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Police Unions and the Implementation of Body-Worn Cameras in a Small Island Developing State: The Case of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

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Abstract

Within the past two decades, body-worn cameras (BWCs) have developed as an evidentiary tool to determine the outcomes of contentious police–citizen contacts as well as a method of enhancing the accountability of both groups. While there have been numerous studies conducted on BWCs, the research has focused primarily on police officer perceptions and follow-up analyses of their usage subsequent to implementation and/or during controlled, randomized trials. However, there is a dearth of academic literature on police union members' perceptions of BWC technology prior to implementation within their departments. This article contributes to the body of literature on BWCs by providing an analysis of data on the attitudes and perceptions towards the implementation of BWC technology into the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service that were collected from Central Committee representatives of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association, the representative body for police officers of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. The findings indicate that the respondents were generally amenable to the introduction and implementation of BWCs into the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service; however, this is premised on a phased implementation preceded by a controlled trial of the BWCs, as well as the creation of internal policies prior to implementation.

Keywords police unions; body-worn cameras; small island developing states; Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

INTRODUCTION

As a form of social control, policing is a “complex task” (Fischer 2014). Instructively, policing contemporary societies has become even more complex since the turn of the 21st century. This complexity is predicated on a host of factors such as the globalization of crime, the emergence of new forms of criminality and the widening

scope of police work; however, none is more pre-eminent than the exponential increase in new types of technologies with recording capacities which have the potential to revolutionize the operations of police departments. Due to widespread social change, there is a current omnipresence of video recording devices (cameras, mobile phones, smartphones, etc.) which provides unique access to observations of policing, including criminal events and real-life behaviour of individuals. In fact, the academic literature notes a global proliferation of new technologies and mobile equipment with video-recording capacities that has given citizens the ability to readily record virtually any activity (Ferrell Jr 2013; Kopak 2014; Simmons 2007) including documenting the actions of police officers, in a manner that was unthinkable three decades ago (García del Castillo et al. 2014).

This proliferation of devices with recording capacities has transformed “the way people interact with their environment and one another . . .” (Michael and Michael 2013:26), has enabled citizens to become “citizen journalists” (LePard and Collins 2015:20) and record aspects of their daily lives, including contentious interactions with the police. Not surprisingly, the proliferation of devices with recording capacities has caused police leaders to look at the potential benefits of incorporating video recording devices such as body-worn cameras (BWCs) systematically in their day-to-day operations (Corso et al. 2015) to counter the unidimensional perspectives of citizen journalists and their video recordings that are viral on social media, but are quite often biased against police officers as they do not always paint a full picture. However, the implementation of BWCs is often greeted with cynicism by police officers and such cynicism can obstruct the expected benefits of BWCs to policing (Tankebe and Ariel 2016).

While many police agencies have taken advantage of advances in technology and have implemented BWCs, even more police departments have overlooked or are unaware of their usefulness, or have chosen not to deploy them (International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP 2014). The pronouncement by the IACP (2014) is applicable to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) as in spite of having made some organizational advances by integrating aspects of technology into its operations, it has lagged behind on the implementation of BWCs to record police–resident contact as an integral part of its operational toolkit. This situation exists in spite of a constant stream of civilian video documenting police interactions with members of the public in Trinidad and Tobago which is facilitated, for example, by the launch of the My Eye app by CNC3 (a local television station). The result is that the police in Trinidad and Tobago are increasingly being monitored by the public (see Ericson and Haggerty 1997) and this has led to the “new visibility of policing” on the island as espoused by Goldsmith (2010).

In many instances, this new visibility of policing via civilian recording of police officers in Trinidad and Tobago is biased as the video documentations do not show the full picture, because the civilian video recordings usually start when the police–citizen interaction goes awry or when the police began using force against the individual. The result is that many commentators in Trinidad and Tobago are clamouring for the introduction of BWCs into policing in the island as they conceptualize it as the panacea to contentious police–citizen contacts as well as a way to equalize the dysfunctional nature of the “new visibility of policing”. This is premised on notions that the placement of BWCs on police officers in

Trinidad and Tobago would act as an “impartial witness” (IACP 2014) and a “neutral match referee”.

As mentioned earlier in this discourse, members of TTPS have no official means of recording their interactions with their colleagues and members of the public. With this in mind, it is argued that there is a need for police officers in Trinidad and Tobago to have state-sanctioned capacity to record their interactions with their colleagues and members of the public as this would create a balance of power in which all sides of police–public confrontation can be equitably recorded. In fact, there have been vocal calls for BWC implementation within the TTPS due to the increased contentious and often inflammatory contacts between police and citizens in Trinidad and Tobago (Kowlessar 2013; Lucky 2014).

