

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Law Enforcement

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Public Sector Management and Leadership

By

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Abstract

The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Law Enforcement

By

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Master of Public Administration in Public Sector Management and Leadership

Law enforcement agencies, during pandemics – like COVID-19, have the responsibility of working in coordination with public health and government officials for controlling its spread and mortality rate, maintaining public order, and serving the local community – all simultaneously and effectively. Under the consideration that the spread of COVID-19 virus was due to person-to-person contact by means of respiratory droplets, the officers of law enforcement were also at the increased risk of exposure because of their close contact with public members. A number of recommendations and policies have been issued by CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and other agencies for specifically protecting officers in an attempt to protect public and officers. There were various ways in which the departments around the country have responded to the pandemic including community outreach initiatives, suspending training, reassigning personnel to high-traffic areas, roll calls, executing safety provisions for police officers, only issuing records for low-level crimes, and limiting access to department facilities. Moreover, the work has also revealed that law enforcement was also exposed to some of the key obstacles of COVID-19 pandemic regarding resource management, changes to crime and service patterns, enforcement of restrictions of public health, and communication. On the basis of initial

responses, early obstacles, and quantitative data from the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Deputies, directions for future response are highlighted at the end of this paper for ensuring security and safety of police officers and the community they serve. The focus of this research is mainly on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on law enforcement and police officers, therefore, used non-probability haphazard sampling qualitative method for measuring particular variables utilizing open-ended questions of surveys. The study has also made use of secondary sources of data for supporting the findings of the study.

Introduction

It has been more than two and half years since the first case of COVID-19 recognized in Wuhan, China and it took no time in reaching every corner of the world across the globe. The pandemic and its consequent crisis continued to leave severe, grim, and potentially long-lasting impact on the daily lives of people. Though COVID-19 turned into a pandemic in no matter of time, the leaders of the USA took more than three months for initiating to take any action for its safety measure or controlling its spread. During the early stage of pandemic, the United States had over 1/3rd of the all reports of COVID-19 patients across the globe along with more than quarter of all the mortalities reported so far (Rozell & Wilcox, 2020). For reducing the inclining rate of morbidity and mortality of the disease alongside controlling and mitigating the spread of virus, the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) in the U.S. mandated distancing measures and social isolation. Due to this national mandate, the usual flow of work has been affected in a number of areas including law enforcement. The daily operation of law enforcement and police officers modified in significant manner since an increase in the number of reported cases of COVID-19 was evident. Indeed, the law enforcement agencies and police officers are some of the most vital providers of public services amid pandemic – COVID-19.

Although much has already been explored regarding the impact of COVID-19 on different fields and sectors as the pandemic is coming towards its end, there is still much to unfold specific to organizations or agencies. A number of scholars were prompted by the crisis of COVID-19 to study its short-term and long-term impact on different fields raising inquired regarding how pandemic has affected or modified the practices in law enforcement agencies (such as Boman & Gallupe, 2020). In the literature review of this work, this topic is explored broadly and the arguments of scholars on the subject matter have been summarized by demonstrating critical

thinking in depth and applying that on the consequences of pandemic on law enforcement. Afterwards, the research is also focused on one of the Sheriff's Department Deputies in Los Angeles while evaluating how the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the effectiveness of police officers.

Literature Review

The impact on the Front Liners

Pandemic, hurricanes, earthquakes, terrorism, and such critical conditions cause damage to the places and reflect the law enforcement systems, along with their operation strategies to combat such situations (Brito, Luna, and Sanberg, (2009). On the contrary, a pandemic affects multiple regions of a planet and continues to spread creating challenges at a global level. During such uncertain events it is the responsibility of law enforcement to establish and regulate rules that are in the interest of the people (Richard, et al, (2006). In 2020, when COVID – 19 was declared a global emergency, law enforcement in various countries took serious measures, in the United States the law enforcement suggested, that people must keep the close contact with the gene-related people and maintain distance from the marginalized people” (Rothstein, (2015). The police officers were dealing with the pandemic on the first lines which increased their risk of the exposure to the virus, as a result, a great number of front lines have decreased in a number of positive results and death, due to which the law enforcement policy refraining the safety of the front liners were questioned by the public (Poston, (2020). In the past outbreaks such as Severe Acute Respiratory (SARS) IN 1918, the law enforcement were working with the authorities and the government in order to establish better standers to deal with the situation. In COVID-19 the meetings, social gatherings, churches theatres, and schools were announced to be completely shut as suggested by

the law enforcement, according to the law enforcement such places where the social gatherings are moral could cause and contribute to the spread of COVID-19 (Plaue & Colarossi, (2020).

