

FUNCTIONAL STRATEGIES OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE IN PREVENTION AND COMBATING OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN A SOUTH AFRICAN TOWNSHIP

Petrus Machethe

Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa.
petrusvip@webmail.co.za

Emeka E. Obioha

Walter Sisulu University, South Africa
eobioha@wsu.ac.za; emekaobioha@gmail.com

- Abstract-

This paper focused on the functional strategies and initiatives taken by South African Police Service (SAPS) towards prevention and combating of substance abuse in a South African Township. The study made use of mainly quantitative (survey) method to collect relevant data from 80 participants who were selected from the SAPS, local churches, Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community members. The findings of this study indicate an array of strategies in use. Police regular conduct of stop and search in certain sectors than others, regular patrols, use of reliable volunteer informants (informants), secret detection, tracking and investigation, sharing of crime information tips and education of public, and police partnership with civil organisations were revealed as the sustaining strategies by the SAPS. Critical analysis of these strategies in the study revealed a mixed bag of functionality. Pragmatic suggestions to improve on the lagging strategies were made by this study.

Key words: *Strategies, Police, Civil organisations, drug abuse, South Africa*

JEL Classification: R50, Z18

1. INTRODUCTION

Drug use affects not only individual users, but also their families, friends, co-workers and communities. Children whose parents take drugs are themselves at greater risk of drug use and other risky behaviours. Drugs generate crime, street violence and other social problems that harm communities. In some regions, illicit drug use is contributing to the rapid spread of infectious diseases like human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis (Fedotov, 2011). This view is shared by Fields (2001:54), who pointed that every neighbourhood and community is affected in some way by problems with alcohol and drugs. According to Fields, “no house, farm, tenement, high-rise, or alleyway is immune from alcohol and drugs. Many streets of inner cities are affected with crack cocaine, and other streets are contaminated by heroine. Every family in every community is vulnerable to the problems associated with alcohol and drugs.”

In Gauteng, South Africa, observations suggest that the simultaneous increase in drug use and crime in Tshwane, especially north of Pretoria is becoming unbearable by the residents of the areas as reported in Masombuka (2013:131) and Machethe, (2015). In August, 2012, Ga-Rankuwa residents took matters into their own hands and acted against *Nyaope* drug smokers by setting their hideout, an old abandoned shack on fire. The residents complained of having lost a lot through the burglary and theft activities of the drug addicts who steal to maintain their habit of drug use (Thamage, 2012). Similar incidents have occurred in other surrounding areas where residents have raised concerns or taken initiatives against substance abuse.

The crime and research statistics of Ga-Rankuwa on drug related crime, based on reported cases show an escalation from 487 cases in April 2012 to 721 cases in March 2013. In April 2013 and March 2014 another escalation occurred from 721 to 1033 reported cases (SAPS, 2014). The increasing number of addicts in Tshwane townships and the corresponding number of children and youth involved in this social problem leaves a lot in the hands of the community organisations and South African Police Service to handle.

To deal with the drug problems require collaborative effort of the police, the public housing authorities, other agencies and, most important, the residents themselves (Miller & Hess, 2003: 445). Recently, in Ga-Rankuwa township, certain religious organisations (church groups) and NGOs have intervened to ensure a drug free society through spiritual/faith healing and other strategies to deal with drug abuse. Similarly, the SAPS through their constitutional mandate to

combat crime such as drug addiction has kept up the pace against this drug menace. The presence of SAPS and arrays of its constitutional mandate to eradicate crime, including drug abuse on one hand and the persistent increase on the number of addicts and drug related crimes in Tshwane, especially in the Townships leaves more questions to be answered. The above observation motivated the researchers to engage in this present study. The purpose of this study therefore was to determine the functionality of various strategies employed by SAPS in the prevention and combating of drug abuse in Ga-Rankuwa Township.

2. BRIEF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

2.1 The Police role in drugs abuse prevention

For most people, the formal police role is to answer calls about crime, undertake investigations, make arrests and assists in the prosecution of offenders. Fighting crime and crime prevention is also primarily the responsibility of the police. Consequently, the police are often judged by the level of crime in the community. Arrests are the benchmark by which the public judges police effectiveness (Lab, 2010:210). Lab makes it clear that social crime prevention, specifically drug abuse prevention, control and combating initiative forms part of the responsibility of the police organisation. Lyman and Potter (2003:294), assert that to control drug use and crime associated with drug use is the goal of law enforcement agencies to disrupt organisations that infiltrate neighbourhood and communities. Many business-related facets exist in the drug trade, including the production, manufacturing, transportation, and sale of drugs.

