



Volunteerism And Community Crime Prevention

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ABSTRACT

Volunteerism is a social phenomenon involving people as individual and group who offer their services helping, learning and actively participating in communities as a part of civic engagement. Community participation in crime prevention activities has been an important efforts made by the community especially in a high crime rate community where the law enforcement is ineffective. One of the ideal approaches could be voluntary involvement of citizen for crime prevention and reduction. Community policing is an initiative of police to established a joint vigilance of the police and the general public or community to identify and solves crime within a particular community. Community Crime prevention emerged as a mechanism for maintaining law and order at community level. So Community policing emerge to legitimize relationship between police and public. Volunteering offers important benefits to individuals, communities and society as a whole. The feeling of responsibility towards safety of community and commitment to community based organization is the main driving force of volunteerism where motivation is without remuneration. Personal enhancement and the need for volunteers are not observed at a greater level and volunteerism in Mizoram is managed volunteerism in the mean time it is also bears unmanaged volunteerism in terms of characteristics. Moreover the support of the government or community based organization is also minimal in terms of training and equipments and there is no proper insurance for volunteers which increase the risk taken by volunteers. Volunteerism towards crime prevention in Mizoram is entirely based on intrinsic and traditional Mizo values called 'tlawmngaihna' meaning altruism.

I. Introduction

The study attempts to assess the nature of volunteerism towards community crime prevention in Mizoram. Volunteerism is a social phenomenon involving people as individual and group who offer their services helping, learning and actively participating in communities as a part of civic engagement. It constitutes a critical and functioning part of social fabric and has been an integral part of Indian society dating back to 1500 BC as mentioned in the Rig Veda (Sen, Siddhartha, 1992).

The UN General Assembly defines volunteerism as "undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor". The norms and values embedded in society persuaded the individuals to engage voluntarily for the betterment of society. Volunteerism has been an important means of engaging people and a strategy for community development. Volunteerism has been a source of strength and resilience in almost every society which is expressed through a wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery, campaigning and advocacy, as well as other forms of civic participation.

Community participation in crime prevention activities has been an important efforts made by the community especially in a high crime rate community where the law enforcement is ineffective. One of the ideal approaches could be voluntary involvement of citizen for crime prevention and reduction. Community policing is an initiative of police to established a joint vigilance of the police and the general public or community to identify and solves crime within a particular community (Liebermann and Coulson 2004). However Community crime prevention goes beyond community policing as it is voluntary efforts of community to fight crime in their own initiative. It is grounded on the belief that the traditional law enforcement is used where government law enforcement could not reach.

1.1 Volunteerism

The term volunteerism originated from the Latin word 'voluntas' meaning 'will' or 'freedom'. Voluntary engagement and action is instigated by desire and it is the manifestation of the human 'will' to help the needy and destitute. The New Dictionary of Social Work (Timms and Timms, 1982) defined a volunteer as: "a person who offers his or her service or who is recruited to render a service at a welfare agency, usually without remuneration." Volunteerism is to a great extent inclined towards social, cultural, political, and economic environment (Dingle, 2001).

The trend of volunteerism has been changing which create new situations requiring new approaches and tools. There is need for organised system and professionalism for continuity and to sustain the values and culture of volunteerism. Volunteers are a professional or non-professional who renders his service to welfare or development organization without reimbursement. They are significant human resource who does unpaid work in welfare and development programmes but instead they earn ethical recognition. They are willing to offer out of free will their time, energy and skills towards accomplishment of task and purpose within some kind of formal structure (Timms and Timms, 1982).

Volunteerism is classified as managed and unmanaged. Managed volunteering involves service and activity through non profit organization and public sector. Unmanaged volunteering is more humanitarian in nature which includes natural and irregular service rendered between friends and neighbours. Volunteerism has significantly contributed for society economically and socially. Many programmes and activities can be managed effectively and efficiently through valuable service of volunteers. It is cost effective but not entirely cost free as it requires infrastructure and training at different levels (Dingle, 2001).

1.2 Community Crime Prevention and Community Policing

Participation of community in crime prevention and civilian involvement has been as long as human generation. Local communities as volunteers patrol the streets. But the spirit of the community crime prevention lost its significance after the introduction of police officers. People's involvement in crime prevention and finding solutions to crime has been passive for many years. It was only after 1970s that Community crime prevention became popular and regains its significance in America (Newham, 2005; Ren et al., 2006).

