

Crime Rate in Ozamiz City, Philippines

**Mercy O. Caba-ong¹, Jose F. Cuevas Jr.¹, Angelita B. Alvarico¹,
Marie Rosellynn C. Enguito²**

¹College of Criminology, Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines

²Misamis University Research Center, Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines

Corresponding author: Mercy O. Caba-ong, email: cyrem_sweet78@yahoo.com

Abstract

Data about the crime rate are relevant in improving the crime control programs in a locality. The purpose of this paper was to determine the crime rate in Ozamiz City from the calendar year 2010 to 2013. This study also aimed to compare the volumes of the index and non-index crimes, respectively and to obtain the percentage breakdown of these offenses per year. The paper also examined the spatiotemporal patterns of index crimes. Incidents of crime reported and docketed in the police blotter were retrieved from Ozamiz City Police Station. Case investigators were also interviewed to verify the data. Findings showed a decreased crime rate in 2010 relative to 2011, a most notable decline in 2012, and the sharpest increase in 2013. Among the index crimes, physical injuries had the highest crime volume, followed by theft and robbery. Despite the lower rate of non-index crimes compared to index crimes, illegal logging, riding motor vehicles without the plate number, driver's license and registration could not be disregarded. The volume of crimes against property was consistently higher compared to crimes against person. Most index crimes occurred in streets followed by homes or boarding houses and were highest in volume from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM indicating a non-random spatiotemporal crime pattern. The findings may help the law enforcers in Ozamiz City improve the strategies for crime control.

Keywords: blotter, police, robbery, spatiotemporal, theft

Introduction

Crime is an act committed or omitted in violation of a public law forbidding or commanding it and for which the punishment is imposed upon conviction (Navarro, 2010). The Revised Penal Code of the Philippines (Republic Act No. 3815) serves as the fundamental law that defines criminal offenses and provides the penalties for the commission of such crimes (Robles, 2015). These crimes are classified as index and non-index. Index crimes are those against person that include murder, homicide, physical injury and rape, and those against property that include robbery, theft, carnapping, and cattle rustling. Non-index crimes are violations of special laws that include among others the use of dangerous drugs. The other non-index crimes include the infraction of laws in the local or city ordinances.

Understanding the roots of crimes can help explain why crimes are committed and may put light on how they should be handled and prevented. There are several theories of crimes trying to explain the elements that make people turn to a life of crime. The rational choice theory explains that the criminals select specific targets based on vulnerability such as the elderly citizens, unguarded premises, or lack of police presence (Jennings & Beaudry-Cyr, 2014; McCarthy & Chaudhary, 2014). The biological basis of crime has gained acceptance in the society for the past decade due to recent scientific developments in molecular genetics and advances in brain imaging demonstrating that many behaviors have genetic basis (Raine, 2013). Both of these theories recognize crime as an individual problem that does not involve the entire community.

The sociological theories of criminology recognize that society creates conditions that lead a person to commit a crime. These theories look at crime as a social problem and not an individual one (Vito & Maahs, 2015). In strain theory, people engage in crime to reduce or escape from the anxiety they are experiencing (Cooper, 2011). In social learning theory, people learn from each other how to commit crimes (Akers & Jennings, 2015; Schaefer, 2014; Holm, 2014). In social conflict theory, people are not born criminals, but the social, political, or material inequalities in society are the underlying causes for these people to become criminals (Lenski, 2013). In control theory, people tend to commit crime because they consider it profitable, useful and

enjoyable (Cornish & Clarke, 2014). In the context of the labeling theory, people become criminals as a result of others forcing that identity upon them. Crimes do not occur randomly or uniformly in time or space or society according to the crime pattern theory (Brantingham & Brantingham, 2013). Some places experience high crime incidents while other areas experience almost none. Crime pattern theory assumes that a proportion of people take advantage of criminal opportunities present in a locality (Groff & Lockwood, 2014).

Crime has a significant negative impact not only on human safety but also on economy more notably in developing countries (Ahmad et al., 2014). Crime, in itself, is a deterrent for foreign investors (Daniele & Marani, 2008). In the Philippines, crime also affects foreign tourism that is associated with robbery and theft (Palanca-Tan et al., 2015).

Reports on crime and delinquency from 2010 to 2013 in the Philippines show a decreasing pattern from 2010-2012, but a surge occurred in 2013 with decreasing crime solution efficiency rate (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2015). On the average, more index crimes were reported compared to the non-index crimes during this four-year period. However, more non-index crimes were reported than index in 2013. For crimes against person, physical injury has the highest number of cases, followed by rape, murder, and homicide. Theft has the most number of reported cases of the crimes against property, followed by robbery, carnapping, and cattle rustling.

There is a substantial escalation of terrorist attacks through bombings in the last 15 years in Mindanao particularly in Zamboanga City, Basilan, Cotabato, Cagayan de Oro City, Lanao del Norte, and General Santos City (Relatorres et al., 2013; Lau, 2014). Kidnapping also remains prevalent in Zamboanga Peninsula and Cotabato-Central Mindanao (Overseas Security Advisory Committee, 2015). The production, trafficking, and consumption of dangerous drugs are also issues of concern (Ocampo, 2015; Lagsa, 2015). This situation continues to hold back the development and progress in Mindanao.