The Guideline of the Law Enforcement

The police officers were given the responsibility of patrolling the zones of “Quarantine” the officers were at higher risk of spreading or catching the virus (CDC, (2020), due to which the law enforcement made PPE compulsory for the officers in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the officers, likewise (Sanberg, Brito, Luna, & McFadden, (2010). The central of control and prevention suggested that the risk of exposure to the people through droplets is high as compared to the other guidelines suggested as following:

- It is essential to maintain six feet distance
- Maintaining proper hygiene (hand washing with water and soap
- Avoid touching the face without washing it (Barr, (2020).

However, instead of all the precautionary measures reports indicates that there were 2000 law enforcement officers were tested positive for COVID-19 due to their duties, and likewise, thousand more officers were tested Positive for the virus, which led a concern among the offices regarding the health of the officers along with their families (Cave & Tahir (2020); Schuppe, (2020) The research indicated that mostly the affected people with increased numbers were the police officers and their families. On the contrary, some of the people as their strategy were spreading the virus on purpose, they were known as the neo-Nazis who encourages COVID-19 positive people to spat or cough on people intentionally (Jennings, & Parvez (2020). To protect the officers from the issue agencies changed their working practices to remote working (Jennings, & Parvez (2020).

Across the U.S various community-oriented policing initiatives have been modified due to the proximity of the numbers of people in the public. The officers are required to interact with the people to communicate (Hermann, Morse, & Jackman, (2020).

Challenges Encountered by the People during Pandemic

Aside from the police officers COVID – 19 affected the law enforcement response to the people that are in the dire need of help. In the first week that the major impact was considered by the specialist that the health departments lead the actual repose to the pandemic and the law enforcement agencies were expected to calm and provide the voice of authority and guidance to the people (Brito et al. 2009). Although the police are often given a task regarding the local business to elucidate and explain the statewide regulation and orders regarding the safety measures (Garcia (2020). Therefore communication was considered a major factor that was affected due to COVID-19. It was suggested by experts that the messages must be established through a collaborative approach with public health agencies along with the local hospitals (Barr (2020); Richard, et al, (2006).

Impact on the Resource management

Furthermore, resource management was also affected due to a second major obstacle for the agencies of the police as it involves developmental management in terms of personnel, finances, and equipment. There was a major shortage of tissue, hand sanitizer, medical equipment, and toilet paper during the pandemic (Naeem, (2021). The reason for the shortage in medical equipment including the PPE was due to the exports that the USA receives from various countries, for instance, China exports most of the medical equipment used in the USA, and due to the pandemic,

the country was using the equipment for to cater the condition in their country instead of exporting the resources mostly to the USA which cause the shortage (Bochtis, et al, (2020). Various police departments, sheriff officers along with people with other authorities were underprepared for the situation and the fast effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Barr, (2020). Agencies that perpetrated adequate rules and prepared for the law enforcement became exhausted quickly due to everyday changing behavior of the virus and new responsibilities related to the health community (Richards, et al, (2006). Furthermore, the financial burden is considered the major issue which affected various different countries and prevented the law enforcement to take certain safety measures that required change, such as an unforeseen costs for the safety programs and that required PPE, essential resources, and liability (Brito, et al, (2009); Sanberg et al, (2010)

Public Education Based Challenges

Various industries suffered the most due to the COVID-19 uncertainty however the education industry struggles the most, reports indicate that various parents preferred to repeat the schooling year of their children as they believed that remote learning was neither adequate nor appropriate for the children as they wasted their time (Mudick, (2022). Most of the Children were passed based on the last results reported the children which were criticized by parents as was the disparity between the children (Chan, Leung, & Fung, (2022). Due to remote learning teachers reported the highest rate of absenteeism in the classroom (Mujtaba Asad, et al. (2022). Furthermore, the law enforcement guided the schools to utilize remote schooling as an option, however, most of the teachers were not prepared, or educationally trained to deal with the classrooms remotely which led to various learning issues. Parents that experience serious financial challenges decline the admissions of their children to the schools (Rozell & Wilcox, (2020). Aside from the parents, the

state suffers for affording the education of the students, as many states have reduced their budget from education expenses in order to save it and invest it in spending on the social safety of the people in the pandemic (Al- Samarra, (2020)). In addition to it, the Federal budget has reduced the budget of the colleges the schools, and other education services, as suggested by Jackson the reduction in the education budget negatively impacts on the performance of the students and the college admission rates as well however, reducing the amount was essential in order to combat the threats COVID-19 is posing to the humankind (Jackson, et al., (2018)). As compared to the recession year 2008 – 2009, there were more than a million teachers along with various other staff members in the U.S directly lost their employment, which directly affected the quality of education given to the students, likewise, the quality of education provided during the pandemic was affected along with the performance of the teachers causing the parents to cancel the admission of their children (Rogers & Sabarwal, (2020)).

