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Importance of Community Policing In Crime Reduction: Lagos Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The growing rate of crime in Lagos state questions the effectiveness of Nigerian police in fighting against crime. The situation is blamed on the centralized management which is practiced in most police organizations in which the police are isolated from their serving communities. To successfully fight crime, all hands must be in desk. For this reason, the present study investigated the importance of community policing in crime reduction in Lagos state. The study was guided by four specific objectives. Questionnaire was adopted in data collection and the sample size for the study was 50 comprising police officers, civil servant, private workers, artisan and others. The sample was randomly selected across five local governments including Ajeromi-Ifelodun, Mushin, Surulere, Ikeja and Amuwo-Odofin. The data collected were descriptively analyzed using frequencies and percentages and the result of the study revealed that community policing is effective in reducing crime in Lagos state given that the share intelligent information with the police to foil planned crime attempt or to apprehend criminals. They also provide evidences to the police. This makes community partnership with the police inevitable in crime reduction. Based in the findings, conclusions were made and recommendations proposed.

Keywords: Community Policing, Crime, Crime Reduction

1 INTRODUCTION

The effect of crime on the society can be grouped into economic, social, psychological and health effects. Crime is a social problem that decreases the quality of life in the society. In every society, it is the role of law enforcement agents and the police specifically to maintain law and order, as this is the main purpose for which they are recruited and trained. They are mainly charged with the duty of preventing crime and apprehending criminals (Mulugeta&Mekuriaw, 2017). In discharging their duties of preventing crime, the police are faced by certain difficulties such as the perception of the public of the police being non-committed and irresponsible, thus affecting their relationship negatively (Kasali&Odetola, 2016). Solving a crime requires the involvement of the community, without which it will be difficult for the police to successfully prevent or solve a crime. Given this challenge, and as a reaction, community policing was introduced. The rationale behind this joint work is the belief that the police alone cannot ensure and maintain safety in a community, and in this regard, the concept of community policing was developed (Mulugeta&Mekuriaw,2017).

Community policing can be described as a model of policing developed from the idea that the police and the citizens of a community can collaboratively work together creatively to prevent and solve crime related issues, in order to minimize the fear of crime, ensure safety and improve life quality in the community (Amadi, 2014).In community policing, the police formulate ways to solidify the cooperation between with community members as a means of enhancing communication and encouraging the giving out of information in order to ensure an effective problem solving activity (Amadi, 2014).

Prior to the emergence of community policing, police was perceived as professionals charged with the defense of crime and restoring order. This implies that the duty of protection and crime prevention was strictly left to the control of the police. However, with the introduction of community policing concept, the perception was changed to viewing policing as partnership with citizens in order to maintain order in the society and create a neighbourhood devoid of crime (Amadi, 2014).

Security in recent times has been redefined following the realization by government that security cannot be monopolized locally as well as globally. This realization has led to broadening the concept of security community to incorporate private participants and civilians in the management of security (Kasali&Odetola, 2016).Successful community policing is only possible with a level of trust between the police and the community. However, in Nigeria, there is an atmosphere of distrust between the public and the police, which makes the concept of community policing unrealistic and unachievable. This distrust stems from the inability of the police to share power with the civilians as they are used to receiving orders from their superiors, as well as the fact that they find it difficult to adopt another policing model different from the traditional model they have been used to for a very long time (Gbenemene&Adishi, 2017). To this end, the study examines the importance of community policing in crime reduction in Lagos state.

2 Statement of research problem

Community policing can be described as democracy in action, as it involves the active participation of private and public agencies, business leaders, residents, local government, and churches based on their common concern of the community welfare. The statistics on crime rate indicates the low impact of crime fighting on crime reduction. Furthermore, the centralized management which is practiced in most police organizations has contributed towards isolating the police from their serving communities. This segregation works to hinder the effort of the police in crime fighting. Furthermore, the police in most cases seems to be unaware of existing problems; and without a strong relationship with the community they serve, they might be denied access to important information that would have aided in prevention or deterrence of crime.Information can only flow to the police from the community when trust is established. However, the establishment of this trust is not easily achieved especially in communities prone to internal conflicts and having strained relations with the police. Community Policing is unsuccessful notwithstanding its introduction in Nigeria as the public perceives the police as corrupt and untrustworthy. The failures of community policing originate from the history of the police force which has been construed in relation to it past mistakes and building a totally new policing strategy has become difficult (Otu&Elechi, 2018). Based on the foregoing, this study examines importance of community policing in crime reduction in Lagos state.

