FOSTERING PUBLIC PROTECTION IN NIGERIA THROUGH COMMUNITY POLICING

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Abstract
Community policing has been presented as a viable option for addressing the security challenges in Nigeria through collaboration between the law enforcement agencies and the local communities. Despite various policing reforms, conventional security measures have not been effective in reducing crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorism in Nigeria. This review paper examines the role of community policing in enhancing security by focusing on its principles, implementation challenges and effectiveness. Using qualitative research design, this study collates information from published journals, books, government reports and policies to present an in-depth understanding of community policing in the context of Nigerian security. The study finds that while community policing has been successfully implemented in various parts of the world such as UK, Japan and Kenya, there are several challenges hindering its effectiveness in Nigeria including corruption, mistrust of law enforcers, lack of funds and political pressure. However, empirical studies have demonstrated that community policing, if implemented effectively, can help reduce the crime rate and increase intelligence gathering in a given geographical area. The study further identifies policy recommendations for effective community policing in Nigeria.

Keywords: Community policing, security, crime prevention, law enforcement, public Protection, Nigeria

Introduction
Crime incidence in Nigeria has been on the rise in recent years. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023), the number of crimes in Nigeria rose by 15.6%

between 2019 and 2022, with kidnappings, armed robbery and banditry being the most prevalent. Insecurity has had adverse effects on business activities, forced migration and reduced investor confidence (Eze & Abubakar, 2022). In addition, efforts to combat crime, Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is confronted with serious structural challenges such as personnel inadequacy, insufficient training and poor funding (Adebayo, 2020). With about one police officer for every 540 citizens compared to UN recommended 1: 450, Nigeria has one of the lowest ratios of police personnel relative to its population (UNODC, 2022). Lack of community policing and trust from the civilians has further exacerbated the problem with low crime reporting and increased vigilantism (Okoli & Orinya, 2021). Community policing presents a viable alternative policing strategy. It is based on proximity policing, problem-solving and community partnership to enhance trust and improve Protection (Skogan, 2019). Community policing has been effective in several countries around the world (Giwa & Johnson, 2021). Empirical studies have shown that localized policing strategies such as cooperation between police officers and community members to identify and solve security issues in a geographical area could increase efficiency in crime prevention and foster trust (Osayomi, 2022). In Kenya for instance, the use of community policing strategies resulted in a 23% decrease in crime levels in five years (Muthama, 2021). Furthermore, Nigeria ranks low on the Global Peace Index (GPI, 2023) as a result of Boko Haram insurgency, banditry and communal conflicts that have negatively affected peace and stability.

Empirical evidence indicates that community policing can help increase security levels by fostering cooperation between police and civilians (Brown & Keating, 2020). In Japan, UK and Rwanda for instance, community policing has improved crime detection and prevention levels significantly (Kagame, 2022). The need for localized security policing approach is necessitated by the unique security challenges in Nigeria. In addition, community policing has been tried in several states such as Lagos, Kano, Ondo, Enugu and Anambra with mixed results (Akinyele, 2020). While some areas have registered low levels of crime and increased police-civilian cooperation, other localities still grapple with poor community policing implementation, lack of trust and political pressure (Nwankwo, 2021). There is a paucity of information on the effectiveness of localized community policing in various Nigerian regions. Therefore, a review study is necessary to examine the role of community policing in enhancing Protection in Nigeria. The study is important in establishing the effectiveness of community policing and the factors that could hinder or promote its success in Nigeria. It further looks at empirical evidence to ascertain whether localized security approaches can be effective in improving public Protection.

Research Methodology

The study employed theoretical and qualitative research design. The research design used is content analysis as data was sourced secondarily through scholarly peer reviewed journal articles, textbooks, newspaper reports and relevant materials downloaded from internet.

Conceptual Clarifications/Literature Review Community Policing

Community policing, neighbourhood policing or proximity policing has been variously defined but all these definitions are essentially different ways of saying the same thing. The word "community" add to policing (community policing) definitely is referring to a community oriented approach of policing to combat crime. Community policing in essence is collaboration between the police and community that identifies and solves community crime problems. With police no longer being the sole guardians of law and order, all members of the community become active allies in the effort to enhance the Protection and quality of neighbourhoods. It entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all in which people take active part in their own affairs (Ikuteyijo & Rotimi, 2012). Community policing involves an interpersonal contract and a management strategy that promote the joint responsibility of citizens and the police for community Protection. It is a philosophy and strategy which is based on a partnership between the community and the police to find creative solutions for contemporary community problems, crime and other related matters (Rooyen, 2001). According to SAPS Police, community policing is a philosophy that guides police community partnerships and a problem – solving approach responsive to the needs of the community (Reyneke, 1997). Community policing means making the police more cooperative with those who are not police (Mastrokski, Worden & Snipes, 1995).