Lyman and Potter (2003:294) list four drug enforcement goals which are; to control drug use, to control drug-related crime and violence, to disrupt the development and growth of criminal organisations and finally, to protect neighbourhoods. Burger (2007:130) maintains that the role of the police should be to identify the socio-economic and other risk factors in crime-prone areas and to provide information to the co-coordinating structures created for this purpose. Alternatively, the police should be able to relay such information to government departments or local authorities who also situate to address those particular problems. From the above views, it is evident that the police play and should continue to play a significant role in drug abuse prevention and combating.

2.2. Theoretical underpinning

The researchers made use of selected theoretical orientations such as Situational Control Theory and Social Control Theory in foregrounding the present study toward a connective understanding between previously known theory and present practical question of police functionality in drug abuse prevention.

Situational Control theory according to Clarke (1997:4) explains that situational crime prevention comprises opportunity-reducing measures such as:

- Measures are directed at highly specific forms of crime;
- Involving the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in as systematic and permanent way as possible;
- Making crime more difficult and risky, or less rewarding and excusable as judged by a wide range of offenders.
- Tailored to highly specific categories of crime.

Social control theory refers to the workings of those elements that keep an individual from committing a criminal or deviant act. Examples include the law enforcement, family, church, and school (Ronald, Sellers & Sellers, and 2013: 21).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Ga-Rankuwa Police station, 2 local churches and 2 NGOs that have taken the social crime prevention role by rehabilitating the drug abusers and attempting to prevent drug abuse through various voluntary community programmes. The study adopted mainly a quantitative research design in exploring this initiative. The study population consisted of male and female South Africans and who either lived or worked in any of the 4 police sectors of Ga-Rankuwa Township from where a total sample size of 80 ordinary community members was drawn, through stratified random sampling method. The mixed method approach was utilized, where survey was conducted in all 4 police sectors with minimal oral interviews as a backup source. Data collected from this process were analyzed by the use of STATA V12 statistical software. Output from the

analysis were presented in tables, which were interpreted and discussed by the researchers.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1. Strategies applied when dealing with drug abuse by South African Police Service.

4.1.1 Stop and Search of drug suspects by police officers

Most of the SAPS participants who were interviewed pointed out Stop and Search strategy as one which is applied everyday by officials that are on duty. Based on police sector, Table 1 reveals that half of the respondents from Police Sector I strongly disagreed that the police conduct stop and search strategy to drug dealer's suspects. Forty percent of respondents from Police Sector IV also disagreed with the statement. Amazingly, 20% of respondents from Sector III and 25% from Sector two II also disagreed with the statement. A further analysis revealed that in all the four Policing Sectors, 20% of the respondents who agreed that the Police conduct Stop and Search of suspected drug dealers reside in Sector three III. Generally, a majority (82.25%) of respondents from all the Police sectors combined inclined to disagree with the existence of Stop and Search Strategy, even though most of the disagreements are from Sector I.

4.1.2 Drug talk shows around the township

One of the police participants interviewed indicated that the police conduct drug talk shows within the community. This police participant indicated that the drug talk shows are included in their financial year plan and are conducted annually around the community halls and stadiums as a programme for social crime prevention. With regard to this strategy, just over half of the total community respondents disagreed having knowledge about the drug talk shows conducted by the police, as 30% also strongly disagreed. Only 8.75% of the respondents were uncertain, while a few (7%) agreed to have viewed the police conducting drug talk shows. Interestingly, the majority of respondents who agreed to the statement are not members of the community-based organisations but only few were church members. Overall, more respondents disagreed (83.73%) that the police hold talk shows in Ga-Rankuwa, which was most expressed in Sector IV, Sector III and

Sector I. The drug talk show is therefore most visible in Sector II Police area of Ga-Rankuwa.

