



# Insight on Illegal Possession and Misuse of Firearms: An Analysis of Criminology Students' Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines criminology students' perspectives on illegal firearm possession and misuse in Pagadian City, Philippines, focusing on their awareness of firearm laws, perceptions of causes and prevention strategies, and views on law enforcement effectiveness. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from 120 criminology students via a validated questionnaire. Results revealed high awareness of firearm regulations among respondents, though gaps persisted in understanding licensing procedures and penalties. Socioeconomic factors like poverty and peer influence were identified as key drivers of illegal firearm possession, with strong support for community policing and stricter enforcement as preventive measures. However, perceptions of law enforcement effectiveness were mixed, highlighting concerns about resource adequacy and transparency. A significant positive correlation (Spearman Rho = 0.72,  $p < 0.001$ ) was found between students' theoretical knowledge of firearm laws and their practical understanding of prevention strategies. The study underscores the need for enhanced academic training, public education campaigns, and institutional improvements to address illegal firearm issues. Recommendations include integrating experiential learning, strengthening law enforcement transparency, and adopting multifaceted interventions to reduce gun-related crimes. These findings contribute to policy and educational strategies aimed at improving public safety and firearm regulation compliance.*

**Keywords:** Criminology students, Firearm Laws, Law enforcement, Crime prevention, Illegal Firearms.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background:

Illegal firearm possession is a critical concern in the Philippines, including in Pagadian City, where authorities frequently apprehend individuals carrying unlicensed weapons. The Philippine legal framework, primarily governed by Republic Act No. 10591 (Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act), strictly mandates licenses for ownership, possession, and carrying of firearms (Respicio, 2025). Nonetheless, incidents continue to emerge, such as the arrest of individuals linked to armed groups found in possession of illegal firearms and ammunition in the Zamboanga del Sur region, which includes Pagadian City (Agonoy, 2025). Law enforcement operations in the area have also led to the confiscation of numerous loose or unregistered firearms, highlighting the persistent challenge of illegal gun possession (SunStar Zamboanga, 2024).

The misuse of illegal firearms in Pagadian City exacerbates security issues, contributing to the local crime landscape marked by a growing volume of criminal activities. Crime statistics show an increasing trend in the city's overall crime rate, with instances involving firearms contributing to violence and insecurity (Crime in Pagadian, Philippines - Cost of Living, 2025). Firearms, including unlicensed and high-powered weapons, are reportedly used in violent incidents

such as shootings and armed confrontations, often linked to private armed groups or political disputes (Agonoy, 2025). The presence of loose firearms has been recognized as a threat to public order, prompting law enforcement to intensify operations aimed at reducing the availability of illegal guns and enhancing community safety (*SunStar Zamboanga*, 2024).

Under Philippine law, illegal possession of firearms carries severe penalties ranging from imprisonment to more stringent sentences depending on the type of firearm and circumstances of the offense, as outlined in R.A. 10591 (*R.A. No. 10591 - LawPhil*, 2013). The law also requires legitimate gun owners to secure licenses and permits, including a License to Own and Possess Firearms (LTOPF) and a Permit to Carry Firearms Outside of Residence (PTCFOR) for carrying firearms in public. Failure to comply exposes individuals to criminal charges, arrest, and prosecution without warrant in flagrante delicto when caught with unlicensed firearms (Respicio, 2025). These regulations aim to curb illegal gun ownership and misuse, though enforcement challenges persist in Pagadian City and other parts of the Philippines.

The impact of illegal firearm possession and misuse on crime rates and public safety is significant, with criminology students' perspectives offering valuable insights (*Perceptions of Criminology and Non-Criminology Students...*, n.d.). Illegal gun carrying is often motivated by the need for protection in violent environments (*Illegal Gun Carrying: Motives, Consequences, and Illinois Arrest...*, n.d.). Simultaneously, research indicates that weak firearm regulations contribute to increased gun thefts and a greater supply of illegal firearms, which lowers their cost on the black market (*Fact Sheet: Weakening Requirements to Carry a Concealed Firearm...*, 2022).