In addition, community policing is a proactive policing strategy that emphasizes collaboration between law enforcement agencies and the community to identify and solve security issues. It involves decentralizing police authority, fostering trust and encouraging citizen participation in crime prevention (Skogan, 2006). According to Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990), community policing aims to create partnerships between police and citizens to reduce crime and enhance public trust.

Community policing does not imply that the police are no longer in authority or that the primary duty of preserving law and order is subordinated, rather community policing entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all (Ikuteyijo et al., 2012). Policing in the Northern part of the pre – colonial Nigeria was through the dogarai (Rotimi, 2003) who were the bodyguards of the Sarki (Emir or King). This group headed by the Sarkin dogarai capture and discipline offenders and guards the community with warders. Community policing is a paradigm shift that seeks to focus on constructive engagement with people who are the end users of the police service and re – negotiate the contract between the people and the police thereby making the community co– producers of justice and a quality police service.

Principles and Core Components of Community Policing

Community policing is based on several key principles that guide its implementation. First, through community-based crime prevention, or what some have called proactive problem-solving, police officers dedicate attention to the roots of perceived problems instead of solely focusing on incidents themselves. Trained to gather pertinent

information about criminal events, police seek to find the likely source of social problems to avoid further criminal incidents. In some cases, citizens are also able to participate in problem-solving training to gather information. Community-based crime prevention can also include program implementation, particularly programs to help educate youth about the risks of drug-use and gangs. Some of the major national police-sponsored crime prevention and educational programs include: Neighborhood Watch; DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education); and GREAT (Gang Resistance Education and Training). These programs also serve to increase police involvement in communities outside of the scope of crime-solving, which leads to the second component of community policing: proactive police participation.

A proactive police participation approach aims to incorporate police into communities beyond responding to criminal complaints, as a means to build relationships with residents and community members. As such, police units have worked to establish partnerships with a variety of actors, including government agencies, residents at neighborhood associations and town hall meetings, nonprofit organizations, and local private businesses. Also, it is not uncommon for local police departments to place uniformed officers on foot, on horses, or on bicycles in an effort to build relationships with residents. Free from the physical barriers present with patrol vehicles, these more accessible means of transport allow the police to get to know residents. While these types of police presence strategies might make some residents feel safer, research finds it can also intimidate community members. For instance, when approached by police, racial minorities, younger community members, and the poor lower income residents are more likely to "feel like a suspect," regard less of whether or not they are breaking the law (Tyler, Jackson, & Mentovich, 2015). And although police presence aims to deter criminal activity and make residents feel safer, evidence suggests that community members do not feel they are more likely to get caught for breaking the law when there is increased police presence (Tyler et al., 2015), nor does it always make residents feel a greater sense of Protection (Hinkle & Weisburd. 2008).

A third common component of community policing involves shifting command responsibilities to lower ranks of the police force by training officers to be relatively autonomous and to utilize discretion. For instance, in cases of citizen disorderly con duct, officers are taught to make arrests only when all other problem-solving options are exhausted. At the height of community policing efforts, officers were structurally supported by programs like San Francisco Cares, which created systems for officers to refer people who were homeless and people who were inebriated in public to services instead of jail booking stations. These types of system highlight the power officers have in making discretionary decisions that can disproportionately impact the most vulnerable.

Security

Security is a fragile and significant issue which conveys different meanings to scholars, analysts, policy makers and organizations across the globe. Fundamentally, security has to do with the presence of peace, Protection, gladness and the protection of human and physical resources or absence of crisis or threats to human dignity, all of which facilitate development and progress of any human society. The concept of security has also become a preoccupation for the decades following the end of the Cold War which could also be referred to as landmark for diverse school of thought with security studies. Security, as a concept, has diverse dimensions. It is aptly used in psychology, finance, information access, public Protection, defense and military matters. The meaning of security is ambiguous as its scope continues to expand every day. The elastic nature of the concept of security attracts different meanings and different views. Security is an important concept that every human person desires and it has one or two meanings though it defies precise definition. This account for the position of Buzan (1991) who describes security as an ambiguous and multidimensional concept in which military factors have attracted misappropriate attention.

