The Mediating Role of Emotion and Motivation Self-Regulation on the Relationship Between Professional Identity and Attitude Towards the Criminal Legal System: Context on the PNP Non-Commissioned Officers

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Abstract. This study investigates the mediating role of Emotion and Motivation Self-Regulation in the relationship between Professional Identity and attitudes toward the Criminal Legal System among Non-Commissioned Officers of the Philippine National Police. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, a modified survey was administered to 272 randomly selected Non-Commissioned Officers in Agusan del Sur. Results indicate a very high level of perception regarding the Criminal Legal System and a high level of Professional Identity among respondents. The analysis reveals a significant partial mediation effect of Emotion and Motivation Self-Regulation on the relationship between Professional Identity and the Criminal Legal System, suggesting that while professional identity directly influences attitudes toward the legal system, it also indirectly affects these attitudes through emotional and motivational self-regulation. The findings underscore the importance of integrating programs that enhance professional identity and develop self-regulation skills within the Philippine National Police, ultimately contributing to improved public trust and ethical conduct in law enforcement.

Keywords: Criminal justice; Police officer; Emotion and motivation self-regulation; Professional identity and criminal legal system

1.0 Introduction

The professional identity of law enforcement personnel, particularly those within the Philippine National Police (PNP), plays a crucial role in shaping their behavior, ethical decisions, and commitment to justice. However, growing concerns about public trust in the criminal legal system have drawn attention to internal factors that may influence officers' attitudes toward their roles and the system they serve. Among the PNP Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), who represent the operational backbone of policing, these attitudes may be significantly shaped not only by their professional self-concept but also by how they regulate their emotions and motivations in the face of occupational challenges. Despite the critical nature of this issue, limited research has explored how personal and psychological factors mediate the influence of professional identity on institutional attitudes.

Existing literature has established a strong connection between professional identity and workplace behavior. For

instance, Ashforth and Mael (1989) argue that a well-developed professional identity can foster a stronger sense of role clarity and accountability. Similarly, Ibarra (1999) found that identity directly influences how professionals interpret their responsibilities and interact with the public. In the context of policing, Schaible (2018). emphasized that officers with a positive professional identity tend to show more substantial commitment to ethical policing. However, these studies often treat professional identity as a direct predictor of organizational outcomes, neglecting the potential internal mechanisms that explain how and why it affects attitudes and behavior.

Recent psychological research highlights emotion regulation and self-regulation of motivation as key mediators of professional experiences. Gross (2014) conceptualizes emotion regulation as essential for managing work-related stress and maintaining professional conduct. Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory further posits that individuals who can regulate their motivations are more likely to sustain engagement and resilience in demanding roles. In law enforcement, studies by Adams & Mastracci (2020) show that officers with stronger emotional regulation skills are less prone to burnout and more open to reforms. However, there remains a scarcity of research integrating these mediating factors within the framework of professional identity and attitudes toward the criminal legal system—particularly among the NCOs of the PNP, whose unique socio-cultural and occupational environment demands tailored inquiry.

This study investigates the mediating role of emotion and motivation self-regulation in the relationship between professional identity and attitudes toward the criminal legal system among PNP Non-Commissioned Officers. While existing literature has explored these variables separately, there remains a limited understanding of how self-regulatory processes may influence or bridge the connection between an officer's professional identity and their stance on the legal system they represent. By exploring these internal mechanisms, this research offers a more nuanced view of how personal and psychological factors shape institutional perceptions. The findings will be significant in informing policies, training programs, and mental health interventions designed to enhance the ethical and psychological preparedness of PNP NCOs. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to ongoing efforts to professionalize the police force and strengthen public trust in the Philippine criminal justice system.