In crime control model, criminal activity is repressed by employing strategic policing methods necessary to protect the community from crime (McElvain et al., 2012). Aligned with the goal of the government to address the crime problem in the country,

the Philippine National Police (PNP) formulated the transformation agenda known as the PNP P.A.T.R.O.L (Peace and Order Agenda for Transformation and upholding of the Rule-Of-Law) Plan 2030. Its mission is to enforce the law, improve crime prevention and crime solution, maintain peace and order, and ensure public safety and internal security with the active community engagement (Mutong, 2014). The PNP is using crime mapping and criminal profiling as strategies along with other techniques to reduce crime. Claridge (2015) emphasized that criminal profiling helps detect and capture criminals. Relevant data about crime rate and pattern could be analyzed to understand better where and when to prioritize the implementation of crime prevention programs (Nazaretian & Merolla, 2013). Crime patterns as to time and space are therefore relevant data to consider in solving criminality (Linning, 2015).

Ozamiz City is one of the three cities in Misamis Occidental Province, which is part of Region 10 in Northern Mindanao. The city is small but is regarded as the center of health, transportation, education, and commerce with growing financial industry as evidenced by the existence of many commercial banks and cooperatives (Atienza, 2014). The city has an airport, the only in the province that caters flights from Cebu and Manila and vice-versa. A relative number of shopping malls and tourist spots attract people from nearby places including Lanao del Norte. The city has tertiary schools and hospitals that cater people even from Zamboanga Peninsula. Several boarding houses, dormitories, restaurants and street-food stalls surround the school vicinity. A relative number of residential subdivisions are also developed in the area.

However, the city has been conceived by many people as a place not safe to live in because of its crime incidence. Hence, gathering the statistical data of crimes is relevant. Facts about the crime rate and patterns may help the law enforcers in the area improve the strategies for crime control. Also, crime rate in the city has not been fully assessed. The purpose of this paper was to determine the crime rate in Ozamiz City from the calendar year 2010 to 2013. This study also compared the volumes of index and non-index crimes, respectively and obtained the percentage breakdown of these crimes per year. The paper also examined the spatiotemporal patterns of index crimes.

Materials and Methods

This study used the descriptive research design. Crime incidents reported and docketed in the police blotter were retrieved from Ozamiz City Police Station (Figure 1), the only station that serves the 51 barangays in the city. Permission to carry out the study was obtained from the PNP ensuring the full confidentiality of the identity of the perpetrators. A checklist was used for the easy retrieval of information. Case investigators were interviewed for data verification.



Figure 1. Map of Ozamiz City showing the location of its police Station (Source: <http://images.search@yahoo.com/images/view>).

Calculation for the crime rate is done by dividing the number of reported crimes by the total population multiplied by 100,000. The population data for each year were obtained from the National Statistics Office. The average monthly crime rate for each year was also determined. The volumes of index and non-index crimes were compared, respectively. Percentage breakdown of crimes by classification per year was also obtained. The spatiotemporal patterns of crimes were also examined.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the crime rate in Ozamiz City from 2010-2013. Findings showed a lower crime rate in 2010 than in 2011, a most notable decline in 2012, and the sharpest increase in 2013. A surge in crime was also observed at the national level as the crime volume in 2013 was triple in 2012 (Cupin, 2014). The observed increase in crime rate could be due to improved record keeping procedures through computerization. The Crime Incident Reporting System (CIRS) or e-blotter system of the PNP was activated during this time to address the problem of irregularities in crime reporting in the Philippines. The CIRS was first introduced by the PNP in 2010 (The Detective, 2013). However, seminars on e-blotter were still yet conducted before the system was fully implemented in 2013 (Granali, 2012). The system does not only improve the documentation procedures and modernize the data storage but also provide a quick and reliable transmission of crime information from one police station to another.

Table 1. The crime rate in Ozamiz City for the calendar years 2010-2013.

Year	Crime volume	Crime rate	Population
2010	658	500.3	131,527
2011	691	517.4	133,565
2012	448	330.3	135,635
2013	835	608.6	137,195

Based on the information gathered during the interview with the police, the new reporting system is an attempt to correct the lapses of the PNP. According to the PNP's Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management (DIDM), the underreporting of crimes was partly due to the policies giving pressures to chiefs of police to maintain a low crime volume and high solution efficiency (Cupin, 2014). The DIDM also acknowledged weaknesses in crime reporting such as different practices in crime counting, traffic-related offenses rarely reflected in the crime statistics, and under-counting offenses involving women

and minors. The exclusion of cases filed directly to the court also affected the crime statistics. There were also instances that investigators would decide whether to include or exclude a crime incident in their report. Moreover, most police stations did not have official Desk (Blue) Blotter and Women and Children Protection Desk or WCPD (Pink) Blotter. Hence, all police stations were mandated to use the e-blotter system to ensure the uniformity of crime reporting across all agencies involved in Criminal Justice System (Grecia et al., 2014).