In line with the above, Imobighe states that "security has to do with freedom from danger or threats to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the well-being of its people. Thus internal security could be seen as the freedom from or the absence of those tendencies, which could undermine internal cohesion, and the corporate existence of a country and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people (Ogaba. 2010). It could therefore be inferred that security, be it classical, state-centric and traditionalist or non-traditionalist, is all about protection of assets including living and non-living resources against loss or damage. Williams (2013) defines security as widely associated with mitigating the threat to cherished value, particularly if left unchecked in the near future threatens the existence of a specific referent object. Onifade (2013) Security is seen as a situation that emerges from the establishment of ways of protecting individuals, information, and properties from hostile people, influences, and behavior. It has to do with a situation in which people can travel around within a given natural space or elsewhere without any real and imaginary threats to their lives or properties. A condition where, with their two eyes firmly closed, people will sleep at night. Security of Life and property is really the fundamental reason for a government to exist in the first place, as attested by the various theorists of social contracts (Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu).

Theoretical Framework for Security in Nigeria

Security in Nigeria is a multifaceted issue that requires various theoretical perspectives to understand its causes, dynamics, and solutions. Several theories can be applied to security studies, including Frustration-Aggression Theory, Social Contract Theory, Broken Windows Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory.

Frustration-Aggression Theory: Frustration-Aggression Theory is commonly used in security studies. Dollard, the proponent of the theory states that frustration occurs when pleasure is blocked and aggression is always a consequence or natural response to frustration, which is directed at persons or objects perceived to be the cause of the frustration (Dollard et al., 1939). Therefore, insecurity as an aggressive action occurs as a result of frustration. Frustration emerges when there is a blockage or an impediment to goal accomplishment. This theory is closely linked with Ted Robert Gurr's Relative Deprivation Theory. The theory proposes that when an individual is deprived of his progressive advancement, it leads to frustration and the end result is violence or aggression. Rahmati and Momtaz (2013) define aggression as a physical hostility meant to hurt others (Rahmati et al., 2013). Scholars have also defined aggression in some other ways aside physical aggression which may be verbal. To Coakley, aggression may be verbal directed at inflicting pain. Whichever way, aggression is directed at hurting another. Rahmati et al. (2013) classified aggression into two: effective aggression and instrumental aggression. Geen linked effective aggression to harm, which is precipitated by negative emotional condition. Anderson and Huesmann (2003), further state that reactive aggression occurs as a result of prior provocation, which is accompanied by anger (Anderson et al., 2003). Galtung opines that there are some conditions that may trigger aggression, when people are in a state of inequality in a socio-political and economic setting and conflict naturally follows. Galtung's position correlates with Davies's proposition on the occurrence of conflict as a result of non-actualization of a person's expectations either politically or economically. Therefore, violence is the natural end product of frustration.

Broken Windows Theory: The broken windows theory, introduced by social scientists James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in their seminal 1982 article "Broken Windows," posits that visible signs of disorder and neglect—such as broken windows, graffiti, and litter—can lead to an increase in serious crime. The theory suggests that addressing minor disorders promptly helps prevent more significant criminal activity by maintaining an environment of order and lawfulness. The theory has significantly influenced policing strategies, particularly in urban settings. One notable implementation occurred in New York City during the 1990s under Police Commissioner William Bratton. The New York Police Department (NYPD) adopted a zero tolerance approach toward minor offenses, such as vandalism and fare evasion, based on the principles of the broken windows theory. This strategy coincided with a substantial decrease in crime rates; for instance, felonies like assault and burglary fell by more than 40% during that period. Empirical studies on the broken windows theory have yielded mixed results. A 2015 meta-analysis found that disorder policing strategies, such as "hot spots policing" or problem oriented policing, resulted in consistent crime reduction across various offense types. However, the analysis noted that aggressive order-maintenance strategies targeting individual disorderly behaviors did not generate significant crime reductions.

