The effectiveness of community policing forum in crime prevention

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ABSTRACT

The National Peace Accord, signed by all major political parties in 1991, created various structures through which police accountability could be sought. In 1993, the Interim Constitution of South Africa Act 200 of 1993 formalized the establishment of the Community Police Forum (CPF) at police stations. The SAPS Act 68 of 1995 made a formal provision for a partnership between the police and the community in fulfilling the needs of the community regarding policing. CPF aims at ensuring police accountability, transparency and effectiveness in the community, promoting cooperation between the service and the community in fulfilling the community's needs regarding policing and promoting communication between the police and the community. It was established to maintain a partnership between the police and the communities, to jointly identify priorities and solve problems related to crime, disorder, fear, poor police-community relation and service delivery. Therefore, the police's new vision of policing was introduced by setting up CPF at police stations throughout the country. The implementation of community policing through CPFs has brought to bear the complexity, dynamics and of social and political relationships at both the provincial and local levels. This paper aims to evaluate the effectiveness of CPF in crime prevention. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed, and data were collected from 40 community members through face-to-face survey interviews. The research revealed that CPF is ineffective in reducing crime due to the lack of resources to support its functioning. The study recommends proper and frequent communication between the police, CPF and the broader community.

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INTRODUCTION

The South African Police (SAP) was the national police force in South Africa from 1918 to 1994. It was responsible for numerous human rights waves of abuse against black South Africans, including acts of state terrorism, murder and was responsible for applying discriminatory laws and regulations (Provincial Gazette, 2011). The Police Act No. 7 of 1958 stated the functions of the police as “maintaining law and order and investigating and preventing crime” and gave the police extraordinary powers to quell unrest and to conduct counterinsurgency activities. The Police Amendment Act no.70 of 1965 empowered the police to search without warrant any person, vehicle or premises within one mile of any national border and seizes anything found during the search. Within the adoption of the interim Constitution in 1994, the homelands and old development regions were abolished and integrated into a united South Africa with nine provinces. The new Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) established a single National Police Service for South Africa under the executive command and control of a National Commissioner whom the President appoints. Consequently, the South African Police Service was formed by integrating the SAP with the police forces of the 10 ethnic “homelands” created under apartheid.

The Advisory Committee to the National Minister for Safety and Security formed a subcommittee tasked with outlining basic guidelines for establishing forums. These guidelines served only as the minimum requirement for forming forums in the period before the promulgation of the Police Act in 1995. It became apparent that the various MECs of Safety and Security in the provinces would
be primarily responsible for forming these forums in terms of the guidelines issued by the national ministry. In April 1995, the MEC for Safety and Security office held a two-day conference on community policing. As such, CPF was established, and Gauteng was the first province to implement Community Policing by establishing CPF (Mistry, 1996).

The South African Police Service Act 68 of 1995 set out the rules of CPF, area community police boards and provincial community police boards. A major objective of CPF is to establish an active partnership between the police and the community through which crime, service delivery and police-community relations can jointly be analyzed and appropriate solutions designed and implemented. This requires that the police consciously strive to create an atmosphere in which potential community partners are willing and able to cooperate with the police.

Crime is a serious problem in South Africa, affecting every citizen's quality of life. Due to crime trends, South Africans feel less safe in their own country, community and homes, making life more uncomfortable for them. 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. The role of the police in CPF is to mobilize and organize the community to take action against local crime together with the police, to act as the liaison between the community of the sector and the local police station; and to act as a crime prevention officer, which involves being responsible for all plans and projects to address crime in the community. On the other hand, the role of the community is to attend the community police sub-forum meetings, to discuss action plans with the sector commander in order to deal with crime in the community; to participate in neighbourhood 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.

Makhwibidung village is situated in ward 27, under the jurisdiction of greater Tzaneen Local Municipality in Mopani District Limpopo. This village is approximately 15km from its nearest police station called Maake police station. Maake police station is situated in Lenyenye under the same jurisdiction as Makhwibidung village. It was observed that, even though CPF has been implemented in the village, the community still experience crime. There are still crimes such as illegal gambling, rape, murder, house breaking, selling of marijuana mostly at high schools and etc., these show that there are discrepancies within CPFs. This affects the partnership between the community and the police, and as such, the community feels as police are not doing enough to protect them and their property against crime. Therefore, it is logic to assess the effectiveness of CPF in reducing crime in Makhwibidung village. In attempting to achieve the above mentioned aim, the following objectives were pursued:

i. To determine the challenges associated with CPF in the area.

ii. To identify the success factors within CPF in reducing crime in the community.

iii. To highlight crime prevention strategies employed by CPF.

