



# The Efficacy of Public Order Training in Improving Performance of District Reaction Groups (DRGs) in the Zimbabwe Republic Police, Mutare Central District, Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe

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## Abstract

This article sought to assess the role of public order training in improving the performance of the District Reaction Group (DRG), in the Zimbabwe Republic Police Mutare Central District. The study adopted a quantitative approach and used a descriptive survey research design. The study participants were drawn from members of Zimbabwe Republic Police Mutare Central District. A sample size of 280 participants was drawn in which a stratified random sampling technique was used. Data for this study were collected through structured questionnaires. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 23.0 and presented in the form of tables and figures. The findings of the study established that public order training had a positive significant influence on Police District Reaction Group public conduct in Mutare District. The study recommended that the Zimbabwe Republic Police should conduct more training on customer care and Human Rights through its Professional Updating Centre (PUC) in order to reduce number of complaints of human rights violations by the public.

## Keywords

public order training, police reaction group, Zimbabwe Republic Police, Professional Updating Centre, training and development

## 1 Introduction and background

The world over, the right to hold and participate in public gatherings is enshrined in international, regional and domestic laws as fundamental freedoms and are inherent and rooted in the fact that human society stands on cooperation between such persons in a community (Mancini & Rosenfeld, 2020). According to Weyland (2020) it is prudent to note that although people come together in pursuit of their common interests, some will have a different motive and end up committing crimes. Thus, given the diversity of cultures across the globe, and country after country, criminal activities and public disorder become inevitable, mostly regarding public gatherings such as political gatherings, social meetings such as football matches, food riots and so many other public order events. Police forces are faced with these different scenarios of conflict and the mandate to uphold the freedom of assembly of their country's citizenry.

At global level, Gilmore (2013) recalls that the world has witnessed a number of public disorder events in which the reaction of police officers to restore order in such situations was either condemned or praised. For example, according to the Amnesty International (2008) on their findings in the Republic of South Korea regarding a deadly protest against the importation of beef from United States of America, which erupted in May-August 2008, they blamed the anti-riot police for incorporating military recruits who were not qualified to deal with disorders. Hence, the cause of Korean National Police Agency poor performance, according to the Amnesty International Report, was a result of frustration and tiredness that led police to use unnecessary and excessive force and brutality on civilians and ended up misusing security equipment. More so, according to an International Criminal Justice Report, the Russian army has been accused of assassinating and injuring innocent citizens in its bid to maintain public order during the Russia – Ukraine war (Haleem et al., 2020). In the same vein, Gilmore (2013) states that Germany Nazi's Party, broke world records for engaging in public order violence, due to so many people being killed and injured a century ago. Therefore, McCarthy and McPhail (1998) establish that the three major components of public order management systems (POMS) apparent in contemporary Western democracies are special and temporal restrictions on protest, grounded in widespread adoption of advanced permit systems; training regimes and technologies designed to help the police contain and control demonstrations more effectively and an emphasis, at least rhetorically on the police negotiating with key participants and organizing groups before and during the events.

In South Africa, public order management became under spotlight following the death and injury of thousands of revolting workers taking part in the Marikana labor uprising and echoing the Sharpeville massacre. The Marikana massacre refers to the events of 11 to 16 August 2012 at the Lonmin Mine at Marikana, where 44 people lost their lives, more than 70 were injured, approximately 250 people were arrested and millions of rands' worth of property was damaged (Boëttger & Rathbone, 2016). These events were preceded by a wage dispute between worker unions and the Lonmin management. The events were exacerbated by a dispute between the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the newly-formed Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU). The eventual tragedy also involved the South African Police Service (SAPS), that used the most lethal force against civilians since the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 (Boëttger & Rathbone, 2016). In the Sharpeville massacre, the SAPS fired without warning into an unarmed crowd at Sharpeville in Vereeniging, killing at least 69 anti-pass law protesters. This incident was seen by many scholars as a turning point in the struggle against apartheid. Although this incident happened more than 50 years ago, it united the oppressed masses against the National Party Government, in much the same way as the Marikana massacre provoked public outcry.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe<sup>1</sup> grants Parliament the power to make laws for the peace, order and good governance of Zimbabwe and Section 59 provides that everyone has the right to demonstrate peacefully. Pursuant to this, the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act (MOPA) was promulgated in November 2019 to provide a regulatory framework for public assemblies. In 2022 the government of Zimbabwe promulgated the Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission Act, which provides for an independent complaints' mechanism for members of the public against members of the security services pursuant to Section 210 of the Constitution. The complaints mechanism is intermediated by a body that is independent from all of the security services, namely the police, defense, prisons and correctional and intelligence services. For this purpose, the Act establishes a Commission to carry out this function with a view to remedying any harm caused by any misconduct on the part of any member of the security services.