The literature on BWCs shows a marked divergence of thought between policy makers who generally clamour for the implementation and usage of BWCs by police officers and police unions who for a multiplicity of reasons have advocated against its implementation (see, for example, Boston Police Patrolmen’s Association, Inc. 2016; Community Policing Dispatch 2014; Johnson and Smith 2014; Prince George’s County Police Department 2015). Police union opposition to the implementation of BWCs is evident in the following: in 2015, the Riverside Sheriffs’ Association, Riverside County, California, USA, instituted legal proceedings against the city to prevent the implementation of BWCs. Added to that, the Boston Police Patrolmen’s Association brought a civil suit against the Boston Police Department in 2016 over the implementation of BWCs, claiming that they were unsafe, while in 2017, the Jacksonville Police Union was opposed to its members being outfitted with BWCs. Notwithstanding opposition from police unions over the implementation of BWCs into their departments, it is argued that as a result of the exponential advances in technology which foster an increasing competition for space between crime and policing, contemporary policing must co-evolve with those technologies to foster technology-enabled crime reduction/prevention strategies (McQuade 2006) and, further, that police unions should acquiesce to the introduction of BWCs into policing as they are a permanent fixture in contemporary policing (see Capps 2015; Fiumara 2015).

Internationally, there is a plethora of research on police perceptions of BWCs, pilot studies of BWCs (Ariel, Farrar, and Sutherland 2014; Capps 2015; Farrar 2014; Farrar and Ariel 2012, Jennings, Lynch, and Fridell 2014; Katz et al. 2015; Mesa Police Department 2013) and police departments’ internal acceptance of BWCs (Jennings et al. 2014; Katz et al. 2015; Roy 2014). However, scholarship has yet to explore the issue of police union members’ perceptions of BWCs generally and specifically prior to implementation.

However, due to the existing gap in literature regarding the perceptions of police union members on the implementation of BWCs, the researcher sought to determine from the union representatives of the TTPSSWA whether BWCs can act as a neutral match referee providing unambiguous evidence as an impartial witness. The research was also aimed at examining the challenges which may possibly face police officers if deployed with BWCs as well as hindrances to its implementation into the TTPS. It is against this background that the current effort on police unions and their perceptions on the implementation of BWCs into the TTPS are predicated. In this regard, this paper differs conceptually in its focus on BWCs from existing literature.

BACKGROUND

Interactions between police and residents is commonplace in policing, as in the pursuit of their mandated tasks, police officers come into contact with the people they serve. However, throughout the history of policing; this police–community contact has often been questionable, troublesome and contentious. In fact, Jennings et al. (2014) argue that policing has been witness to a significant amount of problematic issues, including, but not limited to, the nature of contact between police officers and the citizens they serve and doubts are often raised as to the appropriateness of these contacts. Quite often allegations of excessive use of force by police, abuse of authority, citizen contempt for police and infractions committed by and against police officers emanate from these police–citizen contacts. Additionally, there are also unintended consequences which emanate from police–public contact which often portray police officers in a negative light. These incidents involving police officers and members of the public are not confined to the metropolis and have reared their ugly heads in the Caribbean; more specifically, Trinidad and Tobago. In many instances, the eventual outcomes of these incidents have been determined by evidence provided either by victims, civilian witnesses, police officers or police officer witnesses. This situation has inherent biases and has led to the desire for a neutral party to determine the true nature of the contact as well as the level of culpability of the parties and it has been argued that the standardized use of recording devices provides a higher level of neutrality than what currently exists.

In the context of Trinidad and Tobago, there have been numerous contentious incidents involving members of the public and police officers and there are often frequent calls for BWCs to be used by police officers so that there can be some neutrality or a match referee which is independent of or in addition to police or public evidence. The most notable is the February 2016 incident involving Inspector Roger Alexander of the TTPS and CNC3 television presenter Ian Alleyne whereby an initial video captured at a “crime scene” by a non-police video showed Alleyne being arrested by Alexander with no obscenities being used by the former. This led to a massive furore over Alexander’s purported excessive use of force and abuse of authority. In light of the furore, another video emerged showing Alleyne using obscene language. It was subsequently discovered that the initial video image which was released was altered by CNC3 (Alleyne’s employer) and his use of obscene language edited out. It is submitted that the use of BWCs by officers at the scene would have cleared Alexander of any wrongdoing much sooner.

In another incident in December 2014, it was alleged that Special Reserve Police officers Tynisa Phillip and Roger Rajkumar had slapped, then pushed wheelchair-confined paraplegic Robby “Sharky” Ramcharitar into oncoming vehicular traffic at Lower High Street, San Fernando. A civilian-recorded video of the incident was captured on a cell phone by a passer-by and uploaded onto the social media site Facebook, two technologies which Goldsmith (2010) believes are radically changing police visibility. Another example of “policing’s new visibility” involved a police officer slapping and then arresting a male at St. Margaret’s Junction, Claxton Bay, Trinidad, on August 31, 2012. This incident was also captured by a passer-by using a camera phone, uploaded onto the social media site Facebook and also went viral.

These acts which came in the wake of other alleged abuses by TTPS officers since 2012 caused widespread criticism, ire and outrage and led to several of the offending police officers being arrested and charged as well as being internally disciplined. It is difficult to imagine the same intense public reaction without the very graphic images contained in the widely circulated videos. In fact, one might question whether the events surrounding the incidents could ever have been reconstructed completely and accurately without the video recording. However, we must also be cognizant of the fact that when citizens make video recordings of police officer–citizen interactions, “the tendency to capture only a piece of the incident is a common reality” (Roy 2014:1) and this can depict a one-sided view of the police officer or citizen.

