

Police officers' perceptions of the people's complaints regarding police use of excessive force in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

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Abstract

It is commonly known that Papua New Guinea (PNG) has been facing the problem of police brutality. Ordinary Papua New Guineans often say that police brutality is common in PNG like other developing countries, or even worse. In most police brutality cases, the opinions and cries from the public dominate the discussion and police officers are not given the chance to speak and give their side of the story. Understanding of the reasons behind the use of police brutality in police practice is not well-known. This research focuses on the perspectives of police officers in Badili, Gordons, Gerehu and Boroko police stations in Port Moresby. It aims to establish, from the perspective of officers working at those police stations, the reasons for and/or the causes of police brutality. There are many reports on police brutality written at the international and national level. However, few reports contain the perception of police officers and the causes of police brutality. What is more, no research on this topic has been conducted in PNG to establish the causes of police brutality. This is necessary to provide a greater understanding of the issue for concerned stakeholders. This paper presents the police officers' perception, and provides insights into their training, obedience and disobedience to protocols and directives. The paper concludes with recommendations for the key stakeholders' consideration to mitigate the issue of police brutality in PNG.

Key words: Police brutality, excessive force, generalizing, reasonable force, Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary.

Police brutality - a global and local issue

Police brutality or police use of excessive force is a national, as well as a global issue. This becomes evident as the Human Rights Committee under the United Nations Human Rights System, attempts to address incidents of police brutality in states which are party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Chávez, n.d.). According to Danilina (n.d.), police brutality is "*the use of excessive and/or unnecessary force by police when dealing with civilians*". "Excessive use of force" means force that is well beyond what would be necessary in order to deal with a situation. The terms "police brutality" and "excessive force" will be used interchangeably in this study.

Police brutality can be severely harmful to a person's life and can have both short and long-term physical, emotional and psychological effects on a person. It is a global problem and in Papua New Guinea (PNG), as in many other countries, police officers are accused of harassing civilians taking advantage of the fact that many

civilians do not know or are unable to exercise their rights. The ongoing issue of police brutality in PNG is expressed strongly by the member for Madang Open, Honourable Bryan Kramer, as a major concern for the country (Gware, 2019). Moreover, in a news article published in Post Courier, "*police brutality tops the list of offences which stands at K131 million in litigation matters against the State dating as far back as 1992*" (Zarriga, 2019).

It is generally known and stated in the constitution of PNG that the "...primary functions of the Police Force are ... (a) to preserve peace and good order in the country; and (b) to maintain and, as necessary, enforce the law in an impartial and objective manner" (Government of Papua New Guinea, 1975, sec. 197). However, it has been observed throughout the country that the police force is often not only ineffective in carrying out their duties, but are also committing offences and breaking laws themselves. There have been reports by the public on police brutality and many are vocal about this. However, it is less common to hear the views of the police officers, hence the aim of this study is to provide an understanding from the police officers' points of view on the issue. It is hoped that an improved understanding will help relevant stakeholders to develop appropriate strategies to minimise the problem.

The most reported cases in the academic literature of inhumane acts of police brutality in the developed world concern police officers in the United States of America (USA). "*Historic rates of fatal police shootings in Europe suggest that USA police in 2014 were 18 times more lethal than Danish police and 100 times more lethal than Finnish police, plus they killed significantly more frequently than police in France, Sweden and other European countries*" (Hirschfield, 2015). Many countries have explored options or ways to mitigate this issue, such as providing counselling to cater for the unique problems related to police work. This came about when "police psychology" began to emerge as a distinct field in psychology in the 1980's.

The literature on the causes, effects and controlling of police use of excessive force is evident mostly in other more developed countries in the world. There has been little or none in the unique context of PNG. McLeod and Macintyre (2010) presented perceptions of police officers on violence related to HIV/AIDS, gender and prostitution, but there is nothing on the police officers' perceptions regarding the complaints against them. In PNG, the public is very vocal about the issue of police brutality, but often times, the police remain silent or retreat from the media, leaving no balanced view on the issue.

The history of police officers in PNG dates back to the colonial times. Reed (2011) describes the history of police brutality in the historical context of PNG as follows:

"First German and British and then Australian colonial regimes in Papua New Guinea rested to a large extent on the ability of European patrol officers to impose their authority through extra-legal punitive measures: organized raids of villages, house burnings, shootings and punishment beatings... To a large extent, the officer's indigenous armed constabulary

carried out these measures...Indeed they were trained to operate throughout the country as a kind of para-military force” (p. 23).

Several theories are put forward to explain the causes of police brutality in different contexts, including sociological, psychological and organizational theories. Police officers' actions and reactions depend on how they are directed and controlled, whether or not they receive rewards or punishments and if there is a standard operating procedure for them to follow. Additionally, Scrivner (1994) and Gilio-Whitaker (2017) state that personality disorders, personal problems and past work related traumas are contributing psychological factors. The sub-culture in the workplace also shapes their actions (Chappell & Piquero, 2004). Racial and class prejudice also contributes to police brutality (Mitrani, 2015; People's World, 2004; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Worden, 1995; Bradshaw, 2009). In *Ethics and the Police* (2008), police brutality took place because police officers were not educated adequately in law and in their duties. Further, some were commanded by various local political organizations to carry out some of these acts. Another contributing factor in police use of excessive force in PNG would be culture. Though police officers are trained and educated in the Western justice system, they are still heavily grounded in their culture and the Melanesian way of solving conflict, which involves much violence (McLeod & Macintyre, 2010).

