

Roles of Community Policing in Promoting Social Development: Evidence from Harar City, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Original Research Article

The main purpose of this study was to analyze the roles of community policing in promoting social development and the way forward in Jinela district of Harar city, Ethiopia. The researchers used qualitative research design in which case study was employed to explore and investigate the achievements of Jinela district community policing in social development, how to go forward to capitalize the successes and put recommendations for further progresses. Non probability sampling design was also used in which purposive sampling selected to identify knowledgeable participants who could provide the required information about the program. Data were collected using key informant interview, focus group discussion and researchers' observation. Finding of the study revealed that Jinela district community policing has good progress in working on social development. For instance: the district community policing enlisted some addicted youths with substance use and provide them training on how could be come out of substance addiction, create job opportunities for certain jobless youths by organizing them into associations, working on reducing city traffic flows in collaboration with high school students, cleaning urban residential, green plantations, and reducing family level physical abuse through providing local security in partnership with neighborhood are some of their triumphs. There were also identified challenges affecting sustainability of achievements such as lack of budget, limited networks with local and nongovernmental organizations as well as and low motivations among residents. In order to mitigate the identified challenges, human development and awareness creation should be underlined for the betterment of the program.

Keywords: Community Policing, Promoting, Social Development.

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INTRODUCTION

The practice of community policing can contribute to a wider poverty reduction strategy. When successfully executed, it can both develop security and secure development. It can ensure the safety and security needs of all groups in a particular community. While effectively combating crime, addressing local needs can improve safety and security as well as strengthens the conditions for development to take place [1]. Academicians also have begun focusing a significant portion of their research time on community policing, a fact that is clearly witnessed by a growing number of journal articles and doctoral dissertations on the topic of community policing [2]. There is also a general consensus that development of any area is unlikely without sustainable security [3]. In sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa presents the most advanced experience in the implementation of community policing to date. Community policing in South Africa follows from a long experience in the townships of fear and hatred of the police during

apartheid, together with a dependence on private security initiatives [4]. In the case of Nigeria, in addition to crime prevention, community policing is intended to contribute to the development of social cohesion and capital [5]. However, problems with which all community police officers frequently have to deal are social disorder (especially that resulting from groups of youths, conflicts between neighbors and nuisance), problems of road safety, and petty crime [6]. Policing as an activity persists with local groups taking up the role of maintaining order and combating crime. Such local policing is very diverse in its practices. For instance, local policing providers in Somaliland, Uganda, Northern Mali and Democratic Republic of Congo have been able to provide crucial services to local people, in a manner that reflects local priorities and customs, enhances safety and welfare, builds trust and empowers [7].

Consequently, community policing in Ethiopia was announced officially as a policy at the national

level in 2005 but development of the approach had been ongoing for a number of years previously. In 1997 members of the Ethiopian police force undertook community policing training provided by British trainers in Addis Ababa. Following this, some senior officers travelled to Europe to undertake further training and returned to sensitize colleagues about the community policing approach. This sparked an interest within the Federal Police and key individuals began to read more about the approach and to articulate how it could be shaped to address the challenges faced in the Ethiopian context [8].

Moreover, in different parts of the world, community policing provide diverse services to achieve local development, for students and stakeholders at school. For example, according to [9] the community outreach through police in schools program is a short-term, prevention-oriented, school based group intervention that brings together community police officers and child clinicians as group colliders to provide weekly sessions for middle school students who are at risk of being exposed to violence in the community. The community outreach through police in schools program is collaborative intervention that targets youth before exposure to violence in their community seriously impacts their functioning [10].

In Ethiopian context, the contributions of community policing in promoting social development is not strongly visible and investigated in the eastern parts of Ethiopia like Harar city, but evidences indicated that there are some progresses in practicing the program across different parts of the country. According to [11], despite little attention of political groups and important federal government institutions, institutionalization of community policing in Addis Ababa has brought minor changes. One of the changes is related with the perception that the community has brought towards police. Furthermore, in the areas where community policing is implemented adequately, negative attitude towards police has changed and started to work together with police to secure their environment. In addition, slight reduction of crime and violence has scored after the community policing being introduced and effectively implemented, in Addis Ababa.

