

Police Strategies Addressing Generation Z

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Introduction

In order for the police to fill their role society, it is essential for them to adapt and make changes according to the needs in their community. Policing strategies have ranged from focusing on traditional crime prevention/ punitive practices to one more focused on community engagement and involvement. In relation to youth, the current generation of youth face similar issues to those in the past such as substance and alcohol use, negative family or peer influences and challenges that are created by society. However, there are risks specifically related to Generation Z, that revolves around the increasing challenges in ensuring that youth are safely using various forms of technology such as social media. This study desired to assess the current policing strategies to see if they are providing the community with the most effective intervention to assist youth from engaging in crime related activities.

Background

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe key challenges faced by police when dealing with Generation Z. Generation Z is an emerging demographic in society where they primarily make up the population of those participating in elementary or completing high school. At this stage of life, many of the choices they make will greatly impact their future opportunities such as attending post-secondary school, obtaining a career and raising their own families. This generation was greatly impacted by social media, cellphones and the internet which have shaped their values, beliefs and way they communicate with others. New challenges pertaining to cyber bullying, technology dependence and sexting have been created by this environment. As a result, it is essential that proper intervention is made by policing agencies through developing strategies to mitigate the risks factors that affect Generation Z before they develop criminal attitudes and behaviors. This research study sought to answer the question: What strategies can law enforcement implement to assist youth from engaging in crime related activities?

Methods

A qualitative research approach was used in order to provide a thorough interpretation of secondary data sources provided from multiple academic institutions. Once the sources were chosen and reviewed, they underwent a five stage interrelated data analysis process where they were compared with the community initiative practices of the Saanich Police Department (Saanich PD).

Results/Findings

Amongst the four main themes found in this study, the findings suggest that members of Generation Z are able to multi-task and adapt to work demands faster than previous generations. This is reflected in their ability to use technology to maximize efficiency and their entrepreneurial streak which leads them to have a burning desire in moving up the hierarchal structure to attain leadership positions (Iorgulescu, 2016). However, this has also contributed to multiple challenges where their negative characteristics of seeking immediate gratification, which often leaves them at risk to acting before thinking; and this leads to mistakes that is often found through their risky behaviors on social media (Marganski, 2017).

Multiple similarities were found between what the research proposed, and the programs implemented often by Saanich PD. These include the adoption and implementation of multi-agency partnerships, mentorships, educating youth on safe use of social media, and fostering leadership within the agency. However, some differences and challenges were found in these literature analyzed such as the capabilities amongst rural agencies in being able to adopt and utilize the benefits of these practices.

Discussion

The findings of the data have shown that Saanich PD is able to incorporate youth related practices that quite effective according to the research. Four recommendations need to be considered in order to continue these good practices. Some of these recommendations may already take form in the programs and strategies practiced by the Saanich PD and other policing agencies in Canada; however, it is important to point out that these recommendations may be beneficial for other organizations which may not have the opportunity or have been reluctant in adopting them in a manner that reflects the needs of their community.

Additionally, by discussing this topic, this research provides constructive feedforward for policing agencies, where this research creates insight on issues that perhaps may be unknown.



Recommendations

Four recommendations were made for police agencies to keep in mind when developing strategies. These include developing strong ties with organizations within the community, educating officers of the key characteristics of Generation Z, individualized approaches in assessing risk factors and needs; lastly, ensuring that the strategies implemented fits the needs of the community. If these recommendations are incorporated into their practices, it may enable them to sufficiently address the individual risk factors that each case presents. In turn, this can help mitigate youth from making choices that they may later regret and instead provide programs that help them learn instead of punishing them. In doing so, these recommendations can help police intervention prevent generation Z from making the mistakes that limit the prospective choices that they can have in determining their future. Thus, current policing strategies require interveners to focus on the root causes that create challenges for youth instead of punishing them from their mistakes.

References

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