Research objective

Generally, this study examined the importance of community policing in crime reduction in Lagos state. Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. Ascertain the influence of police-community partnership on crime reduction in lagos state
2. Investigate the challenges of implementing community policing in Lagos state.
3. Assess the attitudes of local residents and police officers towards community policing.
4. Identify the prevention strategies adopted in community policing.

Research questions

1. What is the influence of police-community partnership on crime reduction in Lagos state?
2. What are the challenges of implementing community policing in Lagos state?
3. What is the attitude of local residents and police officers towards community policing?
4. What are the prevention strategies adopted in community policing?

Literature review

Community policing can be defined as a philosophy which allows officers to constantly function in the same region so as to form a stronger connection with the residents living and working within that region. It is tailored to the varying needs of local community enables public safety officers interact with the residents and prevent crime occurrence rather than respond to them after they happen (Lortz, 2016). Community policing according to Olusegun (2016) is the collaboration between the police and the community in which the problems of the community are identified and solved. The members of the community become active partners in the attempt to improve the safety and value of neighborhoods since the police are no longer the only guardians of law and order.

Community policing is made up of three main concepts which are:

Community: which is defined as a social group dwelling in a distinct geographical area and whose members share similar interests, cultural values, historical background, economic activities and basic social institutions (Okafor&Aniche, 2018).

Police: a group of government employees who maintain order and enforce the laws.

Policing: one of the acts mostly done by the Police Force to keep law and order, which combines best techniques in order to fight crime and disorder and also the fear and likelihood of crime(Akinyemi, 2021).

In Nigeria, the concept of community policing become popular in the early 2000. It was introduced in Nigeria in 2003 with Enugu State leading its first operation. The Nigeria Police are used to receiving orders from their bosses and find it tremendously hard to share such powers with the community who are very skeptical of police officers. Community policing in Nigeria is not successful due to the fact that the police are not willing to move away from their traditional policing model which they have been used to for a very long time (Gbenemene&Adishi, 2017). The Lagos State Police Command commenced full implementation of the community policing strategy in 2020 by inaugurating three Community Policing Committees (CPC) which were Area Command Community Policing Advisory committees, Local Government Advisory committees and Divisional Community Policing Committees. Their roles include managing and supporting a policing team who patrol smaller geographical areas within communities, responding quickly to distress calls in their respective areas, arresting offenders, preventing breaches of the peace, taking initial action crime scenes and resolving disputes. Other duties include dealing with traffic accidents and recording witness evidence, gathering intelligence reports daily from the community and passing on the information to the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) within the area, building an effective bond with the members of the community, giving basic crime prevention advice, visiting schools and giving community talks to school children (Igbonwelundu, 2020).

Challenges of community policing in Nigeria;

The philosophy of community policing lays emphasis on partnership, proactivity and delegation of authority but this is not the case in Nigeria as the police force is viewed as one of the most corrupt institutions in the country and known to aid and abet criminals (Gbenemene&Adishi, 2017). The police force is built on the traditional culture of force which they use to brutalize and oppress to same people they are meant to protect, making it even harder for the police to work together with the public to fight crime and community policing to be embraced.

Bribery and corruption is deeply rooted in the police force that makes them lose the confidence, support and cooperation of the members of the public to enable for effective community policing (Karimu, 2015).

The over centralization of the command structure in the police force has affected the processing of community policing and is one of the issues militating against it (Otu&Elechi, 2018; Arase, 2018).

Empirical studies

Akinyemi (2021) carried out a study on the implications of community policing for national peace and security in Nigeria using a systematic review of literature. It was observed that in Nigeria, community policing has been adopted only in principle and has not been implemented or practiced. Also, the level of trust and partnership that is required between the police and members of the public is yet to be achieved as the challenges confronting the security framework of the country have not been addressed.

Ngwu and Ahuruonye (2017) studied the concept of community policing and its effectiveness in maintaining order, preventing crime and reducing fear in communities as opposed to the traditional concentration on execution of serious street crimes founded on 'jungle justice'. Secondary source of data from the existing literature were utilized as well as books, journal articles and the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). It was revealed that police attitude resulted in lack of co-operation of the public with the police and also in giving the police information on the situation of crime in their individual communities. Notwithstanding these limitations, community policing is crucial in maintaining a safe and crime-free society in Nigeria.

Olusegun (2016) examined the different views of community policing in south-west Nigeria through the consultation of related textbooks, publications and journals which revealed that the perception of the police and the community retain the fact that the police force alone cannot successfully tackle crimes in the society given their apparent inadequacies without adequate backing of the members of the community.

