FACTORS CONTRIBUTING AND CURTAILING COMMUNITY POLICING FORUMS IN THE RURAL AREA OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract - The objectives of this study was to identify factors contributing and curtailing Community Policing Forums (CPFs) in the rural area of Limpopo Province, South Africa. Descriptive research design was used. The primary data was collected from 477 samples, using a structured questionnaire. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings indicated that the CPFs forums were dysfunctional as highlighted by significant level of disagreement between the local police and the community members. These significant disagreements between the local police and the community members indicated that commitment from the local police towards effective and efficient CPFs reflected a need that officers needed better communication with the community at large to market the CPFs.

Keywords - Community Policing, Partnership, Police Station, Rural Area, Strategy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The unique policing conditions that prevailed in rural areas, the seriousness of continued acts of violence against the rural community as well as the high levels of crime and criminality, require from the South African Police Service (SAPS), to formulate a an effective, comprehensive and holistic strategy. Community Policing Forum (CPF) is one of such strategies aimed to reduce crime and criminality. This, in a form of a forum, established in terms of section 19(1) of the South African Police Service (SAPS) Act 68 of 1995. A CPF is a group of people from different communities and police representatives who meet to discuss safety problems in their communities.

According to Munneke (2011:23), CPFs were instituted from an idea that they would bring about more legitimisation of the SAPS, and after South Africa's transition, CPFs were supposed to continue to function as bodies through which a partnership between the community and the police is established. A CPF aims at ensuring police accountability, transparency and effectiveness in the community. CPFs are legislated structures responsible for, amongst others, establishing relations between the community and police, and making input into policing priorities. CPFs were established in terms of the SAPS Act, Act No. 68 of 1995. Over the years, their roles and functions have evolved and many CPFs are now central to local crime prevention initiatives (Pelser, Schnetler &Louw, 2002, Pesler, Louw&Ntuli, 2000; Pheiffer, 2009, 2014). CPF is a kind of forum that consists of organisations and institutions. For example, schools, churches, youth groups, ratepayers' associations, civic organisations and businesses can become members of the Forum (Hough & Du Plessis 1994:66). The CPF toolkit mentions some important requirements for every CPF (Munneke, 2011:23). It states that each CPF should have an executive committee that consists of at least a:

- Chairperson
- Deputy Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer, and
- the Station Commissioner/Commander of the SAPS-station the forum is related to.

The CPF also has to be attached to a police station and must have the local police represented in it. Furthermore, it must have adopted its own constitution, to be accessible to community members, organisations and be representative of the community (Munneke, 2011:24). Holtmann and Badenhorst (2010:5) state that the representivity and usefulness of CPFs varies greatly from place to place. Community policing has its core reference in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Section 221(1) and (2) of the Interim Constitution of Republic of South Africa (No. 200 of 1993) directed that an Act of Parliament was to "provide for the establishment of community-police forums in respect of police stations" with the various functions thereof outlined. In reinforcing the constitutional prescripts on safety and security, in 1994 the then Minister of Safety and Security released a draft policy document entitled "Change". In the document, greater emphasis on the democratic control of the SAPS, and community involvement in safety and security issues were key milestones.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research approach and design

The study was carried out using a descriptive research design.

The study describes the opinion of the respondents with regard to the aspects contributing and curtailing CPFs.

2.2. Sampling method
The sampling method adopted for the study was snowball-sampling method where the first author can identified the samples one after the other through references given by the earlier.

2.3. Sample unit
The sample unit is one who uses CPFs in the area of study and has awareness towards the functioning of the CPFs.

2.4 Sample size
The study was conducted with 477 samples from rural area withinMalamulele and Saselemani policing area, Limpopo Province in South Africa.

