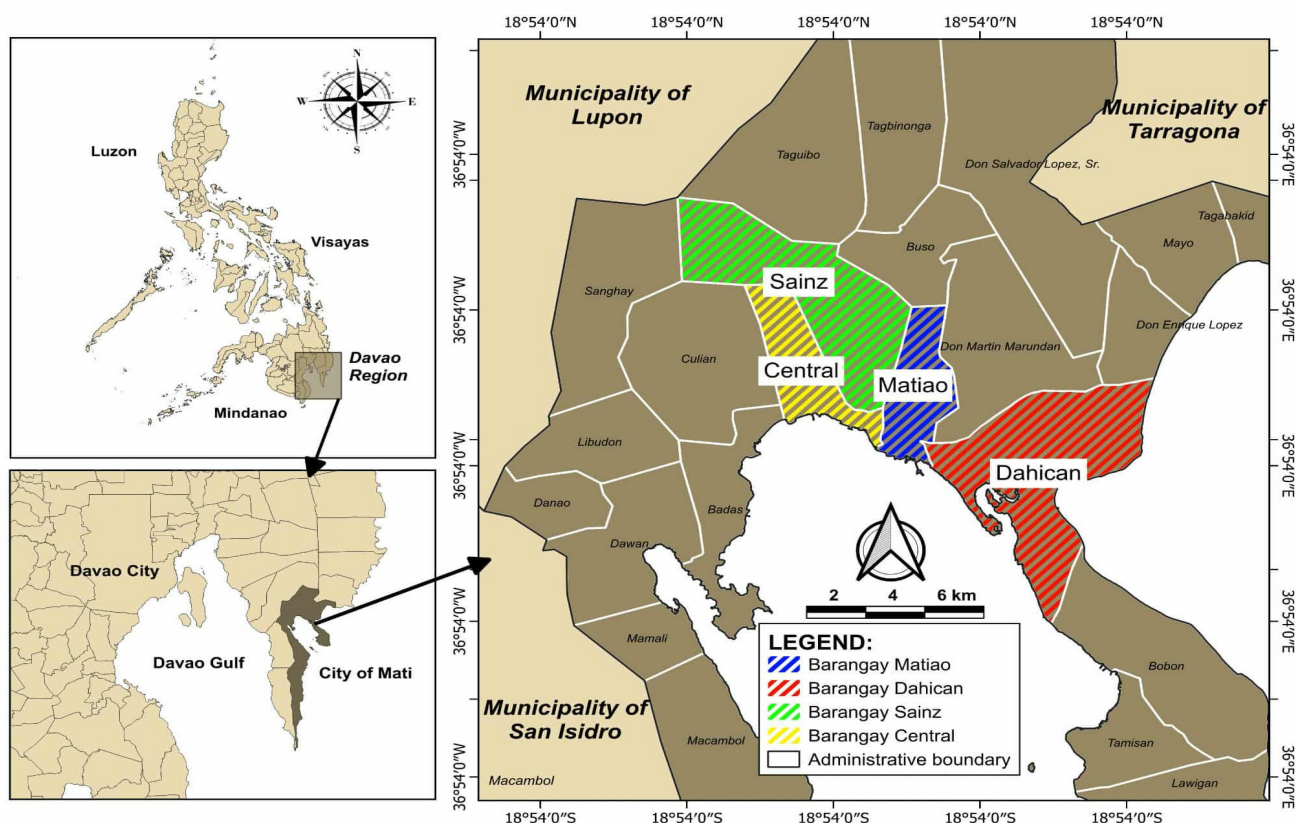


Figure 1. Map of the study area.

Data collection

The respondents of the study were police officers assigned to Mati City, Davao Oriental. They come from the Mati City Police Station, including the Davao Oriental Police Provincial Office (DOPPO), with a total strength of 120 police officers, and all of them were surveyed as respondents utilizing a purposive sampling technique. The police officers were taken as respondents to this study because they were the right people to be evaluated since they were public servants and they deal with diverse cultural backgrounds of their clients (suspects, victims, background checks). The 120 police officers were all taken as respondents to

get more reliable results. As part of the exclusion criteria, non-uniform police officers were excluded as respondents since they have different tasks in the PNP.

Additionally, the researcher has undergone several steps in gathering data for the study. First, since this study was approved, the researcher also asked permission from the Chief of Police of Mati City to conduct the study. Next, with the approval of the City Chief of Police, the researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents in the study. The researcher assured the respondents of the utmost confidentiality of their responses and identities.