Table 1: Responses on the Key Strategies of Drug Prevention by the Police

Search and Arrests of Drug Suspects						
Policing sectors	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Sector 1	10 (50.00)	10 (50.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	20 (100)
Sector 2	5 (25.00)	11 (55.00)	4 (20.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	20 (100)
Sector 3	4 (20.00)	7 (35.00)	5 (25.00)	4 (20.00)	0(0.00)	20 (100)
sector 4	8 (40.00)	10 (50.00)	2 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	20 (100)
Total	27 (33.75)	38 (47.50)	11 (13.75)	4 (5.00)	0 (0.00)	80 (100)
Drug talk shows by Police Officers						
Policing sectors	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Sector 1	6 (30.00)	11 (55.00)	1(5.00)	2 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	20 (100)
Sector 2	6 (30.00)	8 (40.00)	2 (10.00)	4 (20.00)	0 (0.00)	20 (100)
Sector 3	6 (30.00)	11 (55.00)	3 (15.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	20 (100)
Sector 4	6 (30.00)	13 (65.00)	1 (5.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	20 (100)
Total	24 (30.00)	43 (53.73)	7 (8.75)	6 (7.50)	0 (0.00)	80 (100)
Police vehicle patrol by Sector						
Policing sectors	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Sector 1	0 (0.00)	1(5.00)	1(5.00)	11 (55.00)	7(35.00)	20 (100)
Sector 2	0 (0.00)	5 (25.00)	4 (30.00)	11 (55.00)	0 (0.00)	20 (100)
Sector 3	0 (0.00)	3 (15.00)	8 (40.00)	3 (15.00)	6 (30.00)	20 (100)
Sector 4	0 (0.00)	2 (10.00)	5 (25.00)	9 (45.00)	4 (20.00)	20 (100)
Total	0 (0.00)	11 (13.75)	18 (22.50)	34 (42.50)	17 (21.25)	80 (100)

4.1.3 Police vehicle patrol in neighbourhood

From the study, a large number (42.5%) of respondents agreed that the police are patrolling in their sectors 24 hours daily, while 21.25% strongly agreed. Only 13.75% respondents denied witnessing the police patrolling frequently within their sectors, while 22.5% respondents were uncertain. Overall, a majority of the

respondents (63.75%) agreed that the police patrol with vehicles in their neighbourhood. In further analysis of the data based on police sector, police vehicle neighbourhood patrol is most visible in Police Sector I, followed by Sector IV and Sector II where more respondents agreed that the police patrol their area with vehicles on regular basis. While 45% of respondents in Sector three III agreed on police visibility, a majority of respondents who disagreed in this sector are not overwhelming compared to all other three sectors, except for Sector I.

4.1.4 Use of informants by the police

The study revealed that the drug crime investigation, apprehension, search and seizures of drugs rely heavily on information from informants. The police use informants to get information about criminals. The informants are assumed to have the contact information of the patrolling vehicles in their sectors that they inform with regard to crime they witness or crime that is suspected to be taking place. The SAPS participants who were interviewed highly valued the use of informers as the most important strategy of dealing with drug-related crime. There are few community paid informers in certain sectors than others. All of the police participants interviewed identified this strategy as the most powerful tool for police operations. However, one of the police participants experienced a need for more informers who can provide trusted information to the police while another participants experienced that some of the informers' information cannot be trusted. This participant stated that "some informers might provide misleading or deceiving information that will benefit the drug dealers". Another participant stated that "many drug cases that the informers were involved have led to many arrests of drug abusers and dealers". These statements prove that informers are of utmost importance to bring better results in drug investigations, however the recruitment and use of informants should be handled with care and scrutiny to prevent informers with negative objectives.

4.1.5 Engagement of plain-clothe police officials

The civilian members who perform policing functions are not appointed as police officers but they are under Public Service Act of 1994. One of the SAPS participants pointed out that the civil clothing members who are not visible within the community do not have police uniform. The purpose of the civilian members is to dig information, to search for suspects and to contact the patrolling vehicles

for apprehension of suspects. One of the police participants interviewed explained that the civilians who are cooperating with the police are usually young males who fall between the age group of 21 and 35 because drug abuse is mostly abused by people of this age group and below. This strategy aims to reduce the risk of being identified by suspected drug dealers.

4.1.6 Availability of police crime tips pamphlets and educative material

The SAPS has at its disposal a wide variety of literature containing wealth of information and tips regarding crime prevention. This includes, pamphlets, brochures, posters and other informative materials. The study revealed that Ga-Rankuwa police publish pamphlets containing crime tips amongst the community and display in posters in certain public places. The crime tips pamphlets and posters contain pictures and words of how to avoid being victimized by criminals at certain hot-spots. This strategy raises awareness within the community of certain crime that arose and to be alert of the frequent hot spots it occurs. One police participant who was interviewed stated: “although the community neglect or take crime tips for granted, the crime tips pamphlets aids to reduce crime opportunity through avoidance of victimisation.” This participant gave examples of recent crime that was reported involving the victims who were targeted and robbed by drug abusers at Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) while withdrawing their money. The police published crime tips which provided information of a lookout for suspected robbers and the most targeted ATMs, which led to drastic drop in such crime patterns in the Township. The pamphlets also included how the criminals temper with the ATMs in order to steal money from the victims bank accounts.

