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An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Community Policing Forums in Managing Crime in Thyolo Malawi

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Abstract

The concept of Community Policing was embraced by the Malawi Government as a vehicle to encourage Police and Public involvement in managing crimes. Malawi Police Service benefited grasped community policing since 1994, but more of it has been ordinary Community Policing, which was characterized by low citizen support due to need of assets (Mutupha & Zhu, 2022). Community Policing may be a reasoning administration fashion and organizational plan that advances proactive issue tackling and Police-Community associations to address the causes of wrongdoing and fear as well as other community issues. In 1994, the Malawi Police Service benefit formalized the foundation of the Community Police Forum (CPF) at Traditional Authority, Group Village Headman and Village levels. The MPS Act 12 of 2010 sections 119-122 made a formal arrangement for a partnership between the Police and the Community in satisfying the requirements of the community regarding policing. CPF aims at ensuring that they are taking portion in security and security of their region whereby police responsibility straightforwardness and viability in overseeing wrongdoing advancing participation between the benefit and the community in satisfying the community's needs with respect to policing and promoting communication between the police and the community. It was set up to preserve a partnership between the Police and the communities, to together recognize needs and unravel issues related to crime, disorder, fear, poor police-community relation and service delivery. Subsequently the policies modern vision of policing was presented by setting up CPF at each Traditional Authorities, Group and Village heads throughout the country. The implementation of community policing through CPFs has brought to bear the fruit at National, Regional, local and Community levels. This paper aims to assess the effectiveness of CPF in managing crimes. The Qualitative research method was employed, and data were collected from 60 participants through face-to-face survey interviews, focus group discussion and questionnaire. The research revealed that CPF is effective in managing crime. The study recommends emphasis on common goals, bridging the gap between CPFs and Community Interests, trust reconstruction, public awareness and campaigns on CPF, establishment on new and revamping of weak CPFs as one way of mitigating crimes, and improves allocation of resources for CPFs.

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1. Introduction

Before introduction of Community Policing in Malawi crime rate was high. At that point, Police begun setting up Community Policing Forums in different formations as a modern way of managing crime. Crime threatens the safety and security of people, and their property. The research

wanted to assess the effectiveness of Community Policing structures on how they are assisting in managing crimes. Expectations generated by the establishment of CPFs are not met in some areas where Community Police Forums are reported to be functional, and constitutional functions are not entirely executed. Instead CPF members assume functions of

other community groups such as the street committees, local neighborhood watch and vigilante groups (Super, 2014). The concept of Community Policing was adopted by the Malawi Government as a vehicle to facilitate Police and Public involvement in managing crimes. Then, Malawi Police Service embraced Community Policing since 1994, but more of it has been conventional Community Policing, which was characterized by low citizen participation due to lack of resources (Mutupha & Zhu, 2022). Community Policing is a philosophy, management style, and organizational design that promotes proactive problem solving and Police-Community partnerships to address the causes of crime and fear as well as other community issues.

Crime in Southern Africa has increased substantially over the 10 years and has quickly ended up a major issue posturing a particular boundary to improvement handle. It is recognized that as nations within the locale proceed to form move from conventional to present day ways and involvement significant socio-economically, politically and social changes, there will be related within the levels, sorts and designs of criminal behavior as well as criminal equity reaction (David Macdonald and Louis Molamu, 1996-1999: crime in Southern Africa). Increasing crime has been a challenge in many Countries of late. In any case, the sorts of criminal activities vary from place to place. It is accepted that criminal activities is high both in developed and developing countries worldwide for illustration in joined together United States of America, there are states but in that states organized crime like armed robberies, robbery with violence, Car-hijackers, Murder, Burglary/Breaking Offences are order of the day. In United Kingdom, Australia, Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia and Mozambique criminal activities are rampant in these mentioned Countries. South Africa is developing fast politically, socially and economically but criminal activities like armed robberies, Robbery with violence, Murder, robbery breaking into Building and Commit Felony There-in, House Breaking, Burglary/Theft, Theft from motor vehicles, Theft of motor vehicles, theft by Servant, embezzlement, fraud and Corruption are on increase in many cities, towns and provinces.

Malawi Police Service is aware that crime not only affects society, but also influences the country's economy as it leads to material cost for those who become victims; and forces national and local government to spend billions on the prevention of crime, the detection and the punishment of criminals. On the other hand, the role of the community is to attend the community police sub-forum meetings, to discuss action plans with the Police in order to deal with crime in the community; to participate in neighborhood initiatives to safeguard the area in which they live, work and play; and to take ownership of the community policing and support in the enforcement of the law (SAPS Sector Policing, 2013). In all, CPF was implemented to bring the police and the community together to fight against crime in communities.