The literature shows a number of effects of police brutality at different layers of society and for the individual survivors. Socially, McCool (2015) posits that society is divided because the survivors of police brutality are often from the minority of the population. Psychologically, survivors of police brutality may develop post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), causing panic attacks, suicidal tendencies or substance abuse and depression. For survivors in PNG it is very traumatizing. Reed (2011) for example, discusses examples of the impacts of police brutality on inmates in Bomana prison, Port Moresby. Reed (2011) explains that:

“...inmates speak of post-capture maiming and deliberate shootings, fear of the injury that police might inflict dominates not just the waking thoughts of prisoners but also their night time sleep. Individuals report and discuss among cellmates dreams of chase and violent seizure; typically, the dreamer is running away from the Constabulary, trying to evade arrest, but is eventually caught and beaten, kicked or shot. Another common dream image involves being pursued and bitten by police dogs. The sight of screaming bodies and blood soaked faces in dreaming is usually taken to indicate the fate of comrades in the city” (p. 23).

Financially, in successful cases against the police department, the survivors are compensated by the state with millions of kina in taxpayers' money for damages done by police officers (Cohen, 2014). In PNG, Mark (2018) reported how in May 2014, police officers burnt the houses of settlers in Madang as part of an eviction exercise. This act came at a cost of more than K3 million charged to the State and the RD Fishing PNG Ltd.

Training and recruiting

In PNG, the training and recruiting of police officers is still a challenge and is continuously being critiqued and developed. The initial duration of police training in PNG is six months, and the recruitment age has been lifted to 35 to allow more mature people into the force (Waeda, 2016). However, this has yet to take effect. The ratio of police to population in 2004 was 1:1,121. For a better quality output in the training and recruitment of police officers, a new team was set up to review the recruitment program and present the report to the office of the Police Commissioner (Gunga, 2017). Recently, some police officers have participated in management and analytical skills training, interviewing techniques and human rights and law enforcement workshops. In 2016, four female officers from the Royal PNG Constabulary (RPNGC) received certificates for their participation in the first United Nations Human Rights Pilot training workshop in Bomana Police Training College (Kora, 2016).

Vulnerable groups

The groups most vulnerable to police brutality are children and women. Children and youths are physically and sexually assaulted by police officers for simply being on the streets or for committing petty crimes. Boys are at risk of being sodomized and killed (Human Rights Watch, 2005), while girls and women are at risk of being raped or sexually assaulted (Garrett, 2014). All children may be vulnerable to police abuse, but children assumed to be gang members, child sex workers, street vendors and boys involved in homosexual practices are often targeted (Human Rights Watch, 2005). These examples are further supported by the PNG Human Rights Report (2016), which notes “...severe police abuse of detainees and police abuse of citizens; violence and discrimination against women and girls; and vigilante killings and abuses, some related to alleged involvement in sorcery and witchcraft” (p. 1).

Complaints and reports

There are many official complaints of police brutality in PNG. The PNG Human Rights Report (2016) states:

“In January the Police Commissioner told the media that from 2007 to 2014, there were 1,600 complaints of police abuse, resulting in demotions for 134 officers; monetary fines for another 417; and the clearing of 202 officers. He stated that over the same period, authorities recommended more than 600 dismissals but only 247 were successful, as the courts dismissed most of the cases.” (p. 5)

There have also been complaints from asylum seekers on Manus Island regarding police violence (Martin, 2017). It is reported that police officers in PNG disregard the law and commit sexual offences against the public and misuse their power and resources (INA, 2004). In 2016, according to a report from Melanesia Papua, 41 police officers in Port Moresby were suspended and faced with 89 charges. There are also reports of officers drinking alcohol and while in uniform driving in police

vehicles and harassing women (Papiali, 2012). In their report, McLeod and Macintyre (2010) revealed police officers' perceptions regarding the use of violence in solving conflicts in PNG.

“Like many other Papua New Guineans, police share attitudes towards the use of violence as a way of ‘resolving’ disputes or solving problems that are often at odds with Western liberal values enshrined in law. Thus in a meeting with policewomen where the subject of training in ‘mediation’ and ‘dispute resolution’ was being discussed, the majority of women present endorsed the idea that a woman had the right to physically assault another woman who was having an affair with her husband. While some believed that it should still be considered criminal assault, most were of the view that it should be treated with leniency... The women who participated in the discussion justified their use of violence ... as both ‘natural’ and in terms of Papua New Guinea ‘custom’. They were convinced that in administering a beating they were simultaneously venting their anger, ensuring that the woman would not continue her adulterous affair, and enacting a justifiable punishment”. (p. 168)

Approaches to address police brutality

In an attempt to mitigate police brutality in the country, an administrative review committee was formed to address internal misconduct in the RPNGC resulting in action such as inspections of police stations and offices and skills training education in management and human rights. Juvenile courts and guidelines were recently established to cater for juvenile cases (Gunga, 2016; Melanesia Papua, 2016; Radio New Zealand, 2016). Human Rights Watch (2005) appealed to the PNG government to “*publicly repudiate police violence, dismiss and prosecute perpetrators and designate an independent body to monitor police violence against children*”.

