

Volunteering with a Community Policing Centre

Sayk’pru Say

Introduction

Volunteers play a crucial role in addressing the complex challenges that the police face, such as improving public trust, enhancing their relationship with local communities, and police legitimacy. O’Connor and Pepper (2024) proclaim that “volunteers are seen as a bridge between local communities and policing, enhancing the services’ local legitimacy.” This is well said because the police need the collaboration from the community members to strengthen public trust, enhance their relationship, and promote public safety and quality of life for everyone within the community. Volunteers are the backbone of a successful and reputable Community Policing Centre because they create a positive impact and are determined to make a difference in the respective community.

This study is guided by Sir Robert Peel’s nine principles, particularly the principle of the Police are the Public and the Public are the Police. This study uses secondary data analysis from a variety of previous research to find answers to the main question: what are the principal determinants associated with volunteering with a Community Policing Centre? Three sub-questions will be considered and/or addressed: Who volunteers? How beneficial is it to volunteer at Community Policing Centres? What are the volunteer perceptions of volunteering within a police service? This study is significant as it highlights the main determinants associated with volunteering with a Community Policing Centre or within a police service, and it provides invaluable recommendations for people to volunteer with a Community Policing Centre or in their respective Community Policing Centre.

Background

The need for better understanding of the main determinants associated with volunteering with a Community Policing Centre is vital. There is a lack of research on volunteers with Community Police Centres in Canada to provide evidence based on volunteer feelings, attitudes and challenges associated with volunteering with a Community Policing Centre. Volunteers are the backbone of change as they can significantly influence the changes in policing and in the communities.

Methods

This study uses secondary research design and collects data by using secondary data analysis techniques. The three sub-questions and Sir Robert Peel’s nine principles guide the data collection and analysis process. In addition, thematic analysis is used to generate themes. The following databases are used for the search: JIBC Library, Criminal Abstracts with Full Text (CJA), OpenDissertations, and Google Scholar.

The main limitations of this study are data and time. The limitations to this study include the lack of research on the topic and databases not available or need to be purchased to review data. Sources for this study are not limited to peer-reviewed data because of the lack of time to collect information and the lack of qualitative studies, especially in Canada. The lack of qualitative studies result in a limited evaluation of the volunteer perceptions and attitudes toward the Community Policing Centres and the police. Although secondary sources are limited, self-selection influenced the data collection process.

Results

Researchers who study motivation have found several reasons why people volunteer. People volunteer due to intrinsic motivation, finding their volunteer work fulfilling and enjoyable and/or due to extrinsic motivation, finding volunteer work for a reward or an external benefit. According to Blumberg et al. (2020), younger volunteers tend to be motivated by learning new skills, career opportunities, adding volunteer work to their resume, and exposure to new experiences. Older volunteers are most likely motivated by a desire to stay active, to cultivate friendships, and to avoid feeling isolated. In addition, they conduct their study based on six factors: values, understanding, social, protective, enhancement, and career as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Research proves that one’s quality of life is made better by volunteering (Blumberg et al., 2020). Some of the generated themes that demonstrate this include trust, change, and relationship.

1. Trust: According to Britton and Knight (2022), there is a

growing interest in police volunteerism to enhance trust. Volunteering at a community policing center requires trust in the programs, believing that the programs are effective, appropriate, and reliable. It enhances the public’s trust in the programs and the police.

2. Change: Change by creating a positive impact, promoting a safe environment and strengthening the quality of life for everyone. Volunteering opens opportunities to be more involved in the community, creating change and encouraging others to volunteer as well, making a positive impact in the community.

3. Relationship: Volunteering enhances the relationship between the volunteers and the police and strengthens the relationship between the community and the police department.

Figure 1
Example Figure Demonstrating the Results from Blumberg et al.

| | | P | D |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------|------|
| Protective Factors | Values | < 0.001 | 1.97 |
| | Social | < 0.001 | 0.84 |
| | Understanding | < 0.001 | 1.57 |
| | Enhancement | < 0.001 | 1.21 |
| Values | Protective Factors | < 0.001 | 1.97 |
| | Social | < 0.001 | 1.12 |
| | Understanding | < 0.001 | 0.39 |
| | Enhancement | < 0.001 | 0.69 |
| Social | Protective Factors | < 0.001 | 0.84 |
| | Values | < 0.001 | 1.12 |
| | Understanding | < 0.001 | 0.72 |
| | Enhancement | < 0.001 | 0.39 |
| Understanding | Protective Factors | < 0.001 | 1.57 |
| | Values | < 0.001 | 0.39 |
| | Social | < 0.001 | 0.72 |
| | Enhancement | < 0.001 | 0.31 |
| Enhancement | Protective Factors | < 0.001 | 1.21 |
| | Values | < 0.001 | 0.69 |
| | Social | < 0.001 | 0.39 |
| | Understanding | < 0.001 | 0.31 |

Note. Pairwise comparisons: p is adjusted using Bonferroni correction.
<https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=c366c0ec-0131-4d64-b4e0-855da4d0e551%40redis>

Discussion

This study aims to begin reviewing the literature and transfer the data into practice as there is a lack of study on the volunteer perceptions within Community Policing Centres. Through a thorough literature review, the results can aid in encouraging future researchers to conduct more research studies in volunteer perceptions towards volunteering with a Community Policing Centre. Volunteers are essential in supporting individuals who seek assistance, guidance, and resources at Community Policing Centres. Every volunteer upholds their principal determinants and perception towards volunteering with a Community Policing Centre or within a police service. Furthermore, every community is unique, requiring the police and the community members to collaborate to strengthen trust, enhance their relationship, and promote safety and quality of life for all persons.

Recommendations

Community members play a critical role and therefore, they are encouraged to get involved within their respective Community Policing Centres or within a police service to enhance trust between the police and the community, strengthen their connections with the police, and be involved in maintaining quality police legitimacy.

This study can aid future researchers to further explore the principal determinants associated with volunteering with a Community Policing Centre or within a police service. This study hopes to provide evidence that further research is needed to build evidence base on volunteer attitudes, feelings, and challenges associated with volunteering with a Community Policing Centre or within a police service. Future researchers can conduct primary research using a purposeful sample or random sample to better understand volunteer perceptions. Furthermore, future researchers can conduct primary research studies specifically into Community Policing Centres’ core programs to further expand the knowledge and understanding of the principal determinants associated with volunteering.

References

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