Spurred by inflammatory contacts between police and residents there is now a groundswell of public demand for the TTPS to utilize the available technology and outfit its officers with BWCs to record their interactions with civilians. In spite of the demand for the introduction of BWCs into the TTPS (Kowlessar 2013; Lucky 2014), there are infrastructural and other challenges surrounding their implementation as well as the need for effective policies to guide its usage. These calls are also related to general wisdom that BWCs can be used to de-escalate potentially volatile situations. Despite the lack of widespread usage of BWCs by members of the TTPS, technologies currently being used within the TTPS include the use of technology for crime analysis, intelligence gathering, GPS monitoring and the use of social media to disseminate and gather information. However, since its introduction into the landscape of Trinidad and Tobago, policing has taken on certain characteristics which were imported from its former colonial masters, England, via the British Colonial model of policing. The TTPS, as is the case with policing in many other Caribbean islands, has been very slow to change and adapt its approach to policing to include the use of newer methods such as BWC technology.

As elucidated earlier, while there have been some changes to policing in the island, these changes were often slow, puerile and hindered by the “culture of delay” (Cowper 2012). With this in mind, technological advances and technological improvements in the TTPS are not at their optimal level. Therefore, the implementation of a radically different system of policing such as BWCs within the TTPS may be fraught with unintended consequences (see Ariel et al. 2018) that may undermine successful implementation. This abhorrence of change was evident with the 2012 implementation of the 21st-century policing initiative into the TTPS by then Commissioner of Police, Canadian-born Dwayne Gibbs which eventually petered out and died. Indeed, what Gibbs was seeking to do was to implement a radically different system of policing to the British Colonial model of policing which was being used by the TTPS and which this author submits is the “default method of policing” in the island.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data for the study were gathered by means of a self-administered survey questionnaire. Self-administered paper questionnaires were utilized rather than in-person face-to-face or telephone interviews in an effort to offset weaknesses associated with the “social desirability bias” when collecting data in person or by

telephone. Social desirability bias is a situation where survey respondents falsely report a favourable state of affairs when in personal contact with the researcher. For example, data collected in person or by telephone have generally been found to be more strongly influenced by social desirability than data from self-administered questionnaires (Tourangeau and Yan 2007). Based on the study's purpose, a 45-item questionnaire was constructed, tested for validity and reliability and subsequently used in the study. The questionnaire is a modified variant of a questionnaire previously utilized by Jennings et al. (2014). Section A of the instrument consisted of seven questions which gathered the demographic data of the respondents. Section B consisted of 38 open- and closed-ended questions regarding the views, beliefs and concerns of union representatives of the TTPS regarding the implementation of BWCs into the organization.

Participants

The study examined perceptions of union members surrounding the implementation of BWCs through data collected from police officers within the TTPS who are Central Committee members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association (TTPSSWA). The respondents (Central Committee representatives of various police divisions, departments, sections, branches and units of the TTPS) are members of the TTPSSWA, the representative body for police officers in Trinidad and Tobago (similar to a police union in other jurisdictions). The organization is divided into the Executive, which has the responsibility for the overall administrative functioning of the body and the Central Committee which consists of members representing the different police station divisions, branches and units of the TTPS. The Central Committee therefore represents the voice of the wider police membership of the TTPS. Study participation was voluntary and the questionnaires were distributed at a Central Committee meeting of the TTPSSWA on March 4, 2016 at the Association's headquarters in Port-of-Spain. There were 51 members of the TTPSSWA in attendance at the meeting, with 36 members completing the self-administered questionnaire for a 71% response rate.

Measurement

The scale items were developed from previously studied and validated measures by Jennings et al. (2014) and carefully restated to reflect the characteristics of the present study. Multiple items were measured with a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Open- and closed-ended questions, as well as yes/no responses were also included in the questionnaire. Prior to the study, a pilot test was conducted with three different groups of police officers attached to two police station divisions and one specialist section in Trinidad. The wording of items was reviewed and modified based on the pilot test. The reformatted questionnaire was then checked for validity and reliability by a university lecturer who is proficient in quantitative research. Two independent university lecturers were used to validate inter-rater reliability or the process whereby data are independently coded and the coding compared for agreements. The overall reliability of the questionnaire in the study has a Cronbach's α of .73 and validity as measured using Cronbach's α was

.79. In quantitative research, the reliability and validity as represented by .73 and .79 are deemed acceptable (Cresswell 2014). The inter-raters had a concordance rate of 87.80% and this is acceptable in quantitative research (Armstrong et al. 1997).

Sampling

The sample for this research used a purposive method and while the selected samples cannot claim to be based on a random criterion, it includes a reasonable representation of police officers through the TTPSSWA (Union) representatives. In pursuit of this study, the researcher studied available data, reviewed published reports, analysed expert recommendations, and consulted scholarly papers to assist in the development of this scholarly article. Some critics may view the number of respondents to the questionnaire as a limitation of the study; however, the survey instrument was not administered to the entire membership of the TTPS based on the proliferation of studies by local, regional and international researchers, using the general membership of the TTPS as proxies for their studies and the resultant “tiredness”, “lethargy” and lack of interest among the general membership as a result of the over-concentration of research questionnaires completed by members of the TTPS (Anonymous First Division Police Officer of the TTPS). Additionally, “many police associations and union groups oppose the implementation of this equipment” [BWCs] (see Community Policing Dispatch 2014; Ellison 2014 as cited in Johnson and Smith 2014). With this in mind, the researcher thought it prudent to use members of the TTPSSWA, representative (Union) body for police officers in Trinidad and Tobago, to give voice to the wider membership’s views on the implementation of BWCs for police officers in that jurisdiction.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the respondents were cleaned, coded and then entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 computer software. The data were then analysed and various statistics generated which are presented in the form of frequencies and percentages. In the analysis, weighted percentages are reported. The *P* value less or equal to 5% was used to indicate statistical significance.