Criminology students, particularly those focused on criminal justice, often show more opposition to gun control, although those with greater knowledge of gun laws tend to support gun rights (*Illegal Gun Carrying: Motives, Consequences, and Illinois Arrest...*, n.d.). Despite some legislative changes that allow concealed carry on college campuses, most students and faculty remain opposed, doubting that more guns necessarily increase safety. Better data on gun ownership and availability, as well as the dynamics of legal and illegal gun markets, are needed to understand the impact of policies (*A Critical Synthesis of Research Evidence on the Effects of Gun...*, 2024). To mitigate these risks, states should consider strategies such as adopting negligent-storage CAP laws or other safe-storage laws to reduce total and firearm suicides, unintentional firearm injuries and deaths, and firearm homicides among youth. Additionally, states should mandate background checks for private firearm sales, as this has been shown to reduce total and firearm homicide rates (*A Critical Synthesis of Research Evidence on the Effects of Gun...*, 2024).

Criminology students generally show limited knowledge about firearm laws but tend to support gun rights, although there are variations depending on gun ownership status. Ownership of firearms among these students is often linked to protection and sport, reflecting broader cultural shifts from traditional hunting to self-defense motivations. These students' support for gun rights correlates with increased knowledge of gun laws, while non-owners tend to favor some gun control measures (*Undergraduate Students Knowledge and Opinion About...*, 2018).

Recent legislative changes have allowed concealed carry of firearms on some college campuses under specific conditions, sparking debate. Criminology students, particularly those interested in criminal justice careers, often express more opposition to gun control compared to non-majors, reflecting their exposure to crime-related content. Despite legislative shifts, most students and faculty oppose concealed carry on campuses, with many believing that the presence of firearms does not necessarily increase safety. This skepticism highlights concerns about the effectiveness of firearm possession in preventing violence on campus (*Undergraduate Students Knowledge and Opinion About...*, 2018).

Illegal possession and misuse of firearms contribute substantially to violent crime. Criminal misuse is a major problem globally, with firearms used in homicides, assaults, and other violent offenses. Studies have shown that illegal firearms often enter criminal markets through theft, diversion from legal sales, and trafficking. The flow of illegal firearms from states with weaker gun laws to those with stronger regulations exacerbates public safety challenges. Law

enforcement strategies focus on restricting illegal supply, deterring possession, and promoting responsible ownership to reduce gun violence (C. Koper et.al., 2012).

Policies that regulate who may legally possess firearms, enforce safe storage, and reduce illegal carrying are essential for mitigating the risks associated with illegal firearms. Evidence indicates that more restrictive sales laws and dealer regulations, delay the diversion of guns to criminals and reduce the availability of new guns in illegal markets. Police strategies that focus on interrupting illegal supply chains and toughening responses to illegal possession show potential in reducing firearm-related crime (G. Pierce et. al., 2014).

## **1.2 Objectives:**

This research aims to examine criminology students' awareness of firearm laws, analyze their views on the causes and prevention of illegal firearm use, and assess their perceptions of law enforcement effectiveness. Additionally, the study seeks to determine if a significant correlation exists between students' theoretical knowledge of firearm regulations and their practical understanding of prevention strategies, exploring how academic training translates into real-world crime prevention perspectives.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Methods, Materials and Participants:**

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational design to explore criminology students' perspectives on illegal firearm possession and misuse. The descriptive component assessed their awareness of firearm laws, views on causes and prevention, and perceptions of law enforcement effectiveness using survey data. The correlational aspect examined the significant relationship exists between students' theoretical knowledge of firearm regulations and their practical understanding of crime prevention strategies. A structured self-administered questionnaire also utilized to collect data, covering legal awareness, prevention attitudes, and law enforcement perceptions. This study involved 120 criminology students from Pagadian Capitol College, randomly selected to provide insights into their perspectives on illegal firearm possession and misuse. As future law enforcement professionals, their awareness of firearm laws, views on causes and prevention, and perceptions of law enforcement effectiveness are crucial in shaping crime prevention strategies.

### **2.2 Validation**

The research instruments employs a robust validation process to ensure the credibility and reliability of its findings. As summarized in Table 1, the study underwent face validity, where a panel of criminology experts confirmed that the items aligned with the research objectives. Additionally, the content validity, measured by the Content Validity Index (CVI), scored an excellent 0.95, indicating that the tool comprehensively covers the intended topics. Construct validity was further established through factor analysis, with all loadings exceeding 0.70, confirming the theoretical soundness of the constructs. These rigorous validation steps underscore the study's methodological strength and its ability to accurately capture criminology students' perspectives on firearm related issues.