The most notable crime drop in 2012 relative to the previous years could also be attributed to the change in police administration during this year. Records may be flawed in the preceding years before 2013 due to under-counting of crime incidents, but the remarkable decline in crime rate in 2012 may also be attributed to the active patrolling and constant monitoring of illegal activities by the new PNP head with more warrant of arrest served for the offenders. The new Chief of Police (COP) during the first trimester of service may tend to be so active taking into account the three-year term given before one is eventually assigned to another station. Under the transformation agenda of the PNP, strict enforcement of the law is among the crime control strategies used to deter criminal conduct (Mutong, 2014). Criminal activity is repressed by employing strategic policing methods necessary to protect the community from crime (McElvain et al., 2012). Hence, police visibility could also be the factor that reduced the crime rate in 2012 in Ozamiz City.

The average monthly crime rate from 2010 to 2013 is shown in Figure 2. The result is higher compared to the crime statistics in Region 10 for the years 2010-2012 (Senate Economic Planning Office, 2013). The crime rate in the region showed a decreasing trend from 2010-2012 while crime rate in Ozamiz City in 2011 was slightly higher than in 2010. However, the increasing trend observed in 2013 was similar in other places of Region 10 and the entire country. The statistics could be the result of an efficient crime recording system with e-blotter in this year being able to document more violent crimes that may be associated with elections in the Philippines. Elections held in 2013 had led to acts of violence in an attempt to harm particular candidates more notably for local-level offices (Gomez, 2013; Mazumdar, 2013).

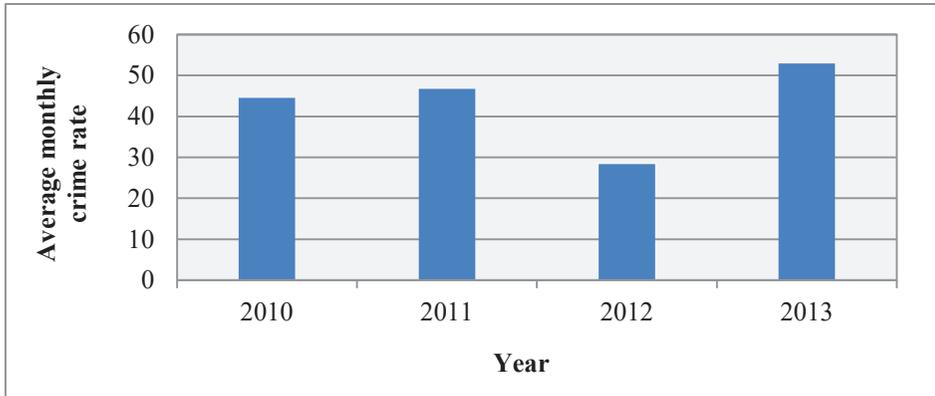


Figure 2. Average monthly crime rate from 2010 to 2013.

Figure 3 shows the comparative index crime volume for calendar years 2010-2013. Physical injuries had the highest crime volume, followed by theft and robbery. These crimes are also common in other places of the Philippines (Navarro, 2010; PSA, 2015). Cases of physical injury in Ozamiz City were more associated with alcohol and prohibited drug use with few cases related to fraternity violence. Alcoholism and substance dependence can be linked to incidents of physical injury (Reingle et al., 2014; Barrett et al., 2014). A study showed that negative affect such as anger, for instance, is associated with higher alcohol consumption on drinking days (Simons et al., 2014) that may lead to violent behavior (Ullrich et al., 2013; Berthelot et al., 2014). The case of intimate partner violence in Cebu, for instance, is associated with alcohol use among men partners. Women partners, in this case, are also motivated to inflict physical injury to their husband or partner out of self-defense while their partners act out of control more often (Fehringer & Hindin, 2014). Hence, crime can also be caused by psychological elements outside of an individual's control (Vito & Maahs, 2015). Few incidents of physical injury in Ozamiz City are also associated with fraternity violence. In other cities, fraternity-related violence is becoming prevalent causing injuries or even death (Sauler, 2015). In a few cases, thieves in the city are beaten by aggrieved residents. This situation is also happening in other urban places in the country (Galupo, 2013; Botial, 2013).