Method

In this study, semi-structured, one-to-one interviews were conducted. Ten police officers, from three Port Moresby police stations agreed to be interviewed. Participants comprised both more experienced and older police officers and the less experienced, younger police officers. The selection was aimed to be gender balanced, however there were only three female officers available. While none of those invited refused to be part of the study, some did refuse to answer some questions. Interviews were recorded on a mobile phone and later transcribed, coded, and put into themes, and subthemes for analysis. Although the findings of this research cannot be generalized, it may serve as a model for similar research projects in other parts of PNG.

Findings

To ensure confidentiality, participants are referred to as Police Officer (PO) 1 – 10. For example, Police participant 1 would be: PO1. The data produced four main

themes, which were: training, perception of police officers, reasons for police use of excessive force and tactics of arrest.

1. Training

During the interview, much was said about the training received in Bomana. Presented is the type of training received, its effectiveness and the timeframe of the training.

1.1 Types of training

All the participants had similar responses to the type of training they received at the college. They mentioned three types of training: drills, physical fitness and academic, with theory and practical components. In drills, they learnt how to march and salute and basically how to groom and conduct themselves as police officers. In physical fitness, they would train and do exercises to be physically fit. They also did weapons training, and how to use their voices to give commands or speak to the public. The tough physical training for new recruits is given to both men and women, with no gender preference. *"...at Bomana we were all treated as men, not females, that's what the instructors tell us. What the men do, we do that too"* (Female PO). This very challenging training is intended to instil discipline into the recruits.

According to the participants in this study, a key part of their training was academic in nature. This involves learning how to collect evidence, interviewing techniques, investigation, preparing court files, learning how to make an arrest, taking witness statements, learning basic law and how to prosecute people. As part of their practical, PO10 stated that, they also conducted practical road traffic monitoring, to demonstrate their classroom learning.

1.2. Effectiveness of training

Each participant had their own way of measuring the effectiveness of their training, which could be influenced by factors such as, the different police officers' attitude and mentality, geography and police station. According to the more experienced participants, their training in the past was more effective than that of new recruits. One stated that prior to the year 2000, police brutality was not so common or severe. However, after that year, police brutality became an issue, due to the inadequate training given. The officer went on to say that *"the training that is given at the Bomana police college, is very poor, pathetic, sub-standard if I can describe"* (PO2, Male). The older police officers describe their training as tougher than the current training of the recruits. Despite these statements, from assessing his colleagues, a younger police officer described his training as *"alright, but, they need to extend the time of training. Like 6 months is not enough"* (PO7, Male). However, two participants disagreed, saying that their training was effective, but successful application depended on the mentality and attitude of individual police officers.

Another factor like geography was mentioned when asked about their training's effectiveness. PO1, indicated that in the towns and cities, the training proved to be more effective. However, it is the opposite for the rural areas because of the geographic condition, the strong familial and communal ties, and the problem of transport. He went on to say that successfully prosecuting an offender is often ineffective in rural areas *because "...sometimes, the suspects may know the boss up there"* (PO1, Male). Therefore, bringing justice to the complainant is sometimes unsuccessful. PO5 stated that the training is ineffective because of the lack of discipline portrayed by the new recruits.

1.3 Timeframe for training

One of the young participants (PO7), defended that the training is sufficient but said that it is confusing for them to know what to follow when they are in the field. He says, *"When making an arrest. Okay, in theory you learn the procedures of arrest, but when you come out to the field, policemen do not follow that arrest process. They do whatever they want and arrest how they want. It is different, that is why it is confusing"* (PO7, Male). Additionally, the majority of those interviewed agreed that the timeframe of their training is simply not enough and they needed more time.

2. Perceptions of police officers

The participants had various responses to the question about the public's complaints against police officers regarding police brutality in the country. Presented below are these perspectives in relation to the sub-themes.

2.1. Complaints from public

According to the participants, the complaints made against them about police brutality are unfair and stereotypical. PO1 protested that many people who are not victims complain about police use of excessive force. These are usually the ones who benefit from the crime that the criminal or offender commits. PO1 and PO3 also said that those who complain about police brutality are those who are arrested and locked up for committing crimes. They complain about the treatment they receive but never speak of the crime they committed. Instead, they go to the media and blow it out of proportion. One participant said *"the public use the media as a tool to attack police, and they blow it out of proportion without trying to understand police officers and where they are coming from"* (PO2, Male). Another revealed that the public *"... only see the bad that is being done by a few police officers and they put it out on the media. This has made us very unhappy"* (PO9, Female).