According to study undertaken by [1], in Hawassa, the zonal police headquarters is divided into four departments: crime prevention, crime investigation, traffic safety management and support services to implement community policing. However, the overall performance of community policing at Hawassa lacks provision of sufficient social services for the community which could gradually hinder local development. In the northern part of Ethiopia, study conducted in Bahirdar city revealed that community poling officers unlike other members in the police department are evaluated based on the following elements: innovative crime prevention strategies,

statistics of crime problems in their zone, efforts of interaction with private and governmental agencies, efforts of community mobilization and development activities. Therefore, the practices of community policing in different parts of the country is primarily focuses on crime prevention. Accordingly, this study is intended to explore numerous contributions of community policing in encouraging social development and how to capitalize the achievements scored in Jinela district of Harar city, Eastern Ethiopia.

Theoretical Framework: Social Capital Theory

The concept of social capital has been increasingly used by criminologists in the study of crime and delinquency. When the connections between social capital theory and criminology are reviewed, apparent links to some major and traditional criminological theories are found. For instance, lack of social capital is associated with an elevated risk of delinquent behavior [12]. Thus, social capital is the glue that holds societies together and without which there cannot be any economic growth or human well-being [13]. In line with social capital theory, community policing requires strong partnership, collaborative efforts of police and members of the public with a view to protecting lives and property at the neighborhood level. Consequently, policing approach helps police to identify, analyze and directly address societal problems with full supports of community members [14]. For instance, when there are few social networks, a lack of trust, little effective mutuality, no shared norms and no commitment to the area, community cohesiveness declines and social underdevelopment is likely to occur. That shows itself in an increase in crime, a desire to leave the area, mutual suspicion, lack of information, few social facilities, lower health standards, and degraded physical environment in short all the hallmarks of a disadvantaged neighborhood [15].

In the field of criminology, several studies have found support for the association between social capital and criminal behavior [12]. Community policing requires cooperation from various sectors of the community including, civic and business leaders, public and private agencies, residents, churches, schools, and hospitals [16]. In this context, the networks of social relationships of trust and mutual caring that exist in communities, known as social capital, represent certain strengths that could be utilized and also cultivated to support social development efforts.

Furthermore, social capital is considered as the acceptance of norms that support and reward positive behavior, while penalizing negative behavior. Norms therefore become meaningful instruments to actually encourage and facilitate certain behavior and actions, and discourage others. This implies that the social capital of residents can inhibit negative behavior and encourage positive conduct in a community. It would mean that, for example, the social relations between

residents who disapprove of crime, along with their accepted norms which encourage certain patterns of behavior, can assist in combating criminal activities and help to ensure safe environments. In order to social development take place, there need to be an environment free from crime potentials and community policing should work on different local developments like youth capacity building, environmental protection and creating awareness to prevent crime. Community policing requires that the broader community and the law enforcement agency understand and believe that public safety and security can be best achieved through collaborative efforts. If public safety is seen as the exclusive responsibility of the law enforcement agency alone, a community policing effort will not succeed. In short, there must be a community-oriented philosophy that drives the whole local government and encourages collaboration and cooperation [9].

In Addis Ababa, community policing has delivered development program such as building toilet, covering tuition fees for the students who are not able to pay for their study, and installing lights at dark areas [11]. The concept of social capital has been shown to hold benefits for families, groups and communities and, when acknowledged, the relationships of trust and cooperation can be leveraged for social development initiatives. The manner in which social capital can be harnessed and utilized when social development initiatives and programs are planned and introduced will be highlighted in the context of what would constitute success for social development programs. Participation can be seen as the backbone of social development. It promotes inclusiveness, empowerment and decisions of consequence [17]. For instance, [18] explained that the success of community policing lies in the development of trust-based partnerships between law enforcement agencies, local government officials, and citizens. Most people can recognize social capital as being the connections and trusting contacts that people make while going about their daily business. These contacts can then be used on a mutual and reciprocal basis to further the development of a community. Likewise, officers should establish positive interaction with the community utilizing every means possible. Building trust, familiarity, and confidence are key factors to gain community participation in police activities [19].