Nchilamwera and Khwethemule areas are in Thyolo. Khwethemule area is approximately 12kilometres from its closest Police Station called Thyolo Police Station whereas Nchilamwera zone is near to Thyolo Police Station. Indeed in spite of the fact that Nchilamwera CPF is closer to Thyolo Police Station but crime is hitting them hard. There are still crimes such as armed robbery, Robbery with violence, Murder, having sexual with a Child, Breaking into Building and Commit Felony There-in, House Breaking, Arson, house Breaking/Theft, Burglary/Theft, Theft from motor vehicles, Theft of motor vehicles, theft by Servant, embezzlement,

rape, fraud and Corruption are on increase in the many cities, towns and provinces. This crimes affects a lot even on partnership between the Community and the Police, and as such, some of the residents feels as Police and CPF members are not doing enough to protect them and their property against crime. Therefore, it is logic to assess the effectiveness of CPF in managing crime in Thyolo. In attempting to achieve the above mentioned aim, the following objectives were pursued:

- i) To highlight crime prevention initiatives implemented by CPF.
- ii) To identify the success factors within CPF in managing crime in their areas.
- iii) To come up with suggestions on how the CPFs and MPS can work together to combat criminal activities that are happening within the locality in Malawi.
- iv) To determine the challenges associated with CPF in the area.

2. Literature Review

This section explains the effectiveness of CPF in managing crime in Thyolo.

Malawi has an alarmingly high crime rate, an unsatisfactory truth that not as it were impacts contrarily on the quality of life of its citizens, but too on the much-needed financial development and improvement of this nation. One of the most noteworthy challenges Malawi Police Service is confronting is to avoid crime. Since the appropriation of community Policing in Malawi the concept of 'crime lessening through community partnership' has proceeded to develop in notoriety. At a certain point of time when conventional policing activities failed to convey substantial diminishments in nearby crime rate, this critical move within the conventional policing worldview driven to expanded utilize of one critical policing procedure called community policing (Segrave & Ratcliffe, 2004 & Myint, 2019).

The following are factors that make CPF effective in managing crime:

a) Community Partnership

An active partnership between the police and the community is fundamental, in which all parties truly work together to distinguish and unravel issues (Miller, Hess, & Orthmann, 2013). The community take a more prominent part in open security with the assistance of the police, in this way since the community know their issues and the kind of crimes that affect them. If fighting crime, the police must encourage the community members to come up with the relevant significant data they know. The community must have a say in how police must work and the police must counsel with the community in each activity that take that concern them (Community Policing Consortium, 1994).

b) Community Participation

Community participation could be a key and essentially one of the steps within the handle that must be completed sometimes recently moving on to another step in execution of CPF. It is an fundamentally portion of the complete handle because it ought to be fundamental approach that oversees all angles from the beginning to usage and checking the distinctive ventures that make up the CPF's technique (Ludman, 2010). Nel, Lieberman, Landman, Louw and Robertshaw (2000) and Kiarie (2012) finds that community interest guarantees that individuals are rise to and dynamic accomplices within the decision-making prepare, have distant

a better understanding of the issues and troubles related with their issue or require, and share obligation to create viable arrangements to the issues raised. For the police to pick up authenticity within the eye of the communities, association will need to be created. In any case, one of the focal points of community support in crime prevention activities is that it permits conventional citizens to end up co-producers of open security at the side the police (Manaliyo, 2016).

c) Communication and Cooperation

According to Nel and Bezuidenhout (1997) in Mabunda (2014), the thought behind the CPF is certainly a respectable one, to advance communication between the police and the community, advance participation between the police and the community to meet the community's police needs and to progress straightforwardness and responsibility of the police service. In any case, their effectiveness as institutions will depend on a few variables. One figure, which is likely of more significance, is the degree to which the police can permit communities to impact their approaches, choices, and decisions.

d) Establish and Revitalize Community Policing Structures

Most of community policing structures are weak and inactive. This shows lack of effectiveness of the concept thereby reducing value of community policing towards safety and security. In view of the inactiveness there is imperative to establish community policing structures across the district and revitalize the weak ones.

3. Research and Methodology

The research employed qualitative research method. Qualitative research puts accentuation on prepare (Bryman, 2012), this made the procedure more important to the study since it was basic to get it how the concept of community policing has advanced. Qualitative research gives the researcher a basic status of getting to be the essential instrument for information (Merriam, 2002). According to Scriven (1980: 6) in Babbie and Mouton (2011), formative assessment may be done to supply input to the people who are attempting to progress something. Formative research helped the researcher to assess the CPF from its arrangement, finds the kind of partnership that the community and the police has conjointly to supply input on whether CPF is effective in reducing crime or not. Data was collected by implies of face-to-face overview interviews with both organized (close-ended) and non-structured (open-ended) sorts of questions and focus group discussion. Face to face survey interview permitted the researcher to explore general views or opinion in more details and obtain relevant information for both qualitative and quantitative method. Thematic content analysis was utilized to analyze open-ended questions within the overview. The reactions for each question were gathered together, analyzed and synthesized into important subjects.