**Literature Review**

This section explains the nature of community policing and the effectiveness of CPF in reducing crime in South Africa

**The nature of community policing**

South Africa has an alarmingly high crime rate, an unacceptable fact that not only impacts negatively on the quality of life of its citizens, but also on the much-needed economic growth and development of this country. In his inaugural speech in 1999, former President Thabo Mbeki reiterated the importance of crime prevention to ensure safety and security in South Africa. Crime prevention has since been identified as a presidential imperative programme. One of the greatest challenges facing the SAPS is to prevent crime. Since the mid 1980’s, the concept of ’crime reduction through community partnership’ has continued to grow in popularity. At a time when traditional policing activities failed to deliver tangible reductions in local crime rate, this significant shift in the traditional policing paradigm led to increased use of one important policing strategy called community policing (Segrave & Ratcliffe, 2004 & Myint, 2019).

The prevention of crime, the detection and punishment of offenders, the protection of life and property, and the preservation of public tranquility are the direct responsibilities of ordinary citizens aided by the police. The partnership approach to policing emphasizes that relations between the police and the public should be consultative and extended into the process of planning (Bednarska-Olejniczak, Olejniczak, & Svobodová, 2019). In order to operationalize these strategies successfully, all available resources in the country need to work together. It must be clearly recognized that CPFs have played a valuable role in ensuring greater cooperation with the SAPS at the local level. It is also appropriate that the functions of the CPF structure be supplemented by duly elected representatives of communities (White Paper on Safety and Security, 1998). According to Nel and Beizenhout (1997) in Nkwenyane (2011), CPFs are intended to assist the police to improve the delivery of police service to the community, strengthen the partnership between the community and their police, promote joint problem identification and problem solving, ensure police accountability and ensure consultation and proper communication between the police and the community (Khumalo, 2016; Govender, 2019). Olofinbiyi and Mthembu (2020) concurs that the major challenges which impact the effectiveness of CPF includes lack of partnership and
accountability, a lack of governance, the loss of public confidence in the police, low morale of CPF members, inadequate training, the use of weak SAPS employees, resistance to CPF modification, absence of thorough guidance and poor relationship between the police and the society.

**Effectiveness of CPF in reducing crime**

Successful CPF also requires coherent communities that are motivated to reduce crime and a police force that can implement innovative methods (Ludman, 2010). The following are factors that make CPF effective in reducing crime:

**Communication and cooperation**

According to Nel and Bezuidenhout (1997) in Mabunda (2014), the idea behind the CPF is certainly a noble one, to promote communication between the police and the community, promote cooperation between the police and the community to meet the community’s police needs and to improve transparency and accountability of the police service. However, their effectiveness as institutions will depend on several factors. One factor, which is probably of more importance, is the extent to which the police can allow communities to influence their police service, policies, decision-making processes. Makondo, Mofokeng and Khosa (2021) found that CPF concept was more popular with the local police than with the community members. This results in dysfunction of the forum. It will indeed be unfortunate if the perception develops that CPFs are little more than instruments of the police to control communities. Manaliyo (2016) urged that effective collaboration requires a high level of trust and understanding between partners.

**Community participation**

According to the National Development Plan 2030, a community safety must be built through integration and community participation. Community participation is a key and simply one of the steps in the process that must be completed before moving on to the next step in implementation of CPF. It is an integral part of the entire process as it should be the underlying approach that governs all aspects from inception to implementation and monitoring the different projects that make up the CPF’s strategy (Ludman, 2010). Nel, Lieberman, Landman, Louw and Robertshaw (2000) and Kiari (2012) finds that community participation ensures that people are equal and active partners in the decision-making process, have a better understanding of the issues and difficulties associated with their problem or need, and share responsibility to develop practical solutions to the issues raised. Community participation plays an important and valuable role in assisting to changing perceptions of ordinary people on the police, empowering people, and developing a common understanding about issues that require the collective effort of communities and the police. For the police to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the communities, partnership will have to be developed. However, some community members are reluctant to participate in crime prevention activities because they feel that the state will not protect them once they provide with information (Masuku & Motalekgosi, 2022). Dandurand (2014), identified police corruption, police inefficiency, the community’s fear of victimization, and lack of communication as the reasons for lack of community participation in crime prevention. Nonetheless, one of the advantages of community participation in crime prevention activities is that it allows ordinary citizens to become co-producers of public safety along with the police (Manaliyo, 2016).

