

Challenges Facing Ward Community Policing in Morogoro Rural District, Tanzania

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East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences

Abstract: This study investigated challenges facing the Ward community policing in Morogoro Rural District, Tanzania. The study used the explanatory design, sampling 100 subjects who filled a questionnaire. Descriptive statistics analyzed the data through mean score and standard deviation. Based on the results, the study concludes that the Ward community policing initiatives operate very well in the Morogoro Rural District. The community policing had sufficient resources in implementing their daily routines and there was effective communication between police officers and other stakeholders, including community members. Both the law enforcement team and member of the community possessed awareness of the importance of the Ward community policing. Furthermore, community cooperation supported the policing initiatives just as higher policy authorities supported the Ward community policing. Finally, the policy officers were disciplined and citizenship behavior prevailed among the community members. These conclusions imply that community policing is an effective way to maintain peace and harmony in Tanzanian communities.

Keywords: Ward community policing officers; ward executive officers; Social challenges; working proximity.

How to cite: Mussa, M. A. (2024). Challenges Facing Ward Community Policing in Morogoro Rural District, Tanzania. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences* 5(4), 69-74.

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2024v05i04.0394>.

Introduction

Community policing is a familiar practice in police forces throughout the world. It is one among the approaches used by police forces to face daily community social challenges. It deals with community social challenges, such as crime and non-crime matters to minimize the uses of military forces. The community policing approach is intended to minimize distance between police and the community, where good relationship between police and community can be maintained. The police forces have realized that the best way for police to work with community in proximity is the introduction of ward community police officers as a mechanism to solve crime and other social challenges (van Caem et al., 2013).

Community policing officers have emerged at different styles and with different purposes. The

term community policing officers is used to denote those police policers who directly connect with communities to deal with community issues. They are the officers who represent senior police officers at the working area jurisdiction. The style of community policing officers differ from time to time, owing to the nature of social challenge prevailing in the society. There are those working at school due to challenges, such as bullying that exists at schools. Other style of community policing include those who deal with unprivileged groups of people, such as children, widows, old people, sexual groups and the like to address challenges that face them (Mussa, 2019).

Researchers around the global in police academy, social science, law and economics have considered the community policing approach as the best way in solving crimes and social challenges in communities.

Their common interest is how the Ward Community Policing officers can closely work together with low-level community leaders in solving community challenges (O'Reilly, 2023). Ward Community Policing officers are the police officer posted to work at ward level. A ward is a small unit of administration set up in Tanzania government. Ward policing officers are required to work directly with ward-level community leaders, such as village chairman, ward administrative officers and religious as well as political leaders at the ward level (Mussa, 2022).

The role of ward Community Policing Officers has been changing from time to time, following the social-economic and technological developments in the world. A good example appears in Tanzania where at the early stage of its introduction, had to build community trust before police officers, to find resources to support the security measures and to solve local community challenges. Owing to social, economic and technological advancements, Ward community policing offices deal with internal issues, such as cyber-crime, home sexual issues and illegal immigration, which cut across different Wards (Solar & Ricart, 2022).

In the United State of America, with the emergence of color challenges that faced the American communities, the Ward Community Policing officers addressed the growing mistrust in the country.

Ward community policing officers had to use body-worn camera to record all events going on while the officers are at the ground. The body-worn camera was said to assist reduction of mistrust between the police and the community. In addition, Ward community policing officers reduced world political tension in the American community (Pyo, 2022).

The same happened in the United Kingdom, where the Ward community policing officers solved local community challenges and political conflicts at community or neighborhood levels. Police believed that political conflicts at the neighborhood level are inevitable and can be only solved in temporary and contingent ways through police officers who are working closely with the community. Through these contingent ways, local ward panel meetings were prepared by ward community policing officers to solve political conflicts arising in the community. Sadly, ward community policing officers could not work together with the community and therefore political conflicts in the United Kingdom persisted (O'Reilly, 2023).

In Tanzania, ward community policing is one of strategies to curb existing crimes in the society. According to Mussa (2019) the strategy was strongly welcomed by people in communities since they perceived it as a solution to existing crimes. This study therefore, sought to establish existing challenges for the sake of suggesting potential solutions to the challenges.

Literature Review

Scholars agree that the implementation of Ward community policing officers as a program faces substantial challenges. The challenges include lack of knowledge and understanding among both law enforcement and member of the community, lack of resources and lack of the community cooperation (Frank, 2023).