Theoretical framework: The Broken Windows Theory (BWT)

The broken windows theory was first suggested by a social scientist, George L. Kelling, in 1982 and states that noticeable signs of crime in urban areas result in more crime (Longley, 2019). According to this theory, just as a building with one broken window is susceptible to additional wreckage, a neighborhood with evident signs of minor disorder, such is susceptible to criminal attack (Friedersdorf, 2020). The slippery slope to disorder is activated simply when a community begins tolerating relatively minor violations of public order such as taking illicit drugs, vandalisation of abandoned structures, street fighting etc. conscious and cautious efforts are required to crack down on these menace which will eventually avert bigger crimes like robbery, burglary and assault, assassination etc. This theory lays emphasis on the police and the criminal justice system not being enough to bear the burden of securing the lives and properties of citizens. Hence, the necessity to involve the community in policing operations.

In this study, this theory applies to neighbourhoods that are populated by unemployed youths with unregulated behavior and slum areas in various localities in Lagos state that are known for various social ills and require the fusion of police and community effort to guarantee peace and order.

Methodology

The study is a descriptive study which examined community policing in crime reduction in Lagos state. The population of study comprised of five local government areas in Lagos state in which the opinions of respondents were sought concerning community policing the local governments. These local governments are Ajeromi-Ifelodun, Mushin, Surulere, Ikeja and Amuwo-Odofin which was purposively selected based on their nearness to the researcher. From these areas, 60 respondents were randomly selected from various areas and questionnaires administered

to them. The questionnaires were structured using a five point likert scale format and administered with the aid of research assistants. The data collected were descriptively analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	27	54
Male	23	46
Total	50	100
Educational qualification		
OND/Technical/NCE	6	12
B.Sc/B.A/HND or Equivalent	30	60
Master's Degree	12	24
Others	2	4
Total	50	100
Occupation		
Civil servant	14	28
Private worker	10	20
Artisan	7	14
Self employed	6	12
Police officer	8	16
Others	5	10
Total	50	100

The table above presents the demographic information of the respondents. As indicated in the Table, 50 respondents took part in the study which comprises 54% female and 46%. Of this sample, 60% had B.Sc/B.A/HND or Equivalent followed by master's degree with 24%, then OND/Technical/NCE with 12% and 4% of the population selected "others" without specifying what others represents. The participants also cut across different occupations like civil servant (28%), private workers (20%), Artisan (14%), self-employed (12%), police officers (16%) and 10% selected 'others'.

1. **What is the influence of police-community partnership on crime reduction in Lagos state?**

Table 2: showing response regarding the influence of police-community partnership on crime reduction in Lagos state

Variables	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%
Specific crime and disorder concerns are identified and the most appropriate remedies to counter the problem(s) implemented.	3	6	47	94	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community is familiar with common trends of crime acts due to frequent notices from the police.	17	34	33	66	0	0	0	0	0	0
Confidence between community and police makes reporting of crime easy.	36	72	14	28	0	0	0	0	0	0
This partnership increases resources and ability to solve problems	0	0	50	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

Field Survey 2021

Table 2 above presents the respondents' views on the influence of police-community partnership on crime reduction in Lagos state. With a 100% agreement to all statements in the table as shown above, the study concluded that police-community partnership plays significant roles on crime reduction. For one thing, they identified specific crime and disorder concerns and come up with the most appropriate remedies to deal with the identified crime. Also, the fact that the community is familiar with common trends of crime acts due to frequent notices from the police also makes the partnership effective and complementary in nature. The partnership also improves confidence between community and police which makes reporting of crime easy. Finally, the partnership increases resources and ability to solve problems. This result confirms that of an earlier study by Wanjohi (2014) who found the partnership between communities and polices as best practice in crime reduction. In same vein the study agrees withJannetta andLachman(2018) and Morgan (2011) respectively who shared similar views.

2.   **What are the challenges of implementing community policing in Lagos state?**

Table 3: showing thechallenges of implementing community policing in Lagos state

Variables	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%
Failure to adapt to changing technological trends deters the process of identifying criminal activities	15	30	23	46	0	0	9	18	3	6
Lack of training on community policing to the public	6	12	44	88	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lack of qualified human resource as police officers lack skills on how to the management, investigation and proactive prevention of potential occurrences of crime	17	34	33	66	0	0	0	0	0	0
High level of turnover of police officers due to low salary and challenging nature of the work	47	94	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Low budget allocation for the implementation of community policing programme	17	34	33	66	0	0	0	0	0	0