Section 219 of the same Constitution establishes the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) and grants it a mandate, primarily to maintain peace and order and protect life and property. It is within this context that ZRP Standing Orders Volume 1 (1995) outline the provision for large urban areas to have their own Police Reaction Groups at both provincial and district levels. Hence, the Mutare Central District Reaction Group is one such police team responsible for public order management in its area of jurisdiction. However, despite several numerous training sessions being carried out by the Manicaland Professional Updating Centre to improve public order policing, the Mutare Central District Reaction Group is facing a lot of challenges during public order/disorder management. For example, the DRG's public conduct has resulted into a number of complaints against police which range from unprofessional behavior to corruption. It is therefore against this setting that this study sought to establish the role of public order training in improving the performance of the District Reaction Group, using Mutare Central District as a case in point.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Crowd mind theory**

This theory by Le Bon has made several crucial points to clarify the reasons behind crowd or mob behavior. He maintains that the development of a type of collective mind, or crowd mind, which causes them to feel and act in ways that are very different from how each person would feel, think, and act if they were in a condition of isolation, is what gives rise to crowds. The impact of a group or collective mind, which develops when certain people get together with a common drive, objective or purpose, is said by psychologists who support the crowd mind theory to be the cause of this phenomenon. They also contend that when someone belongs to a certain group, they lose their sense of self. As such, when dealing with crowds, the police need to ensure that crowds do not commit crimes. Some of the crimes include the destruction of property and subsequent looting of goods. The Maintenance of Order and Peace Act (MOPA), which is a predecessor to Public Order and Security Act (POSA), as well as Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA) are legal instruments crafted by the legislature to resolve the conflicts that may come up between the public and the police, enforcing the laws to curb criminal activities

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment No. 20) Act 2013 [Zimbabwe], 22 May 2013. Online: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/51ed090f4.html>

during permitted gatherings. Some of the ways might point to the review and fine-tuning of the existing MOPA to curb crimes associated with the right to freedom of assembly, as well as the promulgated Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission Act, Chapter 10:34 (No.5/2022). However, the weakness of this theory is that it is heavily inclined towards reasons for crowds behaving in a certain manner, but does not explain why police may sometimes use minimum force in case of rowdy crowds. The theory also highlights that a sense of responsibility is loosened in a crowd and there is a rise of common crowd-consciousness and lapse of personal consciousness. Some, however, disagree, claiming that people have neurological systems and that consciousness depends on how the neural structure works. The theory also asserts that the leader's commands or general direction influence the crowd's conduct and actions. Le Bon used numerous examples from the French Revolution to illustrate his arguments. However, he has drawn criticism on the grounds that just assembling or aggregating a small number of individuals who share a shared goal will not result in a crowd's behavior or attitude. His perspective is further challenged on the grounds that an individual's sensations and feelings in a crowd are not at all unlike those when they are alone. The mass of people as a whole lacks any sense of isolation.

## **2.2 Social Facilitation theory**

Some people contend that while the emotional response of one person does not trigger the emotional response of another, it adds to the emotional behavior of the crowd. This also alludes to Allport's social facilitation theory and cyclic reaction crowd theory. According to proponents of this notion, we sometimes laugh in public situations when other people are laughing without realizing why. It is a reaction in a group hence produced by a group. Allport believes that the prepotent trend of the individual himself is the true source of the crowd response, not the other members of the crowd or the stimulus scenario. Undoubtedly, the crowd's energy and its participants contribute to such behaviors. Each person becomes extremely suggestible and more likely to copy other people's behavior, as their emotions are at their highest.