**Community Partnership**

An active partnership between the police and the community is essential, in which all parties really work together to identify and solve problems (Miller, Hess, & Orthmann, 2013). The community take a greater role in public safety with the help of the police, thus because the community know their problems and the kind of crimes that affect them. If fighting crime, the police must encourage the community members to come up with the relevant information they know. For such to happen, the police must work with the neighbourhood groups, participate in business and civic events, work with social agencies, and participate in educational and recreational programs so that the community can regard the police as part of them. The community must have a say in how police must operate, and the police must consult with the community in every action that take that concern them (Community Policing Consortium, 1994).

**Research and Methodology**

The research was evaluative in nature which employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The researcher used formative type of evaluation because CPF has already been implemented in Makhwibidung village to help in reducing crime. It is a type of evaluation which has the purpose of improving programmes. Since CPF has been implemented, it is logic to evaluate its effectiveness in achieving its goal. According to Babbie and Mouton (2011), formative evaluation may be done to provide feedback to the people who are trying to improve something. Formative research helped the researcher to evaluate the CPF from its formation, finds the kind of partnership that the community and the police has and to provide feedback whether the CPF is effective in reducing crime or not.

Probability sampling technique called stratified sampling was used as a sampling method. In this type of sampling, the researcher divided the entire targeted population into different subgroups or strata to observe the relationship between three subgroups, then randomly select the final subject proportional from the different strata. This type of sampling method was used because the researcher wanted to assess the relationship between SAPS, CPF and the community members of Makhwibidung village. The sample was
comprised of three strata’s which included twenty (20) residents of Makhwibidung village, ten (10) members of SAPS in Maake police station and ten (10) CPF members which made a total sample of forty (40).

Data was collected by means of face-to-face survey interviews with both structured (close-ended) and non-structured (open-ended) types of questions. Face to face survey interview allowed the researcher to explore general views or opinion in more details and obtain relevant information for both qualitative and quantitative method. For this study, data collected was analyzed using both Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 22 (IBM SPSS ) and thematic content analysis. The SPSS software allowed the researcher to tabulate the responses of all respondents into frequency tabulation with variables under study. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze open-ended questions in the survey. The responses for each question were grouped together, analyzed and synthesized into relevant themes.

Analysis and Findings

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

CPFs’ success in reducing crime

The following are responses from the SAPS, CPF members and community members on CPF ability to reduce crime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do community members participate in neighbourhood initiatives to safeguard the area in which they live?</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do community members attend CPF meetings to discuss action plans with the sector commander in order to deal with crime in the sector?</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the community members take ownership of community policing and support the SAPS in law enforcement?</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seventy-five percent (75%) of participants are of the view that community members do participate in neighbourhood initiatives to safeguard the area in which they live. On the other hand, twenty-five percent (25%) of the respondents are of the view that the community members do not participate in neighbourhood initiatives to safeguard their area. Eighty-five percent (85%) of respondents agree that the community do attend CPF meetings to discuss action plans with the sector commander in order to deal with crime in the sector. However, fifteen percent (15%) of respondent disagree with the latter. The majority of the participants constituting eighty-two comma five (82.5%) of the study are of the opinion that the community members take ownership of community policing and support the SAPS in the enforcement of the law. On the other hand seventeen comma five (17.5%) respondents disagree by arguing that community members do not take ownership of the community policing and support the SAPS in the enforcement of the law.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPF members</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community police patrol group</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street watch</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood watch</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business watch</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table shows that forty percent (40%) of participants indicated that the community members support the police by becoming CPF members. However, (22.5%) of participants pointed out that community members support the police through neighbourhood watch, (17.5%) through community police patrol groups, (15%) through street watch and 5% through business watch.