Hence, social capital is an important component in achieving social development at local level; when residents are guided by their social norms and strengthens partnership, it is also a basic mechanism to use community policing as a program to encourage local social development. Social development could be revealed in different aspects such as youth capacity building, striving to create jobs for jobless under associations, cleaning sections of urban areas and dealing with conflict at family level using different strategies. Accordingly, this study

demonstrated the relevance of social capital in the practices of community policing so as to promote social development through collaborations between community policing, residents and different government agencies in Jinela district of Harar city.

METHODS

The researchers used qualitative research design. Qualitative research focuses on the thick description of context and often emerges from situated problems in the field [20]. Accordingly, case study design was selected and used to conduct the study on the roles of community policing in promoting social development in Jinela district of Harar city. A case study research design is a set of qualitative procedures used to explore a bounded system in depth. Case study research is a popular qualitative design because researchers from many different disciplines are interested in understanding what is happening in a system of people [21]. Additionally, the researchers investigated the research setting and about the roles of community policing in contributing towards social development by collecting data through key informant interview, focus group discussion and observation with critical cautions and scientific procedures.

Participants and Sampling Techniques

In order to have correct direction and select appropriate participants, the researchers considered Jinela district community policing workers, the district criminal justice bureau and local community representatives lived in the study site for long years as study population. Participants were not discriminated based on gender difference. Regarding sampling, non-probability sampling design was used, in which the researchers selected purposive or judgmental sampling. In such sampling technique, researchers actively select the most productive sample to answer the research question. This can involve developing a framework of the variables that might influence an individual's contribution and based on the researchers' practical knowledge of the research area, the available literature and evidence from the study itself [22]. Hence, the researchers selected 25 total number of participants where 10 key informants (7 males and 3 females) from top officials of Jinela district community policing. And the researchers conducted two focus group discussions having 7 members for the first group discussion and 8 participants for the second group discussion with members of community policing working in Jinela district of Harar city.

Instruments of Data Collection

Key Informant Interview: key informant interviews involve interviewing a selected group of individuals who are likely to provide required information, ideas, and insights on a particular subject. Such informants are selected because they possess information or ideas that can be solicited by the investigator [23]. Accordingly, the informants were

requested to share their knowledge and reality on the ground about the roles of community policing in social development in the study area. The interview was conducted for 30-45 minutes using sound recorder.

Focus Group Discussion: whatever the perspective or problem, focus groups are most useful when employed with the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed and when the reality of interest is the result of social interaction [24]. The researchers expected that members of community policing could share their observation and working experiences regarding roles of community policing in social development in Jinela district of Harar city. Hence, two focus group discussions were conducted (having seven participants for the first group discussion and, eight for the second group discussion). As members were working in the same district and all of them were police, the researchers smoothly conducted the group discussion.

Data Analysis Method

As method of data analysis, the researchers used thematic analysis. When data is analyzed by theme, it is called thematic analysis. This type of analysis is highly inductive, that is, the themes emerge from the data and are not imposed upon it by the researchers [25]. Accordingly, the researchers classified the analysis section based on nature of collected data from participants in order to well articulate finding of the study. Consequently, relevant scientific explanations and interpretations were made based on gathered data in line with the objectives of the study, which means the contributions of community policing in promoting social development in Jinela district of Harar city, Ethiopia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section revealed finding of the study where the researchers investigated the contributions of community policing in encouraging social development and existing bottlenecks in Harar city. Based on the case study design and thematic method of data analysis, participants' observation about the progresses of community policing in the study area is critically presented in the consecutive sections.

Community Policing in Supporting Social Development at Harar City

In this section the researchers have collected data from informants on the roles of community policing in encouraging social development in Harar city.

