

The role of community policing in the prevention of farmers suicides: a study of Dharwad district

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Abstract

Agriculture has always been celebrated as the primary and predominant sector in the Indian economy. True to this, close to 70 percent of the people still depend on agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood. The major portion of Indian farming is dependent on natural rain fall. The rainfall in India is unpredictable. Failure of rains results failure of crops, as a result the farming community falls in the debt trap and the farmers who fail to overcome these problems has taken an extreme step of ending their life. In the present paper an effort is made to discuss the role of community police in the prevention of suicides among farmers. In the community policing there is involvement of citizens in crime prevention process. Various suggestions like educating the farmers on the values of life and properties, about the facilities available to them, designing a model program for prevention of farmer's suicides Etc., have been discussed in the present paper.

Keywords: Suicide, Community, Farmers, Agriculture, Policing

INTRODUCTION

The early history of policing in the United States, dating back to the colonial period, is heavily marked by politics, as previously demonstrated. From the founding of this nation to the early twentieth century, police relations with the community were intertwined with politics. The relationship was solely based on the dominant power within a community, and it was to this power that the police were appointed and beholden. Although the Pendleton Act was intended to provide relief from these political ties, it did not solve the inherent problems of widespread corruption at the time. The period of the Wickersham Commission's investigation in to the criminal justice system is perhaps the best time period to show the transition of the relationship between the police and the community. Like the Kelling and Moore analysis, the political era of policing is closely related to the relationship between the police and the community, tied into politics from the founding of the new nation in 1776 through the year 1930. The political relations era is then self-evident from the literature.

The new mode of thinking focused on the relationship between the police and the community in terms of public relations. The idea of public relations entailed a separation of the police and community; although the police still remained somewhat beholden to the community they served. As Richard L. Holcomb (1954, 6), described, "the fundamental principle of good public relations can be summed up very briefly. It amounts to doing a good, efficient job in a courteous manner and then letting the public know about the job." The police had little desire to integrate with the public during this time

period and distanced themselves from any ties to the community. The public relations era was marked by simply responding to the public's demands only to that degree which satisfied the immediate problems and in turn the community. The police distanced themselves from the public and an "us versus them" attitude surfaced and marked the police for many decades to come. This period of relationship existed between the years 1930 and 1960.

The movement from public relation to police-community relations has a far more distinct progression than the previous evolution from political relations. This progression is evident in Radelet (1973, 2) discussion of the National Institute of Police and Community Relation Conference, first held in 1955 at Michigan State University. This five-day conference provided the impetus for police departments across the nation to begin encouraging and fostering a sense of police and community partnership (Radelet 1973, 13). The predominant method of carrying out this partnership was generally through the development of special units within police department often known as "community resource" or "community relations" divisions. The other key component to this philosophy was developing some understanding between the police and the community. The police had to understand the various sociological aspects of the groups they dealt with on a daily basis, and the community had to understand what tasks police officers had to perform and how they carried out these duties. The overall assumption, then, was to provide for a special unit and create an understanding between the police and the community (Cohn and Viano 1976; Johnson, Misner, and Brown 1981; Radelet 1973; Watson 1966).

A large proportion of the police-community relations programs were conducted for nothing more than public relations purposes and in some cases political purposes. One primary method of delivering police-community relations services was the concept of "team policing" implemented in various communities across the nation in the early 1970s (Greene 1987; Radelt 1973). Although touted as one of the most prominent policing-community relations programs, it failed (Greene 1987). The premise of team policing was to make the team of police officers part of the community and in turn make the

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community they policed more valuable to them on a personal level. According to Lawrence Sharman (1975), team policing failed to provide the proper support. Jack R. Greene's (1987, 3) summation of why team policing failed is perhaps most apt: it "required a rethinking of the social and formal organization of policing on a massive scale," something that did not fit with the climate of the times.

It has been noted that community policing consists of two complimentary core components- community partnership and problem solving. Community partnership is the means of knowing the community. Problem solving is the tool for addressing the conditions that threaten the welfare of the community. It has also been noted that community policing is "democracy in action." The two statements do fit perfectly in to the historical and driving force in the establishing of police agencies in the United States. We see from the earliest of our Founding Fathers that they called on the government to ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defenses, promote general welfare, and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, as stated in the Constitution.

