

BUILDING SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY POLICING; CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine ways effective public support could be harnessed for community-policing project in order to assist the police to maintain security and work harmoniously with the public. Specifically, it sought to find out the extent the public is aware of the existence of community policing security project, its perceived effectiveness, possible challenges and likely support it requires to function as well as the envisaged implications for national security in Nigeria. A sample of 1000 Adult citizens drawn from Abia, Anambra, Enugu and Imo States in south east Nigeria using stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used for the study. Data was collected with the use of a 25-item Questionnaire titled. "Questionnaire on building effective support for community-policing for National security in Nigeria" (QBESIN). This was complemented with focus group discussion sessions with police officers in the selected states. The instrument was validated by experts and appropriately tested for reliability. Percentages were employed in analyzing data. Findings among other things revealed that majority of the respondents are to a large extent aware of the existence of community-policing project even though certain related challenges such as resistance to change, lack of information/publicity, poor public-police relations etc seem to confront its viability. Correspondingly, it was unanimously agreed by respondents that community policing needed moral, financial, motivational and enlightenment support to work effectively. The implications for national security were identified in form of the need for better police-public relations, public mobilization and participation etc which are deemed strategic for effective performance of the police. These findings and implications were discussed and appropriate recommendations made on how community-policing could be used to support police operational effectiveness in south-east Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Building Support, Police, Policing, Community, Policing, Security

INTRODUCTION

Crimes and general insecurity seem to be on the increase in Nigeria in recent times notwithstanding the concerted efforts of various security agencies especially the police in ensuring peace and security of life and property. The rising trend of insecurity is largely reflected in the increasing incidents of armed robbery, kidnapping, human trafficking, assassinations, terrorism, militancy etc in various parts of the country (Osakwe, 2009). Insecurity without doubt is one of the major problems confronting Nigeria especially in the last ten years. This situation is very worrisome considering the basic responsibility of government and state to lives and property of Nigerians as reflected in the 1999 constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011). In 2009, Nigeria was listed among the 15 most vulnerable nations in the world (Sunday Nation, 2009; Ocholi, 2009). This position did not only corroborate the internal security situation, but also

confirmed the increasing loss of capacity by respective governments to perform basic security and developmental functions despite repeated claims of huge budgetary allocation and expenditure on security of lives and property (Njoku, 2012; Newswatch, 2010).

According to Nnoli (2006: p 11) national security “is a cherished value associated with the physical safety of individuals, group or nation States together with a similar safety of their other most cherished values”. Thus, security connotes freedom from threats, anxiety or danger. Security is therefore a value associated with confidence in physical safety and other most cherished values (p11). Security can be in short or long terms depending on the overall national objectives of a State and other related contingencies. Statutorily, it is the basic responsibility of the state through various government security agencies such as the police, state security services, the Armed forces etc to maintain law and order and protect lives and property. Within the context of a civil environment, the role of the police in maintaining security cannot be over-emphasized.

The police no doubt is the most statutory or constitutional body/organ responsible for the preservation of law and order as well as the protection of the individual in cause of the exercise of his/her legal rights within the society (Imobighe, 2003: p 78). Similarly, the relevant sections of the amended 1999 constitution states that the police among other law enforcement agencies is vested with the functions of security of public safety and public order within the state of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2011: p 140).

Based on the foregoing, the statutory functions of the police are the:

- Prevention and dictation of crime;
- Apprehension of offenders;
- Protection of life and property;
- Maintenance of public order and safety.
- Enforcement of all law and regulation; and
- Performance of such military duties within and outside Nigeria as may be required of them (Federal Republic of Nigeria chapter (154, section 4).

Without doubt, security is a crucial matter which requires co-operation and collaboration of all strategic stakeholders such as government, security agencies, individual citizens of the community or public at large. Indeed, of all the stakeholders, the community or public is the most crucial to effective security. This is because without the co-operation of the community or public the police may be unable to perform optimally. This calls for police-community approach in crime detection and prevention. This co-operation is necessary because criminals are primarily members of the community and if detected early could be prevented from operating. Thus, this approach ensures that members of the community are educated on the need to provide information to the police about crimes and criminals and how to contact the police in emergency situations. (Njoku, 2012). This reinforces the need for community-policing.

