Chapter 17: Psychological Security – Exploring Community Engagement in Peacekeeping

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Abstract

Psychological security is intertwined with peacekeeping, based on the feeling of security. Community engagement is a practice that is employed in peacekeeping to ensure security of communities. Adopting a qualitative case study approach and community psychology as a conceptual framework, this chapter seeks to understand how community engagement ensures psychological security of communities. The chapter argues that psychological security within peacekeeping is dependent upon the conscious and active participation of communities for which security is required. The chapter further argues that representations of community and positions adopted in understanding this concept, have a bearing on how communities are engaged with. The study revealed that a subjective representation of community is associated with community empowerment, while an objective or value free representation of community is associated with a partially empowered community. Communities who feel empowered may be more likely to perceive psychological security in their environment.

Keywords: peacekeeping, psychological security, community engagement, community psychology

1 Introduction

The concept of security, in the field of psychology, dates back to the time of Abraham Maslow, who identified security as one of the foundational basic human needs contributing to psychological wellbeing. Later, Maslow and other scholars coined psychological security (Bar-Tal & Jacobsen 1998; Cummings & Miller-Graff 2015; Jia, Li, Li, Zhou, Maslow 1942; Wang, Sun & Zhao 2018; Zotova & Karapetyan 2018), a term that denotes feelings of safety and belongingness; having a sense of control over the social environment and feelings of confidence in freedom from fear (Maslow 1942).

Bar-Tal and Jacobsen (1998) in their application of psychological security within peacekeeping, submit that a feeling of security is dependent on a person's perspective, thus this renders security a subjective concept. According to these authors, individuals first perceive the external environment/event, evaluate them (based on a repertoire of their beliefs) and subsequently determine their feelings of security. It is for this reason that Bar-Tal and Jacobsen (1998) argue that in addition to understanding security in political, societal and economic terms, we also need to understand it from a psychological perspective. Similarly, this chapter focusses on psychological security within peacekeeping. Acknowledging the varied roles of psychologists and peacekeeping forces, I adopt Maslow's definition of psychological security to refer to communities' sense of control over their environment, including their feelings of confidence from fear. As fundamental principles, it is my view that:

1. Psychological security is not something that can be offered to people, it is dependent on conscious and active engagement [on the part of the individual/group/community under consideration]

2. Psychological security within peacekeeping is dependent upon conscious and active participation of communities for which security is required.

I am therefore interested in understanding the practices that are currently being used in peacekeeping to ensure the security of communities. Community engagement is one such practice, hence its central focus in this article.

The United Nations (UN) is widely known for providing human security through peacekeeping missions. The UN Multi-dimensional Integrated

Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA), the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MSONUSCO), and the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) constitute some of the largest multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations (Henigson 2020). Peacekeeping is a vehicle for providing communities with a sense of safety and freedom from fear as articulated in its mission of controlling and resolving armed conflict (Goulding 1993) and protecting civilians from physical violence (Gorur & Carstensen 2016). In response to the divergent views on the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations, Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon (2013) argue that the size and capabilities of peacekeeping missions, as well as the mandate of UN personnel, play a significant role in determining the success or failure of these missions.

There have been several notable developments in peacekeeping – peacekeeping missions changed from simple observable missions to multi-dimensional and multidisciplinary approaches, ultimately leading to a focus on the protection of civilians (POC) (Singh 2020). Additionally, shifts from negative conceptions of peace to positive conceptions of peace; the object of peace shifted from the global to the national and ultimately the local context (Gizelis, Dorussen & Petrova 2016). Gizelis *et al.* (2016: 2) submit: 'whereas originally peacekeeping was aimed to secure the objectives of major powers and national elites, its main focus now firmly includes civilians caught up in the fighting and suffering the consequences of poorly governed or failed states'. These are aligned with shifts towards more people-centered approaches to peacekeeping and community engagement (Henigson 2020; Rupesinghe 2016), which were promulgated at the recommendation of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report, the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) for the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, the Global Study on the Implementation of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Rupesinghe 2016). Gordon and Young (2019), Krishnan (2020), and Julian and Schweitzer (2015) refer to *community cooperation*, the *responsibility to protect* (R2P), and *unarmed civilian peacekeeping* (UCP) respectively, as additional reforms to peacekeeping, concepts which relate closely to community engagement. These reforms were largely motivated by growing criticisms against peacekeeping practices that were largely state-centric and applied a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to diverse contexts, with a limited focus on political solutions (Henigson 2020; Rupesinghe 2016). Key features of these reforms entail

people-centric and bottom-up approaches geared towards being responsive to community needs and local people (Henigson 2020; Rupesinghe 2016).