Table 4: Community-Police Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do the police consult the community members when important decisions affecting them are taken?</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do members of the community consult the officials of the forum when they have problems?</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the police support and encourage the community members to exchange information with them?</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know anything about CPF in your area?</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do community members know their roles in CPF?</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do community members know the sector commander in their area?</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there enough resources allocation to support CPF activities?</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results on the above table show that most respondents with (85%) maintain that the police consult community member when important decisions affecting them are taken. This is contrary to the view held by (15%) respondents who indicated that the police do not consult the community members when important decisions affecting them are taken. The table also indicates that the community members do consult the officials of the forum when they have problems. This is evident through (82.5%). Only (17.5%) of the participants are of the opinion that the community members do not consult the officials of the forum when they have problems. Furthermore, (82.5%) of respondents are of the view that the police do support and encourage the community members to exchange information with them. However, (17.5%) disagree with the latter. The results show (90%) of respondents having knowledge of CPF in the area. However, (10%) of respondents know nothing about CPF in the area. The table further reveals (52.5%) of respondents indicated that the community know their roles in CPF, while nineteen (47.5%) of respondents disagreed. The purpose of this question was to determine whether the community members know the sector commander in their area/sector. Only (52.5%) of the respondents indicated that they know the sector commander and on the other hand, (47.5%) of the respondents do not know the sector commander. According to the table above, (77.5%) of respondents there are not enough resources allocated to support CPF initiatives. However, (22.5%) of respondents argued there are enough resources to support CPF initiatives.

Impact of CPF in reducing crime

The following are responses to determine the impact of CPF in reducing crime.

Table 5: Relationship level between the police and the CPF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An overwhelming majority of respondents constituting (55%) which are SAPS officials, CPF committee members and community members in Makhwibidung village maintains that there is no relationship between the police and the CPF members. Meaning the relationship is unsatisfactory. Only (45%) of the respondents are of the view that there is the satisfactory relationship between the police and the CPF members.

Table 6: Innovative forms of partnership with the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicates (80%) of respondents who argued that the police encourage innovative forms of partnership with community members so that together they can reduce crime. However, only (20%) of respondents argued that the police do not encourage innovative forms of partnership with the community.
Table 7: Volunteer to be part of CPF committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of respondents, constituting (55%) of respondents are of the view that community members do volunteer to be part of the CPF committee. On the other hand (45%) are of the opinion that community members do not volunteer to be part of CPF.

Table 8: Community perception on CPF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that (10%) of respondents perceive CPF as excellent, (40%) of respondents perceive CPF as good and (32.5%) of respondents perceive CPF as fair. Only (17.5) of respondents perceive CPF as poor.

Table 9: CPFs’ effectiveness in reducing crime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the above table that (80%) of respondents believe CPF is effective in reducing crime. However, (20%) of respondents believe CPF is ineffective in reducing crime.

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 reducing crime

Only 80% of participants who argued CPF help in reducing crime in the previous question participated in this question. The following are ways in which the respondents believe CPF reduce 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 in the community. They argued that when they have problems or crime in the community, the CPF members come and help and also call the police when necessary. Mostly the community know the perpetrators, and as such they inform CPF members and inform the police. They provide valuable information to the police, making it easy to make arrest. The police and CPF members organize CPF meetings where community members are told about crimes that are happening in their community and how to protect themselves. The visibility of the police in the community immediately deters criminals from committing crime because of fear of being apprehended. Police and CPF members conduct door to door campaigns.

The findings echo those by Kiarie (2012), who finds that one of the main objectives of the community policing strategy was identified as developing trust and active cooperation with the community. However, as noted in various focus group discussions and many interviews both within the police service and outside, community police officers were worried that the trust they had developed with members of the community was being destroyed by inappropriate behaviour from other units in the form of excessive use of service, inadequate investigation skills, lack of follow-up, criminal ties, gambling and corruption (among other issues).

Challenges in CPF reducing crime

The thematic analysis with community members revealed various challenges in the reduction of crime and implementation of CPF. The following are the challenges identified by respondents as challenges in CPF reducing crime:
Lack of support

Each and every organization needs support for it to be successful. Support shows that people appreciate what the organization hold. Just like CPF, for it to be effective, it needs full support from both the police and the community. Residents of Makhwibidung seem not to appreciate what CPF is doing in their community. This is because they do not support it. This was supported by both the police and the CPF member saying they lack support from the community. To show that there is lack of support, the community members do not attend CPF meetings, do not volunteer to be part of CPF and do not take part in crime prevention initiatives in the community. The reason for not volunteering to be part of CPF is because they are not paid. Some of the respondents said “we don’t volunteer to be part of CPF committee because they are not paid”. One of the CPF member said “we lack full support from the community; but mostly we lack support from youth, if only we can get support from them Makhwibidung will be the safest place in Tzaneen”.