The present study adopted the minimum sample size criteria established by Fraenkel, et al., (2012), a minimum sample size of 30 was required for correlational studies. In another quantitative study (Macusi et al., 2020), they further emphasized that if the sample size fell below 30, it would yield inaccurate statistical results. Therefore, to ensure meaningful and reliable outcomes, a sample size exceeding 30 was used in this study.

In this study, the selection of respondents was made using a total population sampling approach, a specialized form of purposive sampling (Patton, 2015). This method was deemed appropriate as the entire target population of 120 police officers, was directly relevant to the research questions and fully accessible for inclusion.

Questionnaire

There were two sets of questionnaires used in this study.

One set is for the independent variable, and another was for the dependent variable. The questionnaire for the independent variable is patterned after the work of Kim et al. (2010), who identified its indicators, such as attraction to public participation, commitment to public values, compassion, and self-sacrifice. The questionnaire for the dependent variable of this study is based on the study of Thornton (2010), who identified indicators such as cross-cultural openness, cross-cultural empathy, willingness to engage, self-efficacy, emotional self-regulation, cognitive flexibility, self-monitoring, low need for cognitive closure, and tolerance ambiguity.

The researcher modified the questionnaire to suit the study and submitted it to the panel of experts for validation. To ensure accurate interpretation of the collected data on public service motivation and cross-cultural competence, the weighted mean was computed and categorized using a descriptive rating scale, as shown below:

Table 1. Range of means for public service motivation.

Range of means	Descriptive level	Interpretation
4.20-5.00	Very High	This indicates that public service motivation is practice at all times.
3.40-4.19	High	This indicates that public service motivation is often practiced but not continuously.
2.60-3.39	Moderate	This indicates that the public service motivation is practiced occasionally but not continuously.
1.80-2.59	Low	This indicates that the public service motivation is practiced rarely.
1.00-1.79	Very Low	This indicates that the public service motivation is not practiced.

In evaluating the level of cross-cultural competence of the police officers, the following scale was used:

Table 2. Range of means for cross-cultural competence.

Range of means	Descriptive level	Interpretation
4.20-5.00	Very High	This means that cross-cultural competence is manifested at all times.
3.40-4.19	High	This means that cross-cultural competence is manifested most of the time
2.60-3.39	Moderate	This means that cross-cultural competence is manifested occasionally.
1.80-2.59	Low	This means that cross-cultural competence is manifested in a few instances.
1.00-1.79	Very Low	This means that cross-cultural competence is not manifested at all.

After the data collection, the raw scores for public service motivation and cross-cultural competence were aggregated, and the weighted mean was calculated for each variable. This computed mean was then used to interpret the results by applying the descriptive rating scale. The mean score was matched against the established range of means to determine the appropriate descriptive level and its corresponding qualitative interpretation, thereby translating the numerical data into meaningful findings for discussion.

Data analysis

The data gathered from the police officers were subjected to appropriate statistical analysis to address each objective of

the study. Weighted mean was utilized to determine the level of public service motivation and the level of cross-cultural competence among the police officers, providing a descriptive overview of the variables. Furthermore, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was employed to determine the nature and significance of the relationship between public service motivation and cross-cultural competence. Finally, to determine which specific domain of public service motivation best influences or predicts cross-cultural competence, multiple regression analysis was utilized.

RESULTS

Level of cross-cultural competence of the Mati City police officers

Table 3. Level of cross-cultural competence.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive level
Tolerance for ambiguity	3.04	1.27	Moderate
Need for cognitive closure	3.40	1.18	High
Self-monitoring	3.55	.96	High
Cognitive flexibility	3.71	.82	High
Emotional self-regulation	3.88	.84	High
Willingness to engage	4.03	.77	High
Cross-cultural empathy	3.91	.84	High
Cross-cultural openness	3.96	.84	High
Overall	3.69	.75	High

*Legend: Mean = Average score; SD = Standard Deviation; Descriptive Level = Qualitative interpretation of the mean score.

Table 3 summarizes the data on the level of cross-cultural competence among Mati City PNP officers. The findings indicate that the officers possessed an overall high level of competence, achieving a combined mean score of 3.69. This result implies that cross-cultural competence is generally and consistently manifested most of the time by the personnel. The officers reported the highest level of competence in willingness to engage, earning a mean score of 4.03. This suggests that the officers are notably proactive in initiating interaction and participation within diverse cultural settings.

However, the findings also highlight a specific area for development. Tolerance for ambiguity obtained the lowest mean score of 3.04, placing it in the moderate descriptive level.

This is the only indicator falling outside the high category and suggests that officers may occasionally experience difficulty or uncertainty when encountering situations that deviate from their cultural expectations, requiring focused attention to improve their comfort with the unknown in cross-cultural interactions.