The term community within the context of this study is defined as “all the people or a group of people living within a specific geographical area such as a village, town, city, neighbourhood or state (Apeh, 2006: p 1). It is also conceived in two related senses, namely social and geographical units, which further presuppose that such people referred

to as community are not only located within a defined geographical territory but also closely joined together in terms of feelings of members and other community shared experiences (Omoruyi, 2001)/ Community-policing is therefore a kind of co-operation between the community and the police in checking crimes and ensuring the general security of citizens (community). Policing is a people-driven security arrangement which ensures that members of the community are active in securing their lives, property and the protection of the totality of their environment (Aremu, 2009).

As rightly observed by Zumve (2012: p 132) “policing is a universal requirement of any social order which may be carried out by a variety of different processes and institutional arrangements”. Within the traditional African society, policing was the responsibility of all bonafide adult members of the community. In essence, policing is an obligatory collaborative endeavour between the people (community) and the police. Community policing is therefore anchored on reciprocal relationship between the police and citizens. This position is now increasingly supported by the global practice which favours a shift from traditional policing to community policing. Accordingly, community-policing is a philosophy and practice which have some reform implications for the Nigerian police (Okiro, 2007). Thus, from Nigerian police perspective, Community-policing should promote integrity, professionalism, cooperation and commitment which are aimed at achieving “quality service delivery, police and community empowerment, accountability, problem solving and partnership” (Nigerian Police Force, 2007: p5). These values are also in agreement with the five core elements of Community policing in south Africa namely service orientation (provision of a professional policing services responsive to community needs); partnership (facilitation of co-operative consultative process, problem-solving): problem-solving (joint identification and analysis of the causes of crime and conflicts with corresponding innovative remedial measures); empowerment (creation of joint responsibility and capacity to address crime), accountability (culture of accountability to address community needs and concern) (Republic of south Africa, 1993).

Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature

Some relevant theories are reviewed to situate the concept of community-policing in very clear perspectives. These are structural conflict theory, and the Structural differentiation theory. The major proponent of conflict theory is Karl Marx cited in Weber, (1968). According to him changes are generated on the basis of “contradictions” of the social system which stem from the social relations of production or the economic base of the society. Marxist theorists therefore argue that the main cause of social innovation is class struggle particularly between the working class (proletariats) and the ruling class (bourgeoisie). Inevitably, the totality of these relations (struggles and conflicts) constitute the economic structure of the society which further determine the “character of the political, legal, cultural and religious relations and institution of the society” (Akuul, 2011: p 17). With reference to this study, the theory suggests that the problems of security and general law and order are mere reflections of the nature of the inherent economic system in a society especially the dominant interest that drives that economy. This theory perceives social problems such as “political and economic injustice, inequity, poverty, exploitation, marginalization etc as veritable sources of conflict. It argues that conflicts occur largely because of the exploitative and unjust nature of man. To the Marxists, the police is not necessarily created to serve the “society” or the “people” but the dominant economic interest of a powerful minority”. (Institute of labour and Economic crisis, 1982: p 12). This position portrays the police as a repressive force which necessitated the idea of using community policing to promote ideal Police-Community relations.

The theory of structural differentiation originated by Spencer and Durkheim and further developed by Parsons and Peil (1976) holds that institutional changes lead to specialized differentiations and specialization of functions which are

vital to the overall effectiveness of different aspects of the society. Thus, with reference to this study, policing constitutes, part of the measures and actions taken by the society to regulate societal relations and conformity to norms and values (Reiner, 2000).

In Nigeria, the police force is facing many challenges ranging from negative public image, corruption, low morale, lack of equipment/facilities to rapidly changing social values which tend to encourage increase in crime rates (Aremu, 2009; Effiong, 2004). These factors show that the police in Nigeria is working in a very harsh and hostile environment which is inimical to effective security of lives and property, (Guardian, 2009). This trend is equally worsened by the high rate of ignorance many Nigerians exhibit on basic security issues Akintunde (2009). Thus, it is argued that with the support of community-policing citizens will receive some necessary security trainings and in the process ensure effective community participation in security (Sunday Nation, 2009). Community-policing is critical to effective security and political participation in a democracy. This is evident in USA, Britain and South Africa where promotion of community-policing assisted tremendously in creating consciousness and awareness among members of the police force especially in public relations. Indeed, Police-public relations in Nigeria has been very poor and it is envisaged in this study that effective community-policing can improve the situation.