The intent of those powerful statements is woven through the studies and commission reports dealing with policing over the last 200 years. The most notable report was probably the Presidents Commission Office Forms on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, which was established by President Johnson and issued in "The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society" (1967). In that report, the commission stated that the role of the police is not simply the suppression of crime, but a much broader role including service to citizens and greater involvement in the overall planning and functioning of the community. In addition, the commission report called for an increase in training and the development of skills to handle situations that are often not criminal in nature but are important to maintaining public order and a positive relationship between government and citizen.

As we see in these statements, the concept of community policing is one that has been with the law enforcement community since its founding. But it has not always been put forth in many agencies' strategic plans. These principles should be threaded through all agencies in our mission statements, values, goals, objectives, and daily activities. Community policing is not just a program but a philosophy that has roots with the words of the Founding Fathers and has relevancy, perhaps more today [then] ever before. As we have sworn to uphold the U. S. Constitution and our state constitution, we have made a solemn oath to accept and promote the community policing philosophy (James T. Plousis 1999).

COMMUNITY POLICING: THE INDIAN SCENE

The Indian police essentially represents the State police on the 'centralized' mode of policing as against the Western 'municipalised' mode of policing, historically and traditionally in many parts of the country, it does not appear to be so. There are surviving examples of true community policing in the 'Panchayats of Manipur' 'Pancha Fayda' of Nagaland, 'Kebong' of Arunachal Pradesh and 'Village Defence Courts' with the strong support of all pervasive 'Young Mizo Association' in Mizoram. Hence, the suggested need to revive the Panchayat or Municipal type of police in India is not irrelevant.

Though not systematically conceived or empirically tested, as done in the West, variants of community engagement for law enforcement have been more recently experimented in India, both by means of formal legislation and through individual innovations by perceptive police officers in various States, notwithstanding the problems of identifying 'community' or local neighbourhoods which share the same values and perceptions about the right kind of order or stability. Formal programmes such as the 'Friends of Police' in Tamil Nadu, 'Mohalla Committees' in Maharashtra including the 'Khopade' pattern in district Bhivandi, 'Neighbourhood Watch' in Delhi, 'People Oriented Policing' in Punjab have been early initiatives launched in this direction. Quite recently Jammu and Kashmir and Orissa have introduced more ambitious programmes to actively involve the community in crime prevention and order management. Those will be discussed in more detail. Despite initial enthusiasm and enormous public support, many of the earlier experiments failed to survive, probably for want of institutional support or individual commitment.

Among formal legislations attempted in the past in this direction, the most prominent and the longest surviving seems to be the Karnatak Village Defence Parties Act, 1964, which interface between the police and the rural community. Its implementation has been uneven, partly due to certain inherent weaknesses in its constitution and partly for want of conviction of the district police authorities, who are responsible for its supervision. However the fact that the organization is still vibrant and purposive in certain area of the State speaks of its promise and potential as a viable community policing Programme. Yet another significant dimension of police community relationship is discernible in certain institutionalized service oriented schemes which started with police initiative in metropolitan cities of Delhi and Bangalore seeking out, with help of voluntary associations, victims of social injustice or other forms of exploitation to provide emergency relief as well as arrange long-term rehabilitation. The best known among these are 'PRAYAS' an NGO working for neglected juveniles in Delhi and Women and Child Help Lines in Bangalore. Several NGOs have also been started by individual police officers which have been building bridges with the community more effectively which have been the more common mode of community organization.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study was undertaken with the objective to study the community policing programs to provide the basic help to the farmers in the security of the life and property of the (farmers' suicides) victims' families.

METHODOLOGY

This study depends mainly on primary data. 75 samples were collected from farmers' suicides in Dharwad district of North Karnataka. Structured questionnaires were used to get information from the respondents. The data collected from all the taluks of Dharwad District regarding the farmers' suicide/Farmers attempting to suicide were analyzed and interpreted by using the statistical tools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Awareness about Community policing
(No of cases)

Size-class of land	Knowing Community policing		Total
	Yes	Don't know	
Marginal (0-2.5acres)	-	12	12
	0.00%	100%	100%
Small (2.5-5 acres)	8	27	35
	22.85%	77.15%	100%
Semi-medium (5-10 acres)	10	10	20
	50%	50%	100%
Medium (10-20 acres)	4	2	6
	66.67%	33.33%	100%
Large (20+ acres)	1	1	2
	50%	50%	100%
Total	23	52	75
	30.67%	69.33%	100%

Having visited to the total 75 farmer's suicide families, who are committed suicide when I collected the information while they have understood about community policing. It has been found that only 23 farmers' suicide families have understood about community policing but remaining 52 farmers suicide families have not understood about community policing.

