

Lack of Communication, Resources, Trust As Well As Political Interference And Saps Organisational Culture As Hindrances To Effective Community Police Forums

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ABSTRACT: Crime continues to be a serious problem in South Africa, as the country ranks 3rd on the global crime index as at 2016. The damaging impact of crime on the safety and security of communities, peace and stability in the country as well as its effect on the country's reputation among potential international tourists and investors, and how all these affect the general quality of life of ordinary citizens need no emphasis. Crime solutions that work and are cost effective remain elusive. However, due to its success in reducing crime rates in different parts of the world since its introduction in the United States of America during the 1970s, community policing is now a standard ideological and policy model guiding mission statements, goals, and reform programs of most policing agencies across the world. Regardless of its enviable status in the practicing of policing, more than twenty (20) years after the attainment of democracy, the question beckons whether the inception of community policing and particularly community policing forums is an effective strategy within the South African communities to combat and prevent crime. This paper draws from the work of a PhD thesis, submitted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The primary objective of this paper is to explore the challenges of CPFs in combating crime in two dissimilar residential locations in Durban. A qualitative research approach was adopted, the findings collected through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with a total number of fifty-five (55) participants comprising of South African Police Service (SAPS) and CPFs representatives, political leaders and ordinary members of the two communities suggest limited knowledge of and affinity to CPFs by community members. This owes partly to lack of communication, resources, trust, as well as political interference and SAPS organisational culture, which affect the functioning of these CPFs. Together, these findings suggest that more effort is needed from both the community and the police for an effective functioning of the CPFs.

KEY WORDS: *Crime, Community Policing, Community Police Forums, Safety* Word count: 5586

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, policing in different countries has shifted from the traditional reactive form of policing towards such community-oriented approaches (Pelser, 1999; Brogden and Shearing, 2005). Since its introduction in the United States of America during the 1970s, community policing has considerably succeeded in different parts of the world and is now a standard ideological and policy model guiding mission statements, goals, and reform programs of most police forces and services across the world. In South Africa, the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) of 1996, which lays a clear foundation for the use of partnerships in crime prevention in South Africa, gives emphasis to the value of police-community partnerships as one viable option for dealing with crime and community safety. The NCPS aims to establish partnerships between government organisations and other role players in addressing crime through consultation to identify each other's needs as promote accountability, transparency and effectiveness (Skogan, 2004).

South Africa remains one of the worst affected countries by crime. As at 2016, South Africa is ranked 3rd on the global crime index (Carmichael, 2016). According to an online collaborative database NUMBEO (2017), Durban is one of the top 3 cities highly affected by crime, after Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg. The damaging impact of crime on the safety and security of communities, peace and stability in the country as well as the country's reputation is well documented. Together, these affect the social and economic well-being and the general quality of life of ordinary citizens. Owing to the historical legacy of apartheid which created economic,

social and structural imbalances in societies, South Africa remains generally a dual economy that is characterized by two opposite extremes of the richness and poverty in plush white suburbs and poor black townships respectively. For the purposes of this paper, Glenwood will fit in the richness context and Cato Manor in poverty context. Such areas are reflective of South Africa.

The foregoing evinces that the problem of continued high crime rate in South Africa could be lying not in the question of government commitment, structural conditions of politics and society but perhaps in the (in) effectiveness of implementation strategies of police approaches. It is precisely in this context that the primary objective of this paper was to explore the challenges of CPFs in combating crime in two dissimilar residential locations in Durban. The aim of the paper is to suggest evidence-based strategies to improve implementation and effectiveness of CPFs in the anti-crime drive in specific South African contexts. This is particularly important in South Africa where crime solutions that work and are cost effective remain elusive. The essence of the NCPS derives from the idea that the SAPS cannot singlehandedly reduce crime and hence, it stresses the need for the involvement and participation of the community and other stakeholders to help the SAPS to effectively fulfil its mandate. The level of cooperation between the community and the police should be maximised if crime is to be reduced or even prevented. Burger (2011) argues that, despite all the work and innovation going on in the fight against crime, the crime trend will not be reversed unless there is cooperation between all concerned. The degree of cooperation varies and the level of trust between the community and the police takes time to develop. Considering this background, it is apparent that there is a need for research pertaining to the effectiveness of community policing, with a focus on CPFs.

