

The Result Of Community Policing

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Introduction

In the history of criminal justice and policing, the concept of community policing is relatively new, though it has been tried in one form or the other in the last few decades. Community policing is a policing practice that seeks to reduce an area's crime rate by fostering trust and cooperation between police and citizens. A greater need has been felt to implement aspects of community policing with the rising level of crime in American society. A police department acts as a value system in which the goal is to work with citizen groups and individuals, as well as private and public organizations, to solve matters that can affect the potential livability of areas, neighborhoods or a city.

In this case, it is recognized that many issues cannot be dealt with by the police alone, and citizens share a mutual responsibility to solve them. Prevention, timely intervention and early identification are stressed before the matter becomes serious or unwieldy, and each individual officer functions as the practitioner of this policing practice and becomes a means to bring together private resources and state authority to resolve issues. For this purpose, the officers are required to spend time within communities in order to foster personal relationships with businesses, citizens, community organizations or schools. In December 2014, President Obama convened a 'Task Force on 21st Century Policing' in response to growing sentiments against police and law enforcement, the purpose of which was to reduce crime by introducing community policing strategies. The police departments were directed to improve community relations by introducing community-oriented policing strategies and solving crimes through a more holistic approach. According to President Obama, this would help fortify bonds between communities and police officers. The question that comes into play regarding this is whether or not community policing is an effective practice in today's time and whether increasing community policing reduces street violence and street crimes within a community, as well as confrontations between police and people.

Literature Review

Community policing as a concept has been studied through multiple aspects. In a study by Morabito (2008), community policing was analyzed in the wake of the widespread media attention and government funding it received in the 1990s. A large majority of police agencies surveyed were reported to have been using a mixture of different community policing strategies and activities that served populations greater than 25000 people. The study found that despite reporting so, most of the agencies, in fact, did not properly adopt elements that were central to the method.

The findings also suggested that the method seemed to be difficult for different police departments to

put into practice, as evidence of uneven adoption was found (Morabito, 2008). Furthermore, where it is implemented, it can present new challenges related to accountability and governance. Terpstra (2011) conducted research in which it was found community police officers were often stretched between demands flowing from central or managerial centers from the government and demands of accountability from the local community. The study noted that police accountability can be threatened due to organizational decentralization, hierarchical perspective, increased discretion and growing intimacy of police with citizens. This can lead to policing depending more on community consent and participation.

In the Netherlands, an ethnographic study that compared urban and rural area results examined the extent and nature of tensions and coping measures used by police officers and departments (Terpstra, 2011). It found that police strategies or priorities were not based on local community voices, and that there are competing managerial forces that restrict a democratic control of the police, therefore despite having community policing in practice, it leads to distance between citizens and police officers.

Further studies in this regard by Lee (2010) investigated homeland security planning and its consequences on community-oriented policing among US police departments. The study obtained sample data from 281 municipal police departments in 47 states, each serving a population of over 25000. The study sought to answer what aspects of homeland security are associated with primary police functions and whether prioritizing homeland security correlates with a decrease in community policing. The study found that both community policing and homeland Security can work together because Homeland Security's terrorism prevention measures can also include anti-fear campaigns, hazard mitigation and disaster prevention through emergency community response teams (Lee, 2010).

A community policing approach, according to the study, could serve the purpose through a collaborative problem-solving approach rather than the traditional model. Another study was conducted in a Midwestern city to understand the perceptions of 500 officers regarding themselves, their police department, fellow officers, neighborhood organizations and their overall relations with the community relative to their community policing (Mark A. Glaser, 2010). The findings showed the officers participating in the program saw that the officers could rise above their own self-interest more than the citizens could and that there was a need to prevent neighborhoods from becoming isolated. The broader community and the neighborhoods should have a unified purpose. Among the surveyed officers, those who felt that their police department balanced successfully between community and organizational concerns in community-oriented policing were more likely to display greater commitment to the community they served.

However, a study by Muller (2010) contrasts the previous findings to suggest that community policing may not work the same everywhere and that a local context, political factionalism, clientelism and police corruption can be important factors that lower community policing legitimacy and accountability. An empirical fieldwork survey was conducted to draw the results in Mexico City

(Müller, 2010). The findings supported some uncertainty regarding the community policing method and its alleged democratic potential that according to Muller (2010) was often ignored by the program's promoters. The study concluded that a lot of analyses done in evaluating community policing programs are based on uncritical liberalism and characterized by a lack of nuance when seeking global export. Another interesting study in this regard compared the confidence of police officers in a community policing program with their performance (Ling Ren, 2005).

According to Ling Ren (2005), a shift to community policing led to broader measures of police performance, and the confidence level of the officer could be used by police management as an indicator of their effectiveness. The findings showed that informal collective security led to better confidence in the police, with volunteers also showing higher confidence in the police department, whereas more traffic tickets or a sense of victimization reduced that confidence. When contact increases with the police, it correlates with increased confidence in them. However, the strongest predictor of confidence in the police was the effect of informal collective security measures (Ling Ren, 2005).

Discussion

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that community policing had positive impacts on both the police as well as the people in some places, however the effectiveness depended on a series of complex factors due to which it could not produce fruitful results as pointed out by (Müller, 2010). Furthermore, security dynamics have evolved post 9/11 with the advancement in communications technology and social media. Communities are not isolated, and any unfavorable incidents may get widespread coverage that can lead to unrest and outbreaks in different parts of the world and reinforce or produce grievances, distrust and distance between the police and the people. Therefore, what worked in the 1970s when the concept of Community policing was introduced may not effectively work today.