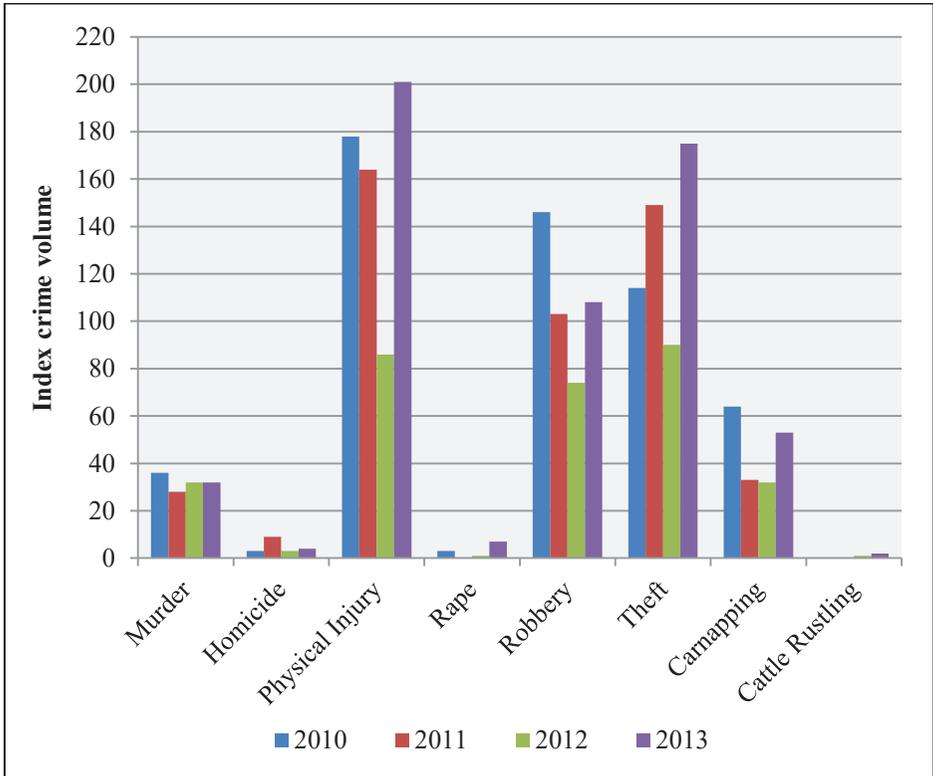


Figure 3. Comparative index crime volume for the calendar years 2010-2013.

Theft incidents in boarding houses, dormitories or homes and streets were also recorded in Ozamiz PNP blotter with few cases in shopping malls. A theft incident occurred in one of the dormitories in the city early in the morning, and the suspect was shot by the security guard of the building. An incident of theft also occurred in a lodging house late at night when suspect stole cell phones and money from the ladies room while everybody was asleep. Few neighbors being able to notice the situation after the suspect jumped from the window were able to seize the intruder and turned him over to the police. A similar situation is also happening in other places in the Philippines with few suspects even agreed to rent a room and eventually fled after stealing expensive gadgets such as cell phones, laptop, and tablets from other rooms (Guiang, 2014; Laking, 2014).

Pickpocketing is happening in congested streets in Ozamiz City. This form of theft is common near the public market and other business buildings. Austin (2012) argued that pickpocketing in northwest coast region of Mindanao can be seen as emerging partly from customary norms that include being able to get something for nothing, being street smart, and being first. However, theft in Ozamiz City could be more associated with poverty and drug addiction. The urbanization in cities may create slums where poverty is the highest and petty crimes such as theft become rampant (Tamayo et al., 2013). People among the disadvantaged are motivated to engage in illegal activities (Rock, 2006). The social inequalities in society are the underlying causes for people to become criminals (Lanski, 2013). Crime, in this case, is regarded as a social problem and not an individual one (Vito & Maahs, 2015).

Drug addicts resort to theft so they could fund their drug habit (Caputo & King, 2015; Pestelos, 2015). There were cases of mall theft in the city, but the suspects were easily apprehended through the aid of the closed-circuit television. A surveillance camera can aid in promoting safety in urban places where crime threat is present (van Heek et al., 2014). Stealing of telephone and cable wires as well as water and electrical meters also became alarming in the city (Medina, 2007). The situation led to barrage of complaints from residents and utility firms to prompt the local government for action which resulted in positive results.

Both theft and robbery are rampant in depressed areas (Barrientos, 2009; Onwuemele, 2014; Bharadwaj, 2014). Home break-ins and pawnshop robbery in Ozamiz City were reported. Khruakham and Lee (2014) showed that home break-ins aside from terrorism were determinants of fear of crime in the Philippines. Reports also came out about the illegal activities of the so-called Ozamiz Robbery Gang in places outside the city. The group was reported to be behind a series of heist that robbed banks, armored vans, pawnshops and other establishments in Metro Manila and Cebu (Calleja, 2012; Padua, 2013). Reports came out then in 2013 that the two leaders of the group were killed by the police escorts while in their custody (Sinapit, 2013; Elona, 2013). The shooting bolstered suspicions of a rubout which resulted in the filing of murder charges against the police escorts (Yap, 2013).

The sociological theories can potentially explain, in part, or in whole why people have the tendency to participate in criminal gangs. According to strain theory, offenders may lack the legitimate opportunity to achieve their goals and may resort to gang robbery, for instance, to escape from the stress they are experiencing such as financial problems (Cooper, 2011). According to the social learning theory, people may also engage in gang robbery because they learn such criminal behavior through interacting with individuals that behave criminally (Akers & Jennings, 2015). People may also engage in gang robbery because they consider it profitable, useful and enjoyable as explained in social control theory (Cornish & Clarke, 2014). People may have the ability to break the law and choosing to do so is based on the many opportunities that are available in society (Cooper, 2011). Whether or not the person is going to become a deviant is determined by the internal and external forces one is exposed to (Siegel, 2010).

