

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: A KEY ELEMENT IN A SAFE SOCIETY – DUBAI POLICE CASE STUDY

ENGAJAMENTO DA COMUNIDADE: UM ELEMENTO-CHAVE EM UMA SOCIEDADE SEGURA – ESTUDO DE CASO DA POLÍCIA DE DUBAI

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Abstract: The cooperation of civil society in Dubai is a key element in preventing crime. Put simply, the police service would cease to function without the active support of the communities it serves. Evidence has shown that effective community engagement, targeted foot patrols and collaborative problem-solving can significantly increase public confidence in police activity. The aim of engagement, as well as the level at which individuals and communities should be involved, should be clear. Community involvement produces two main benefits: better decision-making and improved citizenship. Dubai Police focuses primarily on the decision-making benefit of community engagement and on increasing levels of trust, safety, and satisfaction with policing at the individual level. A community engagement initiative is an essential component of any effective policing activity. It requires several key stakeholders to work together to develop effective programs and initiatives to govern their operations. Effective engagement is more than organizing a meeting with community members. It is a rigorous process that requires sensitivity and careful planning and execution. Since 2000, Dubai Police has been working on different programs to increase community engagement.

Keywords: Community engagement, Accountability, Public Sector, Dubai Police.

Resumo: A cooperação da sociedade civil em Dubai é um elemento fundamental para prevenir o crime. Em termos simples, o serviço policial deixaria de funcionar sem o apoio ativo das comunidades que atende. Evidências demonstraram que o envolvimento eficaz da comunidade, as patrulhas a pé direcionadas e a solução colaborativa de problemas podem aumentar significativamente a confiança do público na atividade policial. O objetivo do envolvimento, bem como o nível em que as pessoas e as comunidades devem se envolver, deve ser claro. O envolvimento da comunidade produz dois benefícios principais: melhor tomada de decisões e aprimoramento da cidadania. A Polícia de Dubai concentra-se principalmente no benefício da tomada de decisões do envolvimento da comunidade e no aumento dos níveis de confiança, segurança e satisfação com o policiamento em nível individual. Uma iniciativa de envolvimento da comunidade é um componente essencial de qualquer atividade de policiamento eficaz. Ela exige que vários participantes importantes trabalhem em conjunto para desenvolver programas e iniciativas eficazes para governar suas operações. O envolvimento eficaz é mais do que organizar uma reunião com os membros da comunidade. É um processo rigoroso que exige sensibilidade e planejamento e execução cuidadosos. Desde 2000, a Polícia de Dubai tem trabalhado em diferentes programas para aumentar o envolvimento da comunidade.

Palavras-chave: Envolvimento da comunidade; Responsabilidade; Setor público; Polícia de Dubai.

1. Introduction

The importance of progressing effective police-community partnerships is an art and represents a departure from familiar ways of operating for both the police and community. It requires

a policing perspective that goes beyond the standard law enforcement focus and a willingness to engage in nuts-and-bolts neighborhood problem solving.

A crucial challenge today is fostering positive interaction

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between police personnel and community members. The connection between the police and communities of color can be improved by acknowledging this within police practice. Police personnel must become more receptive to all members of the community, which should reduce their propensity to abuse individuals of marginalized groups (Skogan; Steiner, 2004).

Different authors mentioned that importance of the strong relationships of mutual trust between police agencies and the citizens they serve are critical to maintaining public safety and effective policing. Police officials rely on the cooperation of community members to provide information about crime in their neighborhoods, and to work with the police to devise solutions to crime and disorder problems. Some of the main concerns about public confidence have been linked with trends towards a more consumer-oriented approach to public service delivery, where levels of customer satisfaction provide a means of measuring the effectiveness of public service (Blaug; Horner; Lekhi, 2006).

Gill et al. (2014, p. 3) refer to community-oriented policing as a philosophy of policing that emphasizes community involvement in crime prevention efforts, in contrast to the focus of traditional policing on law enforcement and order maintenance.