## **3 Concept of Public Order Management**

Disorder can happen anywhere and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in its Human Rights Handbook on Policing Assemblies, has highlighted the great variation in public order situations (Galbreath & McEvoy, 2012). They can range from temporary or short-lived events to the much longer, even semi-permanent, protests that have emerged in the last 20 years. There are numerous examples of these evolving protests in an Irish context, including the Shell to Sea protests, the Shannon Airport protests and the environmental protests on the road-widening scheme at the Glen of the Downs. Horizon scanning and responding to this constantly changing landscape, including preparing for an unanticipated event, requires that police planning, policies, practices, tactics and systems continuously adapt (Garda Síochána Inspectorate, 2019).

As such, public order management systems (POMS) are the more or less elaborated, more or less permanent organizational forms, their guiding policies and programs, technologies and standard policing practices that are designed by authorities for supervising protestors' access to public space and managing them in that space (McCarthy & McPhail, 1998). Variations in the features and styles of public policing protest have received extensive analysis in recent

years, but comparatively little systematic attention has been paid to the organizational structures within which institutionalized police practices are embedded.

In the same line of thinking, the maintenance of public order in Zimbabwe is a major responsibility for the Zimbabwe Republic Police. It is not only essential to the quality of life of those living in Zimbabwe, but also enables important state functions to be undertaken. As such, the Zimbabwe Republic Police Public Order Strategy was formulated to specify how this important responsibility is met, covering the policing of large public order events, ceremonials, serious disorders and major civil incidents, and it is not intended to apply to the policing of low-level disorder and anti-social behavior such as neighbor disputes or noisy parties (ZRP Public Order Training Manual, 2000).

#### **4 Types of Training Activities being conducted to Improve Public Order Management Policing**

Ali, Anita, Zulkifly, & Imaduddin (2019) argues that learning needs should be concerned with identifying and satisfying the needs of employees in order for them to be fit for the tasks and responsibilities accorded to them, as well as their work demand, so as to prepare them to take up higher responsibilities in the future through planned succession. According to Garavan et al. (2021) organizations that value training and development have to implement various training activities which fulfil the tasks at hand. It is within this context that, in order to improve public order, police officers in Zimbabwe are subject to various training activities (Matunhu, & Matunhu (2021) 5

##### **4.1 Customer Care and Human Rights Training**

According to Kivoi (2020) one of the significant factors causing police officers to be stressed is a lack of professional development. In the same vein, Ransley (2016) notes that a number of police managers and supervisors have been deployed without undergoing courses, which has led to poor performance across the globe by various national police service with regard to towards handling public disorder situations. According to Mugari & Obioha (2018), the Zimbabwe Republic Police Public Order Policy seeks to develop and implement training programs which focus on improving all officers' administrative and operational skills to enable them to deal with all aspects of public order/ disorder efficiently and effectively, the ultimate goal being to ensure that the highest level of human rights observance prevails in managing public disorders and disaster situations. According to Sitompul et al. (2021) law enforcers are expected to perform their duties efficiently and effectively so that crowds of demonstrators and spectators are guided and demonstrate in an orderly manner, and this can only be achieved through proper training which focuses on the importance of human rights and good customer care for police officers.

##### **4.2 Exchange Training Programs**

According to Sitompul et al. (2021) exchange training programs aim to share knowledge, skills and attitudes between and among employees in the same industry or sector. He further argues that, for a fundamental benchmark to exist, exchange training programs are very much required, whether at local, national, regional or international level (Sitompul et al., 2021). In the same line of thinking, a paramilitary organization, the Zimbabwe Republic Police, usually conduct

some exchange training programs for public order with sister organizations such as Zimbabwe's National Army and Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services, especially to monitor national events such as harmonized elections and other national public holidays, including Independence and Heroes Day commemorations (Matunhu & Matunhu 2021). Moreover, the existence of JOC (Joint Command Corporation) meetings and workshops for the Zimbabwe Republic Police enhances different commanders of the security service to share notes, experiences and knowledge of public order management across the country. At international level, the ZRP Support Unit wing has often engaged with other countries such as Israel and Mozambique on public order training exchange programs.