II. COMMUNITY POLICING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Crime is a global challenge that threatens not only safety and security of communities but also peace and stability of the country itself. The evidential scourge of crime remains a permanent feature of serious magnitude in South Africa as the country persistently tops the global crime index, along with (Carmichael, 2016), South African national crime surveys show that South Africa has never had what one would call the cleanest image. While a strong contributor to the Commonwealth in terms of finances and culture, South Africa has also had a long history of crime. South Africa's 2015/16 crime statistics were released by the police on the 2nd of September 2016 and they did not make for good reading. There was an increase in crimes such as murder, attempted murder; common assault, robbery with aggravating circumstances, house robbery and hijacking of cars. However, not all forms of crime increased with decreases in assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm, common robbery, house burglary, vehicle theft, and drug-related offences and rape. The high rates of crime in South compromises the quality of life of ordinary people in many ways. The impact of crime on the social and economic life of a country urges for crime solutions that work. There is scholarly agreement that cost-effective and efficient policing requires a joint approach by the police and communities, as well as a strong political will to deal with crime.

A strategy that encourages efficient use of resources and sharing responsibilities to fight crime is an absolute necessity. The responsibility to fight crime traditionally resided with police agencies. However, in modern-day societies, one of the ways in which the lives of ordinary citizens can be improved is for police agencies to involve communities as active partners in the fight against crime. The South African Police Service Act, 1995, compels each police station to embrace community policing and to operationalise it through implementing partnerships in policing (South Africa, 1995a). Community policing is concerned with the issues affecting communities, such as physical and social challenges (Crawford & Lister, 2005). Miller and Hess (2005) argue that the values, concerns and cultural principles of the people living and working in the community and their common interests are important for community policing to thrive. When these are well understood by all role players, it makes policing in the area much easier.

Comparative research on CPFs in unique socio-economic settings are sparse. This paper examines community policing in two different settings: Glenwood, a suburban area and Cato Manor, a township both located in Durban. Subjective experiences and views of community policing were gathered from the participants in these two settings. An analysis of the findings on the nature and challenges that constrain the effectiveness of CPFs in these two different locations provide valuable insights on critical absences and conceptual gaps that if bridged, could result in efficient CPFs that can effectively work towards crime prevention in South Africa.

III. METHODOLOGY

The problem that informed this study was that more than twenty (20) years after the establishment of a constitutional democracy, the question beckons whether the establishment of community policing especially community policing forums is an effective strategy within the South African communities to combat crime. The study deployed a qualitative approach. The approach used a phenomenological design that is both descriptive and exploratory in nature. For this study, the use of a qualitative research approach enabled an in-depth appreciation of the participants' responses and a detailed understanding of the effectiveness of CPFs in Glenwood suburb and Cato Manor Township, Durban.

Study population

Qualitative research data collection usually involves a smaller sample than would be the case for quantitative approaches. The benefits of the qualitative approach are that the information is richer and has a deeper insight into the phenomenon under study. The study population (Table 1) consisted of members of the SAPS, Community Safety and Liaison officials; CPFs and community leaders; and ordinary community members. Together, there are 55 participants who took part in the study. Their complex and detailed understanding of the effectiveness of CPFs in the study areas was explored. As previously explained, the study in question is descriptive and exploratory in nature and accomplished by means of the application of documentary study, FGDs and interviews. In each study area, there were two (2) FGDs consisting of ten (10) participants each and the total of fifteen (15) interviews for both study areas.

Table 1: The selected study sample

Community Safety & Liaison Officials: Assistant Director crime prevention & partnerships (KII)	SAPS Officials: Station Commanders Sector Managers (KIIs)	CPFs Leaders: Chairpersons Secretaries Community engagement (KIIs)	Community Leaders: Counsellors (KIIs)	Community Members: Business Ordinary Citizens (FGDs)	Total
1	3 (Glenwood) + 3 (Cato Manor) = 6	3 (Glenwood) + 3 (Cato Manor) = 6	1 (Glenwood) + 1 (Cato Manor) = 2	20 (Glenwood) + 20 (Cato Manor) = 40	55

The total number of participants in both study areas was forty (40) for FGDs. In each study area, there were three (3) CPFs leaders and three (3) SAPS members for KIIs, totalling to twelve (12) for semi-structured interviews. For policy purpose in CPFs, one (1) official from Community Safety and Liaison were interviewed. Two (2) Community leaders (Counsellors) were also interviewed, one (1) from each area. Participants included Africans, Whites, Indians and Coloureds, speaking different languages. Some were fluent in isiZulu and English, to be precise, and any language of understanding referring to selected residents of the study areas.

Sampling procedures

To select the participants of this study, purposive sampling was used. This sampling method is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher. Researchers rely on their experience, ingenuity and previous research findings to obtain participants deliberately to ensure that the sample obtained may be regarded as representative of the relevant population (Huysamen, 2001). Purposive sampling involved hand picking participants from the target population (from the SAPS, CPFs and community leaders). This sampling was relevant to this study because the participants selected informed the researcher's understanding of the area of investigation.