Approaches to peacekeeping that are people-centred, bottom-up and responsive to community needs resonate with the notion of conscious community participation and active engagement in the achievement of psychological security. These shifts towards community engagement in peacekeeping led to interest in the current study. This study seeks to understand:

1. The community *as* beneficiary in peacekeeping;

2. The practice of community engagement in peacekeeping; and

3. The attainment of psychological security in community engagement.

2 Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach to understanding community engagement as a vehicle for attaining psychological security in peacekeeping. Gerring (2004) argues that case studies tend to be more useful when they are descriptive, exploratory and they favour propositional depth over breadth and boundedness. Thus, this study provides an in-depth descriptive analysis of how community engagement is applied in peacekeeping to achieve psychological security. This study is therefore bounded within the confines of community engagement and peacekeeping.

The primary source of data for this study was the *Practice Note*, a document that was developed by the United Nations (UN) Department of Peacekeeping Operations-Department of Field Studies (DPKO/DFS) (2018). This is a key strategic document for understanding the policies and practical approaches in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Additionally, Community Psychology is used as a conceptual framework for the study. According to Baxter and Jack (2008: 553) a conceptual framework 'provides a researcher with the opportunity to gather general constructs into intellectual *bins*…and serves as an anchor for the study'.

3 Conceptual Framework

In this paper, community psychology is used as a framework for exploring community engagement in peacekeeping. Community psychology as a sub-

field of and approach to psychology has its roots in the Americas, Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand and emerged as such during the 1960s and 1970s (Ngonyama ka Sigogo, Hooper, Long, Lykes, Wilson & Zietkiewicz 2004; Yen 2007). Seedat and Lazarus (2011; 2014) argue that while some manifestations of community psychology in South Africa may have been noted as early as the 1930s, community psychology [as we know it today] only emerged in the mid-1980s. This [present-day] community psychology, they posit, was birthed from psychology's struggles against apartheid racism and socioeconomic exploittation. Some of the justifications for rethinking the place of mainstream psychology in the South African context include questioning the relevance of Western/ European psychological theory within the South African context, including the relevance of clinical and counseling psychology modalities which mostly privilege a few, elite individuals in South Africa (Berger & Lazarus 1987; Dawes 1985; Seedat, Cloete & Shochet 1988; Yen 2007).

Scholars agree that community psychology is an evolving sub-discipline/approach (Ngonyama ka Sigogo *et al.* 2007; Naidoo 2000; Seedat & Lazarus 2011) This affects the manner in which the concept is defined. Naidoo (2000) presents Lewis *et al.*'s definition as follows: 'community psychology refers to a comprehensive helping framework of intervention strategies and services that promote the personal development and well-being of all individuals and communities' (p. 8). This definition places emphasis on community psychology as an approach. At the same time, Naidoo (2000) acknowledges the sub-discipline nature of community psychology, when he underscores the role of cultural norms and traditions and collaboration in the development of community intervention programs. I want to also present a definition of community psychology by Seedat, Duncan, and Lazarus (cited in Yen 2007: 383): - community psychology is concerned with:

- extending mental health services to all citizens, in particular, the historically unserved, underserved, and oppressed;
- transforming the way in which the genesis and development of psychosocial problems are conceptualized and understood;
- providing a contextual analysis that takes cognizance of social issues and addresses environmental stressors;
- radicalizing the praxis of psychological service delivery to include prevention initiatives; and

- redefining the role of psychologists towards a broader public health portfolio that embraces the functions of advocacy, lobbying, community mobilization community networking, and policy formulation.

Seedat *et al.*'s definition, while expanding on Lewis *et al.*'s definition, adopts a radical, transformative stance. The above definition provides an understanding of community psychology as concerned with addressing the structural and systemic challenges impacting individuals, groups, and whole communities. Naidoo (2000) agrees that an understanding of behaviour requires focusing on both an intra-psychic and a systems perspective. I, therefore, premise this article on the understanding that community psychology is aimed at facilitating change and transforming communities.

