

# Police effectiveness



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Abstract.

A Community Oriented and Problem Solving (COPPS) approach to policing is increasingly being adopted in contemporary society. COPPS emphasizes a partnership between the police and the members of the community in tackling crime, and advocates an approach that focuses on identifying the problems faced by a community and using methods tailored to that specific locality to solve the problem. COPPS is the ideal approach to increase police effectiveness and prevent crime in democratic societies. However, it is yet to be implemented effectively.

Police Effectiveness: Community-Oriented and Problem-Solving Approach  
Police Effectiveness obviously depends on the ability of law enforcement agencies to conform to the ideology, and meet the changing needs, of the society they protect, and to tackle the constant evolution in the character of crime. In democratic societies, policing policies have largely moved away from the rigidity of traditional policing. A policy which is popularly being adopted today is Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS).

Community Oriented Policing acknowledges the right of the community to be involved in law enforcement. Prevention of crimes is by working in partnership with community members, and public and private non-governmental organizations, to identify and eliminate the underlying causal factors. There is the decentralization of authority and a personal approach from police officers, who are allotted permanent beats to become familiar

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members of the community. The focus is on shared responsibility of the police and the community through interactive community meetings, door to door calls and foot or bike patrols, fostering of mutual trust, and the formation of grassroots movements to monitor and report crimes.

Community development projects, such as neighborhood clean-ups and combating drug usage, and problem solving, are prioritized. Officers are granted increased discretion and autonomy to deal with problems on a proactive, case-by-case basis, tailoring responses to particular local conditions. Rigid procedural responses are not favored. Community Oriented Policing “ is cooperative, communicative and collaborative” (Summerfield, 2005).

Problem Oriented Policing emphasizes preventive responses. It acknowledges that community problems may not be strictly criminal in nature and police discretion and locality-specific responses are more effective than arrest and prosecution. It favors a long term approach and a proactive police role. It involves (a) Scanning: identifying a recurring problem, its' frequency and consequences. (b) Analysis: Identifying the conditions which precipitate the problem, researching the relevant data, evaluating responses and locating available resources. (c) Response: Evaluating multiple responses, choosing the most appropriate, with clearly defined objectives, and executing the solution. (d). Assessment: Evaluating the level of success achieved, and adding any necessary improvements. (e) Using the Crime Triangle, which holds that a crime occurs when likely offenders and suitable victims come together in a place at a time when there are no protective guardians (police) to prevent the offence. (Center for Problem-Oriented Policing Web site, 2006).

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In spite of research showing that traditional methods of policing, which rely on aggressive responses, and confrontation, are not long-term deterrents of crime, COPPS has not yet conclusively established itself as the alternative method of success. A lack of manpower and poor internal communication in the police force, the psychological barriers against the acceptance of change, continued centralized management, the mistrust of police among the community, and low pay for community officers, are some of the problems which make COPPS remain “ good in theory, but bad in practice” (Summerfield, 2005). Another problem with COPPS is that its implementation requires a raw police recruit to be trained to become “ a well-educated, well-trained, socially and culturally aware protector of the people” (Ray, Stephens, p. 194, Associated Content web site). This is a rather tall order! COPPS’ emphasis on the role of the beat cop, the improvement of the physical environment, a preventive approach to crime and the decentralization of the command structure, coupled with its humanness and community involvement, makes it the ideal tool of policing in contemporary democratic societies. The speedy and dedicated implementation of COOPS will definitely improve police effectiveness and usher in a crime free society.

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