Various scholars assert similar sentiments to the findings above. They postulate that community policing often implies that individuals have common interests, values, integrity, demands and expectations but in practice communities are ambiguous (Segrave & Ratcliffe 2004; & Mabunda 2014). They further establish that community policing in most areas served the interests of the vocal minority and the presence of strong personalities and influential groups which dominated key discussions and used their immense influence to control the direction of an initiative.

Scholars such as Herbert (2009), and Nkwenyane (2011) argues that the global challenges which limited community participation in community policing initiatives included the ethos of individualism which undermined attempts to work in partnership with police. The study also showed that economically and socially disparate communities were not capable of generating and sustaining themselves as communities under the expectations of the normative ideals of community policing. The conflicting values were also a problem for agencies working together. Furthermore, a study by Skogan (2006) in Slovenia noted that community involvement in community policing had not been effective in areas of most need and harder to reach parts of the community that had become excluded in the community effort because they have different interests, values, and expectations.

Lack of information sharing

Information exchange between the police and the community can make it easy for the police to make arrests. According to the police, the community do not share information they know with the police. Some of the parents hide or protect their children even though they are suspects of a certain crime. When investigations are made in the village, the community do not share information even when they have witnessed the crime. Community members also do not report crime. The reason for community members not to exchange information with the police or CPF members is because of fear of threats. One of the community members said “we fear to become victims of crime that is why we don’t give the police information or become witnesses. I was once assaulted because I gave the police the whereabouts of a certain boy who was accused of rape in the community”.

Lack of knowledge

The community members need to know about CPF in their community. From the responses of the interview, it seem like the community member only know one CPF committee member because they were only mentioning him during the interview. They need to know what kind of person can become CPF members. Most community members claim that CPF members are criminals, while some maintained that CPF members collaborate with criminals, making criminals free to do what they want in the community. The respondents further claimed that CPF is constituted of members of the political party ruling in their ward.

Problems faced by the CPF in its operation

Respondents who took part in the study were requested to state the problems faced by their forum in its operation. Similar responses for this question were grouped together into relevant themes.

Lack of resources

Lack of resources seems to be the main challenge for CPF in reducing crime. Most of the respondents indicated that lack of resources is the problem that the forum has faced and is still facing in its operation. Lacking such resources makes it difficult for both the police and the community to carry out their duties in CPF and making it difficult to effectively reduce crime. Resources like transport-to-transport CPF officials from point A to B and airtime for communication purposes were mentioned as types of resources that CPF lacks. Such lack of resources can threaten the process of community involvement as the police will be physically unavailable to meet community expectations and needs. These findings are in line with those of the National Secretariat for Safety and Security (1999:3), who found that the most obvious challenge for CPF is the lack or un-availability of basic resources required by the police and those they serve in a particular community. Lack of basic resources such as transport and other resources such as finance and equipment also challenge the effectiveness of CPF in reducing crime in communities. For the police, lack of such resources affects their basic policing tasks, whereas for the community members, it affects their ability to contribute in a meaningful manner to their CPFs.
Threats

According to the respondents, life of those who participate in CPF, mostly the CPF committee members are at risk as they are being threatened by criminals. One of the respondents said “rena rea tshosetswa gape re bitswa dimpimpi”, meaning “we are being threatened and also called impimpis”. Police in Maake police station also confirmed that CPF members are threatened, but they do report it. The community perceive CPF members to be selling them to the police because they are seen moving up and down in the village with the police. Criminals in the area obviously dislike the fact that members of the community assist the police in fighting crime.

Lack of support and cooperation

Lack of support and cooperation by the police, community and relevant stakeholders is one of the problems faced by CPF in Makhwibidung village. Some of the police mentioned that the community member do not cooperate with them in the CPF activities. This reflected through poor meeting attendance, poor volunteerism amongst others. Furthermore, the community pointed out that the police do not cooperate. Lack of cooperation is reflected by the police’s poor response when called by the community. This has created mistrust between the community and the police. As a result, the community take law in their own hands, leading to wrong people being harmed or murdered. Lack of police cooperation has led to the community not reporting crime.