4.1.7. School safety programme (School search and drug tests).

From the study, as revealed in Table 2, most (47.50%) community respondents concurred that the police visit schools to educate pupils about drug abuse, which is part of the school safety programme, 41.25% were uncertain and just a few 8.75 disagreed while 2.50% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Majority of the respondents agreed having knowledge about the school safety programme that the police are involved in. The study revealed that most drug abuse at Ga-Rankuwa Township occurs outside school premises, especially in parks, old abandoned buildings and disorganized places of businesses.

4.1.8 Investigations, arrests and detention (IAD) of suspects

As shown in Table 2, most (47.50%) members of the community respondents disagreed and 33.75% strongly disagreed that the police investigate, arrest and detain drug suspects, while 13.75% were uncertain. Only very few of the respondents agreed with the statement. Generally, a majority of the respondents 81.25% were inclined to disagree than to agree to notion that the Police engage in Investigations, Arrests and Detention of suspects.

4.1.9 Involvement of the community, NGO's and churches

The study revealed in Table 2 that 25% of the respondents agreed that the police have partnership with NGOs and churches while 28.75% were uncertain with the statement. Thirty-five (35) percent of the respondents disagreed and the rest which is 11.25% of the respondents also strongly did not support the statement.

Table 2: Responses on School Safety, Police IAD Strategies, and Community Partnership

	Stronly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Stronly Agree	Total
School Safety	2.50%	8.75%	41.25%	47.50%	0.00%	100%
IAD Strategy	33.75%	47.50%	13,75%	5.00%	0.00%	100%
Community, NGO Part	11.25%	35.00%	28.75%	25.00%	0.00%	100%

One of the SAPS participants indicated that the police work with social workers when needed. The station has a register of other organisations that they call when they need assistance on services such as rehabilitation and counselling. This participant further explained that the register has a list of NGOs, churches and other community stakeholders. Another SAPS participant experienced that the police work with local churches and NGOs to share information and services.

Further analysis based on type of membership or affiliation of respondents in Table 3 reveals that one third of community respondents who participated in NGOs were familiar with the partnership between the police and community based organisations. While 12.50% of respondents who participate in local churches also concurred that the police have partnership with NGOs and Churches

and 26.53% of respondents who did not partake in any community-based organisation were also familiar with the existence of such partnership.

Table 3: Partnership between the Police and Community Organisations

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
NGO Participants	2 (13.33)	4 (26.67)	4 (26.67)	5 (33.33)	0 (0.00)	15 (100)
Church Members	1 (6.25)	8 (50.00)	5 (31.25)	2 (12.50)	0 (0.00)	16 (100)
Community Members	6 (12.24)	16 (32.65)	14 (28.57)	13 (26.53)	0 (0.00)	49 (100)
Total	9 (11.25)	28 (35.00)	23 (28.75)	20 (25.00)	0 (0.00)	80 (100)

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From this study, a majority of respondents are inclined to disagree than to agree on the stop and search strategy. The reason for this might be that drug abuse continues to spread around public places known to the police in Ga-Rankuwa Township. The presence of huge number of drug abusers in the community validates the community perception that the police are not arresting drug abusers. This raises a question whether the police possess an understanding and exercise of their powers. Although, the police face some difficulties in executing this search strategy due to democratic nature of South Africa where protection of human right is a high priority. To stop and search suspects is often viewed as harassment and results in action being taken against the police. However, the concern is whether the police have adequate knowledge of how to exercise the powers of search, as contained in Police Act, which is very crucial for implementation of this strategy. The South African Police Service Act, 1995 (Act No. 68 of 1995) as amended, makes a provision for searches without a warrant. Section 13 (6) of the South African Police Service Act, 1995 (Act No. 68 of 1995) as amended provides that a police official may search without a warrant on reasonable grounds, any person, premises, other place, vehicle, vessel or aircraft or any receptacle, and seize any article that is found and may be lawfully seized, where it is reasonably necessary for the purposes of control over the illegal movement of people or goods across the borders of the Republic (Basdeo, 2009: 155).