Interviewees said that all police officers are not the same. But what the public is doing is stereotyping all police officers to their experience with the few bad officers. *"The public judge without seeing the real content of the issue or matter"* (PO3, Male). It is not about police officers being one-sided in their statements, responded PO2. Many of the participants stated that it is a fact that some police officers use excessive force, but not everyone is the same. They feel very hurt and troubled when the public blow things out of proportion because there are many

good, hard-working police officers in the workforce. The participants stated that if the public wanted to correct police officers, there are proper steps to follow to lay complaints and charge or arrest police officers who are acting out of line, instead of running to the media. PO10 expressed her unexpected shame when wearing the uniform because of some of these complaints against police officers.

2.2 The use of excessive force in police practice

According to a majority of the participants, the use of excessive force has become a part of police practice, and for a number of reasons which will be discussed below. PO2 disclosed that police officers will try their best to contain a situation, and in the act of containing that situation, “brutality” or excessive force may be used. He went on to say that *“excessive force was used in the Bible to maintain peace and good order, hence, if there is no brutality, people will run wild...”* (PO2, Male). Participants reinforced that if strong measures are not used on criminals or offenders, the public may see them (police officers) as ineffective or of no use and they may lose the respect of the public. That is why *“we have to maintain a stronger arm of the law. So that people will know there is law and order. Once we do that, some kind of brutality will always pop up”* (PO2, Male).

2.3. The use of corporal punishment in police practice

While three of the participants agreed that corporal punishment is necessary, the other seven disagreed. PO8 and PO1, declared that it is necessary to use corporal punishment to teach the perpetrators a lesson, especially if they have been caught several times committing the same offence. Furthermore, PO1 stressed that, in order to prevent this criminal behaviour from influencing the younger generation, one has to be taught a lesson; action needs to be done where words fail. PO3 affirmed that but believes that less severe measures can be taken to teach an offender a lesson:

“...For juveniles, in a case like drunken disorderly, we tell them to remain in the cell for 24 hours. After the person is sober, we release him outside and tell him to clean around the area and then let him go and give them a strong warning... But otherwise, corporal punishment is not allowed, under the law” (PO3, Male).

PO6 maintains that if the offender is already in police custody, then officers do not have the right to touch or punish them. PO10 additionally says it is embarrassing for her that police officers beat up suspects or offenders in an attempt to punish them. *“It is like double punishment – beating them and then charging them legally. They should just let the law deal with the lawbreaker”* (PO10, Female).

2.4. Groups vulnerable to police use of excessive force

According to the participants interviewed, the vulnerable groups are youths and children. PO9 and PO8 stated that it is the youths who are the main victims, as many of them are street vendors. *“For example, they sell stuff on the street which is not the appropriate place to sell things, and also the ones along the traffic lights.*

They carry stuff and sell along there” (PO8, Male). He went on to say that, out of frustration that youths do not obey rules, police officers may exercise excessive force. Surprisingly, in one way or another, there were similar responses from each participant stating that the main victims of police use of excessive force are young people, who are street vending for a living.

3. Reasons of police use of excessive force

Interviewees said that the police do not always use excessive force and that it depends on the context in PNG and the situation. Below are the key reasons for police use of excessive force identified in this study.

3.1. Challenges in policing

A police officer faces many challenges when on duty and even off duty. Some of these challenges then become the grounds for the use of excessive force in dealing with offenders. The first challenge of an officer is the lack of support from the community. PO9 stated that though the older officers helped make their transition from the college into the police force easier, their actual task in the field is challenging because the community did not cooperate with them in apprehending criminals. At times criminals would run into a local community and hide and the people would protect them.

PO8 admits that housing is a challenge when they are being sent to other provinces. If there is a shortage of funds, they end up sleeping in other police officers' houses. Another challenge expressed by PO1 is that, Papua New Guinea's unique mountainous terrain proves to be a challenge in policing as there is the problem of transport and other resources in the rural areas. This prevents them from effectively carrying out their tasks. The increasing normalization of the “wantok-system” (favouring relatives) is also a challenge in the police enforcing the law.

Another very challenging situation the participants mentioned was the lack of man power in the police force. “It is frustrating because the number of police officers is insufficient for the size of the population in the nation” (PO1, male). This, he mentioned, is associated with the poor welfare of police officers in the country.

Lack of counselling is also a challenge that contributes to the use of excessive force. PO10 agrees “*The Internal Investigation Unit deals with police officers who practice police brutality. But there are no counselling services available for police officers. We really need one though. We have a chaplain but it is not so effective*”.

Furthermore, PO5 reported: “*It is very important. Because I remember, I said earlier that it is the one thing causing police brutality. Because all this anger is in them. Yeah, and since there is no counselling done now, they tend to take it out on the public.*”

Finally, it is challenging for a policeman to wake up in the morning and go to work, knowing how unpredictable their job is. Every day their life is on the line, and it is challenging to confront criminals and uphold the law while thinking about going

back home to their families in one piece at the end of the day. This is expressed by all of the participants. They all repeated, in one way or another, that it is almost always a life and death situation for police officers.