Acknowledging the developmental nature of community psychology, Seedat and Lazarus (2011) call for the sub-discipline/approach to consider rethinking and re-theorizing its notions of community, social change, and transformation in order to meaningfully engage socio-political developments. It stands to reason, from this call, that as socio-political and ecological environments evolve, new issues emerge, which would require focused attention. I, however, believe defining a broad strategic focus/ideology [similar to the one already defined for community psychology] sets the trajectory for the sub-discipline/approach and will adapt to changing/prevailing community needs.

In concluding this section, I would like to focus on some of the principles and models of community psychology.

Key principles of community psychology include collaboration, participation, empowerment, action and change, and social justice (Carolissen *et al*. 2010; Naidoo 2000; Perkins & Zimmerman 1997; Rappaport 1981; Yen 2007). Interventions in community psychology place greater emphasis on collaboration between communities and psychologists. The first thing that community psychologists do when they enter a community is to conduct a needs assessment, an aspect of which entails identifying key members of the community who should be consulted. The other aspect entails letting communities identify and communicate their own needs, and together, design interventions. This is a critical process for community psychologists as they believe communities are collaborators and they should actively take charge of their own processes for change and transformation to happen within communities. Equally, the emphasis is on bottom-up approaches – communities are regarded as experts on their own issues and are thus better placed to influence the direction of community interventions. Rappaport (1981) explains empower-

ment from a binary perspective, viz. wellness vs illness; competence vs deficits, and strengths vs weaknesses, thus advocating for a positive approach to community mental health. Perkins and Zimmerman (1997) are of the view that for communities to be empowered, they need to be given the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skill, through engaging as collaborators with community psychologists, instead of engaging with them as authoritative experts.

Community psychology adopts four models to intervene in communities, these are – mental health model, the social action model, the ecological model, and the organizational model (Butchart & Seedat 1990; Ngonyama ka Sigogo *et al.* 2007). The mental health model emphasizes the prevention of mental health problems of those living in a particular catchment area and regards mental health as the absence of mental illness (Butchart & Seedat 1990). Critiques of this model see the model as locating mental health problems within communities, with little or no consideration for wider, socio-economic complexities (Butchart & Seedat 1990; Ngonyama ka Sigogo *et al*. 2007). The ecological and organizational models are primarily concerned with group processes and change. The organizational model operates under the assumption that communities are not able to manage themselves and have thus often been accused of being too focused on managing people, contexts, and processes (Ngonyama ka Sigogo *et al.* 2007). This has a bearing on their ability to perceive communities as collaborators. On the other hand, the ecological model seeks to understand the impact of the interaction between people, their environment and their mental health. It is for this reason that some of the critiques of this model argue that implementing interventions, within this model, is hampered by the complexity of the environment (Ngonyama ka Sigogo *et al.* 2007) All three models are said to focus on ameliorating mental health issues as opposed to effecting transformation (Butchart & Seedat 1990; Ngonyama ka Sigogo *et al.* 2007). Butchart and Seedat (1990) discuss the social action model, which understands psychological problems as a product of inequalities that emanate from economic exploitation and political powerlessness. Communities are thus mobilized to take collective action as a way of addressing these structural issues.

The foregoing discussions have projected community psychology as an evolving sub-discipline/approach, which seeks to change the conditions of whole communities by focusing on structural and systemic issues. The principles of community psychology seek to engage communities in participating actively in changing their conditions and in certain instances, transforming their environment and lives. Thus, aiming at instilling a sense of control, by the community, over their environment (psychological security). I do acknowledge,

though that not all models used in community psychology allow for radical transformation, as per the liberatory stance of the sub-discipline/approach.

The key tenants of community psychology, as discussed in this section, provide a conceptual framework for exploring the concept of community engagement in peacekeeping as detailed in the sections that follow.

3.1 Community as Beneficiary in Peacekeeping

Under this section, I seek to explore how the concept 'community' has been used and is understood in community engagement, alongside the use of the concept in community psychology. I argue that the representations of 'community' and positions adopted in understanding the concept have a bearing on how communities are engaged with, i.e. is the engagement empowering or disempowering the community?