Facilitating Urban Traffic Flows

Road traffic crashes are estimated to kill approximately one million people a year and by 2020, they are expected to be the second leading cause of lost life years. However, traffic safety is rarely a very high police priority but for many local communities, it can

be a major concern in their daily lives [26]. Study indicates that citizens are much more concerned about the risk of traffic accidents than the police think. Thus, citizens find it more important that the police are visible in traffic than in their local area, whereas the police believe the opposite to be true [27]. To solve the problems of traffic in urban areas, partnerships need to be created among stakeholders including citizens and the police. Accordingly, Harar is a historical city of different cultural heritages and place of tours for many tourists as well as known for trade of different commodities where traffic congestion is happening particularly in the city center. In understanding the roles of community policing in reducing city traffic flows, the researchers approached the participants and got the following reflections.

One of the key informants (sex: male, age: 38, educational level: diploma) stated that: *“With the prevailing presumption to reduce problems arising from traffic congestions, the city community policing has selected students from high schools. The selected students received training on traffic rules, symbols, the impacts of traffic congestions and how to easily facilitate and reduce the traffic overcrowding in the city. For instance, in collaboration with the city’s traffic office, the community policing bureau further denoted codes and uniform for each of the traffic students while they are delivering service. Following this, the student traffic members organized in team so as to serve the society in supporting the smooth traffic flows in Harar city. However, the involvement of student traffic is not continuous and some students are not present themselves according to their schedule which is a challenge to incessantly provide the services for the public”*.

In support of the above quotation, evidences indicated that community policing established school monitoring to liaise with schools and advise students on such issues as substance abuse and traffic safety. For instance, in Bangalore, The Students Association for Road Safety is a long standing organization in which children voluntarily participate in learning road safety related matters [26]. Likewise, according to the above quotation it is really important to find the efforts that have been made by the city community policing in collaboratively working with high school students so as to solve the traffic congestions. As per the observation of the researchers the selected students for traffic purpose dressed the uniform which is different from other students and work with Harar city traffic polices. Nevertheless, the above quote indicated that there is lack of continuity and well organized services provided by student traffic. As per the researchers observation, students traffic are sometimes busy with their school attendance and academic activities as well as they need some incentives that could increase their motivations to continuously and actively involved in facilitating Harar city traffic flows.

Furthermore, the participants were asked if there is another mechanism to work on traffic problems like speed accident, reducing public fearing during night and increasing safety. Following this question, one of the key informants stated that: *“The city community policing is cooperating with traffic operations and working on traffic problems during nights. The informants stated that during nights the so called mini-bus and Bajaj are providing services to the urban community and previously we came across many accidents and crimes in the city. To reduce such traffic problems and crimes like burglary, and rape; the city community policing office organized drivers of mini-bus and Bajaj in team and offered a training to reduce such problems together with the community. Moreover, the city police officers provide official phone number and code to the selected mini-bus and Bajaj at the backside particularly those who are working day and night. Availability of such code and phone number helps to easily identify the offenders and those drivers who may participate in wrong act during day or night. Nonetheless, some drivers deliberately hide the codes or phone number given and this is creating challenges, all drives are not equally cooperate with the city community policing in informing offenders and we could not provide training regularly due to financial barriers (January 2017, Venue: Community Policing Office at Harar City)”*.

Finding of [28] showed that most of the burglaries occur during the day. Research concerning past traffic problem illustrated that a high percentage of the drivers who travel through a given area or intersection violate the speed limit during the same hours daily, but by conducting intense traffic enforcement at a given location, it is possible to reduce the average number of violations in the area. For instance, in Sierra Leone, an Emergency Local Policing Partnership Board was held with stakeholders, and it was agreed that night patrols of youth groups should be organized, which led to a considerable reduction in crime rates [29].

Cleaning Urban Spaces and Green Plantation

The Ethiopian police commission in collaboration with Federal Environmental Protection Agency has held training program which constitutes a shift from conventional legal training to more multi-faceted training in the wide area of environmental protection that brings in both the public interest concern and scientific issues surrounding the sustainability of the environment. Community environmental policing should tries to improve both civilian oversight and community participation in policing in terms of society’s broader environmental concerns [30]. In the same way, in Harar city, community policing is working on environmental protection like cleaning urban quarters and green plantations as support for urban development. Accordingly, informants reported

the assistances from community policing in cleaning the residential quarters.