Police are an important mechanism for the maintenance of law and order in any democratic society covering every section of social interactions in society (Arisukwu and Okunola, 2013). Community Crime prevention refers to certain efforts and attempt to change social condition that promote and increase crime in community at a local and residential level (Hope, 1995). It also refers to programs implemented to modify social institutions to decrease crime in a particular community. On the other hand community crime prevention in its contemporary sense seeks to restore and promote positive relationship between community people and police for effective response to crime within community. Different models of community crime prevention were also observed in different communities like neighborhood watch where all residents work with police for crime prevention putting all resource and efforts, Community policing, community organizing, tenant involvement, resource mobilization, community defense, preserving order and protecting vulnerable (Hope 1995).

Community crime prevention started gaining reputation as a practice for managing crime in modern societies in a midst of political and cultural changes which resulted in how government and individual view and perform in response to crime. Community crime prevention emerged in the light of acknowledgement of poor formal social control and traditional model of policing. The rising rate of crime in the western world between the 1970s and 1980s shows limitation of traditional model of crime prevention. Rapid response of reported crime and follow up investigation were no longer effective in crime prevention.

However, the people participation as witness in court and providing information to crime was acknowledged. Community Crime prevention emerged as a mechanism for maintaining law and order at community level. For some community it is seen as an extension to formal social control. Community crime prevention also progressed as a reaction to the crisis of lawfulness of police between political and citizenship involvement. So Community policing emerge to legitimize relationship between police and public (Rosenbaum et.al. 1994).

1.4 Methodology

The present study is explorative research in nature and quantitative approach is employed. The universe of the study comprises of volunteers in community based organisation who are working in area of community crime prevention in Mizoram and the unit of study is volunteers. Aizawl and Lunglei were chosen purposively as it is the most populated district in Mizoram. Disproportionate Stratified random Sampling method was used to select District, Block and villages. There are three blocks in Lunglei District namely Lunglei, Bunglei and Lungsen and four blocks in Aizawl District namely Tlangnuam Block, Thinsulthiah, Aibawk and Darlawn. Two villages that are near to block headquarters and two villages far from block headquarters are randomly selected. In each selected villages 10 volunteers are randomly chosen for sample. The sample size is 280. Structured interview schedule was used to collect quantitative data from volunteers. The quantitative data collected were processed with Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Simple statistical methods of averages, percentages, ratios and proportions are used to analyze quantitative data. t Test was also used to compare the far and near communities.

2. Results and Discussions

The major findings in the present study is presented as Structural Profile of Respondents, Crime Encountered and Preparedness and Efficiency of Volunteers, Volunteerism and Community Crime prevention, Challenges faced by volunteers.

2.1 Structural Profile of Respondents

The structural profile of respondents in the present study is studied by analyzing the profile of respondents and family profile of respondents. The structural profile serves as background information as well as to understand the social background. Respondents are selected from Aizawl and Lunglei District. 14 villages are selected from both far and near from block headquarters and volunteers are selected each villages.

The age of volunteers is Young Age (53%) and Middle Age (39%), and the mean age of respondents is 45 years. Majority is Married (82%) and Single (17%). Almost all the respondents are Mizo (99%) and all are Christian (100%). Majority of the respondents belongs to Presbyterian (53%) and Baptist (37%). The educational qualification is normally distributed among High School (37%), Higher Secondary School (23%), and UG & Above

Family profile of respondents is studied by analyzing Type of Family, Forms of family, Socio-Economic Category, Primary Occupation, Secondary Occupation, and Monthly Household Income. Almost all the respondents belongs to Nuclear Family (90%) and the forms of Family is Stable family (98%) belongs to below Poverty Line (BPL) (73%). The Primary occupations of family are mainly Cultivation (53%) and Government Servant (23%). The Secondary occupation of family is Laborer (40%) and Cultivation (21%) and few are in Private Sector (16%). The household income of the respondents is mainly Below 30000 (46%) and Rupees 30000 to 50000 (35%) and the mean household income of respondents is (₹ 42,500) and there is a significant difference between the far and near community in terms of household monthly income.

2.2 Crime Encountered and Preparedness and Efficiency of Volunteers

The crime encountered and preparedness and Efficiency of volunteers is studied to understand the nature of crime encountered by volunteers during community crime prevention process and preparedness and efficiency of the volunteers is also studied to understand efficacy of volunteerism towards community crime prevention.