This allowed the researchers to collect data from various organisations and communities. The information collected provided the appropriate and relevant data required to illuminate the researcher's understanding of community policing, especially community policing forums.

Data collection techniques

The three primary methods of data collection utilised in this study are interviews (key informant interviews – KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) based on an interview schedule and document study (literature review). Prior arrangements were made with the willing participants regarding the times that they would be available for an interview. The interviews took place at their places convenient to participants and the duration of ranged from 30 to 45 minutes, depending on how much information was forthcoming in each individual case. The FGDs took place at the community halls in both the study settings, and the duration ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Overall, data collection took a period of eight (8) weeks. In the FGDs, participants were not asked to answer each question individually, as compared to the KIIs.

IV. METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Languaged data were generated through KIIs and FGDs. These data were presented according to emergent themes. To gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of CPFs in crime combating, narrative accounts were thematically analysed. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data as it organises and describes data in detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006). At the heart of thematic analysis, the familiarisation of data by the researcher. Data familiarisation was possible because the researcher

personally conducted audio-recorded interviews (KIIs and FGDs) and transcribed them. This process allowed the researcher to familiarise with the data for an expedited and insightful analysis.

Following this thematic transcription, the scripts were analysed using NVivo version 8 software. This software organised the raw data so that it was possible to link and compare thematic issues within and across documents. The list of “starter nodes” was generated from an initial entry in a project journal in the software where the questions and assumptions brought to the report were outlined. The software gave results that allowed for a deeper examination and management of the qualitative data that might not be possible in traditional coding.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data was interpreted with the purpose of establishing how members of the public, local political leadership as well as South African Police Service (SAPS) and Community Policing Forum (CPFs) representatives in two dissimilar communities in Durban understand community policing. It also sought to establish how community-policing forums (CPFs) are organised and the challenges they face in combating crime in these two locations. Furthermore, data interpretation was aimed at relating it to international best practices and research findings on community policing.

Section 18 (1) of the South African Police Service Act 68 of 1995, clearly outlines the purpose of the Community Police Forum as follows:

1. Establish and strengthen the partnership between the community and the police.
2. Improve the delivery of police service to the community.
3. Promote cooperation between the police service and the community in fulfilling community needs for policing.
4. Promote joint problem identification and problem-solving.
5. Ensure police accountability and transparency.
6. Ensure consultation and proper communication between the police and their clients.

What needs to be borne in mind is that legislation alone cannot guarantee the success of community policing because this approach is about building trust and co-operation and as such, it depends heavily on the process of dialogue and empowerment of the police and the communities. It is not just about the process of implementation, but mainly about the prevention of crime and the establishment of safe and secure communities. Awareness on the importance of police impartiality is crucial and all those who are involved need to understand that this process is not an arena for political competitiveness. History has shown that the most frequent cause of the failure of policing is the perception of bias and partiality on the part of the police. Many of the problems of policing in South Africa are rooted in the country's fractious and violent past. The militaristic and repressive nature of policing during the apartheid era hardly needs any comprehensive elaboration. This urges for accountability at the local level which must be augmented.

Considering the, responses from the participants in both study settings indicated that not all community members know about the CPFs in their areas:

“Well, not really. I'd say yes and no because there are some who know about it but there are some who, if you try to talk about this thing, say “what is that?” and there has been talking within the CPF and I'm also fortunate that I've been privy to that because I've been involved also in the CPF and I'm in the current provincial, committee”

This has resulted in the utilisation of media, social networks, brochures and strong visibility as measures that have been developed to make the CPFs known by the communities. Studies have found that community policing, especially the CPFs are not always implemented with immediate success. Problems may come from the police service or the community, and in the implementation of the initiatives. Robinson (2003) argues that the absence of strong leadership and encouragement may have an impact on the CPFs and their effectiveness in crime combating and prevention. Therefore, the participants in Glenwood highlighted lack of communication between the executive members of the CPF and the community as a challenge that affects the functioning of the CPF in the area. This has resulted in community members being reluctant to seek and develop a sustainable partnership with law enforcement.