One of the FGD participants (sex: male, age: 29, educational level: grade 10 completed) who was also a member of community policing stated that: *“In collaboration with Jinela district residents, the community policing has been engaging on different local developments in the city. For instance, some of the areas of contributions by community policing include tracing during rainy seasons to control the floods in order to reduce the levels of harm and damage in the surrounding residents, maintaining small roads, constructing wood made compounds for the needy, and keeping urban social security with community members (January 2017, Venue: Jinela District Community Policing Office, Training Hall)”*.

The extraction taken from the above FGD discussant implies that there were concrete efforts exerted by Jinela district community policing to involve in the local developments in partnership with the surrounding community. However, there should be further efforts to expand the development services in all parts of the district that in turn could lessen the effects of poverty leading to criminal behaviors in the district. Likewise, one of the key informants stated that: *In Harar city, with the supports of Jinela district community policing there are progresses in green plantation, cleaning inner city, street lies, asphalts and other selected parts of the city. These entail significant contributions of the police units to the development of the historical city, Harar. Most of the green plants are collected from Harar city environmental protection office for beautifulness of inner city and members of community policing are active in cultivating and follow up of the plants.*

Besides, another key informant (sex: male, age: 38, educational level: diploma) enunciated that: *Harar city police commission has already established one to five cooperative networks in which the district community policing actively partakes. The network mostly engages on environmental protection by cleaning the environment and green plantation in selected area of the district. The informant reminds that the cooperative groups clean the selected main roads and streets of the district every month (January 2017, Venue: Jinela District Community Policing Office).*

As denoted from the above quotation, the involvement of community policing in greening their district through implanting contribute to the urban development, somehow changing the image of the city to the best level. Based on the above evidence and researchers’ observation, there are no sufficient achievements made by the district community policing in green plantation at Harar city.

Providing Youth Job Opportunity

In some areas more than half of young people do not have a job. Not using the capabilities of young people hampers economic growth and may lead to social instability, driving young people to migrate [31]. In an attempt to reduce unemployment problems and related socioeconomic challenges, the district community policing has been trying to create job opportunities for some youths in the city. Participants were asked about the tangible evidences made by the district community policing in an attempt to provide employment prospects for youths.

Accordingly, one of the focus group discussants (sex: male, age: 42, educational level: diploma) expressed that: *Jinela district community policing selected some youths who were immersed in substance addiction. The community policing officers provided training for addicted youths on how to come out of substance use. After orientation, the youths were organized into union of youths and currently working in the bus station as association of daily laborer for lifting and carrying material goods. In this respect, they saved the life of some youths from the risks of addiction and gave them an opportunity to participate in social development spheres beyond restoring their health and personality (January 2017, Venue: Jinela District Community Policing Office, Training Hall)*”.

Some studies have found that youth who live in neighborhoods with high levels of poverty and crime tend to hold more negative attitudes toward police [32]. Conversely, as stated in the above quotations, the district community policing has working a progressive efforts in providing youth employment opportunities. For instance, by the income that youths got from the work, some of them engaged in family and running their life smoothly as well as supporting their relatives too. However, as only some youths got such chances, it is observable that the remaining majority of the unemployed youths need to get other jobs and share the benefits from the district community policing given that other governmental and nongovernmental organizations need to support the district community policing in capacity building. Moreover, it could be noticed that the more the youths get employment opportunities and involvements in different community policing activities, the more the likelihood of crime occurrence will be reduced. As well, some youths are getting employment opportunities as the tireless efforts of community policing, the youths are in a position to reduce substance youth and trying to lead their life as well as supporting their relatives to some extent.

In addition, one of the key informants (sex: male, age: 38, educational level: diploma) who have been serving as Jinela district Community Policing Officer denoted that: *“The district community policing has also been creating actions to absorb the problems of unemployment through creating job opportunities for*

certain number of residents. For instance, the district community policing registered some of those who are disbanded from the military defense and re-organized them under the supervisions of Jinela district community policing. Then the organized team has got work opportunities as night-watch and security personnel in the recreation areas of the city night clubs. The total number of individuals organized to watch around night clubs were 27 in number. (January 2017, Venue: Jinela District Community Policing Office)”.