3.2. Personal factors

There are some personal factors contributing to the issues and challenges faced by officers. For example, PO5 says due to mismanagement of their finances, police officers are unable to provide for their families and as a result, they are psychologically disturbed from their work and they take this out on petty crime offenders. Some come into work in the morning with marriage problems at home or family arguments. As a result, *"if a man commits a crime, like for example street vendors, he beats them up and this is one example of how the problem of police brutality increases"* (PO8, Male). Moreover, when new recruits come down from their training, they express their anger from the strenuous and painful training on offenders who commit petty crimes.

The use of excessive force would also be a matter of pride and power, for some police officers. For instance, PO8 and PO1, claimed that when police officers wear the police uniform, they feel powerful and that they can do whatever they want. *"They want to show that they are stronger than the civilians... it is a kind of pride"* (PO10, Female). Additionally, PO8 and PO5 held that officers who consume alcohol on duty tend to use more force than those who do not.

According to PO3, a major problem that is affecting police officers and is the cause of the way in which some officers behave, is the frustration of housing. Living in settlements and in rundown barracks or houses with electricity and water problems, officers have to cater for their family, and turn up for work every day surrounded by other pressures like dealing with criminals. A participant expresses his frustration, *"how can we do our work properly when our house is not in order? If you want the best result at the work site, the welfare of the policemen needs to be looked after"* (PO3, male). PO8 stated that many officers either rent rooms or houses or sleep in their parents' house or other policemen's houses and go to work. It is noted that, in a big contrast, PO5 from the Police Headquarters, expressed that housing is provided and water and electricity is definitely not a problem.

3.3. Line of duty

According to the participants there are many factors that contribute to police brutality; as PO5 mentioned, some police officers are deployed for duty away from their families for three to five months. This causes depression and when provoked by the public, they react using force. Furthermore, excessive force is used when the public do not cooperate and listen to the police officers. This provokes the officers to react violently. For instance, according to four participants, police officers become frustrated speaking to street vendors continuously. Hence, out of frustration, excessive force is used to stop them from breaking the law and selling at places that are not allocated for them to sell. PO3 says that when the environment becomes extreme, such as when pursuing a criminal, excessive force is used to contain the situation and also to release their frustration. PO7 said that though it is

not necessary to hit offenders, since it is not what they learnt in training, some police officers do so anyway, out of frustration. Moreover, excessive force is used when criminals or suspects refuse to be brought into the police station for questioning. Out of frustration and anger, excessive force is also used on those who are harbouring criminals. PO9 (Female) comments, *“they (offenders) do not cooperate so it is difficult for us to bring them in... They are very stubborn and they want to talk back to police officers and fight back”*.

According to PO5 from the headquarters, the government has provided all that the police force needs to function as a law enforcing body in the country. However, the rest of the participants disagree with this statement. PO3 stated that the government does not really support them with important resources such as, logistics. *“For example, my air con is not working; no extra tyres for cars, no radio, the cell block lights have gone off”* (PO6, Male). PO6 also said that there are not enough or no computers at police stations to prepare court files and other resources needed to do their jobs quickly and efficiently. When asked if the government has been supporting the police force, PO9 (Female) stated that, *“the government has no money so there’s no paper or ink to fill in files and print them. So, here we are now using pen and paper, to do work preparing court files and such”*. However, PO10 stated that it is up to the commissioner and those in charge to allocate and wisely manage the resources that the government has given to their respective stations or districts.

Another reason given for the police use of excessive force was that police officers sometimes act out of personal anger toward the perpetrator, for instance, those involved in rape cases, assault or abuse. Police officers understand and sympathize with the victims and their families. Out of anger and frustration toward what has been done to the victim, it is almost as if they take revenge for the victims’ sake and apply excessive force when dealing with the perpetrator.

Occasionally, excessive force is used when corruption is practiced within the workforce. PO1 mentioned that sometimes their work becomes *“bottle necked”* because the suspect they are trying to arrest may know someone high up in the hierarchy, so then they are caught between choosing to let it go and keep their job, or fight for justice, and lose their job. If they choose the first option, it produces the possibility of the continuous practice of excessive force. Moreover, PO1 stated that some actions carried out using excessive force are done to serve another person’s interests. This allows for the use of excessive force through corruption within the police force itself.

4. Tactics of arrest: The public and the police

Respondents spoke of the different tactics of arrest when approaching an offender. Presented below are the procedures of arrest of offenders, including the public and the police, according to the study.

4.1. Protocols of arrest

When asked about the normal procedure of arrest, the participants responded in almost identical ways. PO1 stated that his way of responding to lawbreakers is to talk to them. In talking to convince offenders and perhaps those harbouring them, he says that it will prevent any other possible conflicts. PO7 (Male) stated that:

“Firstly, the complaint must be formally lodged at the station to be recorded. After the complaint is lodged, you can proceed to where you can get the suspect’s name and the name of the place where they live. Then you must not enter to the house, but stand outside and ask for the name and such, because you do not have a warrant... If he/she is there, then you simply ask questions and let them know why you are there. And then ask him/her to come with you willingly to the station and tell him/her of their offence, then you charge them and read them their rights and formally arrest them”.