Research Questions

In the analysis of the data on BWCs, the present study pays attention to the factors connected with the environments where people (police officers and civilians) directly participate and the connections that are established between them. Thus, this research attempted to answer the following 10 research questions (RQ):

- RQ1. The wearing of BWCs by members of the TTPS will reduce the number of use-of-force incidents by police officers.
- RQ2. The wearing of BWCs by members of the TTPS will lead to improvements in gathering evidence which can be used by the Court.
- RQ3. The wearing of BWCs by members of the TTPS will serve to reduce the number of external complaints made against police officers.

- RQ4. The wearing of BWCs by members of the TTPS will improve the level of professionalism by local police officers.
- RQ5. The wearing of BWCs by members of the TTPS will increase police officers' compliance with the law.
- RQ6. The wearing of BWCs by members of the TTPS will reduce crime in the island.
- RQ7. Are there benefits to be accrued from the wearing of BWCs by members of the TTPS?
- RQ8. There will be challenges associated with the wearing of BWCs by members of the TTPS?
- RQ9. Is there a need for policies and guidelines to be created before the implementation of BWCs into the TTPS?
- RQ10. Citizens' behaviour will improve as a result of members of the TTPS's usage of BWCs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In acknowledgement of a lacuna in the research regarding the use of police union members as proxies for research on the introduction of BWCs into police departments and the recognition of the importance of BWCs and the attendant debate, the current study sought to provide a data-driven assessment of police union members' perception on BWCs prior to piloting and/or implementation. Emanating from the study conducted in the small island developing state (SIDS) of Trinidad and Tobago, a number of important findings emerged and these are presented and discussed below.

Demographics

Of the Central Committee representatives from the TTPSSWA ($n = 36$), 90% were males and 10% were females. They ranged in age from 20 to 51 years and more, with the largest group of respondents being between the ages of 41 and 45 years, followed by the 36–40 and 46–50 years age groups. Of the respondents, 52% were corporals, 25% were constables, 7% were sergeants and 3% were inspectors. The length of service for the respondents ranged from three years to 33 years with an average of 18.6 years. The respondents represented eight of the nine police station divisions, namely: Eastern, Western, Northern, North-Eastern, Port-of-Spain, Central, Tobago and South-Western Divisions. Respondents also represented a variety of branches, sections, divisions and units (for example, Homicide, Guard and Emergency, Special Branch, Inter-Agency Task Force, Other Task Forces, Criminal Investigations Department, Police Complaints, Traffic, Transport and Telecom Police Band, Police Academy and Organised Crime, Firearms and Narcotics) within the TTPS; therefore there was a wide ambit of representation from the TTPS Central Committee membership. The length of membership within the TTPSSWA ranged from four months to 20 years with an average of five years as a Central Committee member.

Quantitative Results

There was 100% agreement by the respondents that the use of BWCs is non-existent within all sections, departments, units and divisions throughout the TTPS. The respondents reported considerably high rates of agreement to questions on whether they believe that their agency should adopt BWCs for all frontline police officers (72.2% agreement) and that they would wear a BWC while performing their duties (72.2% agreement). While 79% of the respondents indicated that they would encourage other members of the TTPS to use BWCs, only 59% of the respondents indicated that they would feel comfortable wearing BWCs. Importantly, almost 73% of the respondents agreed that they would volunteer to wear BWCs on a trial basis. The respondents demonstrated fairly high levels of agreement that their behaviour would improve if they (respondents) were wearing BWCs (75%), while only 50% believed that citizen behaviour would improve if police officers were wearing BWCs. This particular finding was surprising in light of the statement by Farrar (2013) as it relates to members of the public that, once informed they were being filmed, even the drunk or agitated tended to become more polite.

When considering the effect of BWCs on the discipline of their fellow officers, it was felt by a great majority of the respondents (82.3%) that wearing a BWC will improve officer behaviour and discipline while almost 80% were of the view that it would cause police officers to act more professionally and increase officers' likelihood of behaving "by-the-book" in the conduct of their duties. In terms of transparency of police conduct, police misconduct and safety on the job, the ratings were mixed. For example, only 36% of the respondents believed that wearing a BWC would make them feel safer while on the job. A great majority of the respondents (86%) felt that wearing BWCs will allow for greater transparency of police conduct and act as a "neutral match referee", while 77.8% were of the view that the usage of BWCs by police officers would cause police misconduct to decrease. As it relates to the current *status quo* of policies within the TTPS, almost 84% of the respondents indicated that the TTPS does not have policies in place for the usage of BWCs and 95% were in agreement that policies and regulations for the regulation of BWCs must be first established before any implementation of a system of BWCs into the TTPS.