Employee Productivity during Pandemic

Similar to the drastic changes experienced in the education system the remote working changes for the employees all around the world were perceived as chaotic. Most public organizations required their employees to comply with the government guidelines of working remotely as a response to public and social health-sustaining guidelines (Schuster et al., (2020)). However, some of the companies were using the policy of 50/50 in which 50 percent of the employees were attending the office rest were working from home, however, these policies were shifted to the remote working system. Studies indicated that there were significant advantages and disadvantages if the remote work to the performance of the employees, for instance, the teaching faculty was experiencing major difficulty to adapt to the technological changes. As argued by Ferri teachers

are mostly experiencing teleworking difficulties due to the lack of technological skills and the understanding of the software applications (Ferri et al., (2020). The author focuses on the transition in the delivery of quality services of the teacher's transition to online has not only affected the performance quality of the teachers but also affected the discipline of the classes, most of the employees reported being frustrated due to the technical issues and the lack of understanding of the technology (Ferri, et al, (2020).

In the U.S most community oriented policing and outreach initiatives were canceled and modified due to the vicinity between the members of the policy and the officers. Due to the social distancing the Miami PDC limited employees and visitor both, they only provided access to the building by screening the individuals in order to check-in for the symptom of COVID-19 in individuals, these protocols were established in order to reduce the impact and effect of the COVID-19 on the employees, however, various reports indicate that employees that attended office during pandemic also experienced low productivity rates as well (Garcia, (2020).

Public health restrictions & Law Enforcement

Enforcement of public health regulations is a third significant barrier for police departments to overcome. Most of the globe had been ordered to stay at home by early April 2020, whether voluntarily or involuntarily (Cave & Dahir, (2020). The activities that are forbidden and the consequences for citizen infractions of these directives differ around the globe; some nations have given their police the authority to detain and even shoot offenders (Cave & Dahir, (2020). These orders may require law enforcement to set up checkpoints and impose penalties for noncompliance, depending on their scope and seriousness (Richards, et al, (2006). Police may have fewer options for enforcing limits if they are voluntary, such as advised social distance.

calls police offices get as a result of complaints of infractions; even banal actions like participating in leisure sports in Enforcement of public health regulations is a third significant barrier for police departments to overcome. Most of the globe had been ordered to stay at home by early April 2020, whether voluntarily or involuntarily (Cave & Dahir, (2020). The activities that are forbidden and the consequences for citizen infractions of these directives differ around the globe; some nations have given their police the authority to detain and even shoot offenders (Cave & Dahir, (2020). These orders may require law enforcement to set up checkpoints and impose penalties for noncompliance, depending on their scope and seriousness (Richards et al, (2006).

Police may have fewer options for enforcing the measures if the limits are voluntary, such as advised social distance (Richards et al. (2006). Enforcement of social distance may also lead to an increase in calls to police departments reporting infractions; even routine activities, like playing sports in a park, may suddenly call for a police response (Schuppe, (2020). One crucial issue arises when the police are enforcing these directives, for instance, what precise actions should they take when people disobey regulations like quarantines or travel restrictions, and how does such action impacts the law enforcement and the people. It might be difficult to support enhanced police presence and reaction when officers are being told to restrict police responses and refrain from making minor arrests. Although agencies instructed law enforcement officers to impose fines and change and arrest people that are inconsistent with the law rules and regulations. (Mervosh, Lu, & Swales (2020).

Research Methodology

Research Question

The study aims to identify the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the effectiveness of police officers. The main objective of this research paper is to analyse the factors which influence the effectiveness of policing services during the pandemic. At the time, when everyone was at risk of getting the virus and people were advised to follow all the safety measures, these officers protecting the public, were the most vulnerable to the virus. The aim of this research paper is to have a deep understanding of obstacles in the enforcement of the law regarding public health, safety, protection of community and management of the resources etc, that leads to the changes in the quality of services.

Research Hypotheses

It has been hypothesised that covid-19 has a great impact on the effectiveness of police officers and their services. Law enforcement is affected negatively because of the outbreak. In terms of variables, it can be hypothesised that,

H1: COVID-19 has a negative effect on police officers

H2: police officers have a positive effect on service effectiveness

H3: police officers have a positive effect on law-enforcement

Research Design

The study is conducted with the help of a non-probability haphazard sampling qualitative method. Qualitative methods help the researcher to gain vast knowledge about complex topics. It helps the

researcher to develop an idea and concept of different problems and phenomena. The method lets the researcher examine the data deeply and thoroughly (Smith et.al, 2018). The non-probability sampling is a cost-effective sampling method which is helpful to conduct the research faster. The sampling was done using the haphazard sampling technique. It is a non-statistical technique used for the purpose of approximating random sampling (Hall et.al, 2012).