Butchart and Seedat (1990) conducted an extensive analysis of the concept 'community', from a Community Psychology perspective. These authors argue that it is difficult to understand this concept outside of the South African political landscape. They thus discuss the concept in relation to *domination* and *liberation* discourses as well as within the *discipline of psychology*. They argue that the South African government [during apartheid] used the concept as a deliberate act to maintain their oppression over the oppressed. A distinction is made between 'imagined' communities and the use of 'community' as a euphemism for race and/or ethnicity. According to Butchart and Seedat (1990) the apartheid government 'imagined' communities to preserve the rights and interests of the minority oppressors. At the same time, the term 'community' carries positive connotations, hence its use as a euphemism for race and ethnicity. Prevailing views exist on community psychology as a psychology of black issues, reserved primarily for black psychologists, with little relevance to white psychologists (Ngonyama ka Sigogo & Modipa 2004). Strengthening these views, Carolissen *et al.* (2010) illustrate how apartheid legislative frameworks impact perceptions of 'community' as meaning black, middle- and working-class individuals.

The above notions of 'community' seem to resonate with how this concept was used in the South African liberation discourse (Butchart & Seedat 1990). Thornton and Ramphele (in Butchart & Seedat 1990) are of the view that liberation movements used the concept to refer to wider sociopolitical groups [like the black community…in townships] operating under the assumption of the existence of a community of 'purpose', represented by people [the com-

munity] who act for a common goal. The above representations of community introduce us to 'community' as [also] denoting geographical locations.

Understanding 'community' within the field of psychology shifts the focus from the individual to whole groups, organizations, and communities, including the role and impact of social systems (Butchart & Seedat 1990; Carolissen *et al.* 2010). In their critical analysis of the mental health and social action models of community psychology, Butchart and Seedat (1990) observe that from the perspective of the mental health model, 'community' is defined in terms of geographical boundaries. On the other hand, community, from the perspective of the social action model is defined both in terms of geographical and socio-political boundaries. According to Butchart and Seedat (1990), these representations imply that community is a socially constructed concept.

Looking at the representation of 'community', from the community engagement perspective, I found the concept to be defined from two main vantage points – the territorial or geographic and the relational, as per Gusfield's definitions (cited in Obst, Zinkiewics & Smith 2002). Territorial/geographic community refers to a sense of belonging to a particular area, which could be a neighborhood, town, city, or region (ibid.). In contrast, relational community refers to communities of interests such as hobby clubs, religious groups etc., and tends to be concerned with the quality and character of human relations, without necessarily referring to a geographic location (Obst *et al.* 2002). Interestingly enough, in trying to provide various representations of 'community', Obst *et al.* (2002) borrows the discussion of the concept from the field of community psychology. They allude to 'the psychological sense of community (PSOC)', which was introduced by Sarason in 1977, a concept that expounds on the relational definition of community. According to these authors, characteristics of a sense of community include,

> (1) perceptions of similarity with others;
> (2) acknowledgment of being interdependent with other people;
> (3) willingness to act in ways that maintain this interdependency; and
> (4) having a sense of belonging to a larger, dependable and stable structure.

Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, and Pfefferbaum (2008: 139) define the sense of community as 'an attitude of bonding that includes mutual concerns and shared values and that are characteristic of resilient communities'. Amongst researchers who investigated the theoretical frameworks under-

pinning PSOC, are McMillan and Chavis (1986) who advance four dimensions of PSOC, viz. membership, influence, integration, fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection.

Representations of 'community' from both community psychology and community engagement have a shared meaning – both in terms of its varied nature and its definitions, albeit nuanced differences as articulated within the community psychology field/approach. In the discussion we noted how community engagement borrowed concepts from community psychology to clarify their understanding of the concept 'community'. To a greater extent, community psychology aligns the representation(s) of the concept to factors associated with the emergence of the sub-discipline/approach – as a critique to mainstream psychology and as located within the socio-political space. This alignment results in community psychology adopting a subjective stance in its conceptualisation of the concept. Definitions of 'community' in community engagement denote community as a concept that is 'out there' and which can be studied outside of the individual/group/community, adopting a value-free, if not an objective stance in its explanation of the concept. At this point, I raise the question: 'does the adoption of a particular stance in the understanding of the concept 'community' affect how we engage with communities?' Will this effect influence communities' sense of control over their environment and their feelings of confidence from fear?

In the sections that follow, I explore how communities are engaged with, in community engagement, in an attempt to answer these questions.

3.2 The Practice of Community Engagement

The Practice Notice document presents a founding principle upon which the practice of community engagement in peacekeeping should be understood, viz, 'politics must drive the design and implementation of peace operations' mandate' (DPKO/DFS 2018: 5). The assumption here is that the local community should be allowed to influence the design of peacekeeping strategies.