2.5 Data collection tool
A structured questionnaire was used to survey the respondents.

2.6 Statistical analysis
The collected data was analysed using descriptive analysis, one way Analysis of Variance and Factor analysis. The researchers have used 5% level of significance.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Demographic characteristics of respondents
The discussions revolve around demographic characteristics of the respondents, their interactions with the CPFs structures, the opinion divide, variables contributing to effectiveness of the CPFs and the variables curtailing these structures. The majority of the respondents 249 (50.8%) were from Malamulele, whereas 228 (47.8%) of the respondents were from Saselemani. Female respondents comprised of 259 (54.3%) compared to 218 (45.7%) male respondents. The majority of the community members 161 (33.8%) were from Saselemani, the second largest group of respondents 159 (33.6%) were from the SAPS of which eighty three members were from Saselemani police station and 76 members from Malamulele police station. The lowest community members, 157 (32.9%) were from Malamulele. With regard to marital status, the majority of the respondents - 258 (55.2%) were married, 142 (30.4%) were single, 56 (9.9%) divorced and 21 (4.7%) of the respondents indicated that they were widow/widower. the majority of the respondents, 152 (31.9%) had a Grade 12/Matric qualification, whilst 129 (27.0%) have a Diploma/ Bachelor Degree. One hundred and fifteen 115 (24.1%) had an Honours/Baccalaureus Technologiae (B-Tech) Degree, whilst 73 (15.3%) indicated that they had other qualifications lower than Matric/Grade 12 Certificate, 8 (1.7%) respondents were in possession of masters and doctoral degrees. So, it is easily comprehensible that the average of the respondents for this study was moderately educated. Awareness of community policing is very much crucial for the CPFs to succeed. This section was done with the intention to explore how broad is the police and community members' awareness of the CPF and how deep is the public's understanding of community policing in general. Statements 1 to 6of the questionnaire provided valuable information about the awareness of community policing as well as partnership that includes its existence and to which extend do community policing forum programmes have been publicised and supported. The following discussion focuses on how each of these statements is understood in the community policing context and raises key questions about their effective implementation. The statements discussed below.

3.2. Statement 1: I know what community policing is
This statement was to verify if both the community and the police officials knew the concept community policing. The intention by the authors were to establish whether the police officials as well as the communities were aware of this policing style or approach, needed at the area of study. On the other hand, it enabled the authors to study the respondents' responses, and their level of understanding about community policing. Responses to Statement 1 revealed that significant majority of respondents from Malamulele (68.6%) agreed to the statement in comparison with those from Saselemani (61.7%) who also agreed that they know what community policing is. Thirty four percent (34.0%) of respondents from Saselemani significantly disagreed with the statement, compared with twenty five percent (24.8%) of respondents in Malamulele who disagreed with the statement. Seven percent (n= 15: 6.6%) of respondents from Malamulele indicated that they were not sure compared with four percent (n=4: 6.9%) from Saselemani. From above responses, the slight difference in agreement between Malamulele and Saselemani might indicated that the respondents from both police stations were adequately informed about the goals of community policing are. The objectives of the CPFs amongst others are to reduce crime and disorder, promote citizens' quality of life in communities, reduce fear of crime, and improve police community relations. From the responses provided by the respondents, it seemed that the goals of the community policing achieved through a communicated as well as achieved through three essential efforts: community engagement, problem solving, and organisational transformation. On the other hand, the minority albeit with a small margin from Saselemanisixty two percent (61.7%) policing area were of the view that the police expressed less interest in promoting CPFs within the community as a core strategy to engage with problems of crime and disorder. The responses from Malamulele indicated

that sixty nine percent (68.6%) of the respondents were more positive when compared with the Saselemani. The reason could be that the community members of Malamulele may have been encouraged to a larger degree to work together with community to identify, prioritise, and implement local, community-based solutions to many of the long term crime prevention initiatives, thus involve everyone in the process. This kind of thinking on the part of Malamulele respondents shows their appreciation of CPFs as an effective tool with long time value.

3.3. Statement 2: I know what community policing is

A comparison between the SAPS regarding this statement revealed that an overwhelming majority from the SAPS, hundred percent (100.0%) agreed with statement 1 compared with sixty eight percent (67.7%) community members who also agreed to the same statement. The fact that all police respondents were in agreement with this statement, was an indication that all respondents from the SAPS, from students to senior who took part in this study, understood the notion behind community policing philosophy. This showed commitment and willingness by the police officers around Malamulele and Saselemani policing areas in promoting police community relations in order to make these rural areas a less crime zone. These findings corroborated with the findings by the study conducted by Masogo, Obioha and de Vries (2014:110) which indicated that all the police officers who took part in the study felt that they understood the philosophy of community policing, irrespective of their ranks. From the results presented above, it was evident that community policing terminology was not familiar with some of the community respondents. In the light of this statement, the authors are of the opinion that there were community members at grassroots level who were yet to be exposed to the concept community policing. The implications are that community policing, after decades being introduced, it has not yet achieve its objective in some part of rural areas of Limpopo as it has not yet reach some part of the communities. It could be safely concluded, that members of the community at the grassroots level, were not yet adequately informed concerning policing matters such as the adoption of community policing.