As it relates to the questions on wearing BWCs and the use of force, 40% of the respondents indicated that wearing a BWC would reduce their use of force against members of the public, while 64% proffered the view that when their colleagues wear BWCs, they (their colleagues) would reduce their use of force against members of the public. Interestingly, 50% of all respondents opined that wearing BWCs will serve to reduce the number of external citizen complaints submitted against other police officers and a similar proportion (50%) were of the view that wearing a BWC will reduce the number of internal complaints lodged against them (respondents). Other notable findings are that while 64% of the respondents agreed that the usage of BWCs by local police officers will lead to improvements in gathering evidence which can be used by the Court, only 34% believed that the implementation and subsequent wearing of BWCs will reduce crime in the island.

An interesting finding emanating from the data was that a significant relationship exists between respondents' ranks and their preference for the implementation of BWCs. Sergeants and inspectors were more in favour of implementing BWCs

than constables and corporals. The analysis of the data indicated that there was a level of significance related to this variable which was greater than .05 which indicated that sergeant and inspector respondents were more amenable to using BWCs than constables and corporals. While the data failed to unearth any concrete explanation for this phenomenon, one can use conjecture to suppose that as police officers became more adept, experienced, knowledgeable and battle hardened over time, they were able to perform their tasks with more confidence and without fear of being recorded.

Qualitative Results

As the questionnaire contained open-ended questions (a qualitative strand was embedded into the instrument), several notable comments were proffered by the study's respondents. The following paragraphs detail some of the qualitative elements of the study. For example, it was pointed out that "the use of Body Worn Cameras would now force police officers to adhere to the organizational rules and regulations in a positive way" (respondent #1), while respondent #14 posited that "Quite a number of police officers are in the habit of abusing their authority and the use of BWCs will greatly affect their conduct." Respondent #26 pointed out that BWCs would assist when interviewing suspects and when confession statements are given. The video could be used to negate allegations by suspects that the confession statement was not voluntarily given." Other notable comments emanated from respondent #34 who submitted "If you do police work properly, you will have nothing to fear" and from respondent #17 who argued that "Unless well thought out policies are installed, there would be problems with the willingness of officers to use same (BWCs)."

Interestingly, respondent #19 pointed out "While there are drawbacks to the use of body cameras, the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. I am all for its implementation in the TTPS so that some of the baseless allegations against police that lead to stupid protest actions in some areas could be stopped." Respondent #27 submitted "When a bandit gets killed by police in this country everybody sees and has something bad to say about the police, but when a decent citizen gets killed, nobody sees. Bring on body worn cameras for them kind of people." One opposing view on the implementation of BWCs came from respondent #8 who opined that "There are lots of persons who talk to the police in confidence and others who want to talk to the police in confidence. Due to a lack of trust in members of the TTPS, body worn cameras may not work as nobody will want to talk if everything they say is voice and video recorded. They will fear that their identity and the information they provide will be leaked to the criminal elements." Interestingly, this position has found support from Ellison (Ellison 2014 as cited in Johnson and Smith 2014).

Answers to the Research Questions

An examination of the dataset on BWCs and their possible implementation and usage in the TTPS revealed some interesting details and these findings are now discussed. Research questions RQ6 and RQ10 were answered negatively. This meant that for the police respondents the usage of BWCs by police officers in Trinidad and

Tobago will not serve to reduce crime in the island (RQ6) and that citizens' behaviour will not improve even when police officers in the island are wearing BWCs (RQ10). Research questions RQ1, RQ2, RQ4, RQ5, RQ7, RQ8 and RQ9 were answered in the affirmative. This meant that the police respondents were of the view that wearing BWCs will reduce the number of use-of-force incidents by police officers (RQ1), will lead to improvements in gathering evidence which can be used by the Court (RQ2) and it will lead to improvements in the level of professionalism by local police officers (RQ4). For the respondents, the usage of BWCs will increase police officers' compliance with the law (RQ5) and there are benefits to be accrued from using BWCs by police officers in Trinidad and Tobago (RQ7). Interestingly, the respondents opined that challenges will be accrued from using BWCs by police officers in Trinidad and Tobago (RQ8) and as a result policies and guidelines must be created before the implementation of a BWC system into the TTPS (RQ9). The result for RQ3 was mixed as 50% of the respondents answered yes and no.

Challenges to Implementation of BWCs

There were mixed ratings toward the respondents' perceptions of challenges towards the implementation of BWCs into the TTPS, as 58.3% of the respondents indicated that there will be challenges faced by the organization in seeking to implement such a system. Police resistance/lack of officer buy-in (see Katz et al. 2014), the need for legislation/effective policies to guide the usage of BWC systems and public resistance were identified as the major challenges. Other notable challenges to the implementation of a system of BWCs into the TTPS included the invasive nature of the system, redaction and data storage capacity, the possible lack of standards in choosing the equipment, the prohibitive cost of BWCs, police culture, the use of BWCs to "spy" on junior police officers by senior police officers, the unauthorized usage of the stored video by unscrupulous police officers, and the possible inequity of distribution of BWCs within the TTPS. Approximately 80% of the respondents indicated that prior to the implementation of a system of BWCs into the TTPS, careful consideration must be given to the implementation process. The respondents also cogitated that such an implementation should not be conducted in a similar manner to police reforms conducted by August Vollmer and O.W. Wilson in the USA between the 1920s and the 1960s which "relied primarily on a strong police chief executive who would effect change in a top-down strategy" (Walker 2013:65–6). Instead, the respondents indicated that there should be some form of consultation with the TTPSSWA as well as a trial of BWCs before implementation.