To make sure that the qualitative research method is effective, it is important to identify the variables. There are two types of variables in this research. Dependent variable and independent variable. The independent variable for this research study is **Covid-19**. The dependent variables for this research are the **police officers, law enforcement, and service effectiveness**. The analysis of variables is important to connect the data and understand how the factors have affected the situation.

In order to get accurate information, the data was collected with the help of questionnaires having open-ended questions. The survey led the researcher to new concepts and undiscovered insights and provided the researcher with more detailed and deeper reasoning of phenomena (Roopa et.al, 2012). The answers gave the idea of how the outbreak of Covid-19 was limiting the services of police officers and law enforcement. Besides the open-ended questions, interviews were conducted with the police officers to know about their limitations and how their work is getting affected. The one-to-one conversation was also effective in getting deeper knowledge about the situation. The answers from each method were then analysed to reach a conclusion in order to conduct further study (Anyan, 2013).

The research approach that has been used to conduct this study is Phenomenological research. This kind of approach helps the researcher to investigate the participants' everyday life and draw a

conclusion based on their experiences. It investigates the live experience of a person to get a deeper insight into an unexplained phenomenon (Wilson, 2015).

The research was conducted on police officers from different sectors of the United States. Around 450 officers participated in the research activity. The interviews and one-to-one conversations were conducted after taking their permission. No activity has been conducted without the concern of any participants. The participants were then divided into different sections. Around 200 of the participants signed up for an interview, and 150 of them participated in one-to-one conversations. The surveys were conducted with the help of the active participation of all participants. The most effective method was the one-to-one method as it helped the researcher to develop a deep understanding of the situation. The rest of the two methods, the survey question and interviews led the researcher to get the insight about law enforcement and conclude the data based on the insight and responses. The condition of the societies, the lack of resources, the difficulties in the resource management and the obstacle in providing quality and effective services were being identified with the help of the survey and interviews.

To support the data gathered, more research has been conducted using secondary resources. The data was gathered from a USA-based website of the largest municipal police department. Moreover, variables were being studied deeply with the help of past research papers, articles and recordings to interpret the effect of these variables on the police officers and how the law enforcement is getting affected by covid-19.

Research Limitations

The main limitation of the research was Covid-19 itself. During the pandemic and prevailing curfew, interviewing the officers and observing them was a hassle. The risk of getting covid and

the aim of reaching a conclusion was becoming impossible to go hand in hand. The lockdown in the whole country affected the sampling process for this study. The researcher could not approach a maximum number of participants. There are a number of interviews that were conducted online due to the restriction and safety concerns. Another limitation experienced by the researcher while conducting the research was the lack of information on the topic. Since Covid is an ongoing matter, there are no previous studies supporting this topic. The issues and problems that the world is facing now never existed before the emergence of the pandemic. There are a very limited number of peer-reviewed article. People are still researching the topic.

Background

The world has experienced a powerful challenge in the form of COVID-19 that turned into almost uncontrollable pandemic imposing not just serious risks and concerns on the health of the population but also affecting every dimension of living and everyday practice. According to WHO (World Health Organization), Coronavirus disease was declared a pandemic on 11th March 2020 (Zanke, Thenge, & Adhao, 2020) and by the end of April 2020, the number of mortalities around the world increased by 200, 000 with millions of cases being COVID-19 positive. Aside from affecting human lives, the pandemic proven to be detrimental for education, family, government, and economies. Even today, COVID-19 is one of the top-ranked causes of deaths in number of developing countries. All the governmental departments and agencies have also experienced the challenges of pandemic not just in terms of limiting the spread of virus but also in terms of modifying the way of working and daily practices.