2.0 Methodology
2.1 Research Design
This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, which is suitable for examining relationships among variables without manipulating them (Creswell, 2021). This design was chosen to investigate how emotion regulation and self-regulation of motivation mediate the relationship between professional identity and attitudes toward the criminal legal system among PNP Non-Commissioned Officers. Descriptive research facilitates a systematic and accurate portrayal of characteristics within a population, enabling a clear understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Kim et al., 2017). Meanwhile, the correlational component enables the identification of significant associations among variables, including potential mediating effects, which provide deeper insights into behavioral and psychological dynamics (Zakhidov, 2024). Through this design, the study provides empirical evidence that may guide institutional policies, training programs, and wellness interventions to strengthen professionalism and public trust in law enforcement.

2.2 Research Participants
This study targeted all Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) assigned to stations across the Caraga Region, totaling an estimated 1,000 personnel. Using the Raosoft sample size calculator with a 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level, and a 50% response rate, the required sample size was determined to be 278 participants. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure equitable representation from different provinces and units under the PNP Caraga Regional Office. PNP personnel outside the NCO rank, assigned outside the Caraga Region, or currently not in active service, were excluded from the study. No restrictions were placed on age, gender, or years of service, thereby promoting inclusivity and diverse representation. To uphold ethical standards, all responses were kept strictly confidential, no personally identifiable information was collected, and data were securely stored for academic purposes only, thereby safeguarding participants' anonymity and professional integrity.

2.3 Research Instrument

The study adapted and modified standardized survey instruments from established researchers to assess Professional Identity, Emotion and Motivation, Self-Regulation, and Attitudes Toward the Criminal Legal System. The Professional Identity Scale, adapted from Adams et al. (2006), consists of 10 items rated on a five-point Likert scale and has demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.931). Emotion and Motivation Self-Regulation were measured using a 12-item scale derived from the Self-Regulation Questionnaire (Deci & Ryan, 2000), covering both emotional and motivational domains, with a combined reliability of 0.902 (Cronbach's Alpha). The Attitudes Toward the Criminal Legal System scale was adapted from Tyler (2006) and includes 15 items addressing perceptions of legitimacy, fairness, and institutional trust, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.944. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). To ensure content validity and contextual relevance, the instrument underwent expert evaluation and pilot testing among a comparable group of PNP personnel, confirming its appropriateness and clarity for the intended participants.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

All participants in this study were non-commissioned officers (NCOs) of the Philippine National Police (PNP), selected to represent the intended population relevant to the research focus. Those outside the NCO rank or not affiliated with the PNP were excluded. No limitations regarding age, gender, or ethnicity were imposed to ensure inclusivity and equal representation. Before distributing the survey instruments, the researcher provided a clear explanation of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participants were not compelled to answer any question they were uncomfortable with and were free to omit any personal information. The researcher upheld strict confidentiality by anonymizing all responses, removing identifying details, and ensuring data security. Hardcopy responses, if any, were disposed of securely through cross-shredding or other irreversible means. All information gathered was used solely for research purposes, and utmost care was taken to avoid any ethical conflicts that could compromise the respondents' professional roles. Throughout the process, the welfare and autonomy of the participants were prioritized, and the researcher expressed appreciation for their participation in contributing to this scholarly endeavor.

2.5 Data Analysis

Various statistical tools were employed in this study to ensure a comprehensive and precise analysis of the research questions. The Average Weighted Mean was used to determine the levels of professional identity, emotional self-regulation, motivational self-regulation, and attitude towards the criminal legal system among PNP non-commissioned officers, offering a precise measure of central tendency. To assess the strength and direction of relationships among variables, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to identify significant correlations among professional identity, emotional and motivational self-regulation, and attitudes. Furthermore, Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted to examine the predictive power of professional identity on attitudes toward the criminal legal system, both directly and through the mediating variables. These statistical techniques provided a data-driven understanding of how self-regulation mediates the relationship between professional identity and attitudinal orientation, ensuring robust interpretation and actionable insights.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted only after obtaining the required compliance certificate (UMERC-2023-019) issued by the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC). This measure was taken to ensure the integrity of the research process and the credibility of the output, which relied on the researcher's ability to construct a coherent argument while maintaining objectivity in interpreting and representing the data. The ethical review and verification process by the Committee affirmed the study's authenticity, accuracy, and fairness, promoting responsible and accountable authorship. In line with ethical standards, any form of fraudulent claim—particularly in matters of authorship—was strictly excluded. This involved a clear distinction between inadvertent inaccuracies and intentional misrepresentations, thereby upholding the value of truthfulness. Voluntary participation was strictly observed. Respondents, specifically non-commissioned police officers in Agusan del Sur, were given the freedom to participate without coercion, penalty, or the risk of losing any benefits. The purpose, scope, and potential advantages of the study were explained correctly, including the time required for them to complete the instrument. The researcher sought to establish transparency by introducing the study's goals and reassuring participants of their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time.