The current bad public image of the police as rightly observed by Akintunde (2009) could be attributed to the engagement of some of the officers and men of the force in extra-judicial killing of innocent and defenseless citizens, corrupt practices and even connivance with criminals against citizens they are expected to protect. This state of affair could further be attributed to the colonial origin of the force which made it para-military in nature and repressive in character. It has over the years become an oppressive instrument used by the state to promote certain selfish interests (Imobighe, 2003).

Another issue which probably necessitated the need for policing is the manpower need of the police force. The shortage is largely in terms of number and quality. Thus, given the country's rapid population, growth and the slow rate of recruitment into the force, Nigeria, seem to be grossly under policed. This situation is further aggravated by the regular use of the police for other duties other than "combating crime, law enforcement and maintenance of public order" (Imobigbe, 2005: p84).

Crime statistics in Nigeria indicate a very high trend of general insecurity (clean 2012, Nigerian police force 2007). For instance, states such as Kaduna, Kano, Bornu, Anambra, Abia, Imo have witnessed upsurge in crime rates due to high incidents of armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorism occasioned by Boko Haram insurgency (Obasi, 2008; Abimboye and Adzegeh, 2009). The upsurge in crime is not only an indication of general insecurity but also a fundamental problem of ineffective policing. This situation has further encouraged some states to establish special security squads known as "vigilante" groups to perform police functions. These security outfits which are known for their indigenous social control systems include the Odua' peoples congress (OPC) of the Yoruba, Hisha of the Hausa/Fulani and Bakassi' Boys of the Igbo states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo respectively where crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery assassinations are rampant (Zumve, 2012). These outfits were popularly known for summary execution of suspects without recourse to the police and the judicial system (Mbagwu, 2000).

It was in a bid to strengthen the operations of these outfits that the Federal government approved community policing which is to encourage strategic partnership between the police and members of the community to deal with upsurge of crimes and other related activities. It was introduced on pilot basis in 18 states namely Enugu, Anambra,

Imo, Benue, Kogi, Kano, Kaduna, Jigawa, Bauchi, Katsina, Bornu, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Cross River, Oyo, Edo and the Federal Capital territory (FCT) (DFIH, 2010). This study sought to find out ways the needed support could be harnessed for community policing especially against some possible challenges or burdens and the likely implications the project could have on national security in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Recent trend of insecurity in Nigeria especially in the South East states where crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism and other related fraudulent practices are on the increase constitute a sort of worry to major stakeholders and the public at large. This situation is further aggravated by the increasing inability of security agencies especially the police to protect life and property.

This apparent state of insecurity as reiterated above constitutes a major concern to all stakeholders especially the government. This trend is alarmingly so because of the increasing inability of the police to effectively control crimes due to some inherent challenges in the system. Basically, the role of the police on security has become questionably contradictory because of its poor relationship with the public or the communities it purports to serve. Thus, many communities have resorted to self-help through the establishment of vigilante security outfits whose operational modes isolated the police and violated legal precedents. However, in recognition of the statutory role of the police in ensuring security and based on the need to improve police-community relations, the support for community-policing became imperative and justifiable too. Thus, the problem of this study posed in question form is how do we build support for community-policing in Nigeria and what are the specific challenges to these envisaged support as well as implications for national security in Nigeria?

Research Questions

The following Research Question guided the study:

- To what extent are members of the public aware of the existence of community policing?
- To what extent do members of the public perceive community-policing as a functional security project?
- What are the challenges that undermine effective community- policing efforts in Nigeria?
- In what ways can effective support be built for community-policing in Nigeria?
- What are the implications of effective community-policing on national security in Nigeria?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to find out ways of building support for community-policing; the inherent challenges to these efforts and the implications for national security in Nigeria. This design is deemed appropriate for studies that utilize representative sample to generalize research findings (Nworgu, 2006). A sample of 1000 adult members of the public drawn from Abia, Anambra, Enugu and Imo States of south-east, Nigeria (where there is existing pilot community-policing projects) were used for the study. The population of these states based on the 1992 population census was 10, 754977 (National Population Commission, 1994).