Three participants agreed that it is very important that suspects understand why they are arrested. After being charged, court files are prepared. And if the suspect needs a lawyer then they will be advised to get one. PO5 responded saying that the offenders, whether guilty or not, should be taken in peacefully without harm, but if they refuse, then reasonable force can be used. PO3 (Male) stated that proper analysis of the situation needs to be done: *“If there are no elements to convict the offender, then they are cautioned and advised to settle the dispute outside of the courts. However, if there are elements to convict, we proceed with the process of arrest”*.

PO4 stated that in cases where the criminals are very dangerous, such as cases involving guns, then it is only reasonable to use force and fight back to defend themselves. For cases like that, protocols do not need to be followed. *“It is either them or us, so we need to be prepared. However, for minor things like traffic offences and such, there are protocols to be followed”* (PO4, Male). PO1 stated that it is imperative to take an injured suspect to the hospital before bringing him into custody.

PO9 responded saying that in sensitive cases like rape, the offenders are always alert, so police do not go out looking for them. They inform the victims and their families to watch the offender and see where they are staying. Then they contact the police to come to where the offender is and arrest him. Cases like these are dealt with by the Family and Sexual Violence Unit (FSVU) of the station.

4.2. Reporting police who break the law

All participants agreed that there are certain police officers who do not follow the protocols of arrest. For instance, a new recruit PO7 stated that it was confusing for him to see older police officers not following the protocols of arrest that they were taught to follow; *“When you go, you do not go to arrest, they go in the house and hit the suspects. So, sometimes they take innocent people and ask for their names and hit them”* (PO7, Male). One participant said, generally most police officers do not follow protocol; *“they think that when they are wearing that uniform, they have*

the power to do whatever they want to. But they should know that we are all under the law” (PO5, Female).

In cases of police officers breaking the law, PO6 responded that the Internal Investigation Unit is there to respond to complaints lodged against police officers. *“The complainants go through them and send their complaints. They get their statement, do the internal investigation and then they find out who has done the violent act and they arrest them and charge them criminally. Some are removed from work or if they have a rank, they are demoted” (PO9, Female).*

Discussion

The findings suggest that one of the major contributing factors to the police use of excessive force is the quality of training received by the police officers. The main types of training received in the college were drills, physical fitness and academic, with theory and practical components. The drills are the basics of policing that all police officers should know, and this sets the foundation for the whole training. This will help them implement their duty, which is to “Protect life and property”. Though the physical training is tough, there is no ongoing training program of the RPNGC after graduation, which is why many police officers are seen as physically unfit due to the lack of physical training after their six months training in Bomana Police College. The academic part of the training on the other hand is ongoing, although irregular. The government in conjunction with the police department in PNG, organizes workshops for the police officers, to enhance their knowledge in specific areas, to be competent in their work in the 21st Century.

In interviewing different age groups of police officers, the researcher identified variance in their answers in terms of their training’s effectiveness. The researcher was informed that the kind of tough training given to the older police officers, are not given to the new recruits. Some claim that when put in the field, many new recruits are considered ill-disciplined not only in terms of arresting criminals, but in conduct, dressing and speech. After considering the different responses from the participants, it appears that the training of police officers in the Bomana Police Training College is effective in as much as the individual police officer is willing to execute what he or she has learnt.

The effectiveness of their training however, is truly tested though when new recruits enter the field. Furthermore, a number of different factors contribute to the effectiveness of the training when the officer is in the field, such as corruption or the “wantok-system”. In some cases, police officers do not effectively execute their roles due to fear of losing their jobs. Another factor is the confusion arising from the lack of effective application of rules and regulations within the police force. If the station commander or officer in charge of police officers in a certain station does not effectively establish rules and regulations, police officers may act out of line. This is observed by many of the general public, as well as other officers.

There is no specific requirement for how long a police officer should train. Training around the world could be 6 months or 4 years depending on each country. However, from those interviewed it is generally thought that the timeframe of the

training in the police training college in PNG is inadequate. More time is needed in the training of police officers to mould them to become knowledgeable and competent, good law enforcing agents of the nation. It is important that they learn more academically and in weapons training, since PNG is moving into a modern era, and the problems that come with it need police officers who are adequately trained to handle these problems in the unique context of PNG.

From the interviews, it emerged that police officers do not appreciate public criticism, especially in the media when those criticising do not understand the situation and the events leading up to the use of excessive force. Not all police officers use excessive force, however, the public and the media have for too long, stereotyped and generalized the police force. The psychological theory of the causes of police brutality (Worden, 1995), supports the statement that not all police officers are the same; different police officers, depending on their background and especially education and experience in the force, will react differently in similar situations. Interviewees noted that some people try to take advantage of the negative statements made on social media and manipulate the general public's perception of the police. If police use of excessive force is already a problem, then definitely the public appear to take the side of the 'victim', even if he or she was the instigator. Furthermore, it was surprising for the researcher to find that some of the people who complain about police excessive use of force or police brutality, are repeat offenders and those who benefit from the criminal activities carried out by the criminals.