Furthermore, the reliability of the research instrument was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a score of 0.85 in a pilot test involving 30 participants. This result demonstrates good internal consistency, suggesting that the tool reliably measures the intended variables. By combining high validity and reliability, the study provides a solid foundation for analyzing criminology students' insights into the illegal possession and misuse of firearms. The findings could offer valuable contributions to policy-making and educational strategies aimed at addressing firearm related crimes, particularly from the lens of future criminology professionals.

**Table 1. Summary of the Validation Process.**

Validation	Method/Index	Result	Interpretation
Face Validity	Panel of 3 Criminology Instructors/Professors	Passed	Items aligned with objectives
Content Validity	Content Validity Index (CVI)	0.95	Excellent
Construct Validity	Factor Analysis	Factor loadings > 0.70	Acceptable
Reliability test	Cronbach's Alpha (pilot tested, n=30)	0.85	Good-Internal Consistency

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Awareness of Firearm Laws.

The data presented in Table 2 reveals a generally high level of awareness regarding firearm laws among the 120 respondents. A majority of participants expressed agreement or strong agreement with all four statements, indicating familiarity with national firearm regulations, the ability to distinguish between legal and illegal possession, knowledge of licensing procedures, and understanding of penalties for illegal possession. For instance, 75% (30% strongly agree + 45% agree) of respondents reported familiarity with national firearm regulations, while 76.67% (33.33% + 43.34%) claimed they could distinguish between legal and illegal possession. These high percentages suggest that the respondents are relatively well-informed about firearm laws, though a smaller proportion (15-20%) remained neutral or disagreed, highlighting potential gaps in awareness for certain individuals.

Despite the overall positive trends, the data also indicates areas where awareness could be improved. For example, knowledge about the procedures for obtaining a firearm license had the lowest combined agreement rate (66.67%, or 25% + 41.67%), with 20% of respondents remaining neutral and 13.33% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Additionally, while most respondents understood the penalties for illegal possession (72.5% agreement), a notable minority (7.5% + 3.33%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that targeted educational efforts might be needed to address these knowledge gaps. The findings underscore the importance of continuous public education campaigns to ensure comprehensive understanding of firearm laws across all demographics.

**Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Awareness of Firearm Laws (N=120).**

Statement / Indicator	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
I am familiar with national firearm regulations (e.g., licensing requirements, penalties).	36 (30%)	54 (45%)	18 (15%)	10 (8.3%)	2 (1.7%)
I can distinguish between legal and illegal firearm possession.	40 (33.33%)	52 (43.34%)	16 (13.33%)	8 (6.67%)	4 (3.33%)
I am knowledgeable about the procedures for obtaining a firearm license.	30 (25%)	50 (41.67%)	24 (20%)	12 (10%)	4 (3.33%)
I can explain the penalties associated with illegal firearm possession.	38 (31.67%)	49 (40.83%)	20 (16.67%)	9 (7.5%)	4 (3.33%)

Research highlights that even among groups with generally good awareness of firearm regulations, significant challenges remain in fully understanding licensing procedures and legal penalties. Studies indicate that while many individuals grasp fundamental firearm laws, confusion or gaps persist around specific aspects such as licensing requirements and consequences of illegal possession, which can hinder compliance and effective policy implementation. These knowledge gaps emphasize the crucial role of targeted, ongoing educational initiatives and streamlined licensing processes to improve clarity and accessibility (R.Valek et.al., 2025) . Enhanced training programs, simplified administrative procedures, and public education campaigns tailored to address these weak points have been shown to increase awareness and promote safer firearm practices, ultimately supporting efforts to reduce firearm-related risks and improve public safety. This reinforces the need for persistent, focused outreach to close remaining awareness gaps and foster a well-informed populace(QV Cruz, 2024).

3.2 Perceptions on Causes & Prevention

Table 3 highlights respondents' perceptions of the causes and prevention of illegal firearm use. A strong majority (80%) believe poverty is a major cause of illegal firearm possession (41.67% strongly agree + 38.33% agree), while a similar proportion (79.17%) attribute significant influence to peer pressure (37.5% + 41.67%). These findings suggest that socioeconomic factors and social dynamics are widely recognized as key drivers of illegal firearm use. However, a small percentage (10%) remain neutral or disagree, indicating some divergence in views. On prevention, respondents overwhelmingly support community policing (79.17% agree or strongly agree) and stricter law enforcement (81.66% agree or strongly agree), reflecting a strong belief in both community-based and regulatory approaches to reducing gun-related crimes.