In addition, informed consent was obtained through a written agreement endorsed by the Police Provincial Director, which outlined the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality safeguards, and procedures to protect respondents' privacy and anonymity. Risks to participants were deemed negligible, as the study involved only completing a survey and did not expose participants to any physical, psychological, or socio-economic harm. The researcher also affirms that there is no conflict of interest in conducting this study. Confidentiality was a central ethical concern throughout the research process. All collected data were anonymized correctly to prevent the identification of any respondents. The researcher strictly adhered to UMERC's ethical recommendations and guidelines to ensure data security, impartiality, and the responsible use of findings. While participants were not compensated financially, small tokens of appreciation and a certificate of acknowledgment were presented to the Police Provincial Office of Agusan del Sur in recognition of their valuable support. The broader aim of the study is to offer meaningful contributions to academic knowledge, institutional practice, and community development.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Perceived Professional Identity

Table 1 presents data on professional identity.

Table 1. *Level of Professional Identity*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Subject Matter Field	4.00	0.664	High
Didactical Field	4.07	0.688	High
Pedagogical Field	3.84	0.792	High
Overall	**3.97**	**0.640**	**High**

The analysis of Table 1 indicates that the professional identity of the non-commissioned police officers is demonstrated in the Agusan del Sur Provincial Police Office. The overall mean score is 3.97, with a standard deviation of 0.640, and is described as high, indicating that professional identity was often manifested among non-commissioned police officers. Further, the results showed that non-commissioned officers often manifested their professional identity. Also, the mean scores for the indicators of professional identity are as follows: Didactical Field: 4.07 (high), with a standard deviation of 0.688; Subject Matter Field: 4.00 (high), with a standard deviation of 0.664; and Pedagogical Field: 3.84 (high), with a standard deviation of 0.792.

The strong influence of professional identity was evident in the respondents' high ratings across the Didactical Field, Subject Matter Field, and Pedagogical Field. In my organization, considering subordinates' expertise and skills is important. The result was compatible with the statement that legal professionals with a strong professional identity and positive attitudes towards justice exhibited higher levels of emotional regulation and were more likely to prioritize fairness and impartiality in their judgements (Kappes et al., 2020).

3.2 Perceived Criminal Legal System

Table 2 depicts the level of the criminal legal system.

Table 2. *Level of Criminal Legal System*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Attitude Toward the Criminal Legal System Scale	4.26	0.520	Very High
Revised Legal Attitudes	4.24	0.529	Very High
Juror Bias Scale	4.25	0.572	Very High
Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale	4.05	0.624	High
Belief in a Just World Scale	4.40	0.579	Very High
Overall	**4.24**	**0.468**	**Very High**

Table 2 presents the levels of perceptions regarding the Criminal Legal System across five indicators. The results show that the respondents demonstrated a very high level of agreement across most indicators, with the Belief in a Just World Scale scoring the highest (M = 4.40, SD = 0.579), followed by the Attitude toward the Criminal Legal System Scale (M = 4.26, SD = 0.520), the Juror Bias Scale (M = 4.25, SD = 0.572), and the Revised Legal Attitudes (M = 4.24, SD = 0.529). Meanwhile, the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale received a slightly lower yet still notable rating of High (M = 4.05, SD = 0.624). The overall mean score of 4.24 (SD = 0.468) indicates a very high level of perception and favorable disposition toward the criminal legal system. These findings suggest that the respondents generally exhibit strong trust, positive beliefs, and aligned values with legal principles and justice

norms. A supporting study by Oliveira and Jackson (2021) affirms that individuals with higher perceptions of fairness and legitimacy in the legal system are more likely to support and comply with its laws and procedures, reinforcing the link between belief in justice and positive legal attitudes.