Level of public service motivation of the PNP

The level of public service motivation of the Mati City police officers was computed and interpreted based on the obtained mean rating of each indicator: attraction participation, commitment to public values, compassion, and self-sacrifice.

Table 4. Level of public service motivation.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive level
Attraction to public participation	4.69	.47	Very High
Commitment to public values	4.55	.50	Very High
Compassion	4.31	.68	Very High
Self-sacrifice	4.35	.61	Very High
Overall	4.48	.46	Very High

*Legend: Mean = Average score; SD = Standard Deviation; Descriptive Level = Qualitative interpretation of the mean score.

Table 4 above presents the summary of the data which indicates that the officers displayed a very high level of PSM, achieving an overall mean score of 4.48. This high rating suggests that public service motivation was a consistently practiced trait within the organization, establishing a strong foundation of commitment.

An analysis of the specific indicators revealed a very high level of motivation across all dimensions measured. The officers demonstrated the highest level of attraction to public participation,

earned the highest mean score of 4.69. This finding highlights a principal strength in their desire to engage with the public. Conversely, while still categorized as Very High, the indicator Compassion received the comparatively lowest mean score of 4.31. This subtle variation in mean scores warrants further attention in the discussion, though the overall message remains that the Mati City PNP officers possess a high degree of motivation across the core elements of public service.

Significance of the relationship between public service motivation and cross-cultural competence

Table 5. Correlation matrix showing the relationship between cross-cultural competence and public service motivation.

Cross-Cultural Competence	Public service motivation				
	Attraction to public participation	Commitment to public values	Compassion	Self-sacrifice	Overall
Tolerance for ambiguity	-.07 (.44)	.07 (.43)	.25** (.004)	.29** (.001)	.19* (.03)
Need for cognitive closure	-.12 (.18)	-.06 (.47)	.15 (.100)	.14 (.10)	.05 (.55)
Self-monitoring	.01 (.88)	.16 (.06)	.30** (.001)	.31** (.000)	.26** (.003)
Cognitive flexibility	-.005 (.96)	.20* (.03)	.35** (.000)	.27** (.002)	.27** (.002)
Emotional self-regulation	.12 (.16)	.40** (.000)	.37** (.000)	.25** (.004)	.36** (.000)
Willingness to engage	.12 (.18)	.38** (.000)	.42** (.000)	.42** (.000)	.43** (.000)
Cross-cultural empathy	.08 (.34)	.34** (.000)	.40** (.000)	.33** (.000)	.37** (.000)
Cross-cultural openness	.06 (.48)	.28** (.001)	.31** (.000)	.29** (.001)	.30** (.001)
Overall	.02 (.86)	.25** (.005)	.38** (.000)	.35** (.000)	.33** (.000)

Note: * is significant at $p < 0.05$ ** is significant at $p < 0.01$

Table 5 above showed a significant positive relationship between cross cultural competence and PSM, evidenced by a correlation coefficient of 0.33 with a $p = .000$. This key finding confirms that as an officer's public service motivation increases,

their level of cross-cultural competence also rises, suggesting these two constructs are mutually reinforcing traits among PNP personnel.

Regression analysis on the influence of public service motivation on cross-cultural competence

Table 6. Regression analysis on the influence of public service motivation to cross-cultural competence (probability values, numbers that are bold are significant).

Regressors	B	SE	β (Std.)	t	p
(Constant)	2.29	.66		3.46	.001
Attraction to public participation	-.21	.16	-.13	-1.28	.20
Commitment to public values	-.03	.21	-.02	-.15	.89
Compassion	.33	.14	.30	2.41	.02
Self-sacrifice	.25	.15	.20	1.69	.09
$F(4, 125)=6.775, p<0.05$					
$R^2=0.18$					
$\Delta R^2=0.15$					

In addition, Table 6 showed that public service motivation and cross-cultural competence of Mati City PNP officers is highly influenced by the trait of compassion with a high degree of influence considering its 0.30 beta weight. This infers that compassion is the best predictor of cross-cultural competence among Mati City PNP officers.

The F-value of 6.78 is significant having a *p*-value of <0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis stating that there is no best predictor of cross-cultural competence of Mati City, PNP officers was rejected. In addition, the R^2 of 0.18 signifies that 17.80% of the variation in cross-cultural competence of Mati City PNP officers was explained by the public service motivation. This means that 82.20% of the variation in cross-cultural competence is attributed to other variables not covered in this study.