Despite the consensus on causes and solutions, the data reveals minor dissent. For instance, 12.5% are neutral about community policing, and 8.33% are neutral about stricter enforcement, suggesting that a segment of respondents may be uncertain or skeptical about these measures. The low but notable disagreement rates (1.67–3.33% for causes, 3.33–6.67% for prevention) further indicate nuanced perspectives. Overall, the results emphasize a collective view that addressing root causes like poverty and peer influence, alongside proactive measures like policing and enforcement, is critical to curbing illegal firearm use. Policymakers could leverage these insights to design multifaceted interventions that combine economic support, social programs, and legal deterrence.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Perceptions on Causes and Prevention of Illegal Firearm Use (N=120)

Statement / Indicator	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
Poverty is a major cause of illegal firearm possession.	50 (41.67%)	46 (38.33%)	12 (10%)	10 (8.33%)	2 (1.67%)
Peer influence contributes significantly to the illegal use of firearms.	45 (37.5%)	50 (41.67%)	13 (10.83%)	8 (6.67%)	4 (3.33%)
Gun-related crimes can be reduced through community policing.	42 (35%)	53 (44.17%)	15 (12.5%)	6 (5%)	4 (3.33%)
Stricter law enforcement is effective in curbing illegal firearm use.	46 (38.33%)	52 (43.33%)	10 (8.33%)	8 (6.67%)	4 (3.33%)

The observed levels of neutrality and disagreement among respondents reflect the complex and multifaceted nature of opinions on community policing and stricter enforcement, highlighting the necessity for interventions that address the underlying social determinants of illegal firearm use as well as effective law enforcement strategies. Studies emphasize that no single approach is sufficient; instead, comprehensive interventions that integrate economic support,



community engagement, and targeted policing efforts yield more promising results in reducing firearm-related violence. This nuanced perspective aligns with findings showing that combining efforts to alleviate poverty and address peer influences with proactive, community-based policing and enforcement enhances both public trust and the effectiveness of violence prevention programs. Consequently, policymakers are encouraged to develop multifaceted strategies that balance social support with legal deterrence to achieve meaningful reductions in illegal firearm use (Henry et.al., 2009; JS Roche et.al., 2023; T O’Connor Shelly & MJ Hogan, 2013).

3.3 Law Enforcement Effectiveness

The data in Table 4 reflects mixed perceptions regarding the effectiveness of law enforcement in addressing firearm-related issues. A majority of respondents (62.5%) agree or strongly agree that the police are effective in enforcing firearm regulations (25% + 37.5%), and a similar proportion (63.34%) believe law enforcement responds promptly to gun-related crimes (26.67% + 36.67%). However, a notable portion of respondents express neutrality or disagreement 21.67% are neutral or disagree on police effectiveness, and 23.33% hold similar reservations about response times. This suggests that while many trust law enforcement’s capabilities, a significant minority remains skeptical or uncertain.

Perceptions of resource adequacy and transparency are less favorable. Only 58.33% agree or strongly agree that law enforcement has sufficient resources to combat gun crimes (23.33% + 35%), while 25% are neutral and 21.67% disagree. Transparency and accountability receive even weaker endorsement, with just 53.34% expressing agreement (21.67% + 31.67%) and a substantial 41.67% either neutral or in disagreement. These findings indicate concerns about institutional capacity and procedural fairness, highlighting areas where improvements—such as increased funding, training, or public reporting mechanisms—could strengthen trust and operational effectiveness in combating illegal firearm use. Policymakers may need to address these gaps to enhance public confidence in law enforcement efforts.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Perceptions on Law Enforcement Effectiveness (N=120)

Statement / Indicator	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
Police are effective in enforcing firearm regulations.	30 (25%)	45 (37.5%)	20 (16.67%)	18 (15%)	7 (5.83%)
Law enforcement agencies have enough resources to combat gun crimes.	28 (23.33%)	42 (35%)	24 (20%)	18 (15%)	8 (6.67%)
There is transparency and accountability in handling firearm-related offenses.	26 (21.67%)	38 (31.67%)	30 (25%)	20 (16.67%)	6 (5%)
Law enforcement responds promptly to gun-related crimes.	32 (26.67%)	44 (36.67%)	22 (18.33%)	16 (13.33%)	6 (5%)