In a report on the RPNGC, McLeod and Macintyre (2010), note: "*Like many other Papua New Guineans, police share attitudes towards the use of violence as a way of 'resolving' disputes or solving problems that are often at odds with western liberal values enshrined in law*" (p. 168). This supports the responses of the participants regarding the use of excessive force in police practice. Even after being trained, some police officers still have that mentality, which is generally shaped by the Papua New Guinean culture, of resolving issues the "violent" way. Reasonable force is allowed by the law, but there are instances where this line is over-stepped, and excessive force is used. There seems to be a confusion in the police force when the Western way of policing and law is mixed with the Melanesian way of apprehending criminals. Their upbringing, their environment and culture expects Papua New Guinean police officers to address issues in a way that is the opposite of what the Western law requires of them. McLeod and Macintyre (2010), reported that, in one of their focus groups in the Highlands Region, several community groups stated that they respect the police more when they show their guns and use humiliation and violence in apprehending offenders. It is even cheered on by onlookers as an approved form of justice.

From the data, corporal punishment is disapproved of by majority of the participants. They think of it as a form of punishment for chronic offenders – those who continuously commit the same crime. This form of punishment is seen to be used on juvenile offenders or committers of petty theft. To beat an offender may be seen as punishment by some, and also as an outlet of frustration. Though disapproved by some, it is still practiced and often accepted.

Human Rights Watch (2014) states that the groups most vulnerable to police brutality or use of excessive force, are women, children and young people. Furthermore, the PNG Human Rights report (2016) notes that vulnerable groups also include detainees and women and girls. Those interviewed agreed. This is simply because most youths in towns are unemployed, so they resort to other criminal activities to either pass time or to provide for their basic needs. The lack of support and opportunity given to them makes them vulnerable to police use of excessive force. Furthermore, these young people and children who are homeless are marginalized and do not have the protection and support of a family to shield them against any brutal acts of the police force. Not only that, there is also stereotyping of unemployed youths who are perceived as “raskols” simply because they have no formal employment, and just pass time on the street. Since there are some corrupt police officers, the young people and children are taken advantage of and even abused by those police officers, under the guise of “enforcing law”.

Police use of excessive force is triggered by a number of factors. According to the literature, it would seem that one of the main causes of police brutality in other Western countries like the United States of America (USA), is racism (Walker & Wright, 1995; Fryer, 2016; Fridkin, et al., 2017). However, in PNG, it is rather a combination of different factors that contribute to the police use of excessive force. One key challenge in policing that contributes towards police use of excessive force is lack of community support. Lack of support from community occurs when communities protect a member of their community, who is a criminal, and if they are benefiting from the offender’s illegal ways of earning a living. This springs from the strong familial and communal ties in Melanesia. Another key challenge is housing. This is very evident in the police barracks in Gordons, Port Moresby. It was observed that one family lives in a single unit and the whole environment and infrastructure is simply not adequate. This issue is also supported by literature, as for example, McLeod and Macintyre (2010) reports:

“The single men’s barracks in which he lived had been condemned by health authorities, there was no married housing available and his wife and children lived in a squatter settlement. Wages are low; facilities often inadequate and there are often budget shortfalls that mean cars cannot be serviced or fuelled; phones do not work and fax machines or photocopiers cannot be maintained. Police resentment of Australian advisers often derives from their belief that the funds allotted to projects aimed at expanding training or ‘capacity-building’ would be better spent on infrastructure and maintenance so that they could perform their duties efficiently” (p. 171).

Furthermore, when deployed to other provinces, police officers sometimes do not have suitable housing available for them, which is then a hindrance to them doing their job properly. Other challenges include geographical challenges – especially in rural areas – transport and lack of resources, “wantok-system” or corruption within the police force and justice system. Sometimes justice is not done when the suspects or perpetrators know the station commander or “the boss”. This is where the police officer is caught between saving his job to support his family by letting the guilty party go; or fighting for justice with the chance of losing his job.

The challenge of lack of man-power or human resource in the police force, is also a contributing factor towards the use of excessive force. As stated above, in 2004, the ratio of police to population was 1:1,121 (INA, Police review report), while the United Nations recommended police-population ratio is 1:450. That, by regional and national standards is small. Almost a decade later, in 2013, data shows that, the police population was 5,387. And in 2017, it was estimated to be around 7,000 (Dinnen, 2017). Both Dinnen (2017) and INA (2004) agree that police resourcing in PNG is inadequate and needs to be improved to maintain law and order and to protect citizens.

Becoming a police officer is not attractive because of the current state of the police force, in terms of salary, housing, availability of resources and so forth. This is in line with the organizational theory of the causes of police brutality in other parts of the world (Worden, 1995), where the formal structure and organization influences the police officers' behaviour, especially systems of incentives and disincentives. These contribute to the police use of excessive force when dealing with offenders or the general public.