The meaning of community policing has seen a variety of interpretations. It was, therefore, important to have a common understanding of concepts related to community policing. The researcher attempted to find out the level of understanding by participants through the KIIs and FGDs. The process of establishing their understanding of community policing was guided by the legislative framework such as the South African Police Service Act and policy frameworks such as the NCPS. The SAPS Act provides for community policing and other related matters. According to the Act, the police are required to explain to role players what community policing entails. Similarly, the NCPS provides a framework for a multi-dimensional approach to crime prevention. It also defines community policing. The NCPS provides a means by which the SAPS and other government departments, the private sector and NGOs can integrate their approaches to community policing. In addition, the police are required in terms of the South African Constitution to establish community policing, and the philosophy is defined in the Constitution.

Despite the above-mentioned legislation and other policy guidelines, it appears that some role players still do not understand what community policing is, especially people who are not directly involved in community policing at the station level. Those who are actively involved in community policing have different levels of understanding the philosophy as well as their roles and responsibilities. In expressing their understanding of what community policing is, most of the participants in both study settings were clear about the theoretical aspects of community policing. They indicated that they have a very good understanding of the concept. For them, community policing means that the police and the community should establish a partnership. The participants believed when there is a partnership which is built on mutual trust, honesty and respect, then it will be easy to deal with issues of crime in both study areas:

“Community policing is a partnership between the communities with their local police stations. The community must take ownership of what is happening in their community and together with their local police station, we form a partnership. Whereby we all look out for the interests and safety of the people in our community”

“Well, the general concept would mean community members getting involved in forums that have to do with crime marches and then the police, metro police and the community police. For example, Glenwood falls under Umbilo police station, those people would come together, and they would discuss the crime statistics of the area. What zone or sector that community falls under, what the police and metro police are doing about the crime and what the community can do to help with crime and collectively get together to try and solve those specific crimes that are related to that area”

For Cato Manor, the participants added that politics hinder the proper functioning of the CPF. Furthermore, barriers from within the police organisational structure and the organisational culture or climate was expressed as a challenge for the effective functioning of the CPF:

“The challenge that we have is that some members of the community think that we trying to enter the political race and use these programmes to become councillors, yet all we try to do is to fight crime and ensure that Cato Manor is safe. Some members of the community tend to forget that we advocate for social crime prevention in our area and we do not involve ourselves in politics”

The complexity of police cultures can impede the development of more responsive and advanced approaches to crime management and reduction (Fraenkel, 2004). Police cultures need to change to build relations with the communities. Senior police officers who have been involved in community policing have a better understanding and relate well with community members than low ranking officers. This often affects community policing, especially in terms of CPFs matters.

The above discussion also confirms the findings by Steyn (2006) concerning the presence of the police culture solidarity, isolation and cynicism in the SAPS organisational culture on the institutionalisation of community policing in South Africa. Close partnerships between the police and community based on mutual trust are essential if community policing is to work effectively in South Africa. Steyn (2006) argued that the presence of the police culture themes of solidarity, isolation and cynicism amongst SAPS newcomers prevents the establishment of close relationships with the public. In fact, these themes prescribe to newcomers that the only people they can trust are their peers, and not the public, SAPS management, the criminal justice system, the media – not even their closest social support structures. Mistrust is a trained disposition and is demonstrated in police-citizenship interaction through suspicion. Steyn (2006) suggests that police officers are very suspicious of any police-citizenship interaction because it might bring undue attention, criticism and harm to themselves. They also take nothing at face value and believe that most people are untrustworthy and dishonest. As a new finding, this study shows that community policing should be included when SAPS personnel are trained to break, the issue of police culture:

“The barriers that I have been having as the chairperson is that the members of the SAPS think that they are above the community. They decide to represent themselves instead of representing the whole community as a whole. They don't trust us with some information.”

Another challenge that was highlighted is a lack of resources. The SAPS, like many police services around the world, is faced with a lack of sufficient resources and personnel. Homel (2004) argues that if governments wish to promote community policing successfully, they need to invest in time and resources in such initiatives as the CPFs. The lack of resources in the CPFs is expressed as a source of frustration for the members. Similarly, where there is competition for resources, and conflict is generated between individual and organisational commitments, community policing, especially the CPFs may be difficult to develop and maintain. Crawford (2003), writing in the UK context, has observed that issues about resources constitute a central battleground in interagency conflicts. Where there are legislative or policy constraints about, for example, information sharing and privacy issues, the successful and sustainable functioning of the CPFs is difficult:

“The second challenge that we have is that of the resources. We have an Act of the SAPS saying that the SAPS has to establish CPFs but there's nothing that talks to them being resourced so you have an organisation that has no resources, it has no computers, no access to internet at this time and age, if you need a telephone you have to request a member of the SAPS to provide you with the necessity so it becomes a bit of a challenge to be able to perform optimally without resources which is often what becomes a difference between the township and an

urban CPF because the urban CPF by virtue of them having the support of businesses they can have funds up to thousands of rands and they would have even a vehicle or vehicles, you know, and they would have all the equipment that they would need. That then becomes the issue of inequalities that plays out from our previous history up until we have these structures so we still have that”