Most of the respondents also denied having knowledge about drug talk strategy by the Police. The reason might be that most of the respondents are employed and the drug talk shows are conducted once on annual basis, in weekdays and during working hours. Only few people who do not have employment may have enough time to attend the drug talk shows. This result contradicts the expectation that the police are doing what they are supposed to do in terms of drug education based on the provincial legislation. In Gauteng, the draft of by-laws pertaining to municipal functions relating to drug abuse in the city of Tshwane state that the municipality shall, in alignment with other stakeholders and the Local Drug Action Committee's plan of action, undertake education and awareness programmes to address the various aspects of drug abuse within its boundaries.

Police patrol with vehicles in their neighbourhood was acknowledged by a majority of respondents as a viable police strategy. This proves and indicates that the police are successfully implementing visible policing strategy through vehicles patrol in Ga-Rankuwa neighbourhoods. It was revealed that two police vehicles patrol in each sector 24 hours every day to prevent crime and to speed up the reaction to emergency calls. Each and every sector is allocated two (2) patrolling vehicles with a purpose of preventing crime and reacting quickly to any emergency call received, including looking out for suspected drug dealers and users. This approach benefits from situational control perspective of Downes and Rock (1982). This model explains practical ways of reducing opportunities for crime, in which case the police patrol strategy serves as a situational crime prevention that comprises of opportunity-reducing measures that; are directed at highly specific forms of crime (drug related). This strategy makes crime more difficult and risky, or less rewarding and excusable as judged by a wide range of offenders. Through police visibility in neighbourhoods of Ga-Rankuwa Township, lack of opportunity to commit crime and existence of fear of being apprehended by police influence a potential offender to refrain from committing crime. A drug dealer may hide or refuse to sell drugs to a buyer by fear of being arrested instantly.

To deliver a better service and achieve its goals for drug abuse prevention and combating, the SAPS rely heavily on information from informants. This was revealed in this study as the most important tool in drug investigations. Informant system involves the use of persons who on account of their particular knowledge, insight, experience or observation of a situation or an event, are able to transmit information to the police with a view to uncovering wrongful deed of a person or persons. An informant informs the Police either as a result of his convictions, or

because he is paid to do so, or for other unknown reasons (Naude & Stevens, 1988:134; Madinger, 2000:7). The efficacy of informant system, and to a large extent civil society participation in crime control was demonstrated in the previous work of Obioha (2006). However, the study highlighted the danger of some civil society groups operating beyond their limits by engaging in extra-judicial actions and issues. Based on this, the use of informants by the Police in the Ga-Rankuwa Township should be subject to regular monitoring to avoid civilian to civilian victimisation and frame-up.

Encouragingly, a majority of the respondents agreed having knowledge about the school safety programme that the police are involved in the Township. Even though most drug abuses in the township occur outside school premises, especially in parks, old abandoned buildings and disorganized places of businesses, the police still believe that they are constitutionally bound to work with local schools to ensure the safety for all pupils. The police conduct drug searches and tests in co-operation with the municipal police and school stakeholders unexpectedly without knowledge of the pupils. This strategy was acknowledged to be well implemented in the township, according to this study. The SAPS was able to carry out this strategy as they have at their disposal a wide variety of literature containing a wealth of information and tips regarding crime prevention. This includes pamphlets, brochures, posters and other informative material (Naude & Stevens, 1988:125). The Police school tests and talks is further strengthened by the Minister of Education's regulations in Government Gazette 22754 (Notice 1040 of 12 October 2001) in terms of which all public schools have been declared drug free and dangerous object free zones. These regulations are issued in terms of South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996). Regulation 4(1) and (2) of the above regulation declares violence and drug free public schools, -4(1) No persons may - (d) possess illegal drugs on public school premises (e) enter public school premises while under the influence of and illegal drug or alcohol (South Africa, 2001: 1040). Travis Hirschi's social control theory and Hawkins social development model assume that the deviant impulses that most adolescents share are held in check or controlled by strong conventional society, families, schools and religions. However, Schmalleger and Bartollas (2008:395), asserts that adolescents who do not have such controlling influences will not feel compelled to adhere to convention or to engage in socially acceptable behaviours. The social development model proposes that adolescents become attached to substance-using peers if they feel uncommitted to conventional society or positive role models. This theoretical model suggests that the drug education

sessions conducted by Police in Ga-Rankuwa schools strengthens the resistance to drug abuse and peer pressure.