The comparative non-index crime volume for calendar years 2010-2013 is presented in Figure 4. The volume of other non-index crimes was higher than those crimes in violation of special laws. The results are similar to the findings of Hindin and Adair (2002). Illegal logging and riding motor vehicles without plate number, driver's license, and registration are non-index crimes mostly committed in Ozamiz City. A moratorium on the cutting and harvesting of timber in the natural and residual forests was already declared, and the anti-illegal logging force was created through Executive Order No. 23 (Official Gazette, 2011). In spite of the moratorium, members of Ozamiz Police Force were able to intercept a truck loaded with illegally cut timber during an operation in one of the barangays in the city (Gorit, 2012). Consequently, the Provincial Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force put more checkpoints of forest products at the foot of Mt. Malindang Ranges and Natural Park (Santillan, 2015). On the other hand, typical alibis of motorcycle and other vehicle drivers violating the traffic rules include no knowledge about the rules and negligence as well. Aside from this problem, there is also a delay in the release of the license plates from the Land Transportation Office for the newly registered vehicles due to system upgrading resulting in backlog (Rivera, 2015).

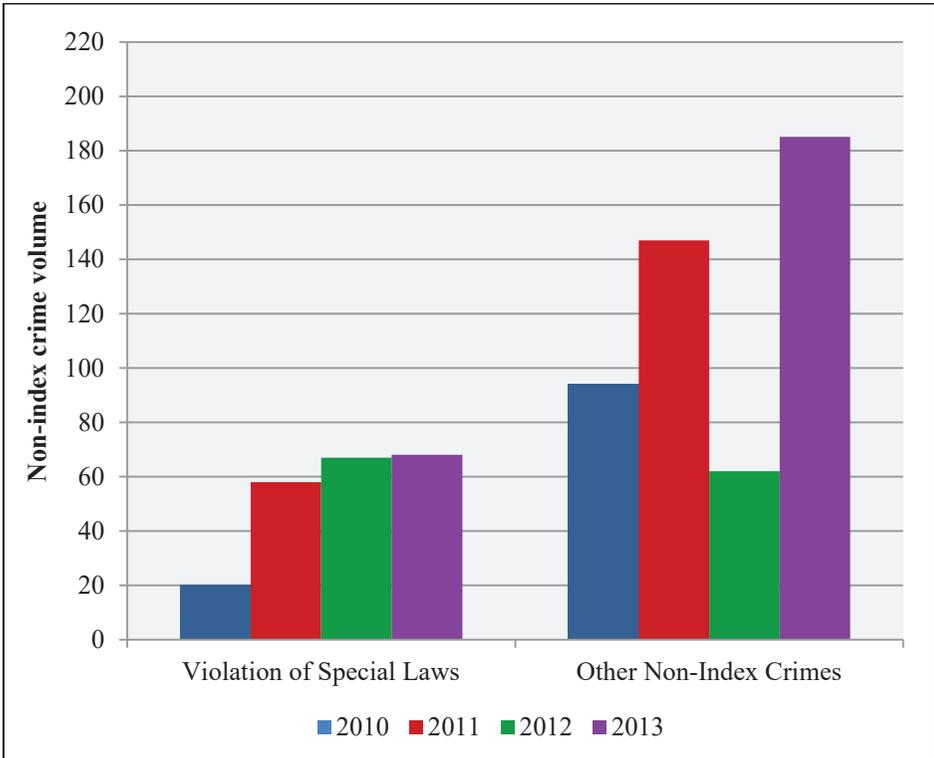


Figure 4. Comparative non-index crime volume for the calendar years 2010 to 2013.

The percentage breakdown of crimes by classification for each year from 2010 to 2013 is shown in Figure 5. A higher percentage of index crimes were reported compared to the non-index for the four-year period. The pattern is also similar with the report of Felipe (2015) showing that index crimes such as theft, physical injuries and rape were among the crimes that had the huge increase. This study also shows a higher percentage of crimes against property compared to crimes against person. The finding is similar to the national crime statistics of PSA (2015). Under-reporting of crimes against a person may be possible. Langton et al. (2012) showed that there were violent victimizations not reported to the police. The reasons for non-reporting include among others the fear of reprisal and the victim chooses to deal with the incident without police intervention.