Benefits of the Implementation of BWCs into the TTPS

Of the respondents, 86% opined that there are benefits that would accrue to the TTPS, police officers and members of the public if a system of BWCs is implemented in the island. This finding is corroborated by the academic literature which points out that there are many benefits to be derived from the usage of BWCs (Ariel et al. 2014; Big Brother Watch 2015; Corso et al. 2015; Figueroa 2016; Gaub et al. 2016; IACP 2004; Jameel and Bunn 2015; Jennings et al. 2014; Mesa Police Department 2013; Miller, Toliver, and Police Executive Research Forum 2014).

Improved professionalism by police officers was the major benefit identified by the study's participants regarding the introduction of BWCs into the TTPS and it was opined that officers would improve their professionalism by being forced to give more attention to following the rules. The international literature also corroborates the respondents' views that the implementation of a system of BWCs would cause officer professionalism to improve (see Figueroa 2016; IACP 2004). This was closely followed by the potential to provide the courts with evidence captured by BWCs. Another key benefit emanating from the study was that the implementation of a system of BWCs into the TTPS will allow for greater transparency on the actions of police officers into contentious contacts with members of the public. The findings of improved transparency as a result of the implementation and usage of BWCs is also corroborated by Big Brother Watch (2015), Corso et al. (2015), and Jameel and Bunn (2015).

The results of the study also indicated that the introduction of BWCs into the TTPS is a way to balance the increasing one-sided inverse relationship whereby citizen journalists have the advantage of recording contacts with police officers and placing them on social media sites, even when those recording do not show the full picture. The data which emanated from the study suggest the need for BWCs to be used by members of the TTPS. This has never been more evident, particularly after recent events in San Fernando, Chaguanas and Freeport; however, this technology does not come without criticism (Digital Ally n.d.:1; Rakia 2014). According to Digital Ally (n.d.:1) "Body worn cameras are no silver bullet" to police-community misconduct. Continuing, Digital Ally notes that "there are many benefits that make body camera a judicious and enormously helpful tool in the modern police environment" (Digital Ally n.d.:1).

The respondents (approximately 87%) opined that BWCs should be implemented into the TTPS; however, implementation should be done with much caution and with pre-planned regulations in place to guide BWC usage so that regulatory systems should precede implementation. In sum, the respondents pointed out that what is needed is a set of well-thought-out and well-documented policies prior to the implementation of BWCs into the TTPS. Additionally, the respondents submitted that BWCs would serve to provide greater equity, parity and provide truer accounts of what transpired (the neutral match referee) as well as balancing the current one-dimensional reporting on police by civilian reporters who do not provide a full account of police-civilian contacts. The respondents also cogitated that as well as acting as "a silent witness" (see Ferrell Jr 2013), BWCs have the potential to provide unimpeachable evidence and thus act as a "neutral match referee". The respondents also highlighted the following additional benefits:

- (1) Identification of criminal offenders and suspects.
- (2) Improved accountability (support from Big Brother Watch 2015; Jameel and Bunn 2015).
- (3) Improved police conduct.
- (4) Corroboration/validation of police account of contact with members of the public.
- (5) Vindication of police officers from baseless allegations.

- (6) Facilitation of greater compliance with standards and procedures (police officers).
- (7) Protection of police officers from allegations.
- (8) Safeguarding police officers against litigation.
- (9) Enhanced clearing of police officers accused of wrongdoing.
- (10) Improved behaviour by members of the public.
- (11) Captured videos can be used for training purposes (police recruits and established officers).
- (12) Captured video images can be used as records.
- (13) Provision of real-time evidence of police–civilian contact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are some recommendations for the implementation of BWCs into the TTPS. These recommendations were gleaned from the participant responses to the questions on the survey instrument and are as follows:

Recommendation 1: Development of a national strategic plan/BWC policy as the deployment of BWCs is a complicated, costly and administratively complex process that requires a broad strategic plan (see Katz et al. 2014).

Recommendation 2: The conduct of a BWC pilot study using volunteer front-line police officers within police divisions, branches, sections, etc. with an experimental and a control group to determine differences in attitudes and outcomes.

Recommendation 3: The subsequent implementation of BWCs on a phased basis. This should be complemented by quarterly evaluations of the programme to ensure project efficiency and effectiveness.

Recommendation 4: The eventual positioning of BWCs as standard equipment for all officers in units that have high instances of citizen contact.

Recommendation 5: Active involvement of the TTPSSWA in testing of BWCs before they are purchased as well as in pilot studies of BWCs before implementation.

Recommendation 6: The purchase of camera technology that includes software from vendors that can be managed by information technology personnel within the TTPS.

Recommendation 7: The development of policies and procedures to guide all aspects of BWC usage based on international best practices using internal (TTPS) and external professionals to guide the development as well as ensuring that these policies and procedures are in place, prior to full-scale implementation of BWCs.