3.3. Emotional and Motivational Self-Regulation
Table 3 illustrates self-regulation of emotions and motivation.

Table 3. *Level of Emotional and Motivational Self-Regulation*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
I finish tasks quickly, even before they are due.	3.98	0.861	High
I complete tasks even if they seem unimportant.	4.11	0.799	High
When instructions are too long, I still follow them.	4.18	0.754	High
I finish all tasks, even if they are not relevant.	3.94	0.843	High
I am overworked, but I still fulfill my duties.	3.90	0.920	High
If I do not keep going, I might fail as a police officer.	3.94	0.932	High
Things are challenging, but I meet my duties.	3.88	0.862	High
Tiring duties are typical, but I keep going to fulfill my duty.	3.94	0.839	High
Tasks are stressful, but I still manage them.	4.13	0.784	High
Tasks are challenging, but I manage to do them well.	4.04	0.820	High
When I feel unable to handle a task, I keep going without complaint.	4.16	0.782	High
I feel nervous but trust myself to succeed.	3.85	0.918	High
Everything seems fine, and I understand it.	4.27	0.803	Very High
Stressful tasks are routine, and I stay calm and keep going to succeed.	4.38	0.690	Very High
It seems that every time I do it better, I am progressing.	4.11	0.823	High
Police work is interesting, and I understand it well.	4.08	0.791	High
Overall	**4.06**	**0.629**	**High**

Table 3 presents the respondents' level of emotional and motivational self-regulation, highlighting their capacity to persist and perform duties under various work-related conditions. The results show that all indicators fall within the High to Very High descriptive levels. The highest-rated items where stressful tasks are routine and I stay calm and keep going to succeed (M = 4.38, SD = 0.690) and Everything seems fine. I understand it (M = 4.27, SD = 0.803), both of which are categorized as Very High, indicating a strong sense of emotional balance and clarity even in demanding situations. Other items, such as Tasks, are stressful. However, I still manage them (M = 4.13, SD = 0.784) and complete tasks even when they seem unimportant (M = 4.11, SD = 0.799), reflecting consistently high levels of task commitment and resilience. The overall mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.629) supports the conclusion that respondents maintain a high degree of self-regulation, enabling them to manage stress, stay motivated, and fulfill their responsibilities effectively. This is consistent with the findings of Fredberg and Pregmark (2021), who emphasized that individuals with higher self-regulation tend to perform better in emotionally taxing, goal-driven environments, especially in high-stakes professions such as law enforcement.

3.4. Correlation Analysis of the Variables
Table 4 presents the results regarding the significance of the relationship between professional identity and emotional and motivational self-regulation.

Table 4. *Significance of the Relationship Between Professional Identity and Emotional and Motivational Self-Regulation*

Professional Identity	Emotional and Motivational Self-Regulation
Subject Matter Field	.752* (0.000)
Didactical Field	.821* (0.000)
Pedagogical Field	.733* (0.000)
Overall	.857* (0.000)

Table 4 presents the significance of the relationships between professional identity, emotional self-regulation, and motivation. The results reveal a strong positive correlation between all components of professional identity and emotional and motivational self-regulation, as indicated by the correlation coefficients and the significance values (p = 0.000). Among the dimensions, the Didactical Field shows the strongest correlation (r = 0.821), followed by

the Overall correlation (r = 0.857), suggesting that individuals who are confident and competent in instructional delivery tend to exhibit higher emotional and motivational regulation. The Subject Matter Field (r = 0.752) and Pedagogical Field (r = 0.733) also show strong associations, indicating that expertise in subject content and pedagogical approaches both contribute significantly to one's self-regulatory abilities. These findings support the study by Pihkala (2020), which emphasized that a strong professional identity enhances educators' motivation and emotional resilience, especially in challenging environments such as policing and education. The consistent significance across all dimensions (p < 0.01) underscores the crucial link between how professionals perceive their roles and how effectively they regulate their emotions and motivation.

