Navigating the Complexities of Police Force: Impacts on Society, Trust, and Civil Liberties

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Abstract

The use of force by public and private security forces is currently an issue of great relevance because of the potential injuries caused by any excessive use of force by either active or passive subjects or a deficit in the real mastery of appropriate physical intervention techniques (PITs). For this reason, certain traditionally used physical intervention techniques have been questioned by scientific research studies and punished by justice. On the other hand, certain media have dealt with this matter in a biased and unfair manner by broadcasting videos where the use of force by police officer is displayed out of context. As a consequence, this problem has been brought under the spotlight, causing general uneasiness of the communities and rapidly spreading over social networks while favoring all sorts of parallel judgments.

Keywords: Social Fabric, civil liberties, social cohesion, Police Force.

Introduction

In the intricate tapestry of society, the role of law enforcement is indispensable, acting as both guardian and enforcer. However, this dual nature carries with it a myriad of consequences that ripple through the very fabric of our communities. The use of police force, while often necessary to maintain order and protect citizens, can have far-reaching and often unintended effects on various aspects of society [1]. This article delves into the multifarious consequences of police force, examining its impact on social cohesion, trust in institutions, and the delicate balance between security and civil liberties.

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The dynamics of social cohesion

Social cohesion, the glue that holds communities together, can be significantly affected by the use of police force. The frequency and severity of force employed by law enforcement can lead to the erosion of trust between citizens and those sworn to protect them. Communities that perceive excessive or unjustified use of force may develop feelings of resentment and estrangement [2], leading to fractured relationships between citizens and law enforcement agencies. This division within society can weaken the overall sense of unity and shared identity, potentially resulting in long-lasting social divisions.

The increasing trend to militarize security forces by fostering the recruitment of people with military backgrounds for law enforcement bodies is often positively and erroneously associated with the use of lethal force against civilians under arrest [3]. The problem is that people who have been trained on military modus operandi may tend to apply a disproportionate use of force.

The Rokoko Smartsuit Pro was fundamental for the purpose of this study. This equipment provides a set of data suitable for their analysis by Biomechanics of Bodies software applications, such as the Marras risk assessment method or REBA and NIOSH, which were used previous [4]. In the latter study, a set of biomechanical parameters useful for risk analysis in physical police intervention techniques were determined on the basis of REBA and NIOSH methods. Progressing in this line, a comparison of the injury risks associated with OTP techniques and traditional physical intervention techniques, using such a set of parameters, was recently made. It was concluded that the OTP techniques proved to be the least harmful. The same procedures can be applied to the analysis and assessment of the injury risks associated with OTP, comparing these against those associated with traditional physical intervention techniques, using the Marras method [5].

Trust in institutions

Trust in institutions is a cornerstone of a stable society. When law enforcement agencies employ force disproportionately or without accountability, public trust can erode rapidly. High-profile incidents of police brutality captured on video, shared through social media, and broadcasted by the news media have magnified this issue [6]. Such incidents can lead to widespread skepticism about the intentions and integrity of law enforcement institutions. The fraying of this trust can undermine the legitimacy of these institutions and hinder their ability to effectively maintain order and security.

The balancing act: security vs. civil liberties

A fundamental challenge arises when society seeks to strike a balance between ensuring public safety and upholding individual civil liberties [7]. The use of police force must be grounded in the principles of

proportionality, necessity, and legality. In cases where these principles are breached, the consequences can be profound [8]. Overzealous or unchecked use of force can lead to infringements on individual rights, sparking outrage and legal battles that can further strain the relationship between the public and law enforcement agencies.

Unintended consequences

The consequences of police force often extend beyond the immediate incident. Communities where the use of force is perceived as unjust may experience prolonged unrest, protests, and calls for reform. These reactions can contribute to a cycle of tension between law enforcement and citizens, hampering cooperation and effective crime prevention efforts [9]. Furthermore, the trauma experienced by individuals subjected to excessive force can have lasting psychological effects, impacting mental health and overall well-being.

Towards a comprehensive solution

Addressing the multifarious effects of police force requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Law enforcement agencies must prioritize training that emphasizes de-escalation tactics, cultural sensitivity, and community engagement. Implementing transparent oversight mechanisms and accountability measures can help restore public trust in institutions [10]. Equally important is the promotion of open dialogue between law enforcement and communities to bridge divides and promote understanding.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of police force, while necessary in certain situations, carries a complex web of consequences that can strain the social fabric. Balancing the imperatives of security with the preservation of civil liberties is a delicate task, requiring a nuanced approach. By recognizing the multifarious effects of police force and taking proactive steps to address them, society can work towards a more harmonious coexistence, where law enforcement agencies serve as true partners in ensuring both safety and justice.

On the basis of the results of the probability of injuries analysis that was carried out, it could be concluded that OTPs are less harmful and, therefore, more suitable for the training of the members of the security forces and corps. Their implementation allows speeding up police interventions by reducing body movements, in addition to providing the possibility to clearly differentiate the levels of force to be employed in each situation. From the perspective of occupational risks, specifically in the police field, this represents a considerable improvement of the safety during police arrests, with a significant reduction in the risk of injuries suffered by both police officers and citizens.

Without prejudice to what has been indicated, we stress the need to continue scientific research in order to enhance knowledge in at least two aspects: expansion of the risk analysis with a greater number of PIT techniques, and expansion of the studies to a larger population sample of police officers.

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