3.3. Statement 3: I am aware of the existence of the CPF in my area

The overwhelming majority of the respondents 159 (100.0%) from the SAPS agreed that they were aware of the existence of the CPF in their area compared with the sixty four percent (63.6%) of community respondents who disagreed. Thirty six percent (36.4%) of the respondents from the community agreed with this statement. Again, police respondents present a positive picture regarding the awareness of the CPFs existence within their policing areas. In this regard, there is no difference between this finding in this statement and Statement 1. Nevertheless, the study revealed a bit of contradictions between the views of local police and those of the community members regarding the awareness of existence of the CPF in their areas. Based on the responses provided by the community members, it was evident that awareness for community members at the grassroots level about the existence of community policing forums (CPFs) in their area have not been adequately conducted done. The fact that merely thirty six percent (36.4%) of the respondents from the community did agree with the statement has serious implications to the addressing of crime related problems in these two stations. This could be because there were still majority community members who did not know what community policing was, at the time of the study. As a result, this majority group are not up to date concerning the existence of community policing programmes such as CPFs happening around their areas. According to the researcher, this increases the need for public awareness in policing initiatives.The reason behind lack of public awareness about CPFs may be due to lack of community mobilisation by the SAPS in the rural areas of Malamulele and Saselemani policing areas. It was observed that some villagers in these areas do not value CPFs as they are of the view that it is waste of time. They might be ignorant about their roles to reduce crime due to lack of interest to attend public meetings in order to be empowered about CPFs. Crime prevention, according to Burger (2007:42), should not be primarily the sole responsibility of the police as a single role player, but should involve other role players including the community members. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every citizen to have respect for the police and get involve and be committed in community policing programmes such as CPFs and become the ‘eyes and ears’ of the SAPS.

3.4. Statement 4: The CPF in my area add value to the quality of life

The responses to this statement indicated that that an overwhelming majority (96.2%) from the SAPS officials agreed, whereas, one percent (0.6%) neither agreed nor disagreed and three percent (3.2%) disagreed. On the other hand, sixty three percent (62.9%) of the respondents from the community disagreed whereas thirty seven percent (37.2%) agreed with the same statement. The responses to this statement showed that there was a correlation in terms of agreement from the respondents with the previous statement (Statement 3). Even though there was a significant difference between the responses from the SAPS and that of the community, what is discouraging is that only the SAPS officials and not the local community members were optimistic about that the existence of the CPF in their policing area offers a sense of security and thus add value to the quality of life. Based on these findings, the authors

are of the opinion that CPFs can only be effective if it is active and that a CPF can only add value to the quality of community member's life when there is active involvement by both the police and the public. The findings indicated that, to a certain extent, the community had lost faith in CPFs. It is the opinion of the authors that the CPFs have largely not succeeded in mobilising the broader societal structures in the fight against crime. According to a strategic document developed by the SAPS entitled "Approaches to crime prevention" (2005:5), the prevention of crime requires many and varying stakeholders, and the setting up of partnerships with a range of stakeholders is the key to crime reduction in society. Furthermore, partnerships should create a sizeable pool of the resources and skills of all relevant role-players. One of the main objectives of community policing is to establish a partnership between the police and the community they serve to ensure effective protection of communities and better quality of life. The National Development Plan-Vision for 2030 (NPC, 2011:21-22), drafted by the National Planning Commission (NPC), states that when a community feel unsafe it is difficult for them to develop their capabilities and participate in social activities. To rectify this, there is a need for communities to gain confidence in the criminal justice system. This same development plan consists of a proposal for the adoption of an integrated approach aimed at tackling the causes of crime and, for this purpose, there is a need for a concerted effort to mobilise state and community resources in the fight against crime. The plan further proposes the building of community participation through safety programmes within which civil society organisations and civic participation are recognised as critical elements of a safe and secure society. The authors are of the view that the National Development Plan is currently steering the national agenda in the right direction in as far as the fight against crime is concerned (NPC, 2011). The responses for Statement 4, paint a disturbing picture that the respondents in the areas of Malamulele and Saselemani communities are of the view that the CPFs in their areas did not add value to quality of their lives.