Achieving community-based initiatives requires that all stakeholders engage to develop effective programs and initiatives. On their part, the police should choose groups they engage with carefully. OSCE (2014) explains that police engagement with the public should be inclusive, reaching out to all communities and a cross-section of members within communities, including at grassroots level. The police should be careful not to engage only with specific groups, self-proclaimed representatives of the community or only with interlocutors sympathetic to them. They should strive to engage with all individuals who are useful in carrying out their mandate. The emerging concept of community policing, as developed and applied around the world, dates back to the 1829 Peelian principles for policing (Albrecht, 2019; Peed, 2008; Robertson, 2012). This Peelian principle resonates in the numerous examples of community policing strategies that have been developed and deployed with varying levels of success across the globe. The literature associated with community policing reaches back to the later 1900s as evidence by, for example, the work of (Brown; Wyckoff, 1987), which suggests the objective for community policing is to build partnerships with the community (members of the public) to assist in reducing crime and disorder. It is feasible to assume that community policing provides a reason for the systematic organization of popular communities in favor of the police, "[...] to the extent that police forces respond to public concerns, it can be concluded that there is hardly any inconsistency between community policing and democratic theory" (Skolnick; Bayley, 2002, p. 110).

The main purpose of this paper is to examine a case study from Dubai Police using community engagement and innovation to develop and maintain a strong relationship with the community of Dubai. Since 1956, Dubai Police has been working to set a leading position and bring about positive change for the citizens, residents, and tourists.

2. Community engagement

Community engagement has been regarded as an important element of successful security initiatives to achieve better results for police forces and law enforcements agencies. Numerous studies have shown that it plays a significant role in reducing crime, enhancing benefits, and sharing responsibility towards public safety.

The community-based policing initiatives as a form of engagement requires police departments to organize their management, structure, personnel, and information systems in a

manner that supports partnerships with advocates and other community members and proactive problem-solving focused on survivor safety (Ruteere; Pommerolle, 2003).

Community involvement can take many forms, and partners can include organized groups, agencies, institutions, or individuals. Community engagement involves a diverse number of stakeholders and can include several sectors. For Dubai Police, community engagement is a long-term process and involves individuals or citizens in identifying problems and shaping and implementing decisions and programs that affect them. Enabling community involvement in solving problems identified by the community and in police initiatives increases the trust and legitimacy of the police. "Community policing is a philosophy that focuses on crime and social disorder through the delivery of police services that includes aspects of traditional law enforcement, as well as prevention, problem-solving, community engagement, and partnerships" (Docobo, 2005, p. 143-158).

The College of Policing (2013) in the United Kingdom defined community engagement as the process of allowing citizens and police services to work together by encouraging relationships where information and assurance can be exchanged by having the community help to identify and implement solutions to local problems.

Community partnerships are critical for community policing efforts to be effective. In police forces and law enforcement agencies that have demonstrated a strong commitment to the philosophy of community policing, police officers and community partners jointly prioritize and tackle public safety issues that are most important to the community. Successful partnerships (public-private partnership) are more than just frequent contact or simply sharing information. They involve ongoing efforts to work together in meaningful ways to address problems facing in a society.

A greater sense of community engagement and relationship between the public and police will result in a safer environment for officers. The more respect and acceptance the community has for the police force, the safer the officers will be when carrying out their duties.

A more visible police service will be a more effective police service. From the chief to the officers patrolling the streets, if there is a sense of proximity, the investigations will be more effective, the streets will be safer, and the agencies will see their recruitment becoming easier. We may even see fewer members leaving their policing careers.

Community engagement is important in an era where we must remind the population that police officers are there to serve and protect first and foremost. Ultimately, building a stronger sense of community might be one of the new ways to make policing safer.

Improved public perceptions of safety and actual drops in crime and disturbance are two positive effects of community engagement (Myhill; Bradford, 2012). Through the provision of a fundamental degree of neighborhood security that fosters the development of informal social controls, such results can strengthen communities (Innes; Fielding, 2002). The ability of residents to protect their neighborhoods against crime, as well as their courage to confront and question any suspicious character is a manifestation of cohesive communities (Kubrin; Weitzer, 2003).