As a point of departure, the Practice Note emphasizes inclusive peacekeeping, which incorporates a participatory political dialogue. The aim of this dialogue is to promote the shared understanding of goals between key role-players – in this instance, the affected stakeholders, communities, and the UN and its partners. This principle aims to safeguard the interest of the community against exclusionary processes that may result from insensitivity [to critical

issues and/or processes] on the part of those leading peace processes. When engaging with communities, it is essential to avoid using a top-down approach that may not ensure engagement with trusted national authorities and interlocutors; including consideration of all root causes of conflict that the community may perceive as urgent (DPKO/DFS 2018). Another consideration in the community engagement process is the inclusion of unpopular and difficult community issues that run the risk of being omitted when marginalized voices are excluded from the engagement process.

Rupesinghe (2016) shares three key goals of engagement, viz. communication, consultation, and empowerment. She explains that communication ensures communities receive the necessary information that will enable them to organize themselves. On the other hand, consultation enables communities to share their perspectives, grievances, needs, and priorities with peacekeepers [for the purpose of designing and developing relevant and appropriate interventions]. Lastly, empowerment allows communities to be directly involved in decision-making processes.

The principle stated above, and its aim within community engagement seeks to promote consultation and to allow the voice of the community [both prominent and marginalized] to be heard. In this respect, community engagement operates on similar principles to those of community psychology, particularly at the level of promoting and encouraging participation, collaboration, and empowerment. As communities share their local security concerns and are given the opportunity to prioritize them, they feel empowered to influence how peacekeeping is managed and implemented [in their own communities]. Henigson (2020) advances three main reasons why the UN Peacekeeping engages with communities:

1. To sensitize local communities on their mandate and to manage community expectations about their role of peacekeeping as well as build relationships with the communities
2. To understand the potential threats facing local communities from the perspective of communities and to also obtain information on existing community-based, self-protection mechanisms.
3. To support the resolution of localized conflicts and to build protective environments

Furthermore, Henigson (2020) described three main areas of focus for community engagement, depicted in Table 2 below.

Activity	Civilian Component	Military Component	Police Component
Awareness-raising, information-sharing, and relationship building	• Meetings with local communities to sensitize them to the mission mandate • Information sharing through activities such as public events, radio shows, or the use of social media	• Informal engagement with community members during dismounted patrols • Meetings with local communities in hotspots to sensitize them to the mission mandate	• Informal engagement with community members during dismounted patrols • Information sharing in community meetings • Meetings with local communities in hotspots to sensitize them to the mission mandate
Conflict resolution and reconciliation and community-level peacebuilding	• Facilitation of inter-community meetings to mediate conflict • Capacity-building workshops with civil society organizations or community-level groups and actors	• Support to local conflict-resolution and reconciliation efforts, usually in coordination with civilian sections • Support for quick impact projects, usually in coordination with civilian sections	• Efforts to build community-level trust in the national police • Support to local conflict-mediation efforts • Capacity-building support to strengthen community members' self-

	• Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and community violence reduction (CVR) programming • Quick-impact projects	• Facilitation of dialogue between host-state security forces and local communities	protection measures

Table 2. Community engagement activities (Henigson 2020)

Key principles of community psychology are collaboration, participation, and empowerment (Carolissen *et al.* 2010; Naidoo 2000; Perkins & Zimmerman 1997; Rappaport 1981; Yen 2007). There is an immediate link between community engagement in peacekeeping and community psychology as both emphasize the critical role played by collaboration and participation in promoting ownership [amongst communities], with a view to empowering community members. Peacekeeping that is focused on the local context is concerned with understanding drivers of conflict from the perspective of community members and thereafter, customizing their overall mandated tasks (DPKO/DFS 2018). The assumption in this approach is that, these drivers of conflict are found within local communities, hence communities are regarded as experts in determining these drivers. It is not clear whether the inherent socio-political environment is taken into consideration during this information-gathering process. However, studies that focus on peace, women, and security (PWS) provide a sense that the broader socio-political environment is considered when designing peace operations (Donais & Murray 2021; Holmes 2020; Klossek & Johansson-Nogues 2021; Nagel, Fin & Maenza 2021). With these emerging studies, it seems more likely that, similar to the Social Action model of community psychology, there is a deliberate attempt to mobilize community members into collective action against problematic societal structures (Butchart & Seedat 1990). Such efforts serve to transform communities (Ngonyama ka Sigogo *et al.* 2007) and are in keeping with the

goal of community psychology, which is to radically transform and redefine the profession of psychology whilst serving the historically oppressed (Seedat, Duncan & Lazarus 2001).