Public trust in law enforcement is significantly influenced by perceptions of resource adequacy and transparency, which are critical factors for effective policing and community cooperation. Studies show that when law enforcement agencies lack sufficient resources, such as personnel, training, and technological tools, their ability to address complex issues like gun crimes diminishes, leading to public skepticism about their effectiveness (Y. Prastyanto & A. Saptomo, 2024). Similarly, transparency and accountability mechanisms such as clear reporting procedures, open communication, and oversight are essential to building legitimacy and ensuring procedural fairness (J. Ramirez, 2019; KM O’Reilly, 2017; M. Irvita & A. Asriani, 2025). Without these elements, citizens tend to feel disconnected and distrustful, which

can undermine not only the enforcement efforts but also the broader social contract between law enforcement and the community. Therefore, enhancing funding, improving training programs, and establishing robust public reporting frameworks are vital steps policymakers should consider to address resource limitations and transparency concerns, ultimately fostering stronger public confidence and more effective crime prevention (A. Tyagi, 2023).

### 3.4 Theoretical Knowledge vs. Practical Application

The data presented in Table 5 highlights the perceptions of 120 respondents regarding the alignment between their academic training and practical application of firearm law knowledge. A significant majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their academic training prepared them to understand firearm laws (78.34%) and apply this knowledge in practical settings (73.33%). Similarly, 75% agreed or strongly agreed that they could propose effective strategies to prevent gun-related crimes, while 69.17% felt confident in assisting communities with firearm law education. These results suggest that a substantial portion of the respondents believe their theoretical knowledge translates well into practical skills, indicating a positive correlation between academic preparation and real-world application. However, the presence of neutral and disagreeing responses (ranging from 11.67% to 16.67% for neutral and 6.67% to 10.83% for disagree) points to areas where some respondents may feel less confident or prepared, warranting further investigation into potential gaps in training or practical exposure.

The findings underscore the effectiveness of academic programs in equipping individuals with firearm law knowledge and practical competencies. The high agreement rates across all indicators reflect a strong foundation in theoretical understanding and its applicability. However, the variability in confidence levels particularly the lower percentages for assisting communities (69.17%) compared to proposing crime prevention strategies (75%) suggests that practical engagement, such as community outreach or hands-on training, might require additional emphasis. Addressing the needs of the minority who expressed neutrality or disagreement could involve enhancing experiential learning opportunities or targeted support to bridge these gaps. Overall, the data supports the value of academic training while highlighting opportunities for refinement to ensure comprehensive preparedness in firearm law education and its practical implementation.

**Table 5. Frequency Distribution of Theoretical Knowledge vs. Practical Application (N=120)**

Statement / Indicator	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
My academic training has prepared me to understand firearm laws.	38 (31.67%)	56 (46.67%)	14 (11.67%)	8 (6.67%)	4 (3.33%)
I can apply my knowledge of firearm laws in practical settings.	36 (30%)	52 (43.33%)	18 (15%)	10 (8.33%)	4 (3.333%)
I can propose effective strategies to prevent gun-related crimes.	40 (33.33%)	50 (41.67%)	16 (13.33%)	10 (8.33%)	4 (3.33%)
I feel confident in assisting communities with firearm law education.	35 (29.17%)	48 (40%)	20 (16.67%)	13 (10.83%)	4 (3.33%)

Academic research consistently demonstrates that incorporating experiential learning components into firearm law education enhances not only knowledge retention but also practical skills and community engagement capabilities. Studies have found that hands-on training methods, such as simulations, role-playing, and community-based projects, significantly improve students' confidence in applying firearm laws and developing effective crime prevention strategies. This suggests that supplementing theoretical coursework with more interactive, practice-oriented experiences can help address gaps in preparedness, particularly in areas requiring direct community involvement. By

emphasizing experiential learning, academic programs can better equip individuals to confidently assist communities and implement comprehensive firearm safety and prevention measures, thereby strengthening overall educational outcomes in this field (*Perspectives from firearm stakeholders on firearm safety promotion...*, 2019).

3.5 Significant relationship exists between students' theoretical knowledge of firearm regulations and their practical understanding of prevention strategies.