Principles of community engagement, which coalesce around the idea of police working with local communities, have become increasing influential within contemporary policing. Done well, 'community engagement' can foster constructive dialogue, mutually beneficial and collaborative relations between police and citizens and communities to identify and tackle local issues of crime, disorder, and neighborhood safety. (Stuart, 2011).

As globally, the demands on police organizations have increased there has been increasing reliance on volunteers in policing to undertake an increasing range of activities previously performed by police officers (Britton; Knight, 2020; Callender et al., 2020; Westall, 2022). The challenges of community engagement are sizeable and shaped by an array of internal (or organizational) and external (or environmental) factors. The latter include the social, economic, and cultural conditions of a local neighborhood which shape local demands on police, as well as police community relations more broadly; the former include the organization's structures, cultures, and workforce, which serve to enable or constrain the practice of community engagement.

2. Methodology

There are different ways to develop a new hypothesis and one of the most common approaches is called case study. Case studies have been used in social science and have been adding value in different practical fields, like management, social work, education, among others areas. Robert Yin (2011) defines case study as an empirical enquiry that investigates a modern phenomenon within its real-life circumstances mostly when the borderline between phenomenon and context are not obviously evident. Case study methodology has long been a contested terrain in business, law, education, research which is characterized by varying, sometimes opposing, approaches espoused by many research methodologists.

Yin (2009) mentioned three types of case studies: exploratory (collecting data and looking for patterns), descriptive (considering possible theories to frame the study and questions), and explanatory (explaining the how the topic or population studied). Case studies have been broadly used in different scopes of knowledge (Yin, 2009, 2011) by authors from all specialties, and the main conclusions can be induced to other cases with characteristics close to those observed in the study (Maxwell, 2008).

3. Dubai Police: case study

Dubai Police was established in 1956 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). In 1956, there were 29 members and more than 25,000 civilians and police officers in the Dubai Police. The Dubai Police protects a population of more than 4 million people that include 210 nationalities in a city that has seen tremendous economic growth and a high level of urbanization.

"Smart secure together," the main motto of Dubai Police reflects the core belief that technology, openness and tolerance are the corner stone of our identity. The Smart Police Station is a high-quality technology comprising artificial intelligence that provides an integrated and interactive self-service police station without any human interaction. The stations are the first of their kind, allowing community members to request the Dubai Police services that are provided at traditional police stations across the city (Román, 2019).

Allowing the participation of citizens in policing at their chosen level, varying from providing information and comforting to empowering them to identify and implement solutions to local problems and influence strategic priorities and decisions for Dubai Police and the community. Effective partnerships also involve the willingness of community members to engage in constructive dialogue with the police. Through efforts to build trust and to collaborate, police and community members can act as catalysts and facilitators of activities to strengthen the community and increase safety-violence prevention partnerships are examples of this practice. The Dubai Police's main services not only maintain security, prevent crime and stability but try to exceed these and cover all the requirements of Dubai's citizens. Dubai Police's strategic plan, based on the Dubai Vision 2033, contains goals, objectives and different initiatives that exceed the

expectations off the citizens and tourist of Dubai and guarantees their satisfaction, all of which stems from the DubaiVision 2033. Dubai Police Community Engagement Strategy aim (Dubai Vision 2033) is to provide effective and meaningful engagement with the society of Dubai, partners and, most importantly, those that suffer the effects of harmful and persistent local problems to ensure that all are effectively involved in the identification and prioritization of these problems and, where appropriate, in their resolution. It is essential that there is a policing purpose for any local engagement. Engagement needs to be a two-way process. It is very important for Dubai Police being informative, keeping two-way conversations and being active within the community, including with partner organizations (public-private partnership). For Dubai Police, engagement in the community boosts social capital and benefits citizens. Working cooperatively with and through groups of individuals connected by a common interest, location, or circumstance to address problems affecting their well-being is an effective tool for enacting environmental and behavioral changes that will enhance the community.