4. Analysis and Findings

The following are findings from data analyzed through thematic content analysis.

Thematic Content Analysis of Data

The following are responses from all the qualitative questions in the study. The responses were synthesized and grouped in relevant themes.

Ways in Which CPF Help in Managing Crime

Only 83% of participants who agreed that CPF help in managing crime in the previous question participated in this question. The following are ways in which the respondents believe CPF manage or lessen crime.

Calling the Police, Provision of Information and Police Visibility

Majority of the residents mentioned that CPF reduce crime by calling the police when there is crime within the community. They argued that when they have issues or crime within the community, the CPF members come and offer assistance additionally call the police when is vital. Generally the community know the culprits, and as such they illuminate CPF members and advise the police. They give important data to the police, making it simple to impact captures. The police and CPF members organize CPF gatherings where community individuals are told about crimes that are happening in their communities and how to ensure themselves. The visibility of the police within the community quickly discourages offenders from committing wrongdoing since of fear of being secured.

Challenges in CPF Managing Crimes

The thematic analysis with community members revealed various challenges in the managing of crime and implementation of CPF. The following are the challenges identified by respondents:

Lack of Support

Each and every organization needs bolster for it to be effectiveness. Bolster appears that individuals appreciate what the organization hold. A bit like CPF, for it to be effective, it needs full back from both the police and the community. Residents of Nchilamwera and Khwethemule do appreciate what CPF is doing in their communities. This can be since they do backtheir work. The reason for their volunteerism to be portion of CPF is since they needed their areas to be more secure.

Different researchers attest comparable opinions to the discoveries over. They proposed that community policing regularly suggests that people have common interface, values, integrity, requests and desires but in hone communities are vague (Segrave & Ratcliffe 2004; & Mabunda 2014). They advance set up that community policing in most regions served the interface of the vocal minority and the nearness of solid identities and compelling groups which ruled key discourses and utilized their monstrous impact to control the course of an initiative.

Researchers such as Herbert (2009), and Nkwenyane (2011) argues that the worldwide challenges which restricted community interest in community policing activities included the independence which undermined endeavors to work in partnership with police. The study also showed that financially and socially dissimilar communities were not able of producing and supporting themselves as communities under the desires of the standardizing belief of community policing. The clashing values were tooan issue for offices working together. Besides, a study by Skogan (2006) in Slovenia famous that community inclusion in community policing had not been compelling in zones of most required and harder to reach parts of the community that had gotten to be prohibited within the community exertion since they have diverse interface, values, and desires.

Information Sharing

Information exchange between the police and the community can make it simple for the police to form compelling captures. According to Thyolo Police Station, they are accepting productive data from individuals of the common open which offer assistance them to process it and at long last influence captures. A few purposely cover up or ensure their children indeed in spite of the fact that they are suspects of a certain crime. When investigations are made within the community they chosen to stow away data. The reason for community individuals not to exchange information with the police or CPF members is since of fear of dangers.

Lack of Knowledge

The community individuals got to know almost CPF in their community. From the reactions of the meet, it appear just like the community part as it were know few CPF members because they were as it were saying him amid the meet. They have to be know what kind of person can gotten to be CPF members. Most community members claim that CPF members are offenders, whereas a few kept up that CPF members collaborate with hoodlums, making hoodlums free to do what they need within the community. The respondents assist claimed that CPF is constituted of members from the administering political party.

Challenges Faced by the CPF in Managing Crime

Respondents who took part in the study were requested to state the challenges faced by their CPF in its daily work. Similar responses for this question were grouped together into relevant themes.

Lack of Resources

Lack of resources seems to be the most challenge for CPF in managing crime. Most of the respondents showed that need of resources is the issue that the forum has confronted and is still confronting in its operation. Lacking such resources makes it difficult for both the Police and the community to carry out their obligations in CPF and making it difficult to effectively manage crimes. Resources like transport to be utilized by CPF members from point A to B and airtime for communication purposes were said as sorts of resources that CPF need. These findings are in line with those of the National Secretariat for Safety and Security (1999: 3), who found that the foremost self-evident challenge for CPF is the need un-availability of fundamental asset required by the police and those they serve in a specific community.

Threats

According to the respondents, life of those who take an interest in CPF, for the most part the CPF members are at risk as they are being debilitated by hoodlums. One of the respondents said "we are being threatened". Police in Thyolo Police Station too affirmed that CPF members are undermined, but they do report it and investigation underway. The community sees CPF members to be offering them to the police since they are seen moving up and down in their communities with the police.