Factors Contributing to Insecurity in Nigeria

Some of the factors contributing to insecurity in Nigeria include but are not limited to;

1. **Ineffective Criminal Justice System**

Efficient criminal justice administration is key to curbing crimes in the society and ensuring long-term solutions to security challenges. Unfortunately, there are existing inadequacies and human indiscretions that make the system unable to rise the challenge. Corruption in the law enforcement and justice sector aids escape of criminals from the law which emboldens and imbues them with a sense of impunity and makes the wronged persons take the laws into their own hands for vengeance. Extortion and torture in the hands of security agents have been cited by many high-profile criminals as a reason for their indulgence in criminal activities or their extreme show of sadism. There is also insufficient capacity and lack of deliberate effort to take apprehended high-profile criminals through the justice dispensation process. For example, the trial of Boko Haram suspects in Kainji, Niger State which began in 2017 drew a lot of criticism for lacking sufficient transparency and rigour and for the fact it had yet to cover a lot of suspects relative to the number of persons in custody.

2. **Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons**

Arms proliferation is a driver of insecurity in Nigeria. Arms proliferation has been defined as the "excessive accumulation and illegal spread of weapons which could have a destabilizing effect on national security). The point to note here is that the illegal movement of arms from one place to another denotes illicit arms availability for illegal use and by illegal persons or groups of persons. There is a high flow of illegal arms in different parts of the country. Availability of these arms to criminal elements poses a danger for the country as criminals have access to automatic weapons which in some cases are more sophisticated than those used by security agents. Readily available arms are often incentives for people and groups with ill motives to conduct attacks, further exacerbating insecurity. Arms proliferation is a recipe for disaster, which further highlights the connecting line between the proliferation of arms and insecurity as without access to arms it will be difficult, for criminal elements to operate. The implication for Nigeria is the high level of insecurity currently manifesting across the country.

3. High Incidence of Poverty and Unemployment

Nigeria was once described as the poverty capital of the world, by the World Poverty Clock, an online real time aggregator. It is argued that four in every 10 Nigerians are living in poverty, with just 17% of Nigerian workers having the wage jobs able to lift people out of poverty. As of the fourth quarter of 2020, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics reported that the unemployment rate had risen to 33%, making it the second highest on the global list (Bloomberg 2021). According to the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, 39.1 percent of Nigerians lived below the international poverty line of $1.90

per person per day (2011 PPP) in 2018/19. Yet a further 31.9 percent of Nigerians had consumption levels between $1.90 and $3.20 per person per day, making them vulnerable to falling into extreme poverty when shocks occur. In addition a high population growth rate, limited job opportunities and the low value of the naira in the exchange/capital market have further pushed many Nigerians below the poverty line. High incidence of poverty and unemployment expands the pool of possible recruits for criminal activities.

Benefits of Community Policing in Enhancing Public Protection

Community policing has been shown to significantly improve Public Protection by fostering cooperation and reducing crime. Some of the notable benefits include;

1) **Reduction in Crime Rates**: Studies indicate that community policing can lead to a 1520% decrease in crime rates over a five-year period when implemented effectively (Gill et al., 2020). This is achieved through improved intelligence gathering, citizen participation, and targeted interventions. The United States has adopted the CompStat model which integrates crime data analysis with community engagement. This model has led to a 2030% reduction in violent crime in major cities like New York and Chicago (Weisburd & Braga, 2021). Nigeria can adopt data-driven strategies to improve law enforcement efficiency.

2) **Improved Police-Community Relations**: By involving community members in Protection initiatives, community policing builds trust and reduces hostility between law enforcement and the public. Research in Nigeria suggests that 73% of citizens feel safer when police officers engage in community-based initiatives (Alemika, 2021). South Africa has implemented Community Safety Forums (CSFs) that involve civilians in policy discussions and crime prevention initiatives. Research shows that areas with active CSFs experience a 25% decline in crime rates (Alemika, 2021). Nigeria can adopt similar forums to encourage citizen participation.

3) **Enhanced Public Cooperation and Intelligence Gathering**: When community members trust law enforcement agencies, they are more likely to report crimes, provide information, and participate in neighborhood watch programs (Skogan, 2022).