4. Results

Trust and transparency between police forces and law enforcement agencies and the people they serve are vital for community stability, officer safety and effective policing. Dubai Police wants to build a solid foundation for this trust by leveraging the resources and tools created to enhance the culture, policies and practices that will unite the police force with its communities, as well as learning how to establish trust and legitimacy between Dubai Police and the community, collaborating with residents to develop policies and oversight that reflect community values, harness technology and social media to engage and educate community members and work with residents to implement community policing and crime reduction strategies for a better city and add to Dubai Police's value proposition of "Make Dubai the safer city in the world".

The community engagement creates two main advantages: improved decision-making and strengthen citizenship (Metropolitan Police, 2009). Dubai Police concentrates its attention primarily on the decision-making benefits of community involvement and increasing levels of trust, safety, security, and satisfaction with policing.

Back in 2021, Dubai Police organized the UAE's first community policing forum. The forum aimed to highlight the importance of maintaining a positive relationship between law enforcement agencies and members of the society. Major General Khalil Ibrahim Al Mansouri, Assistant Commander-in-Chief for Criminal Investigation Affairs at Dubai Police, said that community policing is a soft power that facilitates crime prevention and helps enhance the quality of life. For Dubai Police it is imperative that law enforcement agencies invest time in their communities so they can build relationships and gain the public's confidence.

5. Main initiatives to increase community engagement for Dubai Police

- Dialogue and act honestly: To make sure that the community can understand the activities and decisions made by Dubai Police, give priority to transparent administration, operations, and communications. To involve the community, tourists, and residents of Dubai in debates regarding expectations for openness, accountability, and privacy, take into account all communication channels and platforms.
- Facilitate group decision-making: "We Work Together," Dubai Police seeks the entire community of Dubai (more than 4 million people) input while creating, implementing, and maintaining community involvement initiatives. This includes recommendations from locals who hold favorable,

unfavorable, and critical viewpoints. By engaging in nonenforcement, goal-oriented activities, organizations can be seen as sincere, fair, and trustworthy.

- Act on community feedback: Encourage cooperation between the community and Dubai Police. Partnerships function best when both parties gain from equal efforts. Dubai Police always encourage the identification of priorities by consensus and the creation of joint solutions.

A fundamental principle of community-oriented policing is cooperative problem-solving between the police and the community. Even though it can be difficult to conduct scientific research due to the variety of techniques used within the community policing framework, research have shown that community policing can raise community approval ratings of the police and boost police legitimacy (College of Policing, 2013).

Promoting public safety, as policing continues to evolve and new policing models such as intelligence-led policing and evidence-based policing arise, community-oriented policing remains an effective way to promote public safety and to enhance the quality of life in a community.

6. Conclusions

Dubai Police firmly believes that community engagement is a

dynamic and long-term process through which the commitment and involvement of the police and individuals or groups (in different areas of Dubai), identify problems, amend, and implement decisions and programs that will affect them.

The success of Dubai Police highlighted in this article demonstrates the great potential for community engagement approaches in police forces and law enforcement agencies globally. What distinguishes the Dubai Police journey of excellence is a complete and long-term commitment across the organization to ensure sustainability. Dubai Police shows in this study case that building understanding of those policing services by developing a close relationship with the community and citizens to prevent crime using the latest technology are not enough.

The importance of community engagement level strategies as an effective element of crime reduction has been most visibly seen with the widespread implementation of neighborhood watch (Oyoon initiative). With systematically support from the Dubai Police, these represents a clear attempt to directly involve community members in local crime reduction efforts. Dubai Police's Community Engagement's Strategy is a one of the most important components of the Dubai Plan 2033 because it establishes the way in which it understands the needs of the public, which, in turn, helps the organization to shape the delivery of policing services to the society.

Additional Information and Author Declarations (Scientific Integrity)

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