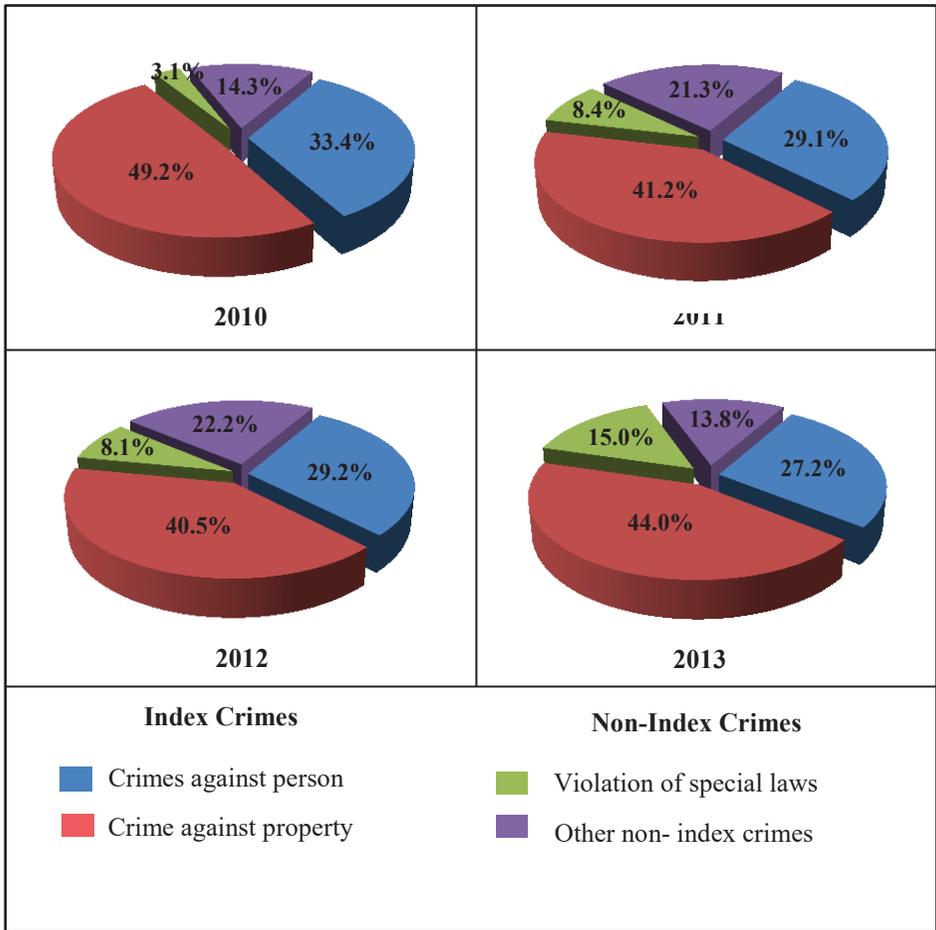


Figure 5. Percentage breakdown of crimes by classification per year from 2010 to 2013.

Figures 6 and 7 present the spatiotemporal patterns of crimes against person and property from 2010 to 2013. For crimes against person, physical injury and murder had the highest crime volume from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM. Homicide had the highest volume from 2:00 AM to 5:00 AM while rape had the highest crime incidents from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM.