Recommendation 8: Ensure that all personnel are properly trained on the use of BWCs as well as educated on the policies and procedures addressing camera use.

Recommendation 9: The tri-annual updating of the BWC software and apparatus.

Recommendation 10: The evaluation of each phase of the implementation plan in order to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

Recommendation 11: Stakeholder consultations (law enforcement, community and political executive) prior to the drafting of legislation and/or procedures on the usage of BWCs.

Recommendation 12: Ensure that the BWC policy is widely available to the public via a variety of sources inclusive of the Internet.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Many academic studies are hindered by limitations of some sort and this study is no exception. The major limitation of this study is that the respondents represented eight of the nine police divisions in Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, there should be some caution in generalizing the findings from the study as being representative of the views of the entire Central Committee membership of the TTPSSWA. In spite of the aforementioned limitation, the study is of great importance as it adds to the body of literature on policing (locally, regionally and internationally) and is of great social relevance to the TTPS in its quest to implement BWCs. Further, the current study is one of the first ever studies to date to assess in detail a police union's perceptions of BWCs before implementation by canvassing the views of its membership. In this regard, this evaluative study is also important and fills a gap in the existing literature.

Although this research makes an important contribution to scholarship on BWCs, it spawns some new questions. Indeed, research on the implementation of a system of BWCs into the TTPS is far from being complete and further research should be conducted using other research methodologies. Researchers can aid this effort, as research and analysis will allow public interest groups to better understand the implementation and deployment of this new policing technology and ensure that the deployment of BWCs is consistent with the goals outlined for its use. While this study focused on the implementation of BWCs into the TTPS, the need for policies and guidelines as well as the possible challenges to such an implementation, given the importance of the ways that policing and communal contact interrelate, it would be crucial for future work to consider the impact of BWCs on both groups. This researcher proposes a 12-month pilot study to determine the efficacy of using BWCs by using an experimental as well as a control group of police officers in Trinidad and Tobago. This will aid in the determination of the viability of its usage and provide further evidence to support the findings of this study. This trial will also serve further purposes of durability, testability, scope, cost, etc.

CONCLUSION

This study compiled data from the Central Committee members of the TTPSSWA and enhances the developing body of knowledge on BWCs for local police, criminal justice professionals, academicians and community members. It is submitted that there is a role for technology to play in building additional trust and enhancing accountability between police officers and community residents in Trinidad and Tobago. This position emanating from the data gathered from the Central

Committee representatives of the TTPSSWA is hardly surprising given the unidimensional nature of civilian-led reporting in Trinidad and Tobago. In spite of the favourable findings regarding the implementation of BWCs into the TTPS, the readership of this article must be aware of the unsavoury human tendency to latch on to the most readily available solutions whenever complex problems arise. Calls for the implementation of BWCs into the TTPS may be viewed as an exemplification of this. Importantly, equipping police officers in Trinidad and Tobago with BWCs is neither a “silver bullet” nor a panacea that will automatically dissolve police–resident contentious confrontations; however, it will act as an independent witness, providing unimpeachable evidence.

With this in mind, local policymakers and police executives should be cautious with the implementation of BWCs as a panacea for every policing problem. The author of this paper endorses the views that BWCs are “no substitute for broader reforms of policing practices” (Data and Civil Rights 2015:1), replacements for proper, effective policing methodologies or a panacea for ineffective policing and/or calamitous behaviour by community residents. It is a complementary system to aid policing. Importantly though, the TTPS must be able to actively participate in the current digital age which has been facilitated by the exponential advances in information and communication technologies, if it is to enhance its mandate and further develop the organization. Based on the result of this heuristic study, the introduction of BWCs into the TTPS has the propensity to create a “balance of power” by acting as the “silent witness” (Ferrell Jr 2013), an independent witness, as well as a neutral match referee to provide unambiguous and unimpeachable accounts of contentious contacts between police and residents. In so doing, the police union respondents in Trinidad and Tobago agreed that BWCs create the possibility of capturing the entire police–citizen contact from start to finish and were generally amenable to their introduction into the TTPS.

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TRANSLATED ABSTRACTS

Abstracto

En las últimas dos décadas, las cámaras de uso corporal (BWC) se han desarrollado como una herramienta probatoria para determinar los resultados de contactos polémicos entre policía y ciudadanos, así como un método para mejorar la responsabilidad de ambos grupos. Si bien se han realizado numerosos estudios sobre las BWC, la investigación se ha centrado principalmente en las percepciones de los oficiales de policía y los análisis de seguimiento de su uso después de la implementación y, o durante los ensayos controlados y aleatorios. Sin embargo, existe una escasez de literatura académica sobre las percepciones de los miembros del sindicato de policía sobre las BWC antes de la implementación dentro de sus departamentos. Este artículo contribuye al cuerpo de literatura sobre BWC al proporcionar un análisis de los datos recopilados de los representantes del Comité Central de la Asociación Social y de Bienestar del Servicio de Policía de Trinidad y Tobago (TTPSSWA), el cuerpo representativo de los oficiales de policía en Trinidad y Tobago (TTPS), con respecto a la implementación de la tecnología BWC. Los resultados indican que los participantes del estudio son generalmente susceptibles a la introducción e implementación de las BWC en la policía; sin embargo, los participantes sugirieron una implementación por etapas, precedida por un ensayo controlado de las BWC, así como la creación de políticas internas antes de la implementación. También se discuten otros hallazgos clave, recomendaciones y direcciones para futuras investigaciones.