Correspondingly, another key informant pointed out that: *“Jinela district community policing has been working in organizing some residents who are retired and jobless then facilitated them to get job opportunity in watching and protecting the car parking lots around Harar Brewery area where many vehicles stay over. In this way some of the residents are generating income and help them to support their life (January 2017, Venue: Jinela District Community Policing Office)”*.

As stated above, the researchers have observed attempts made by the district community policing in facilitating the condition in which members of the military defense those who break their usual jobs to acquire employment opportunities. While the organized teams are working as night-watch they are sharing the responsibilities of city polices in keeping society safe in addition to generating income. This fact implies that the district community policing has contributing its part in up grading the life styles of those who are in need of supports and jobless that way it goes to the urban development of Harar city. However, as these practices did not cover all parts of the city and sufficient, it has to be stretched to the entire district of Harar city and there should be assistances from other stakeholders in the city to achieve better socioeconomic development of the residents.

Provision of Social Security

Many countries of the world have continued to adopt community policing to meeting their different security needs. Building a cordial relationship between the police and the public has become sacrosanct for effective security management in any community, rationalizing the growing relevance enjoyed by community policing as alternative security policy framework to address growing security challenges [33].

Study conducted in Ethiopia of Dire Dawa city revealed that local youth organization viewed its relationship with the police as being built on trust and mutual respect. In return, police are able to utilize the network of youth as an extension of their information network, so they know what is going on with youth throughout the city [34]. Regarding security issues of Jinela district, the researchers gathered relevant data from participants as far as any development agenda never achieved without societal security. One of the

focus group discussants (sex: male, age: 28, educational level: Level III) remarked that: *“It has been attempting to solve family level conflicts. It is believe that such problems are societal problems and need to be solved. Under such circumstances we mostly employ negotiation as conflict resolution mechanism”.* (January 2017, Venue: Jinela District Community Policing Office, Training Hall).

Police departments work with community partners in assisting people with a wide array of problems and social conditions such as aiding sick people, resolving minor domestic disputes, spend considerable time in settling family fights through informing, advising, mediating and referring or expert assistance [35].

One of the key informants (sex: male, age: 42, educational level: degree) also added that: *“as peace and security is a fundamental base for any development, the community policing officers strived to disseminate orientations during public events and celebrations in our city. Such activities played its part towards the courses of realizing the programs of sustaining peace and order in the community (January 2017, Venue: Harari Regional State Justice and Security Office)”.*

Study conducted in Dire Dawa city signified that family police are typically fathers or older sons, but mothers can on occasion occupy the position. The function of the family police is to address family disputes, children’s behavior and other petty crime [34]. Moreover, another focus group participants (sex: male, age: 30, educational level: diploma) forwarded that: *“In rare situations the community policing extended its support to residents with large family size and those who are unable to send their children to school. Some children have been receiving educational opportunities and material supports from the community policing. This activity has been implemented in collaboration with school directors and local community based organization. Here, the discussant further noted that the community policing has been working with schools in giving awareness to students on the danger of substance use as well (January 2017, Venue: Jinela District Community Policing Office, Training Hall)”.*

CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

As a whole, the achievements of community policing in the areas of social developments stand out encouraging because the district community policing was working with youths, families, schools, associations and other stakeholders in creating job opportunities, providing community services and crime preventions as well as environmental protections. As a result, Jinela community policing members need to further intensify their networks and operational capacities that could promote the overall social

developments and image of the district in particular and the city at large.

However, the field observation made by the researchers and data collected from participants, revealed three major challenges facing the implementations of community policing in contributing towards social development. First, lack of strong network with local government officials. Second, there is less commitment of Jinela district residents in supporting the program. It is cognizant that inter-agency cooperation should be improved among various bureau levels (not only between department heads). They should develop a better understanding as to what constitutes overall community needs and how they can, by working together and improve their response to those needs. Lack of budget is another factor which challenged the daily activities of community policing and undertake local development concern in the study area. Therefore, the government body should allocate sufficient budget and local based nongovernmental organizations should support the program.

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