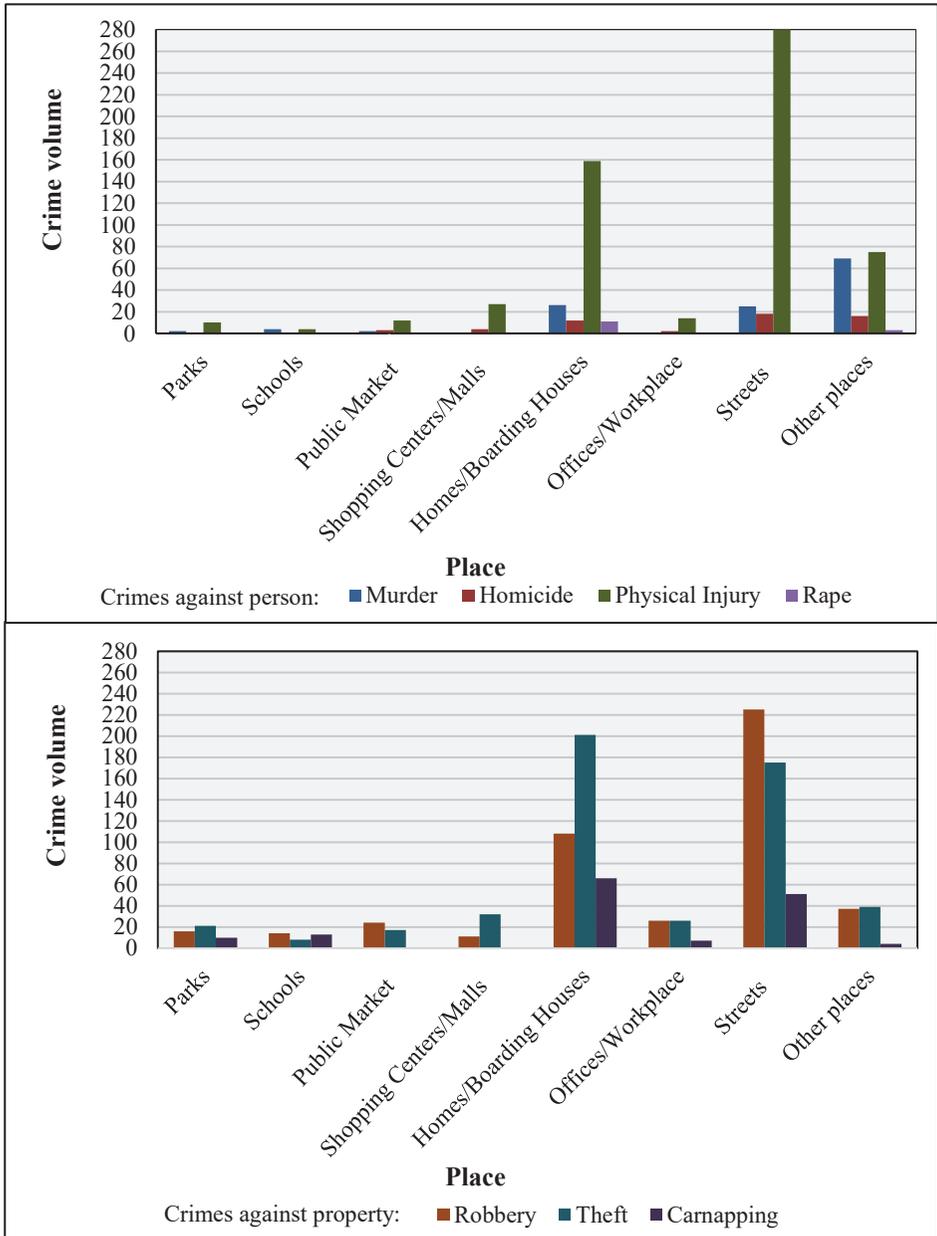


Figure 6. Spatial patterns of index crimes in Ozamiz City from 2010 to 2013.

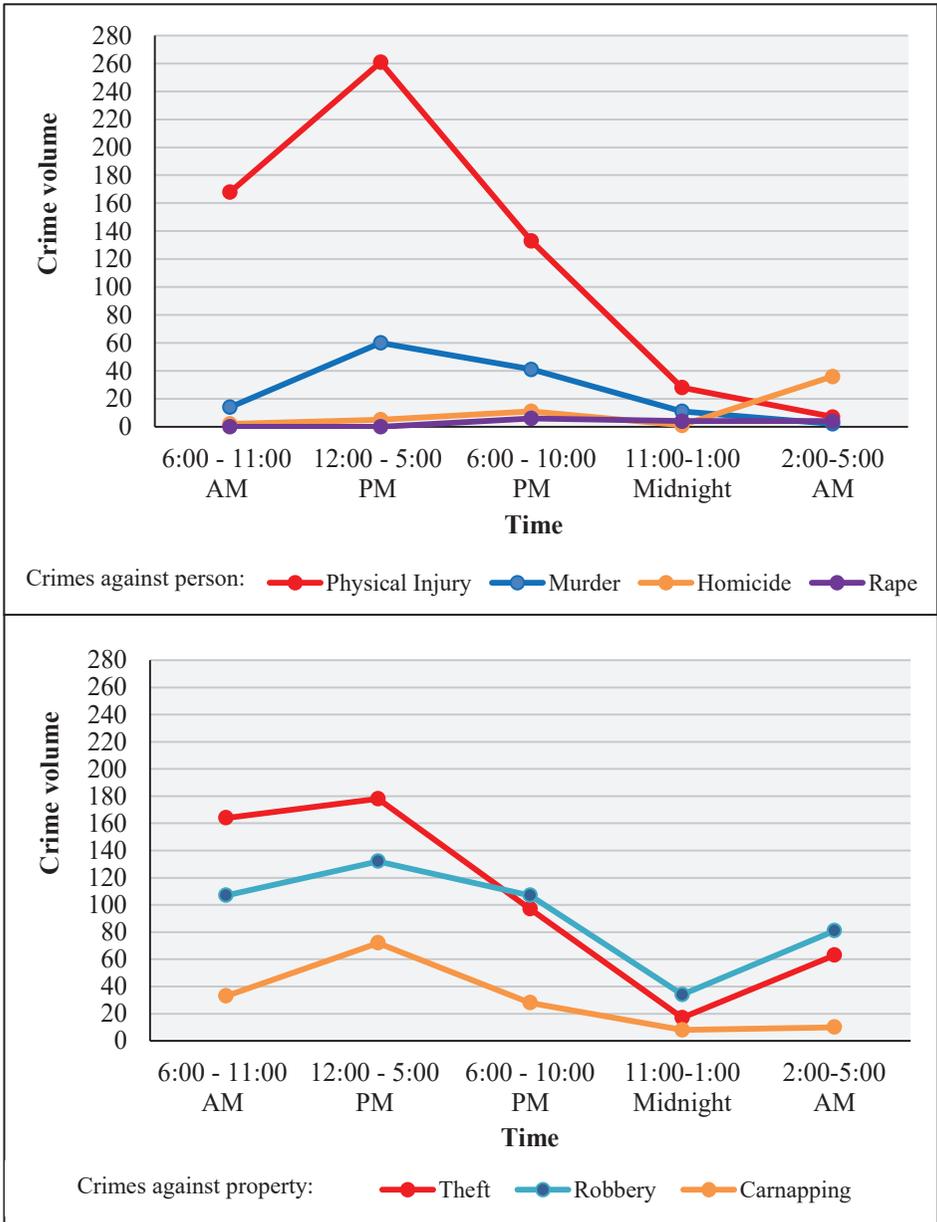


Figure 7. Temporal patterns of index crimes in Ozamiz City from 2010 to 2013.

The average volume of crimes against property such as theft, robbery, and carjacking was highest from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM. Offenders tend to look for the motives and opportunity in committing the crime. Crimes are committed during the busy time when people are doing their routine works at the office, when some are in the streets, and while students are in schools (Lemieux & Felson, 2012) or during night time when everyone is asleep and the houses are closed.