The plain clothes police officials play a significant role in detection, tracking and investigation of drug suspects in the township, as revealed in this study. This finding corroborates an earlier position of Naude and Stevens (1988:122) who assert that when crime adopts a particular pattern by being regularly committed in the same place or area, plain-clothes policing technique is used to prevent it. They are sometimes positioned where they cannot be seen and in other cases are disguised. Very often, their operational ability is extremely limited but in such cases aids such as two-way radios can be used to inform other policemen who are more mobile and thus able to act. The chief aim of this strategy (plain-clothes policing) depending on the circumstances and the kind of crime is to identify the suspects and to arrest them or to allow them be arrested so as to prevent further crimes from being committed (Naude & Stevens, 1988:123).

Irrespective of the strategy above, on the low side of the study, majority of the respondents were inclined to disagree than to agree that the police execute their mandate to investigate, arrest and detain drug dealers. The reason for this might be because the drug abusers are seen every day on the streets and in their known spots. The drug abuse continues to spread and the efforts of the police are not recognised. If a drug dealer (seller) is arrested, another dealer is available immediately to continue with the business. This situation is linked to the difficulties involved in drug crime investigations because arrested drug abusers do not provide information about the drug dealers. These issues are commonly dealt with by detective policing operation and investigation system which are important part of police work. The detective division of a police department is charged with solving, or clearing, reported crimes. In traditional detective operations, detectives conduct a follow-up investigation of a past crime after a member of the patrol force takes the initial report of the crime and conducts some sort of preliminary investigation. Dempsey and Forst (2008:264) further state that the detective or investigator also conducts canvasses (searches areas for witnesses), interrogates possible suspects, arrests the alleged perpetrator, and prepares the case, with the assistance of the district attorney's or prosecutor's office, for presentation in court.

The non-involvement of the NGOs was flagged as one of the undoing of the Police in the effort to deal with drug abuse and dealings, as this study revealed. From a different perspective, the reason behind this loose partnership between the

police and the community organisations might be that the churches and NGOs which assist drug abusers do not want to share information with the police about the lives of their clients. The relationship between the police and community-based organisations is therefore not popular in the area, which is not entirely the fault of the SAPS. However, in a democratic country like South Africa, proper and successful policing, especially with regard to drug issues depends on community involvement. Police partnerships with the community-based organisations and churches are a major initiative that can combat and prevent drug abuse. Partnership policing or involvement with the civil society is one of the key points of community policing which have been recommended by most police organisations, as being practiced for many decades in the country. In Ga-Rankuwa, the police have involved churches, NGOs and other organisations to share the role of crime prevention and combating, although not up to the expected magnitude. Indeed a good relationship between the police and the community depends on an understanding of “what the police expect from the community and what the community expects from the police” (Radelet as cited by Naude and Stevens (1988:126). Mutual communication and community involvement create a forum for negotiation by means of which problems can be eliminated and support given over a wide front. Such support is demonstrated in practice by reservists, junior reservists and the neighbourhood watch. The denial of the role played by Police in combating crime, especially in crime prone communities and apparent community members’ dissatisfaction with the Police crime fighting effectiveness is not only applicable in this study in a South African township but elsewhere in Nigeria as evinced in Obioha, (2004). Community discontent and lack of cooperation with the Police was invariably a loose end or gap, which became the main driver in criminal proliferation.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed a mix bag of strengths and weaknesses of the SAPS in prevention and combating of drug abuse in Ga-Rankuwa Township. Some of the strategies that were proven to be very effective as agreed by a majority of the respondents in their observations and experience include plain-clothe policing and neighbourhood patrol. The civil clothing members who are not visible within the community produce better results during investigation and tracking of suspects. The police patrol strategy is implemented but not in drug hot spots. The police patrollers are easily spotted by the drug abusers and dealers and therefore they

easily hide or destroy the evidence. The civil clothing members can easily spot the crime happening and contact the two patrolling vehicles nearby in post to react to such crime. The paid informers within the community are of outmost importance in building a better and safer society. The study revealed that there is a shortage of informers and civil clothing members. All these strategies are effective in some domain and ineffective in another. Improving intelligence can be very useful if the police can enlist citizens to provide information about drug dealing to the police, much can be accomplished. Many also believe, however, that the police either do not care or are actually corrupt because they arrest few dealers. When dealers are arrested, they are often back on the street within hours. Some departments have established tip lines where residents can provide information anonymously. Improved police-community relations need to take place immediately with more attention given to all community-based organisations. These organisations need to be recognised and their interventions and strategies enhanced. Many of the strategies shown in this paper are included in the key principles of community policing. Strong and effective police-community partnerships can prevent, combat and control drug abuse in Ga-Rankuwa Township and South Africa as a whole.

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