The study of HusainiUsman (2023) in Nigeria revealed that despite the Ward community policing officers being a central point in crime prevention, they faced significant challenges, such as lack of training, poor implementation strategies, information gap among the Ward community policing officers and lack of community involvement. These challenges call for effective communities' participation in planning and choosing appropriate approaches as well as becoming equal owners of the process.

van Caem et al. (2013) added, other challenges that the Ward community policing officers are facing include lack of active citizenship in the implementation of community policing programs, shortage of a visible community police officers and open communication channels between police officers and other stakeholders. These challenges create a working gap, creating a distance between the Ward community policing officers and citizens. This situation does not enhance mutual understanding and cooperation between police officers and the community.

The study of Diphoorn and van Stapele (2021) in Kenya revealed some more significant challenges that the Ward community policing officers faced. Kenya Police used the Ward community policing officers as a vehicle for transforming the state of Kenya, which faced three interconnected challenges: diversity, representation and ownership. Diversity means there are many definitions and practices of the Ward community policing officers. This makes uncertainty and contradictions for community policing stakeholders. Representation means the concept was not so clear to many

communities. Many communities did not have such concept before its initiation. In case of ownership, the Ward community policing officers remained the owners and implementers of state police. These three challenges made the Ward community policing officers to be far away from the communities.

The study of Luong (2021) concluded that lack of trust between police officers and community members yielded multiple effects relating to the ward community policing officers working closely with the Ward Executive Officers. Lack of police trust created a bias tendency between the Ward Executive Officers and the Ward community policing officers. This affected productive communication between the police officers and the community, making harder for the ward community policing officers to work closely with the Ward Executive Officers.

Wright and Headley (2021) depicted that Ward community policing officers' behaviors and police legitimacy constitute challenges that make the Ward community policing officers and the Ward Executive Officers to work closely. Most of police officers were blamed of being corrupted, using abusive language and being lazy to follow up community crime information. As a result, most of the community members did not trust the police officers and they were not ready to work with the police officers. Similar cases were revealed by Yesber et al. (2023) in a study about Police visibility, trust in police fairness and collective efficacy.

In Tanzania, Ward community policing officer's initiatives have been part of the community policing programs. The programs sought to enhance community trust and cooperation between police officers and the community, making a closer partnership between citizens and the police officers and to minimize the police officers' distance from their police stations to villages (Mussa, 2019). Tanzania police had dispatch police officers with the rank of assistance inspectors to almost all Wards and Shehia in Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar, respectively. Apart from being crime solvers, Ward community police officers were duty bound to be secretaries of security committee in the Ward. Their main duty was to cooperate with the Ward Executive Officers to hold meetings with the intention to discuss community challenges and find proper solutions (Mussa, 2022).

This study took place in Morogoro Rural District. The territory covers 19,056 square kilometers (7,358 square miles). It is enclosed to the North and East by the Pwani Region, to the South by Kilombero District, to the Southwest by the Kilosa District and to the West by the Mvomero District and the Morogoro Urban District. The area has 31 Wards with different environmental conditions. The population of the area is about 387,736 (Ministry of Finance and Planning et al. 2022).

Methodology

Design

This study used the explanatory design, which sought to report prevailing challenges in the territory being investigated.

Population and Sampling

The study population was 387,736 people from Morogoro Rural District. The study population includes villagers, village local community leaders (including religious leaders and chiefs), Ward Executive leaders, Village Executive leaders, Ward community policing officers and workers from the office of the Director of Morogoro Rural District. The study sampled 100 respondents by using Simple random sampling and stratified sampling techniques to get a representation from the study population. Only those with 18 years or older, over 3 years' experience were prospective participants.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was examined by research experts before its use. The reliability test yielded the Cronbach's Alpha of above 0.7. Therefore, the questionnaire was a reliable source of data collection.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics. The questionnaire had four-point scale responses. Therefore, the following scale of mean score interpretation was used: 3.50-4.00 = strongly agree, 2.50-3.49 = agree, 1.50-2.49 = disagree and 1.00-1.49 = strongly disagree.

Results and Discussion

This section gives the results and discussion. The section was guided by one research question: Are there specific challenges that face the Ward community policing initiatives?

This research question sought to establish potential challenges that faced the Ward community policing initiatives. The results appear in Table 1, where 12

items were listed for respondents to agree or disagree with. The following scale of mean score interpretation was used: 3.50-4.00 = strongly agree, 2.50-3.49 = agree, 1.50-2.49 = disagree and 1.00-1.49 = strongly disagree.

From Table 1, it is clear that the mean score of respondents ranged between 1.07 to 2.00, which is between strong disagreement and disagreement. The listed statements include working in proximity between the Ward community policing officers and the Ward Executive officers. Disagreement of this factor as a challenge indicates that police officers work harmoniously with the Ward Executive Officers. The second statement was about lack of trust between police officers and community members as a challenge. Disagreement with this statement means that the police officers worked

with the community members harmoniously. The third item was about lack of resources as a challenge. The disagreement with this statement suggests that the community policing had sufficient resources in implementing their duties. Collaboration between police officers and community local authority and community members has been well documented by literature. Schaap (2021), for instance, in a study about Police trust-building strategies revealed that police requires public trust to do their work properly and effectively. The study held that community trust strengthens the police legitimacy. Police collaboration with the community enhances community ways of thinking, thus promoting the community support.