Community within community engagement has been demonstrated to adopt an objective or value-free stance, unlike community psychology, which adopted a subjective stance in its representation of 'community'. From the analysis provided in the foregoing discussions, a subjective stance to 'community' resulted in an explicit understanding of the objective of community psychology as transformative. On the other hand, in line with its objective or value-free stance, community engagement [as reflected in the Practice Note] is silent on its transformative agenda, this agenda only emerges in studies conducted post the release of the Practice Note, as a way of applying it. Given the value of transformation on communities, it would benefit community engagement to explicitly declare its stance in defining the concept of 'community'. This objective or value free stance is commensurate with the less progressive and less transformative community consultations and participation. One can assume that a community that is engaged in a less transformative consultation and participation process is less likely to feel a sense of control over their environment and may experience lower feelings of confidence from fear.

Another key theme in the practice of community engagement involves its use of models or theoretical frameworks. While the Practice Note offers in-depth discussions of processes to be followed when engaging communities, it does not particularly offer any theoretical models that should be used for this engagement. After all, community engagement is defined as 'a strategic *process* that involves local populations in all aspects of decision-making, policy development, and implementation to strengthen local ownership, capacities and community structures as well as to improve transparency, accountability and optimal resource allocations across diverse settings' (UN 2020: 5). This implies that community engagement does not seem to be based on a well-defined theoretical framework. While the United Nations Department of Peace Operations (UN DPO 2020) mentions the different tools used in community engagement, viz., Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs), Community Alert Networks (CANs), Joint Protection Teams (JPTs), Joint Assessment Missions (JAMs), Community Protection Plans (CPPs) Community Oriented Policing (CoP), the theoretical basis for this is not presented. Similarly, while processes for engaging communities within peacekeeping were advanced, these were devoid of a theoretical framework or model.

In contrast, community psychology, as presented in section 3 above, is practiced within either the mental health, social action, ecological, and/or organizational models. The discussion (in section 3 above) indicated how each model explains and resolves mental health issues within communities. I argue that the practice of community engagement in peacekeeping could benefit from developing a model (s) of community engagement so as to offer theoretical understandings of how various concepts [used in community engagement] interact to explain specific phenomena – e.g. in understanding and implementing the processes for community engagement as explained in the Practice Note, is there a specific sequence through which these processes occur? What happens if any of the processes that were explained does not take place? In what way would this affect the overall goal of the process? Gaining insight from other contexts that also utilize community engagement, Abimbola (2019) reflects on how she was compelled to develop a theory for community engagement after noticing gaps that existed in systematic and theory-driven policies [going beyond merely describing that things are (not) happening to provide answers to questions that ask why things are (not) happening]. The use of theory in community engagement is not uncommon, as will be illustrated in the section that follows, where community engagement has been applied in settings other than the military.

Community engagement [as a practice] has been applied in various contexts, including [but not limited] to learning, higher education, public health, research, and various disciplines such as Archeology, Psychology, and Nursing, to name a few (Abimbola 2019; Brunton, Thomas, O'Mara-Eves, Jamal, Oliver & Kacanagh 2017; De Leiuen & Arthure 2016; Ebersohn, Bender & Carvhalho-Malekane 2010; France-Harris, Burton & Mooney 2019; Rutty 1998; South & Phillips 2014; Zuber-Skerritt 2015). In all these contexts, its practice is based on a particular model or theoretical framework. A few of these include the Participatory Action Learning and Action Research theoretical framework (PALAR) (Zuber-Skerritt 2015), International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) community engagement model (De Leiuen & Athure 2016), the Experiential Learning model (Ebersohn *et al.* 2010) and AT-EASE model (France-Harris *et al.* 2019).

Other studies present justifiable arguments for the use of theoretical frameworks in understanding the link and impact of community engagement on behaviour, especially within the public health domain (Abimola 2019; Brunton *et al.* 2017; South & Phillips 2014). Illustrating one such argument, Abimola (2019) is of the view that the contextual circumstances that are linked to the

performance of community health committees lack a theoretical basis. In a similar vein, Brunton *et al.* (2017) argue that it is necessary to understand relationships between concepts. They cite the following example: '…we needed to consider how a process of collective decision-making influenced people's motivations for engagement and how this, in turn, might lead to particular outcomes including harms – for example – disillusionment when expectations were not met' (p. 3). The above discussions have provided justification for the development of a community engagement theory for peacekeeping.