Why did the semi-medium scale farmer's families aware about community policing much more? Those semi-medium families were more educated and belonging to middle class families, due to this they have better/more understanding regarding community policing, on comparison with those of other categories of Farm Families under study,.

In case of Marginal scale (0-2.5acres) farm families, out of 12 respondents none were aware of the community policing.

In case of Small scale (2.5-5 acres) farm families, out of 35 respondents only 8 were aware of the community policing and the rest 27 were unaware of the community policing. This shows that still

many the small scale farming families are unaware of this the community policing.

In case of Semi-medium scale (5-10 acres) farm families, out of 20 respondents 10 were aware and the rest 10 were unaware of the community policing. This show that farmers in this category seem to be having more awareness towards community policing, the possible reasons would be as discussed above.

In case of Medium scale (10-20 acres) farm families, out of 6 respondents 4 were aware of the community policing and the rest 2 were unaware of the community policing. This clearly shows that these medium farm families have a comparatively greater awareness towards community policing.

In case of Large scale (20+ acres) farm families, out of 2 respondents 1 was aware and the other 1 was unaware of the community policing, this shows that these medium farm families have a greater awareness towards community policing than any other categories being studied.

Table 2. Role of Community policing in solving household problems of Victims' Families
(No of cases)

Size-class of land	Solved the Problem					
	Son/Daughter			Drugs/alcohol/bad habit,		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Marginal (0-2.5acres)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Small (2.5-5 acres)	5	3	8	6	2	8
	62.5%	37.5%	100%	75%	25%	100%
Semi-medium (5-10 acres)	4	6	10	7	3	10
	40%	60%	100%	70%	30%	100%
Medium (10-20 acres)	-	4	4	1	3	4
		100%	100%	25%	75%	100%
Large (20+ acres)	-	1	1	1	-	1
		100%	100%	100%		100%
Total	9	14	23	15	8	23
	39%	61%	100%	65%	35%	100%

On observing the table 2, out of 23 farm families, nearly 39 percent (9 cases) were aware and have received remedies to the problems in relation to son/daughter through community policing. Nearly 22 percent (5 Cases) of Small (2.5-5 acres) farm families and nearly 18 percent (4 Cases) of Semi-medium (5-10 acres) farm families were able to come out with the solution to the problems in relation to son/daughter through community policing.

Similarly, out of 23 farm families, 65 percent (15 cases), were aware of community policing and initially were addicted with a bad habits like drugs and alcohol, but were successful in solving their

problems after getting the remedies from the community policing. In this regard, 30 percent (7 cases) semi-medium scale farmers have found out solution by community policing, which forms the larger share out the beneficiaries of this community policing.

CONCLUSION

The solution to the farmer's plight should be directed towards enabling the farmers to help themselves and sustain on their own. Temporary through monetary relief would not be the solution. The

efforts should be targeted at improving the entire structure of the small farmers where in the relief is not given on a drought to drought basis, rather they are taught to overcome their difficulties through their own skills and capabilities. The Government and its various agencies need to come up with pro-active solutions and the nation has to realize that farmer suicide are not minor issues happening in remote of a few states, it is a reflection of the entire country.

SUGGESTIONS

- As the community policing involves the participation of the public in the crime prevention process, the community leaders should work as friend and guide to the farming community and create awareness in them about the values of life.
- Arrange meetings, discussions with experts of the Department of Agriculture to understand the problems faced by the farming community and evolve the strategy to find out the solutions.
- Educate the marginal and small-scale farmers about the facilities available to them in the agricultural department and also in some financial institutions.
- Office of the community police should be established at each of the villages and the complaints regarding farming problems should be recorded and efforts should be made by the volunteers of community police to attend and solve those problems.
- Develop and evaluate model program for farmers suicide prevention comprising of prevention, intervention, and crises response in order to provide replicable, evidence based outcomes that other communities and service providers can use with adaptations.
- To develop and implement a public awareness campaign to reduce the stigma of suicide, and increase awareness of risk factors, including mental illness, and promote linkage to

human services.

- Develop and implement a suicide prevention model involving community policing.

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