### **4.3 Training programs for intelligence officers on information-gathering**

McCarthy and McPhail (1988) aver that effective and efficient public order management begins with effective and efficient public order intelligence-gathering, especially for politically-motivated violence. This implies the need for training programs for intelligence officers on information-gathering. Hence, in the Zimbabwe Republic Police, intelligence-gathering training, covers all aspects of evidence-gathering including post-event investigations, observation points and surveillance, legislation, contemporaneous commentary training, public order tactics and fitness training (Matunhu & Matunhu 2021). During the course of evidence-gathering, officers work with photographers taking part in public order training exercises (Beggs et al., 2012).

### **4.4 Physical Training**

The Zimbabwe Republic Police recruits able-bodied young men and women between the ages of 18 to 22. Physical training is part of the curriculum during the initial recruit training of a Police officer in Zimbabwe. The training, which used to be a six months basic course, now covers a period of two years and has theoretical and practical components. Their semesterized theory covers modules such as police duties, police administration, weapon handling, public order management and counter insurgency and the history of the police and policing. In addition to these foundational courses, the other courses include cyber-crime, contemporary policing, research methods and statistics, criminal investigations, criminal procedure and an introduction to law, computers and financial accounting.

The Mukushi Training Depot (formerly Morris Depot) is mandated to provide basic police training. The Mukushi Academy is affiliated with the University of Zimbabwe and now recruits new graduates with a Diploma in Policing. After graduating from Mukushi Academy, police officers may also apply to join the Police Staff College (the highest institute of higher learning in the Zimbabwe Republic Police), which is an affiliate college of the University of Zimbabwe, as well as the Bindura University of Science Education. The police staff College offers police officers various degrees and diplomas related to crime and policing. These include but are not limited to diplomas and degrees in Community Development and Lifelong Policing, Cyber Security Studies and diplomas in Law, Business Management and Criminology. All these equip police officers with 21<sup>st</sup> century policing strategies that also encompass public order management. According to the ZRP Public Order Training Manual (2000), the most physically demanding work that a police officer is expected to perform is associated with public order in all its manifestations, whether dealing with large numbers, of good-humored people on important royal occasions, militant strikers, football hooligans, or crowds of opposing political extremists.

As such, a police officer needs to remain cool, alert and capable of meeting emergencies as they arise. It was further argued that the work is often energy-sapping, for example, holding back a pressing crowd. Sometimes it is dangerous (for example, when officers are subjected to violent attacks and missiles being thrown) and there are always those occasions when long hours and bad weather make great demands on their patience and stamina. Through all these demands there is a need to remain mentally alert and confident (ZRP Public Order Training Manual, 2000). Matunhu & Matunhu (2021) argue that police officers who are unfit will eventually succumb to a physical need for rest and will become mentally exhausted and consequently a liability, if not a danger, to their colleagues and supervisory officers. It is for these reasons that all public order-trained police officers at all levels are required to take part in physical training and fitness lessons as part their training (Matunhu & Matunhu 2021).

#### **4.5 Refresher Courses and Retraining**

According to Dickinson (2021) a refresher course refers to a training course that keeps the workforce informed of the new ideas and developments in their areas of interest or skills applied to long term employees of the organization who had been trained in the past. Skeem et al. (2014), propounded that once members are trained, there is need after a considerably period for re-training them, so that, they are kept work-oriented. In support of this belief, Phillips (2018), advanced that refresher courses assist in developing employees and preventing them from becoming obsolete in terms of the job requirements. This is a significance factor in the fields of policing, where changes in the environment call for adjustments in the workforce's skills. According to Shannon (2018) continuous training of the police would reduce miscarriages of justice, improve their service delivery by upholding the rule of law and be able to provide policing by consent to all the communities. In case of ZRP public order refresher courses, it holds practical sessions, including standardized practices, procedures and techniques for crowd control, the use of public order equipment such as firearms, canisters, shields and baton sticks, as well as information/evidence-gathering (ZRP Public Order Training Manual, 2000).