I further argue that community engagement within the context of peacekeeping could find some of the community psychology models useful, particularly as the two fields intersect in many respects. As a starting point, community engagement needs to clarify its use of the concept 'empowerment'. Section 3.3 below delves into the use of empowerment in the practice of community engagement in peacekeeping. Case examples from the implementation of community engagement in peacekeeping, as contained in the handbook on 'protection of civilian in United Nations peacekeeping' (UN DPO 2020) provides examples of how community consultation processes resulted in empowerment of communities. The handbook clearly provides best practices in the implementation of community engagement, following the publication of the Practice Note. These positive developments could be used to assist in redefining the use of the concept [empowerment] in community engagement.

Ngonyama ka Sigogo *et al.*, (2004) argue that the Social Action model [in community psychology] advances a transformative agenda because of its focus on the radical transformation of social problems (Butchart & Seedat 1999). Applying the Social Action model in community engagement can assist the practice of community engagement to understand the relationship between their key concepts and how this relationship contributes to empowerment or transformation of communities.

3.3 Attainment of Psychological Security in Community Engagement

The Practice Note presents best practices on how to engage with communities in peacekeeping. Detailed steps to be followed as well as their intended outcome at any given phase of the process are provided. There are three main processes that are involved when engaging communities for peacekeeping – consultation, goal-setting, and communication. The main purpose of consulting with communities is to create clear and effective community entry points and to develop

clear and usable feedback for peace operations (DPKO/DFS 2018). Once feedback has been received from community members, the next process requires setting goals to ensure community priorities are incorporated into the peacekeeping plan (DPKO/DFS 2018). Communication is another central process that is emphasized in community engagement (DPKO/DFS 2018).

These best practices provide a systematic and coherent process for engaging communities. I discuss focal points for each of these best practices in the sections that follow.

The Practice Note argues for some level of coherence between these processes for them to be effective. *Consultation* entails the mapping of stakeholders and the building of relationships. There is also sharing of information on specific drivers of conflict and analysis and reporting of the shared information. A key requirement of the consultation process is to strive for inclusivity in stakeholder representation.

The *goal-setting* process entails setting internal priorities, shaping political processes, and managing risks. While peacekeeping has its own priorities, viz. restoring state authority; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), including community violence reduction; support to judicial and penal institutions; and security sector reform (DPKO/DFS 2018), it needs to equally consider the priorities identified by the community. The Practice Note highlights two main challenges that impact the success of this process. The first one concerns the integration of community priorities and drivers of conflict into the peacekeeping mission's overall mandated tasks. The second one refers to the use of UN resources – material and technical, to ensure alignment between political and peace processes, as well as community priorities. The goal-setting process is primarily about ensuring communities are given a voice and this voice is heard, during peacekeeping decision-making, to ensure the relevance and responsiveness of interventions.

The last process for engaging with communities is *communication*. The Practice Note premises the importance of effective, outward communication on the following 2008 guiding principle:

> If the parameters of United Nations activity are clearly laid out and explained to the local population and other target audiences, fear and misunderstanding will be minimized, disinformation will be corrected, and the impact of those who wish to damage the peace process through rumor and untruth will be minimized.

At the same time, the Practice Note admits the complexities surrounding communication in peacekeeping. The first of these has to do with an outdated communication model, which is labeled as best practice. The second entails acknowledgment of the multi-dimensional nature of the peace process, with multiple stakeholders, each having their own interests and communication strategies for influencing individual events. This, renders coherence in communication channels difficult.

Mindful of the above challenges, the Practice Note emphasizes the importance of good strategic communication, community links, and management of crises and rumors. Timely and accurate information strengthens strategic communication.

The processes that were outlined above have illustrated the extent to which community engagement seeks to reach out to communities, and empower them to take ownership of their peacekeeping, by including all types of voices [prominent, marginalized, mainstream, silenced etc.] and removing any misconceptions about aspects related to peacekeeping. A framework for implementing these processes has also been clearly mapped out, to provide guidance and avoid confusion within the sector. These processes resonate with most community psychology processes. Both fields/approaches emphasize inclusive, bottom-up approaches that lead to community empowerment.