Table 2: Challenges Facing Ward Community Policing Officers

SN	Activity	Mean	Interpretation
1	Working in proximity between ward community policing and ward executive officers is a challenge	1.07	Strongly Disagree
2	Lack of trust between police and community members is a challenge	1.51	Disagree
3	Lack of resources is a challenge for Ward Community Policing Officers to work in proximity with the Ward Executive Officers.	1.53	Disagree
4	Lack of open communication channels between police officers and other stakeholders is a challenge	1.56	Disagree
5	Lack of knowledge and understanding among both law enforcement and member of community is a challenge	1.56	Disagree
6	Lack of community involvement which lead to unrealistic community expectations is a challenge	1.65	Disagree
7	Lack of community cooperation is a challenge for Ward Community Policing Officers to work in proximity with the Ward Executive Officers.	1.67	Disagree
8	Lack of police and community training is a challenge for Ward Community Policing Officers to work in proximity with the Ward Executive Officers.	1.75	Disagree
9	Information gap among ward community policing officers and their senior police officers is a challenge	1.77	Disagree
10	Failure of the police departments to recognize the Ward Community Policing Officers is a challenge	1.83	Disagree
11	Ward community policing officers' behavior and police legitimacy is a challenge.	1.90	Disagree
12	Lack of active citizenship in the implementation of the community policing program is a challenge	2.00	Disagree

Lack of open communication channels between police officers and other stakeholders as a challenge was another listed factor in which the respondents disagreed. This implies that there was good communication between police officers and other stakeholders. Police and community communication have great importance not only in improving police duties but also in the crime reduction process. The study of Lwanga (2023) in Lurambi sub-county, Kenya, revealed that *Nyumba Kumi* strategy was an important way to improve open communication

between police officers and communities in Kenya. This strategy helped Kenyan communities to effectively collaborate with police officers in resolving existing community crimes such as murder and terrorism.

Lack of knowledge and understanding among both law enforcement and member of community as a challenge was also listed, and the respondents disagreed with it. This implies that both the law enforcement team and member of the community possessed awareness of the importance of the Ward

Community Policing Officers. According to Kearns (2020), awareness of the Ward community policing role enhances initiatives to address crimes and terrorism cases effectively.

Lack of community involvement and cooperation were also listed as potential challenges but the respondents disagreed with such items as challenges. This implies that community involvement and cooperation do exist in the Ward policing initiatives. According to Mlomo (2024), police officers and community members have to work hand in hand in fighting barriers that interferes with security and community development. Community members have to participate fully for security initiatives to be realized.

Failure of the police departments to recognize the Ward Community Policing Officers as a challenge was also listed. However, respondents disagreed with such an item as seen in Table 2. This implies that higher Policy authorities respect and support the Ward Community policing.

Ward community policing officers' behavior and police legitimacy as a challenge was listed in Table 2, but respondents disagreed with the item as a challenge. This means that the participants considered the Ward Community Police officers as disciplined in their duties. This is against the findings of Mussa (2019) and Fegley (2021) that police officers sometimes misbehaved by engaging into corruption, abduction and raping. These behaviors reduce police trust and legitimacy.

Finally, lack of active citizenship in the implementation of the community policing programs as a challenge was listed. The findings in Table 2 shows that respondents disagreed with this item as a challenge. This implies that both the police officers and other stakeholders demonstrated citizenship behavior in supporting the Ward community policing. Active citizenship is key too effective implementation of community policing initiatives. Every citizen has the role to play towards functioning of this initiative. In their study, Sari and Suryaningsi (2023) argued that citizens' active participation not only promotes community policing initiatives but also supports good governance, combat corruption, advance social justice and strengthens democracy.

Conclusion and Implications

The study concludes that the Ward Community policing initiatives operates very well in the

Morogoro Rural District. This conclusion was reached since the Ward community policing officers and the Ward Executive officers worked harmoniously just as the police officers worked harmoniously with community members. The community policing had sufficient resources in implementing their daily routines and there was effective communication between police officers and other stakeholders, including community members. Both the law enforcement team and member of the community possessed awareness of the importance of the Ward community policing. Furthermore, community cooperation supported the policing initiatives just as higher policy authorities supported the Ward community policing. Finally, the policy officers were disciplined and citizenship behavior prevailed among the community members. These conclusions imply that community policing is an effective way to maintain peace and harmony in Tanzanian communities.

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