#### **5 Empirical review**

Hoggett and Stott (2010) conducted a study titled “Crowd psychology, public order police training and the policing of football crowds”. The purpose of the study was to examine what theory of crowd psychology is being applied within public order police training in England and Wales and what accounts of crowds, police strategies and tactics subsequently emerge among officers who undertake this training. The study used a qualitative approach and relied on observations of public order training courses, interviews with students and instructors, and the dissemination of questionnaires, in which a small sample size of 40 subjects was adopted. The study established that a form of crowd theory associated with the work of Gustave Le Bon has become institutionalized within police training. This in turn was leading to a potentially counter-productive reliance on the undifferentiated use of force when policing crowds. It was also illustrated that such training outcomes not only are counter to recent developments in evidence, theory and policy but also undermine the police's ability to develop more efficient and effective approaches to policing crowds.

Namukuve (2021) conducted a similar study titled “A Review of the Public Order and Management Act and Its Implications on Public Gatherings: A Case Study of Kampala in

Uganda”. The study adopted a qualitative approach and employed a cross-sectional research design. A sample of 18 key respondents was drawn and data was collected via in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. It was found that the Ugandan Police Force has a duty at its center, to ensure the balance between enjoyment of one’s human rights and freedoms. It was also revealed that the rule of law requires those who want to use public order means to be mindful of the rights of others, to preserve peace and harmony and to respect the bill of rights in its entirety.

Mugari & Obioha (2018) also conducted similar research titled “An Investigation into the Causes of Malperformance by Police Reaction Group in Managing Public Disorders, A Case of Bulawayo Province in Zimbabwe”. The study adopted a case study method and a sample size of 40 respondents was drawn from police officers only. The study was purely quantitative and used questionnaires for data gathering. The findings of the study established that malperformance among Police Reaction groups members emanated from inadequate resources required for both public order training and public order enforcement on the ground. It was also established that most members of the ZRP who were deployed to the Police Reaction Group (PRG) were too junior and lacked the necessary experience.

## **6 Research method**

The present research adopted a quantitative approach with a positivist philosophy. The researcher used cross sectional survey designs in which data was gathered using a structured questionnaire. The main question was what is the role of public order training in improving the performance of the District Reaction Group. The study participants were drawn from members of Zimbabwe Republic Police’s Mutare Central District. A sample size of 280 participants out of a population of nearly 1000 police officers was drawn, in which a stratified random sampling technique was used. Data for this study were collected through structured self-administered questionnaires. The collected data were analyzed using tSPSS version 23.0 and presented in the form of tables and figures.

## **7 Findings and discussion**

The sample size was 280 as 280 questionnaires were distributed. Accordingly, 224 questionnaires were returned in a completed and usable state. This translated to a response rate of 80%. Testing for normality was necessary to fulfil the assumptions of many of the most suitable statistical tests. In this view, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted to determine the normality of the data, as emphasized by Razli and Wah, (2011). Variables for both measures were far less than 0.05.

This therefore implies that the variables under consideration were not normally distributed thus paving the way for using non-parametric tests to infer associations among the research constructs.

Using SPSS Version 23, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity were largely used to determine whether the acquired data were sufficiently representative of the population. These tests were thus performed to determine whether or not factor analysis could be undertaken. The KMO test was thus conducted to examine the strength of the partial correlation; that is, how the factors explain each other between the variables. KMO values closer

to 1.0 are considered ideal while values less than 0.5 are unacceptable (Reddy & Kulshrestha, 2019). Scholars such as Reddy and Kulshrestha (2019) argue that a KMO of at least 0.80 are good enough for factor analysis to commence.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)		.749
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	122.479
	Df	78
	Sig.	.001

Table 1: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)

Source: Authors’ own collection.