Empowerment is defined by the Cornell Empowerment Group as: 'an intentional ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, caring and group participation through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources' (cited in Perkins & Zimmerman 1995). Another definition by Rappaport (1987) refers to a process through which people gain control over their lives, and democratically participate in the life of their community. The definition by the Cornell Empowerment Group indicates that processes used for community engagement in peacekeeping, possibly lead to partial empowerment of the community. There is indeed an intentional process that is centered in the community which involves mutual respect, critical reflection [although not explicit], and group participation as reflected in both the consultation and goal-setting processes of community engagement. An empowerment aspect that is not explicitly evident from the processes of community engagement relates to the 'intentional *ongoing process*'. While the process of consultation is centered in the local community, there is no reference to an ongoing process, post-implementation of the peacekeeping strategy. In this sense, empowerment doesn't seem to be sustained over time, which may raise questions of whether

this constitutes true empowerment that leads to liberation. A second empowerment aspect that is hidden from the community engagement processes relates to '… *people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over the resources*'. Participation of community members in peacekeeping seems limited to consultation and goal-setting processes, there is no reference to any access to and control over valued resources. Again, this points to possible, partial empowerment of the community. Applying Rappaport's definition of empowerment to community engagement yields similar results. There is no clear indication of '*people gaining control over their lives*' as a result of having participated in the above-discussed processes of consultation and goal-setting.

The above analysis yet again confirms the assertion that the representation of community and how communities are positioned have a bearing on how each field/approach engages with its community. While engaging the community in peacekeeping as per the processes outlined in this section may empower communities to make decisions that inform peacekeeping strategies [for their own communities], it is not clear if this process impacts communities' sense of liberation and transformation. The definitions of empowerment and psychological security all point to: 'control over one's life'. At phase value, one can assume that if individuals feel empowered, they would more likely perceive the environment as providing psychological security. Linking this to psychological security, it is unclear whether community members would regard themselves as having a sense of control over their social environment when they are regarded as not being fully empowered.

4 Conclusion

This article explored the practice of community engagement in providing psychological security of communities in peacekeeping, using community psychology as a conceptual framework. The study adopted Maslow's definition of psychological security, as referring to communities' sense of control over their environment, including their feelings of confidence from fear. The study argued that psychological security, within peacekeeping, is dependent upon conscious and active participation of communities for which safety is required. The study, further argued that representations of community and positions adopted in understanding this concept, have a bearing on how communities are engaged. By exploring the practice of community engagement, the study revealed how a subjective representation of community is associated with community

empowerment, while an objective or value free representation of community is associated with a partially empowered community. When communities feel empowered through participating meaningfully in decision making processes and having a sense of sustained control over their environment, they are more likely to perceive as sense of psychological security.

Community engagement as a practice in peacekeeping:

1. Is a process that attempts to meaningfully engage communities to shape their own safety and security – responsibility for meaningful and contextual solutions are not determined externally, but the community is given agency [be it at a very basic level]

2. Attempts to shift from understanding security as an objective concept [which can be provided to people] to understanding security as a subjective concept [which results from considering collective community perceptions of what can lead to security] (Bar-Tal & Jacobsen 1998).

This study concludes with the following recommendations, which serve to better clarify or improve the practice of community engagement in peacekeeping:

- It is necessary for the community engagement practice to reconsider its positioning of the concept 'community'. Currently the Practice Note framework is not explicit about this positioning. In line with the assertion of this study, representations of the concept have a bearing on how communities are engaged with and subsequently impact on communities' perceptions of psychological security.

- The manner in which the concept 'empowerment' is discussed and applied in the Practice Note, does not fully align with the community psychology conceptual framework that was used for this study. It is thus recommended that the concept be explained in relation to its transformational/liberatory agenda. As a starting point, it may be useful to conduct empirical research to understand the consultation processes used in community engagement, the power dynamics inherent within communities during this process and the resultant [personal] impact of

the consultation processes on community members, in order to get the extent of the process' empowerment effect.

- The study has shown how the Practice Note is silent on models or theoretical frameworks for community engagement. The study has furthermore illustrated how studies that applied community engagement argued for the use of theory and even applied theory. This study therefore recommends that such theory be developed to guide the practice of community engagement in peacekeeping. This, for instance would allow for deeper understandings of how empowerment is achieved and explained. A starting point might be to conduct systematic literature reviews of all studies related to community engagement within the peacekeeping context, to assess for theoretical grounding.

I acknowledge that this study has its limitations. The main limitation being exclusive focus on the Practice Note, as a basis for the discussion of community engagement.

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