The above findings are in line with those by Onwudiwe (2009) who concurs with Oenga (2015). Their study highlights that in Nigeria, the police culture undermined police community relationships because police officers viewed themselves as crime and disorder experts, which disadvantaged the community when offering solutions. It was found that the police were doing a good job of engaging with the community for help and support but were still reluctant to share power and decision making with them. The study further noted that the police often unilaterally decided on the terms of engagement for various social problems which disempowered the community and limited its involvement. This study focused on the informal initiatives towards community policing and therefore there was not clear policy of how to engage the community in maintenance of law and order.

Discussion of Findings

The research findings show that the area commissioner is favourable toward partnership because he does mobilize and organize the community in the sector or area to take action against local crime together with the police. The community members do participate in neighbourhood initiatives to safeguard the area in which they live. Community members do attend CPF meetings to discuss action plans with the sector commander to deal with crime in the sector. Community members take ownership of community policing and support the SAPS in the enforcement of the law.

Community support is one of the roles of community members in CPF. There is an indication in the research that some of the community members in Makhwibidung village support the police in any way possible. Although the community engage themselves in street watch, community police patrol groups and neighbourhood watch to assist the police in cracking down those considered disorderly by the broken window theory, few residents support the police by becoming members of CPF. Meaning they become a buffer between the police and the community. These members take their precious time and take their own responsibility within their own community and help the police to make their community a safer environment.

From the findings it is evident that the police follow one of the Batho Pele principles on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997) which is consultation. That is because they consult the community members when important decisions affecting them are taken. These shows that the SAPS are interacting with, listen to, and learn from the people they serve. The police stay in touch with the communities they serve, finding out what services they need, how they would like their services to be delivered and what they are dissatisfied about. There is communication between the forum official’s representatives and the community at large. The community trust their elected CPF representative, because if they did not, they would not been consulting them or seeking help from them when they have problems. From the research findings, a conclusion can be made that the police support and encourage the community members to share information.

However, there are no enough resources allocated to support CPF activities to enable them to perform their tasks and the CPF in Makhwibidung village lack resources to support its activities. This makes CPF and police work to be difficult in trying to reduce crime in the village. These findings are in line with those of Nkwenyane (2011) who found that, although resources are allocated to support CPF activities in police station or communities, not much is provided to enable CPF to do their work properly. The evaluation of the Western Cape Community Policing Pilot Project (1998) state that, the effect of this lack of resources in CPF threatens the process of the community involvement as the SAPS is physically unable to meet communities’ expectations and needs in some cases.

These findings echo those by Hebert (2006) and Salomane (2010) that among the challenges facing community policing was inadequate resources. It was revealed that community policing departments engaged community policing initiatives with a relatively small number of officers, while most patrol resources are devoted to responding to calls or doing real police work, as it is described by some still steeped in entrenched approaches. In these departments, traditional criminal justice focused policing remained the dominant culture. Second, the cost of maintaining the community policing unit officers falls on local governments that are not in a position to sustain the increased staffing beyond the mandatory requirements. In cases where staffing levels were sustained, there were no guarantees that the officers will remain devoted to community policing over the long period. In fact, a number of police
departments laid off officers because they did not have the funds to continue their employment, which even today it is costing the individuals to be involved in CPF.

Further Research by Mammus (2010) establishes that in Nigeria, the major challenge of policing was the manpower shortage which is a similar finding to the current study. Inadequate funding, inadequate logistic support and infrastructure, lack of serviceable information and technological equipment to cover all the huge areas. Other factors include inadequate manpower (both in strength and expertise), education and training, inadequate equipment, and poor conditions of service of the average policeman.

Conclusion

The aim of the study, namely, to evaluate the effectiveness of CPF in reducing crime in Makhwibidung village, was achieved. The results of this study are consistent with other studies when highlighting that for CPF to be effective, it needs a full support from both the police and the community at large as the police alone cannot reduce crime. From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the community and the police are working jointly to fight against crime in their community. However, challenges are hindering the functioning of CPF. The community and the police still work together. The issue of support in terms of appropriate budget for CPF activities should be considered. This study suggests the use of Technological devices in community policing as human efforts are characterized with many personal issues, such as trust. In conclusion, poor information sharing, and fear of victimization hinders the effectiveness of CPF in crime prevention.

Recommendations

Due to the issues and challenges identified in the study, the following recommendations are drawn:

i. Monitoring and evaluation
ii. 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

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References


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