Palabras clave sindicatos de policía; cámaras de uso corporal; estado insular pequeño en desarrollo; Servicio de policía de Trinidad y Tobago

Abstrait

Au cours des deux dernières décennies, les caméras portées sur le corps (BWC) se sont développées comme outil de preuve pour déterminer les résultats des contacts litigieux entre la police et les citoyens, ainsi que comme une méthode pour renforcer la responsabilité des deux groupes. Bien que de nombreuses études aient été menées sur les BWC, la recherche s'est principalement concentrée sur les perceptions des policiers et les analyses de suivi de leur utilisation après leur mise en œuvre et, ou pendant des essais contrôlés randomisés. Cependant, il y a une pénurie de littérature académique sur les perceptions des membres des syndicats de police sur les BWC avant leur mise en œuvre dans leurs services. Cet article contribue au corpus de la littérature sur les BWC en fournissant une analyse des données collectées auprès des représentants du Comité central de l'Association Sociale et de Bien-être de la police de Trinité et Tobago (TTPSSWA), l'organe représentatif des policiers du Service de police de Trinité-et-Tobago (TTPS), concernant la mise en œuvre de la technologie BWC. Les résultats indiquent que les participants à l'étude sont généralement disposés à introduire et à mettre en œuvre des BWC dans le TTPS; cependant, les participants ont suggéré une mise en œuvre par étapes précédée d'un essai contrôlé des BWC, ainsi que la création de politiques internes avant la mise en œuvre. D'autres conclusions, recommandations et orientations clés pour les recherches futures sont également discutées.

Mots clés syndicats de policiers; caméras portées sur le corps; petit état insulaire en développement; Service de police de Trinité-et-Tobago

抽象

在过去的二十年中，随身摄像机（BWC）已经发展成为确定有争议的警察与公民接触的结果的证据工具，以及增强两组问责制的一种方法。尽管已经对穿戴式摄像机进行了大量研究，但研究主要集中在警官的看法以及实施后和对照试验中的使用情况的后续分析。但是，关于警察工会成员在其部门内实施之前对佩戴式摄像机的看法的学术文献很少。本文通过对从特立尼达和多巴哥警察局社会和福利协会（TTPSSWA）中央委员会代表的收集数据进行分析，为身体佩戴式摄像机的文献做出了贡献。特立尼达和多巴哥警察局（TTPS），关于将便携式摄像机技术应用到警察局中。调查结果表明，这项研究的参与者一般都适合使用和实施随身摄像机；但是，参与者建议分阶段实施，然后对穿戴式摄像机进行受控试验，并在实施之前制定内部政策。还讨论了其他关键发现，建议和未来研究方向。

关键字： 警察工会；随身携带的相机；小岛屿发展中国家；特立尼达和多巴哥警察署 福利

نبذة مختصرة

كأداة إثبات لتحديد نتائج الاتصالات المثيرة (BWCs) خلال العقدين الماضيين، تم تطوير الكاميرات التي يرتديها الجسم للجدل بين الشرطة والمواطنين وكذلك طريقة لتعزيز مساءلة كلا المجموعتين. في حين تم إجراء العديد من الدراسات على الكاميرات التي يرتديها الجسم، فقد ركز البحث في المقام الأول على تصورات ضباط الشرطة وتحليلات المتابعة لاستخدامها بعد التنفيذ، أو أثناء التجارب العشوائية الخاضعة للرقابة. ومع ذلك، هناك ندرة في المؤلفات الأكاديمية حول تصورات أعضاء نقابة الشرطة للكاميرات التي يرتديها الجسم قبل تنفيذها داخل إدارتهم. تساهم هذه المقالة في مجموعة المؤلفات حول الكاميرات التي يتم ارتداؤها من خلال توفير تحليل للبيانات التي تم جمعها من ممثلي جمعية الرعاية الاجتماعية التابعة لشرطة ترينيداد وتوباغو (TTPSSWA) في اللجنة المركزية، وهي الهيئة التمثيلية لضباط الشرطة دائرة شرطة ترينيداد وتوباغو (TTPS)، فيما يتعلق بتنفيذ تكنولوجيا الكاميرات التي يرتديها الجسم في خدمة الشرطة هناك. تشير النتائج إلى أن المشاركين في الدراسة قادرون بشكل عام على إدخال وتنفيذ الكاميرات التي يرتديها الجسم؛ ومع ذلك، اقترح المشاركون تنفيذًا مرحليًا يسبقه تجربة محكمة للكاميرات التي يرتديها الجسم، بالإضافة إلى وضع سياسات داخلية قبل التنفيذ. وتناقش أيضًا النتائج والتوصيات والتوصيات الرئيسية الأخرى للبحوث المستقبلية.

الكلمات الدالة: نقابات الشرطة، كاميرات يرتديها الجسم، الدولة الجزرية الصغيرة النامية، دائرة شرطة ترينيداد وتوباغو

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