Lack of trust is another challenge highlighted in both study settings that affect the effectiveness of the CPFs in crime combating. Trust is the essential coordinating mechanism of partnerships (Frances, 1991). Earning and sustaining trust is a two-way iterative process. Police officers react to perceptions of distrust. Where officers generally perceive disrespect and distrust, they are unlikely to support partnerships with the community and have less favourable attitudes towards them (Novak & Alarid, 2003). For partnerships to be maintained, there needs to be a sense of ownership on the part of individual members. As such, educating communities about crime prevention is important for the success of the CPFs. It is of great concern that some police officials in South Africa are still socially isolated from the communities they serve. Novak and Alarid (2003) argue that the rising level of crime and the lack of a strategy to fight it successfully both contribute to the mistrust that exists between the SAPS and their respective communities.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, CPFs were set up with much enthusiasm and hope that they would not only facilitate relations between the community and the police but also facilitate prevention and combat against crime in the two areas. However, years have passed and CPFs in both Glenwood and Cato Manor are experiencing problems that inhibit them to function effectively. This is not surprising given that they are a fairly new phenomenon in the country. The participants in Glenwood highlighted lack of communication between the executive members of the CPF and the broader community as a challenge that affects the functioning of the CPF in the area. This has resulted in community members being reluctant to seek and develop a sustainable partnership with SAPS. For Cato Manor, the participants added that the proper functioning of the CPF is affected by politics of the day. Furthermore, barriers from within the police organisational structure and the organisational culture or climate was expressed as a challenge for the effective functioning of CPFs.

The lack of resources in the CPFs was highlighted as a source of frustration for most of the members. Similarly, where there is competition for resources, conflict is often generated between individual and organisational commitments, hence community policing, especially the CPFs may be difficult to maintain. Lack of trust was another challenge highlighted in both study settings and that affects the effectiveness of the CPFs in combating crime. It is of great concern that some police officials in South Africa are still socially isolated from the communities they serve.

Recommendations

The results of this study may be used as a guide, especially by the community members and the police, to focus on issues which affect most of the community particularly those that may lead to worse results if not timeously attended to. The following recommendations are made regarding the effectiveness of the CPFs in combating crime and prevention:

Communication

Communication about the CPFs and their meetings needs to be streamlined, as several participants gave examples of not being involved in CPF meetings. This appears to be a problem because it means that important decisions are taken without the participation of some key role players in policing. In addition, it was found that investigating officers do not always provide feedback on reported cases. For CPFs to function effectively, role players need to communicate with each other on a regular basis. The objectives of community policing need to be communicated to all role players in a clear and unambiguous manner. There should be open and honest communication between the police and the citizens in the various sectors, which will lead to the joint identification and solving of problems. It is also recommended that community radio and other media structures should be effectively utilised for both communication purposes and during awareness campaigns.

Trust building

Trust between the SAPS members, CPF members and the community enables the police to gain greater access to valuable information from the community that could lead to success in combating crime. It is recommended that initiatives such as sporting events be jointly organised, as they assist in bringing people closer together. It will also keep the youth busy and discourage them from participating in illegal activities or use illegal substances. It is recommended that police management and community members should initiate joint projects that involve them in policing partnerships.

Police organisational culture

Police cultures need to change in order to build sustainable relations with the communities. The presence of the police culture solidarity, isolation and cynicism in the SAPS organisational culture on the institutionalisation of community policing in South Africa needs to change. Therefore, community policing, should be included and

practised when SAPS personnel are trained in order to break, the rigidity in police culture. Policing is all about people and the rendering of a policing service. The control of institutional actions requires that an organisational structure ensures uniform and goal-directed action. Hence, in order to be able to implement the principles and philosophy of community policing, especially through CPFs, the organisation (SAPS) must change its structure and culture.

This change in culture can imply a change from a culture of militarism and power, to a culture of self-control; a change in the emphasis on hierarchy, rank and authority, to the emphasis on development, creativity and flexibility. Furthermore, a change in the emphasis on old practices (we have always done things the way and standing orders specify), to a constant balance between past practices that are still relevant and new practices. Further to this, a change from just following the rules, to questioning allegations and interrogating procedures, amongst other things; a change from a closed system that implies a lack of accountability, to openness, communication and recognition of results. Lastly, a change from internal solidarity (united against the external enemy), to professionalism to ensure that justice is done.

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