

AN ASSESSMENT ON CYBER ISSUES AMONG THE RESIDENTS OF SAN JOSE DEL MONTE, BULACAN

ABSTRACT

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San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, is undergoing rapid urbanization alongside increasing digital connectivity (Philippine National Police, 2024). This development heightens the community's exposure and vulnerability to cyber threats. This study aims to assess the extent of this vulnerability by examining residents' awareness and cybersecurity practices. The investigation is framed by Routine Activity Theory, which explains crime occurrence through the convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the lack of capable guardians (Cohen & Felson, 1979). This study utilized a descriptive quantitative research design to evaluate the awareness and experiences of 50 residents and 10 personnel from the Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group (PNP-ACG). Random sampling was employed to ensure a representative sample of residents across various barangays in San Jose del Monte. Data were collected using a questionnaire based on a 4-point Likert scale. The data analysis involved frequency distribution, percentages, and weighted mean to assess the levels of awareness and preventive behaviors (Creswell & Guetterman, 2020). The findings indicate that identity theft and smishing are the most prevalent cyber issues experienced by residents. Respondents showed limited awareness of phishing scams and lacked knowledge on reporting procedures, reflecting low digital literacy. Cybersecurity practices were notably weak, with enabling Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) having the lowest adoption rate. Only a small portion of respondents reported engaging in proactive cybersecurity measures. Additionally, 82% of residents had never participated in a cybersecurity awareness seminar. When choosing educational formats, residents preferred printed materials like brochures over workshops or online training. These results were confirmed by the Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group (PNP-ACG), which reported smishing and identity theft as the most common cases locally, often linked to insufficient cybersecurity awareness and failure to identify fraudulent communications (Philippine National Police, 2024). The study recommends launching a Community Outreach Street Campaign to distribute clear and accessible cybersecurity brochures to households in San Jose del Monte. These materials should highlight how to identify phishing and smishing attacks, implement secure account management practices—such as strong passwords and Two-Factor Authentication (2FA)—and report cyber incidents effectively. Future studies should evaluate the impact and effectiveness of this brochure-based intervention (Creswell & Guetterman, 2020).

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