Two major instruments namely 25-item Questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on public support for community policing in Nigeria “(QPSCPIN) and Focus group Discussion (FGD) were used to collect data. The questionnaire consists

of two sections namely A and B. Section A contains information on demographic profiles of respondents while section B which was organized into clusters dealt with information on public perception of the extent of existence of community-policing as a legal security project, challenges to its effective operations, strategies for building support for it and the implications for national security in Nigeria respectively. In addition, the second instrument Focus Group Discussion was used to facilitate discussion on the challenges facing community policing as well as its implications on national security with selected sample of men of Nigeria police from Abia, Anambra, Enugu and Imo States. The Questionnaire was validated by experts to ensure precision, appropriateness and relevance of items. The reliability of the instrument was established using cronbach alpha with a sample different from that of the study. A value of 0.81 for general reliability was obtained while the various clusters yielded 0.79, 0.77: 75 and 0.78 respectively.

The instrument was administered on the respondents, with the assistance of four trained research assistance assigned to each of the four states of Abia, Anambra Enugu and Imo, respectively. The Focus Group discussion was held with sampled police officers from the four states for a period of one month. Data collection phase with questionnaire lasted for two weeks. Quantitative data were analysed with the use of percentages while information from FGD were analyzed qualitatively.

Results or Findings

Findings or results are presented in tables below based on the relevant research questions.

Research question I. To what extent are members of the public aware of the existence of community-policing as a relevant security project?

Table 1: Extent of Awareness of the Existence of Public Community Policing as a Relevant Security Project

S/N	Statements	N	\bar{x}	S Deviation
1.	Community policing is a very popular security watch in my neighbourhood.	1000	3.0302	0.82611
2.	My community has good working relations with the police.	1000	2.6354	0.94143
3.	Members of my community belong to neighbourhood watch supervised by the police.	1000	2.9511	0.91815
4.	Payment of security levy is compulsory for all adult members of my community.	1000	2.6027	0.87959
5.	Representatives of my community neighbourhood watch group attend monthly police briefing on security.	1000	3.2003	0.69631
Total		1000	2.8839	0.72698

The result in table 1 show that items 1 and 5 had mean values of 3.03 and 3.20 while items 2, 3 and 4 had mean values of 2.64, 2.95 and 2.60 respectively. The overall mean response was 2.88 which seemed higher than the criteria mean value of 2.50. These indicate that members of the public are to a large extent aware of the existence of community policing as a relevant security project.

Question Two: To what extent do members of the public perceive community-policing as a functional security project?

Table 2: Extent the Public Perceive Community Policing as Relevant Security Project

S/N	Statements	N	\bar{x}	S Deviation
1.	Community policy helps to discourage criminal activities.	1000	3.1200	0.67090
2.	Community policing helps to improve security consciousness of the public.	1000	1.4300	0.97706
3.	Co-operation of members of the community with the police helps to prevent crime easily.	1000	1.0400	0.77746
4.	Law and order can be easily maintained when there is joint community-police efforts/partnership in fighting crimes.	1000	2.2931	0.69931
5.	Community-policing encourages active participation of members of the public in security matters.	1000	.5622	0.96735
Total		1000	2.0931	0.81842

The result in table 2 indicate that items 7, 8 and 9 had mean values, of 1.43, 1.04 and 2.29 while items 6 and 10 had mean values of 3.12 and 2.56 respectively. The overall mean response was 2.09 which appear lower than the criterion mean value of 2.50. This suggests that despite the fact that some members of the public agree that community policing could help to discourage criminal activities (3.12) and promote active participation of citizens, (256) they appear not persuaded to see it yet as fully functional.

Question Three: What are the challenges that undermine effective community policing efforts in Nigeria?