Counselling is also seen as a major challenge in policing. Without proper debriefing after traumatizing and challenging experiences in the field as well as, counselling for other personal problems, police officers may well express their frustration on the offenders that they deal with. According to Scrivener (1994), police officers with personal problems such as those going through a divorce or a separation have a greater chance of practicing brutality in police work. Releasing their stress from their training on offenders can also be classified as displaced anger. Counselling is needed in this area due to the fact that officers need to deal with their anger and personal problems before getting on the field and releasing their frustration on law breakers. Looking at the personal factors contributing towards the police use of excessive force, pride and power emerges. Supported by the psychological theory on the causes of police brutality (Worden, 1995), police officers with "authoritarian" personalities tend to use more force to display their power and control over the offenders. This is more of a psychological problem that should be dealt with through counselling within the police force. Many officers become traumatized by some of their experiences, and without a proper outlet, they resort to other ways of expressing their trauma. It was conveyed that even though there was a chaplain, his job was not as effective, and there is a growing number of police officers who need to go for counselling.

From the study, it appears that the police release the accumulation of stress through the use of excessive force when provoked by the public. The stress is an accumulation of being deployed away from their homes and families, lack of cooperation from the public or community, the frustration of speaking to and dealing with chronic offenders, pursuit of criminals in an extreme environment, and the lack of compliance from the law breakers or offenders when being asked to go to the police station. There is also stress from the lack of government support, via vital resources for them to carry out their tasks effectively. Without the proper resources, the police force cannot be expected to effectively implement their roles.

In their line of duty, police officers are faced with sensitive cases like rape. Seeing the state of the victim and the families, police officers empathize, and in empathizing, they might feel the urge to avenge the crime. Though it is not lawful to do so, especially in their line of work, it is encouraged by other members of the force and even the public (McLeod & Macintyre, 2010). Furthermore, work stress is related to corruption when general police officers are put in a situation where they are intimidated by their bosses. If their bosses are involved in corrupt or unjust acts, they do not report it or speak against them for fear of being terminated from work. This allows for the use of excessive force through corruption within the police force itself.

Though there are formal procedures to follow when arresting offenders, not all officers follow them. This depends on a number of factors as previously discussed. It is assessed that due to such factors mentioned, police officers do not always arrest offenders according to the proper protocols. There are trends elsewhere where less experienced police officers patrol more aggressively and are more likely to make arrests (Worden, 1995). It should also be noted that the longer a police officer serves in the force, the less he or she considers or takes the proper protocols into account when carrying out his or her tasks.

Finally, it seems that the use of excessive force is mostly done in urban areas, the towns and cities. It is not so common in the rural areas mainly because there are a few number of police officers and less police stations and resources in the rural areas. If police officers were to use excessive force in the rural areas, it is perceived that the people will retaliate and outnumber the police officer in manpower, as well as in firearms. This is linked to the strong familial and communal ties that Melanesia is famous for.

Conclusion

Out of the main issues contributing to police use of excessive force, the most mentioned one is the lack of adequate training. Furthermore, the lack of cooperation from the public also contributes to the use of excessive force. Participants said that the public's complaints are too generalized and unfair because there are some good officers trying to do their job, but the lack of resources and support, prevents them from executing their tasks effectively. This has affected not only the work of the law enforcers, but also the relationship and understanding between the officers and the public. Therefore, to build a bridge between the concerned parties, and for the betterment of the communities and the nation, changes are needed according to the recommendations outlined below.

From the findings and the analysis of the data, the researcher has gained an understanding of why police officers behave in a certain way depending on the situation. And that, the media and public may not always be right; there is always another side of the story. Despite stereotypical and generalized comments regarding the behaviour of police officers, this study has found that not all police officers use excessive force in policing. This is the first research done specifically with the police officers in the four suburbs of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. It

may benefit the police officers within the force, the people, the government and any other researcher who would want to conduct a similar study.

Way forward

The way forward in mitigating this issue is presented by the participants themselves which, in their opinion, could minimise the problem of police brutality.

Recommendations:

The first recommendation is addressed to the Station Commanders of respective police stations. The Station Commanders should encourage police officers to go for counselling as a means of taking care of their mental health. Debriefing after traumatizing experiences could be made mandatory for all police officers.

The second recommendation is addressed to the Minister for Police and the Police Commissioner and follows from the first. It is recommended that a trained counsellor and a chaplain be assigned to police stations for the psychological and spiritual health of the police officers, to enable them to do their duties effectively. It is also recommended that the timeframe of training is extended to increase the standards of policing in the country, and that refresher courses be made available for police officers to help them become competent in the 21st Century. Extra courses and/or training should also be given to police officers to develop their skills, knowledge and competency. Furthermore, after they finish from their service in the force, the training may help them take up employment in another sector, instead of being unemployed. It is also recommended that more awareness be done on the function and importance of the Internal Investigation Unit (IIU) to the public in the National Capital District (NCD) and other parts of the nation

The third recommendation is addressed to the Government of Papua New Guinea. It is recommended that the Government, especially in the NCD, provide more marketing places, especially for young street vendors to sell their products. Also, more opportunities should be provided for unemployed youths to help better themselves, such as self-help courses. The Government can work in conjunction with churches, businesses and non-government organizations. The study also lends support for improved housing and accommodation with properly functioning water and power supplies for police officers and their families.

The fourth and final recommendation is addressed to the public – the people of Papua New Guinea. It is recommended that people follow the rule of law set by the government and that they cooperate with and assist police officers to carry out their jobs effectively.

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