From the global trends, it has been demonstrated that the police officers had contact with public in very frequent manner and public were supposed to be the symptomatic or asymptomatic carriers of the virus (Jennings & Perez, 2020). As a result of this exposure, the officers from police department were at the higher risk of contracting the virus while the department of police forces was poorly equipped for completely protecting the staff. According to the reports, the department of Police in Los Angeles lost hundreds of members because of COVID-19 alongside more than 20 percent of its staff contracted the virus (Bella, 2021). As per the findings of this research, there were certain situations and activities that led police officers of Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Deputies to several risks in terms of contracting the virus. The major challenge reported was linked with the enforcement of lockdowns among the communities where general public was neither supportive nor completely aware of the situation. Along this challenge, police officers also experienced the challenge of dealing with several criminals or suspects in close proximity or physically because of their nature of job. Some of the participants have also reports that interaction was challenge for police officers on a daily basis with a number of members from public who were may be the carriers (symptomatic or asymptomatic) carriers of virus at quarantine facilities, collection points for ration or cash, checkpoints, police stations, airports, or hotels. Some of the challenges that impacted the performance of police officers during pandemic include delivery of goods to the hit areas of COVID-19; performing or tracing the contact by means of taking interviews and other ways so as to identify people who came in contact with the person tested positive for COVID-19. Since police officers were not provided with any appropriate training to undertake duties of crowd control and deal with peaceful public, protestors, and culprits during the pandemic; it imposed severe challenge on effective performance of the law enforcement.

The secondary results have also supported that it was very challenging for police force to perform their duties without having sufficient access to needed PPE such as hazmat suits, gloves, masks, or sanitizer in adequate quantity. Because of the limited workforce, police officers (on duty) were required to serve longer hours on their duty which become stressful and exhausting for them mentally and physically.

Conclusion

Initially, the pandemic has caught a number of members from law enforcement unprepared but the evolution in the response of law enforcement was evident throughout the pandemic duration. Regardless of the fact that practices evolve with the time, managing public and pandemic altogether impose some of the unprecedented challenges on the performance and practices of law enforcement. There were no existing set of recommendation or course of action planned to undertake in such scenario. The question this research seek to answer was how did the Covid-19 pandemic impact the effectiveness of police officers? Officers in law enforcement agencies like the ones in Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Deputies had to work together with workers of healthcare and played the role of individuals on the front lines against the war of pandemic together with their typical duties. It is emerged from this research that the individuals, who serve the front line, i.e. law enforcement officers, are likely to play the vital role in the response of world and U.S. thus there should be measures to ease their challenges and improve their performance in order to receive effective results.

It can be argued that pandemic is no more considered as the state of emergency across the world, some of the modifications at wider level have become normal and recurrent that were introduced as the exceptions in way of working in societies thus they are probable of staying longer than

assumed. Hence, learning from the experiences of crisis is likely to be beneficial for law enforcement in making it better equipped and resilient for longer-term. Reflecting and assessing how authorities of law enforcement should approach do not only evolve the threats of crime but it is also important to assess the suggestive actives that are revealed from the lessons learned from the experience of crisis when it comes to the work of police and law enforcement agencies. Following are the set of recommendations that are retrieved from analysis of primary and secondary data in this research.

The first recommendation in this regard is associated with communication – a major challenge for workers irrespective of field. It is recommended that police officers must communicate frequently and clearly with the staff regarding the policies and procedure related to COVID-19. This way, the police officers can be prepared for countering the challenges. In regards to communication, it is further recommended that police department can consult with WHO for preparing uniform SOPs nationwide for transportation, arrests, investigation, detention, quarantine facilities management, mob management, prosecution, positive and suspect escort, lockdown imposition, etc.

The second recommendation is associated with training aspect. All the officers must be provided with training on proper removal, wearing, and disposal of PPE along with educating them how they can disinfect their phones, weapons, handcuffs, belts, desks, uniform, etc so as limit the chances of spread of virus. It is also recommended under training aspect that there must be an increase in the frequency of disinfecting offices, interview rooms, patrol cars, locker rooms, barracks, and other facilities in the department for reducing their exposure to the virus. When officers would have limited exposure to virus, there will not be shortage of staff thus their effectiveness can be improved significantly. Along these lines, training must be given to police

officers in helping them to maintain a balance between protecting themselves and protective civilians.

Thirdly, it is also recommended that communication between police department and general public must be done frequently to not only keep them aware but keep them under controlled as well. By consistently delivering the latest information among public, the hazard and panic can be controlled and disinformation can be combat. Thereby, it greatly require agencies to revise their job descriptions and transform the role of every police officer with respect to need.

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Appendix

Thank you for your participation in this survey. Responses to the following five statements will be used to determine the effect size of COVID-19 on particular aspects of police officers' productivity. All responses are anonymous and confidential.

Please check the box that corresponds to your answer to each question.

Question	Your Response
Being a police officer, what is the most challenging situation you encountered during pandemic?	
How would you define the availability of resources and staffing during pandemic in overcoming the challenges?	
Please highlight what you think about the training of police officers at LAPD with respect to handling and managing the situation of lockdown.	
In what aspects the performance of police officers at LAPD has been affected?	
Please provide any suggestion you think is helpful to prepare the police force in future.	