Table 3: Challenges Facing Effective Community –Policing

S/N	Statements	N	\bar{x}	S Deviation
1.	Lack of trust between the police and the public affect the effectiveness of community-policing	1000	2.9207	0.86020
2.	Poor public image of the police affect the smooth operations of community-policing.	1000	3.0221	0.71822
3.	Inadequate manpower in the police affects the operations of community policing.	1000	3.1005	0.89357
4.	Corruption based on poor working condition of the police affect the effectiveness of community policing.	1000	2.8725	0.90413
5.	Low or poor educational background of some members of the police affect community policing adversely.	1000	2.7940	0.96735
Total		1000	2.9420	0.86869

The result in table 3 show that items 11 to 15 had mean values of 2.92, 3.02, 3.10, 2.82 and 2.79 respectively. Overall mean response is 2.94 which seemed higher than the criterion mean value of 2.50. This indicates that members of the public perceive lack of trust, poor image, inadequate manpower, corruption and poor educational background as challenges possibly facing the police force and by implication community-policing.

Question four: In what ways can effective support be built for community-policing in Nigeria?

Table 4: Ways of Building Support for Community Policing

S/N	Statements	N	\bar{X}	S Deviation
1.	Adequate funding of the police is an effective way of building support for community-policy.	1000	2.9803	0.87391
2.	Improved public-police relations is an effective way of building support for community-policing.	1000	2.8572	0.93442
3.	Enlightenment of the public on community policing by the police can boost public interest in police role in national security.	1000	3.2136	0.86573
4.	Reduced corruption in the police and society can encourage effective police-public partnership.	1000	2.9027	0.91234
5.	Adequate equipment of the police (material and facilities) is an effective way of ensuring non-materials community-policing.	1000	3.1600	0.97453
Total		1000	3.0228	0.91219

Finding in table four indicates, that adequate funding ($\bar{X}2.98$), improved public-police relations ($\bar{X}2.85$), Enlightenment of the public ($\bar{X}3.21$), reduced corruption ($\bar{X}2.90$) and adequate equipment of the public ($\bar{X}3.16$) are perceived ways of harnessing support for community-policing.

Question Five: What are the implications of effective community-policing on national security in Nigeria?

Table 5: Perceived Implications of Community Policing on National Security

S/N	Statements	N	\bar{X}	S Deviation
1.	Community-policing can enhance broad-based arui community policing for effective security.	1000	3.2034	0.79891
2.	Community-policing can promote problem-solving rather than repressive policing.	1000	2.6712	0.97233
3.	Community-policing can promote joint responsibility between the public and the police in the maintenance of law and order.	1000	2.7025	0.89073
4.	Security consciousness of the public can be enhanced through community-policy.	1000	2.5831	0.99018
5.	The public can be empowered to take security decision through community-policing.	1000	2.6378	0.74854
Total		1000	2.7596	0.88014

Result in table 5 indicate that the public perceive community as having some for reaching implications on national security ($\bar{X}2.75$). These implications are in terms of broad based community policing ($\bar{X}3.20$), problem-solving ($\bar{X}2.67$), joint responsibility ($\bar{X}2.70$), security consciousness ($\bar{X}2.58$) and security decision ($\bar{X}2.63$) respectively.

Discussion of Findings

Findings with respect to research question one showed that the public is to a large extent aware of the existence of community policing as a relevant security project/effort. This finding indicates that community policing is gradually becoming a global best security practice aimed at improving community-police relations especially in crime detection and prevention (Njoku, 2012). It also supports the existing claims that community-policing can project or promote the integrity, professionalism and public relations of the Nigerian police especially in the area of quality service delivery (Zumve, 2012).

With respect to research question two (which is on the extent the public perceive community-policing as functional security project) it was clearly shown that although the project is yet to be seen as very functional, it nonetheless seem to have the inherent operational capacity or potentials to discourage criminal activities and promote active public participation in security if given necessary support. This is in line with the views of Akintude (2009) and Imoghibe (2003) which posit that poor public perception of the Nigerian police affects its operational efficiency and professional integrity. These positions are corroborated by the repressive nature of the Nigerian police force (arising largely from corruption, inadequate equipment, low motivation etc) which weakens effective policing and by implication community-policing in Nigeria (Imobighe, 2003: p 84).