3.5. Statement 5: The CPF has received enough publicity in my area

In this statement, the findings highlighted that eighty two percent (81.7%) of the respondents from the SAPS agreed, whilst seventeen percent (16.9%) disagreed whereas two percent (1.9%) were undecided. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents from the community in responding to this statement, the majority of the respondents, seventy one percent (71.4%) disagreed whereas twenty one percent (21.4%) agreed with the statement. The significant difference between the SAPS and community members regarding the publicity of the CPF paint a bleak picture. Because the CPF represents a departure from past practices where the police were seen as solely responsible for maintenance of law and order in the community, the CPF on the other hand, is expected to play a vital educational function. Rather than simply asking the public to be the 'eyes and ears' of the police, CPF calls for communities' active involvement in problem solving and in helping to set police priorities. CPF meetings are supposed to serve as a locus for finding solutions to problems and for involving active participants in problem-solving forum, not just as a place to register complaints. Thus, communities need not only to attend meetings but also to understand their role in problem-solving policing. Furthermore, the huge disparities or gap between the responses given by the SAPS officials and the community members, could also indicate that inadequate marketing strategies in the form of awareness were done to promote the concept community policing forums to the members of the public. In the interest of creating a working as well as effective partnership between the SAPS and the local communities, it is essential for the SAPS officials to identify amongst others; faith based organisations, schools as well as community leaders as part of key role players towards the implementation of the effective of CPFs. The findings in this study somehow for this statement could, also be interpreted as the respondents from the SAPS were trying to cover up themselves as they didn't do well in creating adequate awareness regarding CPFs to the community members at the grassroots level. Dempsey and Forst (2012: 4) highlighting the work of Sir Robert Peel, argues that the police are the public and the public are the police, it is of paramount importance that every policing style or programme of community policing be marketed and reach the entire communities as community policing involves both the police and the public. According to the authors' observations, in most rural areas of Malamulele and Saselmani policing area, majority of community members at the grassroots level do not have full and accurate information about the CPFs. Therefore, much emphasis by the police should be placed on publicity of the CPFs in rural areas. CPFs will not achieve each and every objective it aimed if such forums had limited exposure or marketing or publicity into the rural communities.

3.6. Statement 6: The CPF in my area provides with precautions on how to reduce levels of victimisation

Responses to the above statement indicated that the majority (99.4%) of the respondents from the SAPS agreed, whereas only one percent (0.6%) disagreed with the statement. On the other side, the majority (54.3%) of the respondents disagreed compared with the forty six percent (45.7%) of the respondents who agreed with the statement that CPF in their area provides with safety precautions. Based on responses

provided to this statement, it would be safe to assume that community members were of the view that the CPFs did not provide with adequate awareness on how to reduce the levels of crime in their neighbourhoods. As police recognise the effectiveness of the problem solving approach, there is a growing awareness that community involvement is essential for its success. Determining the underlying causes of crime depends, to a great extent, on an in-depth knowledge of community. Therefore, community participation in identifying and setting priorities will contribute to effective problem-solving efforts by the community and the local police. Cooperative problem solving also reinforces trust, facilitates the exchange of information, and leads to the identification of other areas that could benefit from the mutual attention of the police and the community. The implications for the SAPS are that it is essential that the local police should provide the local communities with safety precaution regarding possible victimisation in order to minimise the fear of crime thus improving the quality of life. The Limpopo Provincial Crime Prevention Strategy (DOSS, 2011:2) states that local crime prevention has been left to CPFs which are supposed to engage in joint problem identification and participatory problem-solving with the SAPS. According to the Strategy (DOSSL, 2011:6), mayors and local public officials in the United States of America have realised safety of communities is a basic human right, and it is an important element to quality of life for communities. As a result, they have mobilised local partnerships with key stakeholders including the police, government agencies, community organisations and residents in order to establish safer, secure and vibrant communities. The Draft White Paper on Safety and Security (DOSS, 2011:34) formally seeks to establish Community Safety Forums (CSFs) which do not aim to replace or duplicate any existing structure or forum at local level. The purpose of establishing CSFs is to create a comprehensive coordinating mechanism of all activities and all role-players with regard to the safety of communities at local government levels. The aims of the CSFs include ensuring integrated service delivery, multi-agency collaboration and community participation along with a commitment to the sharing of resources, accountability and partnership as propagated by this study.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has outlined the factors contributing and curtailing CPFs in the rural area of Limpopo Province, South Africaand major conclusions are as follows:

1. This study highlighted that communities are the ones that rest with the sole power of turning community projects like CPFs into a success. Thus, community participation is a step in the right direction.
2. The community also stands to benefit from this research as the research dealt with issues of sustainability of the community development as well as crime prevention projects initiated and implemented by either the local police or NGOs.

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