The types of crime encountered are analyzed to understand the involvement of volunteers and the difference between the far and near communities are compared to understand the difference between communities. Majority of the volunteers claimed that they sometimes encountered Theft (80%), Illegal Selling of Alcohol (95%), Violence/fighting (69%), Domestic violence (59%). In the mean time more than half of the respondents encounter Smuggling of Drugs (57%), Causing problem for public (53%). There is a significant difference between the far and near community in certain crime encountered by the volunteer viz., Illegal Selling of Alcohol (0.007), Smuggling of Drugs (0.043), Domestic violence (0.029), Violation of Covid19 Pandemic Curfew (0.003), Violation of Covid19 Appropriate Behavior (CAB) (0.003)

Preparedness of Volunteers is analyzed by studying preparation in terms of availability of manual & guidelines, trainings related to rules and law, judicial process, human rights, self-protection & First Aid etc. The preparedness of the volunteers is not satisfactory as no preparatory actions are observed in the process of community crime prevention. Only half of the volunteers read manual and guidelines (55%) and majorities never (83%) have training on manual and guidelines, the volunteers never attend training on how to deal with crime related issue (75%), how to handle criminal (81%), training on Judicial procedure of handling criminal (90%). Only a few of the volunteers had training on rules and law (CRPC, CPC etc), training on Human rights (96%), attended training on Training on self-protection (97%), training on First Aid (98%) and even Social Media was not utilized (67%) by the volunteers. There is no significant difference between far and near communities in terms of preparedness of volunteers except in Training on rules and law (CRPC, CPC etc) (0.016).

2.3 Volunteerism and Community Crime prevention

Volunteerism and Community Crime prevention in the present study is analyzed by studying Pattern of Involvement and Appointment of Volunteers, Level of Involvement, No of Years Volunteered, Purpose and reasons of Volunteering, Nature of Volunteering, Response to crime and Action taken and Nature of Community support.

The pattern of Involvement and Appointment of Volunteers in the present study is analyzed by studying reason of involvement, duration of involvement as volunteers and criteria for appointment as volunteers. Majority of the volunteers declare that they are appointed by Community Based Organizations (99%) and there is no criteria for appointment (70%) and are not selected based on skills, knowledge or commitment for community. Most of the volunteers involved for 5 to 10 Years (43%) and 10 to 20 Years (31%) and the mean number of years of volunteers involved in community crime prevention in the present study is 10 Years. There is no significant difference between the far and near communities.

The level of involvement in the present study is studied by analysing the involvement of volunteers in different organization involved in community crime prevention at various levels viz., YMA Kumpulan Committee, Village

Defense Party (VDP), YMA Supply Reduction Service (SRS), and Village/Local Level Task Force. The volunteers are members of YMA Kumpuan Committee (69%), Village Defence Party (VDP) (26%), YMA Supply Reduction Service (5%), Village/Local Level Task Force (14%), Tangrual pawl/ Local Organization (24%). Out of the volunteers few of them are leaders in YMA Kumpuan Committee (13%), Village Defence Party (VDP) 9%), YMA Supply Reduction Service (SRS) (1%), Village/Local Level Task Force (2%), Tangrual pawl/ Local Organization (5%). However most of the volunteers are not involved in Village Defence Party (VDP) (65%), YMA Supply Reduction Service (SRS) (94%), Village/Local Level Task Force (84%), Tangrual pawl/ Local Organization (71%). The number of years volunteered in various crime prevention organizations is studied to understand the experiences of volunteers.

The mean years of volunteers involving in YMA Kumpuan Committee (6.4 years), Village Defence Party (VDP) (2 Years), Tangrual pawl/ Local Organization (1.5 years), Local Level Task Force (0.4 years), Supply Reduction Service (SRS) (0.3 Years) show that the volunteers have experience in all the community based organization involved in crime prevention. There is a significant difference between the far and near community in terms of Supply Reduction Service (0.02) and Local Level Task Force (0.02). Supply Reduction Service is mainly functioning in urban areas and the volunteers are lesser in remote areas therefore volunteers have more duration of involvement in remote areas. The far and near community have no significant difference in YMA Kumpuan Committee, Local Level Task Force and Tangrual pawl/ Local organization.