Similarly finding with respect to research question three identified the major challenges to community-policing to include lack of trust between the police and the public, poor public image of the police, inadequate manpower in the police, corruption and low or poor educational background of the lower ranks. This finding is supported by other previous studies which argue that the inability of the police to function effectively in Nigeria is due to both societal and systemic problems identified above (Akuul, 2011, Aremu, 2009). Similarly corroborative findings from focus group discussion session with men of the Nigerian police in the area of study also show that inadequate manpower, lack of equipment, corruption and other related challenges still confront effective policing and by implication community policing in Nigeria.

Findings with respect to research question four on ways of building or harnessing public support for community policing, indicated that improved-public-police relations, public enlightenment (through the media) reduced corruption and adequate equipment of the police force could help to promote the viability and efficiency of the community-policing project. Similarly, opinions of men of the police force based on focus group discussion sessions seem to support the above modalities. This position is further supported by Zumve (2002) who argued that “----- effective policing can be sustained through different processes and institutional arrangement” (p 132).

Lastly, findings with respect to research question five (which focused the implications of community policing for national security in Nigeria) revealed that community policing project is capable of being used to enforce broad based security initiatives which are anchored on problem-solving approach necessitated by joint security needs, public-police relations and effective security decision-making efforts and skills. The views gathered from focus group discussion also seem to support the above claims especially with respect to the need for co-operative and collaborative efforts of all stakeholders in ensuring adequate security in Nigeria.

IMPLICATIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, the following implications were further highlighted with appropriate corresponding recommendations.

- The widely held view that security is the sole business of the government and security agencies is no longer tenable. In this regard, the Nigerian public should be sufficiently sensitized on the viability and necessity of community-policing as a joint effort in national security. This is because the public is a strategic stakeholder in national security.
- The police and other security agencies cannot function effectively without public support and co-operation. Thus, the Nigeria police force should improve on its core professional values and integrity through cordial

public-police relations. This should be promoted through deliberate public relation programmes and re-orientation activities with the help the mass media.

- Effective national security cannot be achieved if members of various security agencies are adequately motivated or equipped to function effectively. To this end, government and other stakeholders should increase the funding of the police and other security agencies with a view to improving their welfare incentives, accommodation, equipment, conditions of service etc. This will corresponding by improve their loyalty and commitment to effective national security and by implication community-policing project.
- Better motivated and well educated security operatives are likely to have better self-esteem which is a desirable psychological strategy for effective policing and community-policing. To this end, suitable educational qualification should guide recruitment into the Nigeria police force. This will discourage irresponsible and irrational behaviours of some of the men of the police force. Similarly, study leave, conferences, short-courses should be made available to eligible officers to improve their professional value and commitment which are necessary indices for effective public-police relations and by implication viable community policing.
- Public security is better achieved through properly sensitized individuals. To this end, the government should deliberately raise the security consciousness of individual citizens through media enlightenment and informal civic or political literacy that bother largely on individual rights and roles within the context of collective national security. This is because national security remains the major business of three strategic stakeholders namely, security agencies, the government and the citizens. Thus, the public must play its own role creditably to maintain the desired harmonious security balance in the society through community-policy project.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings of this study show that public-police partnership and collaboration on security matters remain a major option for effective policing in contemporary Nigerian society especially in the south-East states where crimes of different dimension appear to be on the increase in recent times. This position is further strengthened by the specific findings of the study which not only indicated public awareness of community policing but also its desirability as a functional security project with far reaching national security implications despite some perceived challenges. Thus, this study has shown that sustainable community policing in Nigeria is not only in tandem with the current security best practices globally but also in line with the operational values of democratic culture which promotes principles of civility, freedom rights and duties as necessary options for collective security. Thus, the major conclusion of this study is that community-policy though not fully functional in Nigeria at the moment (due largely to some challenges) can still be seriously invigorated to achieve national security expectations through various modalities which are anchored on effective public-police relations, joint or collaborative efforts such as funding and all inclusive professional reforms in the police force.

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