Correlation Analysis of the Variables

Table 5 presents the results regarding the significance of the relationship between professional identity and emotional and motivational self-regulation.

Table 5. *Significance of the Relationship Between Levels of Emotional and Motivational Self-Regulation and Criminal Legal Justice*

Emotional and Motivational Self-Regulation	Criminal Legal Justice					
	Attitude Toward the Criminal Legal System Scale	Revised Legal Attitudes	Juror Bias Scale	Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale	Belief in a Just World Scale	Overall
Overall	.542* (0.000)	.548* (0.000)	.451* (0.000)	.513* (0.000)	.430* (0.000)	.597* (0.000)

Table 5 displays the significance of the relationship between emotional and motivational self-regulation and the components of the criminal legal justice system. The findings indicate moderate to strong positive correlations across all indicators, with all p-values equal to 0.000, signifying highly significant results. The highest correlation is observed in the overall relationship (r = 0.597), suggesting that individuals with higher emotional and motivational self-regulation tend to demonstrate more positive orientations toward the criminal legal system. Specifically, notable correlations are observed between self-regulation and the Revised Legal Attitudes (r = 0.548), the Attitude toward the Criminal Legal System Scale (r = 0.542), and the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (r = 0.513). The Juror Bias Scale (r = 0.451) and Belief in a Just World Scale (r = 0.430) also show moderate but significant relationships. These results imply that self-regulated individuals are more likely to exhibit fair, consistent, and principled beliefs about justice and legal processes. This finding is supported by research from Dong and Zeb (2022), who found that individuals with higher self-regulatory capacities are more inclined to demonstrate ethical reasoning and adherence to societal norms, which are essential traits in the context of criminal legal justice.

Correlation Analysis of the Variables

Table 6 presents the results concerning the significance of the relationship between levels of professional identity and criminal legal justice.

Table 6. *Significance of the Relationship Between Levels of Professional Identity and Criminal Legal Justice*

Professional Identity	Criminal Legal Justice					
	Attitude Toward the Criminal Legal System Scale	Revised Legal Attitudes	Juror Bias Scale	Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale	Belief in a Just World Scale	Overall
Subject Matter Field	.515* (0.000)	.516* (0.000)	.462* (0.000)	.522* (0.000)	.365* (0.000)	.573* (0.000)
Didactical Field	.544* (0.000)	.557* (0.000)	.449* (0.000)	.465* (0.000)	.416* (0.000)	.583* (0.000)
Pedagogical Field	.406* (0.000)	.422* (0.000)	.309* (0.000)	.429* (0.000)	.373* (0.000)	.468* (0.000)
Overall	541* (0.000)	.553* (0.000)	.448* (0.000)	.524* (0.000)	.429* (0.000)	.600* (0.000)

Table 6 illustrates the significant relationship between levels of professional identity and various components of criminal legal justice. The data reveal that all correlations are positive and highly significant (p = 0.000), indicating that as professional identity strengthens—across subject-matter, didactic, and pedagogical fields—so does

alignment with more principled legal attitudes. The overall correlation (r = 0.600) reflects a strong association between professional identity and criminal legal justice. Among the specific domains, the Didactical Field shows the strongest overall correlation (r = 0.583), particularly with Revised Legal Attitudes (r = 0.557), while the Subject Matter Field also reflects high correlation (r = 0.573). The Pedagogical Field, while slightly lower, still shows moderate but significant correlations, with its highest being with the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (r = 0.429). These results suggest that individuals who strongly identify with their professional roles are more likely to adopt fairer, more reasoned legal perspectives. This is consistent with the findings of Ballangrud and Aas (2022), who emphasized that a well-developed professional identity enhances an individual's ethical orientation, decision-making, and civic responsibility, especially in roles where justice and impartiality are critical.