DISCUSSIONS

The overall very high level of Public Service Motivation (PSM) observed in the Mati City PNP officers provides a strong foundation for effective policing. This finding is consistently supported across all PSM dimensions, particularly the very high mean score of 4.69 for attraction to public participation, which aligns with Rigaux and Cunningham (2021) and Albrecht (2019) in affirming that public engagement is vital for enhancing police legitimacy and trust.

Furthermore, the high level of commitment to public values, with a mean score of 4.55 suggests the officers possess the essential moral anchoring that is crucial for preventing the abuse of authority (Mehozay and Factor, 2017; Hidayat et al. 2023). This uniformly robust motivational profile implies an ideal psychological readiness for officers to undertake challenging external duties, including interacting with diverse communities. In practice, Llanto et al. (2024) asserted that the Revitalized Pulis Sa Barangay (R-PSB) program successfully operationalized this high PSM, demonstrating that the R-PSB program grew to be a mission to maintain the advancements made by government programs and protect the public in general. Additionally, the other findings of their study on a very high level of community safety and police-community connections directly confirm that this intrinsic PSM (public service management) successfully translates into substantive efficacy and positive public outcomes.

However, a closer look at the cross-cultural competence results revealed a key area for development. While the officers achieved an overall high mean score of 3.69 and showed high levels of willingness to engage and cross-cultural openness, the indicator tolerance for ambiguity obtained 3.04 mean score with the descriptive level of moderate. This result suggests a vulnerability when officers encounter cultural uncertainty. This finding is explained through the lens of internal psychological strength, which Bilbao et al. (2025) tied to self-concept. An officer with less emotional stability, derived from a less secure self-

concept, may find the inherent unpredictability and stress of ambiguous cross-cultural situations to be overwhelming, leading to avoidance or rigid judgment, thus limiting their full competence.

Additionally, this is a crucial finding because it suggests that while officers were willing and open to engagement (Alexander, 2017), they may experience internal discomfort or unease when encountering situations characterized by cultural uncertainty or incomplete information (Масян, 2022). This difference implies that the officers' foundational desire to serve is high, but the specific skill of managing the stress caused by cultural novelty remains a point of vulnerability that limits their full competence.

Meanwhile, the study established a significant positive relationship between cross-cultural competence and public service motivation. This core finding aligns with Reid et al. (2012), who underscored the significance of PSM's underlying affective motives (Perry and Wise, 1990) as essential for personnel engaging with diverse cultural backgrounds.

The subsequent result of the regression analysis showed that compassion is the best and only statistically significant predictor of cross-cultural competence among the four PSM indicators. This finding offers a novel implication, clarifying the specific motivational pathway driving cultural competence. Since compassion is fundamentally a genuine desire to offer emotional support and prioritize others' well-being (Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project, 2017), it acts as the psychological bridge connecting an officer's high moral intention to their practical cultural skills. An officer motivated by this intrinsic compassion is naturally more inclined to be patient, seek to understand different perspectives, and manage their own emotional responses, behaviors that directly translate into essential components of cultural competence like Empathy and Emotional Self-regulation. This strongly suggests that training programs focused on enhancing intrinsic compassion would yield greater returns in improving cross-cultural skills than simply emphasizing adherence to public values or external participation.

In light of these findings, the study suggests that the Mati City police officers should focus future training not only on cultural sensitivity but specifically on building tolerance for ambiguity through exposure to complex, simulated cross-cultural scenarios. Furthermore, since compassion is the primary driver of cultural competence, it should be highly prioritized in training and evaluation, leveraging this innate motivational factor to strengthen operational skills.

CONCLUSION

In this section, conclusions were derived from the insights obtained from the study's findings. First, the level of public service motivation of the Mati City police officers revealed a very high mean score. Second, the level of cross-cultural competence of

the Mati City police officers revealed a high level. Third, the test of the relationship between variables indicates a statistically significant and positive relationship between public service motivation and cross-cultural competence within the Mati City PNP. Lastly, the regression analysis of the present study reveals that public service motivation was found to be a significant predictor of the cross-cultural competence of Mati City PNP officers. Among the four (4) indicators of public service motivation, compassion has the highest degree of influence, considering its beta weight. This implies that compassion is specifically the best predictor of cross-cultural competence among Mati City PNP officers.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author conceptualized the study, designed the framework and questionnaire, conducted the data gathering and analyzed the data and interpreted the results of the paper. Moreover, the author reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work, ensuring accuracy and integrity.

DECLARATION

Informed consent statement

The researcher adhered to rigorous ethical guidelines throughout the study, strictly following the study protocol assessments and asked verbal permission from the city and barangay local government to conduct the study. He also asked all individual respondents whether they were willing to be interviewed or not at the start of the interview.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest regarding this research study.

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