This study also found that index crimes mostly occurred in streets followed by homes or boarding houses. Crimes also occurred in shopping malls, offices, public market, parks, schools and other places such as residential subdivisions. Physical injury and homicide were mostly committed in streets. This result is also affirmed by the report of International Association of Chiefs of Police (2014). Murder mostly occurred in residential subdivisions. Rape was mostly committed in homes or boarding houses. Crimes recorded in this study did not happen in places close to police station similar to the finding of Ahmed and Salihu (2013). Criminals select specific targets based on vulnerability such as unguarded premises, or lack of police presence (Cornish & Clarke, 2014). Concern has been expressed that prevention efforts at specific locations will only move the crime to other, unprotected locations, but instead of crime displacing, the benefits of the prevention efforts diffuse to unsafe areas (Eck & Weisburd, 2015).

This study also showed that crime occurs more often in areas with easy road access, particularly when there are many commercial houses. Some proportion of people takes advantage of criminal opportunities (Groff & Lockwood, 2014). Hence, busier places have an increased likelihood of being part of the activity space of the offender. In some locations, there are facilities such as public housing communities or residential subdivisions that can be associated with increased crime rate and can be regarded as crime generators and attractors (Haberman et al., 2013). The persistence of high-crime places may be drawn upon the notion that offenders choose specific targets with high reward and little risk (Braga & Clarke, 2014). Crime incidents in Ozamiz City could be alarming to the community since most of the thieves and robbers might be engaged in substance addiction. Most of the drug users are interested in safe and quick criminal gain to support their drug habits and other vices.

The findings of this study suggest that crimes in Ozamiz City are non-random across space and time. The results support the claim that crime is not randomly or uniformly organized in space and time (Brantingham & Brantingham, 2013; Ratcliffe, 2010). The spatiotemporal patterns of crime revealed in this study support the argument that criminals make a rational choice and freely choose where and when to commit the crime after weighing the potential risks against the benefits (Jennings & Beaudry-Cyr, 2014; Cornish & Clarke, 2014; McCarthy & Chaudhary, 2014). Crimes in other places of the Philippines are also non-random. Bomb threats and reports of suspicious items, for example, occur in buildings (commercial, government, and transport) and highways during daytime on weekdays (Barrera, 2015). In Negros Oriental, motor thefts that mostly occur in the provincial capital are concentrated at dawn during weekends (Barrera et al., 2015), while the shooting incidents cluster in central business district and occur mostly late in the evening and early dawn at weekends (Rubio et al., 2015).

Crimes are clustered because crime opportunities are not random across space and time. Relevant data about the spatiotemporal crime pattern could be analyzed to determine crime trends (Law et al., 2014) and to understand better where and when to prioritize the implementation of crime prevention programs. Hence, studying how crimes distribute across space and time is vital for the PNP to control crimes in Ozamiz City. The data of spatiotemporal pattern of robbery and violence crimes at the micro-level for example could be very beneficial for the police force when developing and implementing crime prevention and control initiatives (Herrmann, 2015).

The findings of this study indicate the importance of policing at places and time that crimes are mostly committed. Ozamiz PNP has been conducting patrols in crime hot spots such as the busy streets giving more attention to street crimes as well as in areas where there are many boarding houses, dormitories, and homes. Night patrol has been optimized to reduce the crime rate. Similar policing strategy has been conducted in other places particularly in Metro Manila (Pazzibugan, 2013). Hence, more police enforcers have been trained and deployed to busy areas to conduct patrols. Studies in places outside the country showed that hot spots policing reduces crime

incidents (Braga et al., 2014; Weisburd & Green, 2006). Studies also demonstrated that optimizing the length of patrol stops in high-crime locations had small but noteworthy reduction in crime rate (Koper, 1995). The finding of Telep et al. (2014) also showed that 15-minute patrolling for each police rotation in hot spots resulted in significant overall decline in crime incidents. Deploying more intelligence personnel within the locality can also check, identify, and reliably evaluate the criminal activities (Greenfield & Paoli, 2013).

Support and involvement of the public and victims may also help reduce crime rate (Mutong, 2014). Without the meaningful participation of the community, it would be so difficult to control crime even with the best trained and fully equipped police force (Caparas, 2000). The crime rate of Ozamiz City requires attention of both PNP and community to the greatest extent to ensure public safety. With this, the residents are not only assured of their security, but the economy of the locality may also improve (Havi & Dodzi, 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The community in Ozamiz City has always been challenged by the relative crime rate in the area. The residents are not entirely safe from physical injuries, theft, robbery, murder, homicide, rape, and carnapping. Despite the lower rate of non-index crimes compared to index crimes, illegal logging, riding motor vehicles without the plate number, driver's license and registration could not be disregarded. Trafficking and consumption of dangerous drugs in the city also continue to divest residents of their security. The non-random spatiotemporal patterns of crime revealed in this study provide relevant information as to how crimes are distributed across space and time.

There is a need for the PNP to revisit the existing crime control programs in Ozamiz City in partnership with the community and other concerned agencies taking into account the results of this study. Patrol operations with longer patrol stop particularly in hot spots, and creation of a task force in the area can help protect the people. Police visibility in high-crime places is highly recommended to deter offenders in committing crimes.

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