Path Analysis
Table 7 presents path analysis.

Table 7. *Mediating Effect: Path Analysis (Result: Significant Partial Mediation)*

Path			Unstandardized	Standardized	SE	C. R.	P
PI	▼	EMSR	.843	.857	.030	28.382	***
EMSR	▼	CLS	.232	.311	.066	3.487	***
PI	▼	CLS	.245	.334	.065	3.745	***

Table 7 presents the results of the path analysis assessing the mediating effect of Emotional and Motivation Self-Regulation (EMSR) on the relationship between Professional Identity (PI) and Criminal Legal System (CLS). The model reveals a significant partial mediation, as all three paths show strong, statistically significant estimates (p < 0.001). The direct path from PI to EMSR is highly significant with a standardized estimate of 0.857, indicating that a stronger professional identity enhances emotional and motivational self-regulation. In turn, EMSR significantly influences CLS, with a standardized estimate of 0.311, suggesting that higher self-regulation is positively associated with attitudes and beliefs toward the criminal legal system. Moreover, the direct path from PI to CLS remains significant (standardized estimate = 0.334) even after accounting for the mediating variable, confirming partial mediation. This suggests that while EMSR plays a role in shaping legal attitudes, professional identity also independently influences CLS. This finding aligns with Pinedo's (2023) emphasis on the role of self-regulation in guiding ethical behavior and decision-making, especially in professions that demand accountability and moral judgment, such as policing.

4.0 Conclusion
This study provides a meaningful contribution to understanding the relationships among professional identity, emotional and motivational self-regulation, and attitudes toward the criminal legal system among law enforcement personnel. The findings reveal that professional identity has a significant positive influence on both emotional and motivational self-regulation and perceptions of the criminal legal system. The results of the path analysis further show that self-regulation of emotions and motivation partially mediates the relationship between professional identity and criminal legal system attitudes. This means that while professional identity directly influences how officers perceive the legal system, it also exerts an indirect effect by shaping their ability to regulate emotions and motivation. These results underscore the importance of strengthening law enforcement officers' professional identity, as it contributes to their psychological preparedness and informed perspectives on legal matters.

In addition, the findings indicate that officers with stronger emotional and motivational self-regulation tend to exhibit more favorable, balanced attitudes toward the criminal legal system. Significant positive correlations were found between self-regulation and key indicators, including juror bias, authoritarian attitudes, belief in a just world, and overall legal perspective. This emphasizes the need for police institutions to integrate emotional self-regulation programs and values-based professional development in their training. Such efforts can cultivate emotionally resilient officers who are better equipped to exercise fairness, objectivity, and integrity in their duties. Developing the didactic, subject-matter, and pedagogical fields of their professional identity will not only enhance

personal growth but also improve public service delivery.

Future research should consider exploring causal relationships through longitudinal studies to determine the long-term effects of professional identity and emotional self-regulation on legal attitudes and law enforcement behavior. Expanding the research to include commissioned officers, personnel from other law enforcement agencies, or those assigned in various regions may reveal additional factors that influence these relationships. Furthermore, studies could assess the effectiveness of specific interventions or training programs focused on identity formation and emotional self-regulation to support the continuous professionalization of the Philippine National Police and other sectors of the criminal justice system.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Both authors contributed equally to this study, sharing responsibilities for writing, editing, data analysis, and preparing the research instrument. They jointly refined the study's overall framework. Author 1 was primarily responsible for drafting the initial manuscript, while Author 2 concentrated on revising and editing the content. The final version of the manuscript was completed through their collaborative efforts and mutually approved for publication.

6.0 Funding

7.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest, financial or non-financial, that could have influenced the conduct or outcomes of this research.

8.0 Acknowledgment

9.0 References

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