The data analysis reveals a highly significant positive relationship between students' theoretical knowledge of firearm regulations and their practical understanding of prevention strategies, as indicated by a Spearman Rho correlation coefficient of 0.72 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This strong correlation suggests that students who possess a robust theoretical understanding of firearm regulations are also more likely to demonstrate a practical grasp of prevention strategies. The p-value, which is less than 0.001, confirms the statistical significance of this relationship, indicating that the observed correlation is unlikely to be due to random chance. This finding underscores the importance of theoretical knowledge as a foundation for practical application in the context of firearm safety and prevention.

These results highlights the interconnectedness of theoretical and practical learning in firearm education. The "Highly Significant" classification of the relationship emphasizes that educational programs aiming to enhance practical prevention strategies should prioritize strengthening students' theoretical knowledge. This alignment between theory and practice is critical for developing comprehensive and effective firearm safety training. The findings suggest that educators and policymakers should design curricula that integrate both theoretical and practical components to ensure students are well-equipped to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios.

Table 6. Spearman Rho Correlation Analysis on the Significant relationship exists between students' theoretical knowledge of firearm regulations and their practical understanding of prevention strategies.

INDICATOR	SPEARMAN RHO ( $\rho$ )	P-VALUE	INTERPRETATION
Relationship exists between students' theoretical knowledge of firearm regulations and their practical understanding of prevention strategies.	0.72	$p < 0.001$	Highly Significant

Note:  $p < 0.01$ - Highly Significant,  $p = 0.02 - 0.05$  - Significant,  $p > 0.05$  - Not Significant.

Research consistently shows that combining theoretical instruction with hands-on practice significantly improves learners' retention, understanding, and application of firearm safety principles, thereby enhancing overall safety outcomes and reducing accidents (Hamilton, 2025). Integrative training approaches, such as the "Tell, Show, Do, Review" method, effectively bridge knowledge and action, enabling students to translate safety concepts into responsible behavior (Martin, 2024). Moreover, studies highlight that curricula which blend cognitive knowledge with practical exercises foster safer firearm handling habits and better preparedness for real-life situations, underscoring the necessity of synchronized theoretical and practical education in firearm safety programs (*Gunlines Shooting*, 2024).

4. Conclusions and Recommendation

4.1 Conclusions

The study highlights a strong correlation between criminology students' theoretical knowledge of firearm regulations and their practical understanding of prevention strategies, as evidenced by a highly significant Spearman Rho coefficient of 0.72 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This finding underscores the importance of robust academic training in firearm laws, as it directly enhances students' ability to apply this knowledge in real-world scenarios. Additionally, the research reveals



that while most students demonstrate a high level of awareness regarding firearm regulations, gaps persist in understanding licensing procedures and penalties for illegal possession. These gaps suggest the need for more targeted educational interventions to ensure comprehensive knowledge dissemination. Furthermore, perceptions of law enforcement effectiveness remain mixed, with concerns about resource adequacy and transparency indicating areas for institutional improvement.

The study also identifies socioeconomic factors such as poverty and peer influence as key drivers of illegal firearm possession, with respondents advocating for a combination of community policing and stricter law enforcement as preventive measures. However, the presence of neutral or dissenting views on these strategies suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach may not suffice. Instead, a multifaceted strategy addressing root causes while enhancing enforcement capabilities is essential. The findings emphasize that criminology students, as future law enforcement professionals, play a crucial role in shaping firearm-related policies and community safety initiatives, making their education and preparedness a priority.

## **4.2 Recommendations**

To address the identified gaps, academic institutions should strengthen firearm law education by integrating more experiential learning components, such as simulations, case studies, and community engagement programs. These methods can bridge the divide between theory and practice, ensuring students are better prepared to handle real-world challenges. Additionally, policymakers should support public education campaigns that clarify firearm licensing procedures and penalties, targeting not only students but also the broader community to enhance compliance and safety awareness. Law enforcement agencies should also prioritize transparency and resource allocation to improve public trust and operational effectiveness in combating illegal firearm use.

Finally, a collaborative approach involving educators, law enforcement, and community leaders is essential to develop comprehensive strategies that address both the causes and consequences of illegal firearm possession. Programs combining economic support, youth engagement, and stricter regulatory enforcement can create a more balanced and effective framework for reducing gun-related crimes. Future research should explore longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of integrated training programs on students' practical competencies and their effectiveness in professional settings. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can foster a safer and more informed society, better equipped to tackle the challenges of illegal firearm possession and misuse.

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