The purpose and reasons of volunteering is studied to understand the motivating factor and factor responsible for volunteerism in Mizo society. The purpose and reasons of volunteering shows that Majority of the volunteers agree that they volunteer because are appointed by YMA (72%), Leader of YMA (56%), Interested to participate (69%), I want my community to be safe (86%), and I am responsible for management of crime in my own community (88%). The volunteers disagree that Appointed by LC/VC (84%), Appointed by Church (98%), I represent my Church/NGO (76%), Leader of Church (98%), I have leadership quality (98%), Member of LC/VC (91%), I am having expertise (98%), People feel I am reliable (93%), The police failed to maintain law and order in our locality we have to step up (98%). There is no significant difference between the far and near community regarding the purpose and reasons of volunteering.

The nature of volunteering studied in the present study is mainly the nature of work done by the volunteers during their time of duty. The volunteers in the present study always Participated in meetings (97%) and Decide as a group/committee on what to do (97%). Whenever crime occurred in community the community people inform the VDP/Kumpuan Committee and make decision before the Police arrived (69%). They always have follow up of the crime reported to them (67%) and sometimes they try to solve any issue without involving the police (96%). They also involve police only after negotiation are not possible (70%). Rights of individual are always respected and women and ladies are searched only by lady members (91%). The volunteers declare that they sometimes were on duty at night in village (89%) and on duty in public place (98%) as well. They sometimes assisted various government duty viz., Police, health, water, sanitation, electricity etc. (74%) and even assist police in the process of crime prevention (60%). Even in the absence of police they searched a person for illegal possession (81%) and raid houses for illegal possession-Alcohol, Drugs (88%). Sometimes the volunteer took some matter into their own hand and punishment is given to those who violate the law by the volunteers as convenience (52%). There is a significant difference in Duty at night (0.003) where night duty is more prevalent in far community. The near communities are more prompt to giving information to Police once crime happened (0.031) as compared to far community. The near communities involve police once negotiations are not possible (0.007) as compared to the far community. There are more raiding houses for illegal possession-Alcohol, Drugs (0.011) among the near community as compared to the far community.

The volunteers in their response to crime declare that they always summon any suspects in the community (98%) and interrogate the accused before handing over to police (95%). However, Rules/Law is maintained while they are on duty and the action taken (89%) and in general human rights are always respected (95%). The volunteers sometimes declare that there is a need for violence/force during interrogation and action (53%) and they hit/slap/beat when the person summoned are not cooperating (53%) and sometimes they need to be handed over to police (77%).

The volunteers declare that there is a few case where they need to take harsh action against those who are against the rules and majority declare that they never stop membership of community/ Community based Organization (85%) and lock House (93%) and ask to leave their community (90%). In terms of the response to crime and action taken the far and near community follow the same pattern except in interrogating the accused before handing over to police (0.018) and Locking House (0.003).

The volunteers in community received certain support from the community members and the nature of support is rated by volunteers and the volunteers declare that they always receive support in terms of providing space for duty (81%) and always receive community support and the community respect their action and decision (79%). The volunteer declare that the community sometimes provide refreshment and water (64%) and provide Information regarding crime (63%) acting as an informant.

2.4. Challenges faced by volunteers

The challenges faced by volunteer in crime prevention at community level are studied to understand the problems and sources of problems faced by volunteers and as an organization. Majority of the volunteers agree

that they face different challenges as Membership is only temporal (97%) and there is lack of training of members (93%) there is no training on professionalism (84%) so this leads to decision are made based on moral values of the community (64%) which leaves many room for error. Moreover, the equipment and infrastructure provided are poor (84%) and there is no insurance for loss of life or property for duty volunteers (83%) which increase the risk of volunteering. To add challenges funds are inadequate (79%) but the support of community (76%) and police (88%) is adequate which evenly manage situations. Only in some cases the police are on time when case is reported (10%) so the cooperation with the police is not satisfactory.

The volunteers disagree that the police provide necessary equipment (90%) and there are no clear instruction on how to operate (91%) laws are not followed in the process of execution (72%). Sometimes human right violation happens in the process but disagree that it's unavoidable (68%) There is no regularity (13%) and there is no particular strategy (41%). Some volunteers believe that there is no integration with other institutions (government or community) (4%).

The challenges faced by volunteers in general show the same pattern among both the far and near communities. The far community have a significantly higher score in terms of The police are on time when we report case (0.028), The support of community is adequate (0.047), Decision are made based on moral values of the community (0.000) while the near community have a significantly higher score in terms of There is no regularity (0.003) among volunteers.

3. Conclusion

The study attempts to assess the nature of volunteerism in community crime prevention process in Mizoram.