4) **Strengthening Social Cohesion:** Community policing fosters stronger community ties promoting collective efforts in crime prevention and neighborhood Protection (Cordner, 2020). The Neighbourhood Policing Model in the UK prioritizes visible policing and regular engagement with communities. Reports indicate a 35% improvement in public trust and cooperation (Gill et al., 2020). Nigeria can implement neighborhood policing initiatives to enhance law enforcement credibility.

Challenges and Limitations of Community Policing in Nigeria

Community policing in Nigeria has been advanced as a means of achieving better security and police-community collaboration. However, this policing reform has faced numerous challenges that have hindered its success and sustainability in the country.

The challenges stem from diverse sources, including institutional, socio-political, economic, and system-related factors (Alemika, 2021).

Weak institutional framework and lack of legal backing: One of the main challenges of community policing in Nigeria is the weak institutional framework and lack of legal backing to guide its implementation. Although policies have been formulated, they lack the legal backing required to make community policing effective throughout the country (Ogundiya, 2022).

Corruption and lack of accountability: Corruption has been a major impediment to effective community policing in Nigeria. Communities report that the incidence of bribery, extortion, and favoritism by police personnel has hindered their willingness to collaborate with the police (Transparency International, 2021).

Inadequate funding and resource constraints: Community policing is a resource-intensive endeavor that requires huge investments in training, equipment, logistics, and community engagement. However, the Nigerian government has not provided the necessary funding to support community policing initiatives (Adebayo, 2020).

Public distrust and fear of police brutality: Decades of human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, and police brutality have generated deep mistrust between the police and the Nigerian public (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Ethnic, religious, and political influences: The complex ethnic, religious, and political landscape of Nigeria presents additional challenges for community policing. In some cases, community policing initiatives have been co-opted by ethnic or political groups, resulting in exclusionary and discriminatory practices (Ojo, 2021).

Poor training and lack of skilled personnel: Many community police officers lack the requisite training and skills to carry out their duties effectively. This deficiency undermines the effectiveness of community policing initiatives (Nwankwo, 2023).

Resistance from traditional police officers: Traditional police officers often view community policing as a threat to their jobs. This has resulted in hostility towards community police officers, which has impeded effective collaboration (Eze, 2021).

Lack of public awareness and participation: Many Nigerians are not familiar with the concept of community policing and its objectives. A study by Adeyemi (2022) revealed that over 60% of Nigerians interviewed had limited or no knowledge of community policing initiatives in their communities, resulting in poor public participation.

Conclusion

Community policing has the potential to play a critical role in enhancing security in Nigeria and promoting police-community collaboration. However, it has faced

numerous challenges, including weak institutional frameworks, corruption, inadequate funding, public distrust, political interference, and poor training of personnel. To overcome these challenges and realize the benefits of community policing, strategic reforms need to be made. By implementing strategic reforms and promoting collaboration between the police and local communities, community policing can become an effective localized security strategy that enhances both security and police-community relations.

Recommendations

To improve the effectiveness of community policing in Nigeria and achieve localized security in the context of the challenges identified, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. The Nigerian government should put in place a law that will give community policing a legal backing in the country.

ii. Adequate funding should be provided at the federal, state, and local levels to support community policing initiatives.

iii. Community police officers should be trained in conflict resolution, intelligence gathering, human rights protection, and community engagement.

iv. Partnerships should be forged with international security agencies and civil society organizations to provide training and knowledge exchange.

v. Regular town hall meetings and community dialogues should be organized to facilitate police-community relations and address security concerns collaboratively.

vi. The government should invest in surveillance technologies such as CCTV cameras, drones, and data analytics to support proactive policing efforts.

vii. There should be increased coordination between community policing units, traditional security agencies, and local vigilante groups.

viii. Nationwide sensitization campaigns should be carried out to educate the public about the benefits of community policing and encourage citizen participation.

Policy Implications

In the light of the above discussions, some suggestions are hereby made for policy implications: The findings of this paper would hopefully be useful in fostering the activities of the Nigerian police, the operational and administrative issues, and the maintenance of peace and order in the society. In addition, the outcome of the findings will be useful for government to develop a legal framework that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of community policing.

Increase funding for community policing initiatives at both federal and state levels. Strengthen anti- corruption policies within the police force to enhance public trust. Ensure that recruitment and training of community police officers align with global best practices. Promote interagency collaboration between community police units and conventional law enforcement agencies. Establish effective monitoring and evaluation

mechanisms to assess the impact of community policing strategies.

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