Community-oriented crime prevention fundamentally seeks to be a proactive method of reducing crime by bringing awareness to members and organizations of the community that may be a potential target. It also seeks to broaden communications and contact between the community and the police. The police facilitate most of the community crime prevention programs with the support of their local communities, who need to participate in those programs for them to be successful and effective. The question that comes into play regarding this is whether or not community policing is an effective practice in light of given circumstances, and does increasing community policing leads to a visible reduction in street violence and/or street crimes within the community, and does it reduces confrontations between law enforcement and citizens.

To study this, the indicators of community policing will be used in two different areas over a 2-year period that are known to have a high crime rate. Agency records from the police department will be collected and used to analyze the people's perceptions of street crimes and street violence as

dependent variables, compared to the other areas where the community policing strategies will not be implemented, acting as the independent variable.

Methodology And Analysis

The research will have three main components that relate to the research design, procedure and the participants. The primary objective of the research would be to evaluate the efficacy of the community policing program and to observe any reductions in street crimes. A community policing program will be implemented in one area with a population of greater than 25000, and its effect will be observed over a period of 24 months. There will be two groups of people out of which one group will be living in the area that will be implementing the community policing program. Any adjacent city or area that has a relatively high crime rate can be chosen for the purpose. Citizens of all ages, genders, races or ethnicities will be included in the study population. The police department assigned to the area will implement the new policing program, which will also involve police officers of different ranks, both female and male officers.

The research will study both groups to demonstrate how effective a community-oriented policing program can be by measuring a reduction in street crimes and any police and citizen confrontation for 24 months. To implement the program, the department will assign officers to patrol particular neighborhoods for their shifts and to develop contact and community relations within. The variables of success will be evaluated through assessing crime rates against community policing indicators, by first collecting statistics regarding the initial crime rates in the given area. Although general crime indicators like robberies, murders, larcenies, homicides, rape or assaults will be measured however, street crimes and violence will be given higher priority as part of this experiment. How well a community policing program in an area is working will be measured according to the number of officers on the patrol and their contact and interactions within their jurisdiction amidst the communities and citizens.

The level of cooperation between citizens and the police will also be measured and evaluated. As an added measure, the costs incurred by the police department after implementing the program will also be taken into account. The number of street crimes and incidents of street violence will then be measured and collected from agency records each month throughout the 24-month study duration. The fluctuations, increases or decreases within each month will be recorded and compared at the time of commencement of the program till the end to assess any reduction in general crimes and especially street violence. The area or neighbourhood where community policing measures were particularly well implemented will be studied with greater care as it is understood that not all officers would perform the same in the role.

If the monthly collected data signifies a reduction in crime rate, that will mean that the community policing program has been effective. The costs of implementing the program will also be evaluated to compare the actual performance with the amount of resources required to make the program a

success. Data from police records, citations and tickets will be collected from the department, along with financial records during the course of the study. Officer feedback will also be collected to assess how well was the implementation of the program in the designated areas. A multivariate analysis will be conducted, as the given quantitative data will be plotted to indicate trends and improvements, if any.

Implications

The study conducted will be vital for police departments and municipalities to determine whether community oriented policing programs can work effectively in their areas and neighborhoods to ensure public safety in a better way compared to traditional policing programs. Furthermore, those departments in other states who are already implementing community policing programs fully or partially will be able to use the study to evaluate whether they should discontinue or continue their own programs or not, or how they could improve them. Due to the fact that there will be more officers required on patrol, costs are bound to increase as well. The study period is long enough to be able to judge to a relatively accurate level how different practices in policing can lead to a reduction or increase in crime rates and whether the benefits justify the costs. Owing to the increased crime today, it is well known that law enforcement authorities are searching for innovative solutions to reduce crimes generally, especially street crimes, which have been a long problem in many parts of the country.

Since traditional law enforcement uses mainly reactive measures to counter crime, there is little incentive for them to connect to citizens. If the new community policing program is shown to be effective, then the implementation of the program could lead to better connections between citizens and law enforcement. It will also give citizens and volunteers an opportunity and encouragement to be involved in keeping their areas and neighborhoods safe by cooperating with the officers on patrol. This will allow the police to interact with the community on a personal level and to know them, whereas the people will see the police with greater positivity and reliance. A greater cooperation can then, in turn, lead law enforcement to better possible leads and witness statements. Street crimes and crimes of other nature may possibly reduce as the criminals see more witnesses and citizens cooperating with law enforcement to help them deter crime.

Within the research methods, there are some limitations, however. It is possible that not all citizens will engage or cooperate with the officers on the same level or vice versa. If a community itself is reluctant to participate then the cost of implementing the program does not become feasible enough. It is also possible that since the duration of the study period is longer, there could be transfers within the department and the assigned officer to the neighborhood may be replaced, with the new one struggling to connect and cooperate with citizens as the previous one did. Therefore, having the same patrolling officer is important to get the maximum benefit out of the program. Furthermore, what works in one city, region, or state may not work in the other since community policing indicators are based on at least some successful aspects in the past. However, the results cannot be expected to be

replicated all the time. Finally, a follow up survey could be used to measure the perceptions of the people after a successful community policing program could also be carried out to assess the results from the public's perspectives.

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