The demographic profile of volunteers selected for studies indicate that most volunteers are matured, educated member in society who are married and have stable families. Most of the volunteers are Mizo who follows Christianity. The volunteers belongs to a nuclear family and most of them are BPL family with average monthly income of ₹42,500/-.

The types of crime encountered are Theft, Illegal Selling of Alcohol, Violence/fighting, and Domestic violence. Some volunteers encountered Smuggling of Drugs, and also deal with community people causing problem for public. The volunteers in community are dealing with complicated nature of crime which requires preparation and skills. But the preparedness of the volunteers is not satisfactory and there is no preparatory actions observed in the process of community crime prevention. There is no proper manual and guidelines and the volunteers do not have training on manual and guidelines. The volunteers never attend training on how to deal with crime related issue and how to handle criminal which is very crucial to be more effective. Even the Judicial procedure of handling criminal and rules and law (CRPC, CPC etc), and Human rights were not given importance. There is no training on self-protection and on First Aid which put the volunteers at a great risk and even Social Media was not utilized by the volunteers for education and awareness.

Volunteers are usually appointed by Community Based Organizations and there is no criteria and was not based on expertise or skills and it is based purely on commitment level. Most of the volunteers are interested to take responsibility in community crime prevention because they want their community to be safe and they are responsible for management of crime in their community. Some volunteers are leaders of various Community Based Organizations where they need to take leadership. The average no of years of volunteering in Community Based Organizations in community crime prevention is also 10 years which clearly indicate the commitment level. The volunteers in a community are members and leaders of community Based Organizations involved in crime prevention but some volunteers cannot involve in as some organizations are selecting their volunteers. The mean numbers of years involved is the highest in YMA Kumpuan Committee.

Volunteers usually approach crime issues with a meeting and decision and action are taken as a group or committee. Whenever crime occurred in community the community peoples inform the VDP/Kumpuan Committee. The volunteers under the guidance of community based organizations usually follow up of the crime reported to them and try to solve any issue without involving the police and sometimes decision are made before the Police arrived. In some cases like public nuisance the volunteers involve police only after negotiation are not possible. However rights of individual are always respected and only in the absence of Police they searched a person for illegal possession and usually women and ladies are searched by lady members only. The volunteers sometimes assisted various government duty viz., Police, health, water, sanitation, electricity etc apart from their duty on crime prevention. The timing of their duty is not regular and they sometimes have duty at night depending on the needs. Sometimes the volunteer took some matter into their own hand raid houses for illegal possession-Alcohol, Drugs and sometimes punishment is given to those who violate the law in their community which sometimes involves beating, admonition. When the warning and request of the community based organizations are not respected and there are repeated offenders, when all options are taken harsh action may be taken involving locking of their houses and removing them from their community. Sometimes all the welfare activities under the Mizo traditions and customs performed by the communities are banned. This is accepted by the community as the community supports the actions taken in the process of crime prevention. However, these kinds of cases are extreme case and it happen rarely. This is possible as the supports of the community are strong which can be seen in providing place for duty and instrument needed for duty and sometimes refreshments are

provided by the community. The follow up of cases by the volunteers and the police is easier as the community people act as an informant which is valuable in crime prevention.

The challenges faced by volunteers are mainly related to participation and management of volunteers by various community based organizations. The membership is temporal and there is lack of systematic approach. There is no systematic recruitment process so the volunteers lack training and professionalism could not be maintained. There are no clear instructions or manual on how to operate which is due to lack of integration among government institutions and community based organizations. There is no particular strategy followed in the process which effect regularity. In the mean time the support from the police is not adequate encouraging management of crime at local level. Actions are taken based on the decision of volunteers which are driven by moral values of the community and laws are not followed in the process of execution. Sometimes violation of human rights is reported. Equipments and funds are also not adequately provided by community and even from the police for effective participation. Moreover there is no insurance policy for volunteers while they are on duty which put the volunteers at a great risk. However the support of the community providing place for duty, refreshment and moral support helps to manage volunteerism in community crime prevention.

Volunteering offers important benefits to individuals, communities and society as a whole. The feeling of responsibility towards safety of community and commitment to community based organization is the main driving force of volunteerism where motivation is without remuneration. Personal enhancement and the need for volunteers are not observed at a greater level. Moreover the support of the government or community based organization is also minimal in terms of training and equipments and there is no proper insurance for volunteers which increase the risk taken by volunteers. Volunteerism towards crime prevention in Mizoram is entirely based on intrinsic and traditional Mizo values called 'tlawmngaihna' meaning altruism.

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