The above results obtained met minimum conditions and permitted EFA to be performed (Field, 2009).

### Descriptive statistics

Descriptor	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
Customer care and Human Rights Training	224	4	5	4.62	Strongly Agree	487
Intelligence gathering training	224	4	5	4.62	Strongly Agree	487
Physical Fitness Training	224	4	5	4.62	Strongly Agree	487
Exchange Training Programmes	224	4	5	4.63	Strongly Agree	484
Valid N (listwise)	224					

Table 2: Types of Training Activities Conducted to Improve Public Conduct

Source: Authors’ own collection.

In summary of the above Table 2, the highest mean was 4.63 for the descriptor Exchange Training Programs Training, which thus corresponds to strongly agree. The mean was 4.62 for the other three. This means that, on the 5 point Likert scale, most respondents strongly agreed. The high standard deviations implies that respondents had varied views on the above descriptors. This means that some could either agree whilst some could disagree with these descriptors. However, the overall mean response for these descriptors (Strongly Agree) indicates that respondents believed that it was true that the above listed types of trainings are needed to improve the roles of Police District Reaction Groups in Mutare Central District. The research results substantiate previous findings by Mugari and Obioha (2018) who declared that law enforcers are expected to perform their duties efficiently and effectively so that crowds of demonstrators or spectators

are guided and demonstrate in an orderly manner, and this can only be achieved through proper training, which focuses on the importance of human rights and good customer care among police officers. The results also resonate with Mugari and Obioha (2018) who argue that police officers who are unfit will eventually succumb to a physical need for rest, will become mentally exhausted and consequently a liability, if not a danger, to their colleagues and supervisory officers. It is for these reasons that all public order trained police officers at all levels are required to take part in physical training lessons and fitness as part of their public order training.

### 8 Hypotheses

In testing the hypothesis, the researcher used the structural equation modelling (SEM) in AMOS. Under the SEM. The following research hypotheses were tested:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Public order training has a positive and significant influence on improving DRG public conduct in Mutare District.

Hypotheses	Hypothesised Relationship	SRW	CR	P values	Remark
H <sub>1</sub>	POT → DRG Performance	.392	11.025***	.0000	Supported

Table 4: Influence of public order training on District Reaction Groups Performance

Notes: SRW standardized regression weight, CR critical ratio, \*\* significant at  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* significant at  $p < 0.001$ , ns not significant, Adjusted R square 0.682

H<sub>1</sub> hypothesis was supported (Standardised Regression Weight = 0.392, Critical Ratio = 11.025,  $p = 0.0000$ ).

The p value of 0.0000 which is statistically significant as it is less than 0.05. There is therefore rejection of H<sub>0</sub> (null hypothesis) at 5% level of significance which leads to the conclusion that public order training (POT) had a positive effect on performance of Police District Reaction Group (DRG). Performance in this case is measured by the number of non-causalities when Public Order Teams are called to maintain public order. Less to nil causalities means good performance.

### 9 Conclusion

The study sought to assess the role of public order training in improving the performance of the District Reaction Group (DRG) in the Zimbabwe Republic Police Mutare Central District. The results showed that customer care and human rights training, intelligence-gathering training, physical fitness training and exchange training programs lead to an improved performance

by the ZRP District Reaction Groups. The hypothesis test conducted supported the view that there is a positive association between public order training and performance of Police District Reaction Groups. It is from the findings and conclusions that the researcher recommends that the Zimbabwe Republic Police should conduct more training sessions on customer care and Human Rights through its Professional Updating Centre (PUC) so as to reduce the number of complaints by the public on human rights violation and hence limit civil suits being launched by members of the public.

## 10 Limitation and further research

The present study on the efficacy of public order training on improving performance of the District Reaction Group had limitations that necessitate future researchers to address issues that were not covered by the present research. The study was conducted in Mutare Central District, which falls under Manicaland Policing Province. The results from the ZRP Mutare Central District may not be generalized for all Police Districts in Zimbabwe, hence the need to conduct the study at national levels.

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