Lack of Support and Cooperation

Lack of support and participation by the police, community and significant partners is one of the issues confronted by CPFs both in Nchilamwera and Khwethemule. A few of the Police said that the community part don't cooperate with them within the CPF activities. This reflected through destitute

assembly participation, destitute volunteerism among others. Need of participation is reflected by the police's destitute reaction when called by the community. This has made doubt between the community and the police.

The over discoveries are in line with those by Onwudiwe (2009) who concurs with Oenga (2015).

5. Discussion of Findings

The research findings show that the Officer in Charge Thyolo Police Station is favorable toward partnership since he does mobilize and organize the community in his region to require action against local crime at the side the community. The community members do participate in neighborhood initiatives to defend the region in which they live. Community members do go to CPF meetings to talk about activity plans with the Officer in Charge to bargain with crime within the communities.

Community support is one of the parts of community members in CPF to battle wrongdoing. There's a sign within the research that a few of the community members in Nchilamwera and Khwethemule zones bolster the police in any way conceivable. In spite of the fact that the community lock in themselves in road observe, private security patrol teams and neighborhood observe to help the police in breaking down those considered scattered in wrongdoing, residents back the Police by getting to be members of CPF.

From the discoveries it is obvious that the Police take after one of the Batho Pele principles on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997) which is discussion. That's since they counsel the community members when vital choices influencing them are taken. This appears that the Police are connection with, tune in to, and listen to, and learn from the individuals they serve. The police remain in touch with the communities they serve, finding out what services they require, how they would like their services to be delivered and what they are disappointed approximately. There's communication between the forum official's representatives and the community at huge. The community believe their chosen CPF representative, since in the event that they did not, they would not been counselling them or looking for offer assistance from them when they have issues. From the research findings, a conclusion can be made that the police bolster and energize the community members to share information.

Be that as it may, there are no sufficient assets designated to bolster CPF activities to empower them to perform their assignments and the CPF in Thyolo is additionally need assets to back its activities. This makes CPF and Police work to be troublesome in attempting to oversee wrongdoing within the communities. These discoveries are in line with those of other ranges who found that, in spite fact that resources are distributed to back CPF activities in Police Station or communities, not much is given to empower CPF to do their work appropriately. The assessment of progressed Community Policing forums in developed Countries moreover influenced with need resources in CPF which debilitates the method of the community desires and needs in few cases.

These discoveries reverberate those by Hebert (2006) and Salomane (2010) that among the challenges confronting community policing was insufficient resources. It was uncovered that community policing departments lock in community policing initiatives with a generally little number of Officers, while most watch assets are given to reacting to calls or doing genuine Police work, because it is portrayed by

a few still soaks in dug in approaches. In these divisions, conventional criminal equity centered policing remained the overwhelming culture. Moment, the fetched of keeping up the community policing unit Officers falls on nearby Governments that are not in a position to support the expanded staffing past the obligatory prerequisites.

Further Research by Mammus (2010) sets up that in Nigeria, the major challenge of policing was the labour deficiency which could be a comparative finding to the current study. Insufficient financing, insufficient calculated back and framework, need of serviceable information and innovative gear to cover all the gigantic zones. Other variables incorporate insufficient labour (both in quality and ability), instruction and preparing, insufficient hardware, and destitute conditions of the service of the average Policeman.

Conclusion

The aim of the study, to be specific was to assess the effectiveness of CPF in managing crime in Thyolo, was accomplished. The comes about of this study are reliable with other studies when highlighting that for CPF to be effective, it needs a full back from both the police and the residents at large as the Police alone cannot decrease or end crime. From the comes about of the study, it can be concluded that the community and the police are working together to battle against crime in their communities. Be that as it may, challenges are preventing the effectiveness of CPFs. The issue of bolster in terms of fitting budget for CPF activities ought to be considered. This study proposes the utilize of mechanical gadgets in Community Policing as human endeavors are characterized with numerous individual issues, such as believe. In conclusion, destitute data sharing, and fear victimization prevents the effectiveness of CPF in crime prevention.

Recommendations

Due to the Issues and Challenges Identified in the Study, The Following Recommendations are drawn

- i) Enhanced monitoring and evaluation.
- ii) Mobile public awareness campaign of the CPF.
- iii) Resources needed to support CPF.
- iv) The need for support and a good relationship between police and the community.
- v) Communication.
- vi) Trust reconstruction.
- vii) Use of recent modern social media to bring CPF activities on public domain.
- viii) Bridging the gap between CPF and Community Interests.
- ix) New establishment and revamping of CPFs.

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