Field survey 2021

The second research question investigated the challenges confronting the implementation of community policing in Lagos state. As indicated in the table, several factors interfere with the partnership between community and police. With 100% agreement on all the times in the table above, this paper concludes that the failure to adapt to changing technological trends deters the process of identifying criminal activities. Also, poor training on community policing to the public; lack of qualified human resource as police officers lack skills on how to the management, investigation and proactive prevention of potential occurrences of crime; high level of turnover of police officers due to low salary and challenging nature of the work; and low budget allocation for the implementation of community policing programme are some of the challenges interfering with the implementations of community policing. This result confirms that of the study carried out by Otu and Elechi (2018); Arase (2018); Gbenemene and Adishi(2017); Karimu(2015) respectively. These individual studies also revealed that there are some obstacles in the implementation process of community policing among which are poor communication, lack of trust, bribery and corruption and the aforementioned challenges identified in this study.

3.   **What is the attitude of local residents and police officers towards community policing?**

Table 4: Showing the attitude of local residents and police officers towards community policing

Variables	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%
Residents are actively engaged in community policing works	50	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%
Residents support community policing officers by providing information and cooperating with the officers to prevent crime	47	94	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Material support and provision of information when necessary is increased after the introduction of community policing.	6	12	44	88	0	0	0	0	0	0
There is frequent and sustained communication between community residents and police personnel to build mutual trust and cooperation	15	30	23	46	9	18	0	0	3	6

Field survey, 2021

The table above presents the respondents opinion of the attitude of local residents and police officers towards community policing. With a 100% agreement to all the statements on the table above except number 4 with 76%, the study revealed that partnership improves community trust and belief in policing. As indicated in the able therefore, the paper supports that residents are actively engaged in community policing; they support community policing officers by providing information and cooperating with the officers to prevent crime; residents offer material support and provision of information when necessary is increased after the introduction of community policing.There is frequent and sustained communication between community residents and police personnel to build mutual trust and cooperation. This result supports Peyton, Sierra-Arévalo, and Rand (2019); Cummings (2019); and Rosenberg, Sigler and Lewis (2008) respectively who also found that the people's attitudes toward police improves due to community policing

4.   **What is the prevention strategies adopted in community policing?**

Table 5: showing the prevention strategies adopted in community policing

Variables	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%
Door-to-door contacts is used as a crime prevention strategy	15	30	23	46	9	18	0	0	3	6
Watch programs in which residents observe possible criminal activities are used	44	88	6	12	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community is encouraged to share intelligence with the police.	33	66	17	34	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community members are provided with hotlines to report crime related incidences or signs	3	6	47	94	0	0	0	0	0	0
Police patrols are easily accessible visible and familiar to their community.	50	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Field survey, 2021

Finally, the table about presents the respondents' opinion on the prevention strategies adopted in community policing in fighting against crime. According to the result, Door-to-door contacts are one of the preventive strategies used in fighting crime by community policing. Others include: Watch programs in which residents observe possible criminal activities are used; Community is encouraged to share intelligence with the police; Community members are provided with hotlines to report crime related incidences or signs and Police patrols are easily accessible visible and familiar to their community. The result confirms an earlier Cummings (2019) and Broockman, and Kalla (2016) who also identified door-to-door canvassing as one of crime preventive strategy, among others.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The result from this study shows that community policing is essential in fighting crime. This is so because crime rate increases every day which overwhelms the limited number of police in every community. More so the key to successfully charge a criminal to court depends on the availability of information which is usually in the hand of the community. Their cooperation with the police therefore is essential in solving crime

mysteries. It is without doubt that in the process of discharging their duties of preventing crime, the police are faced by certain difficulties such as the perception of the public of the police being non-committed and irresponsible, poor access to relevant information, community hiding the criminal or any implicating evidences, thus affect their relationship negatively (Kasali&Odetola, 2016). Solving a crime requires the involvement of the community, without which it will be difficult for the police to successfully prevent or solve a crime. Given this challenge, and as a reaction, community policing was introduced. The rationale behind this joint work is the belief that the police alone cannot ensure and maintain safety in a community, and in this regard, the concept of community policing was developed (Mulugeta&Mekuriaw, 2017). This study has proven the effectiveness of community policing in resolving crime and thus recommends the partnership between the community and the police to completely eliminate crime in Lagos state. The study also recommends effective communication system to make the partnership transparent and efficient. Also, there should be confidentiality to protect the individuals who share intelligent information with the police fir their safety. Also, there should be adequate medium to verify and authenticate information provided to avoid costly mistakes.

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APPENDIX

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN CRIME REDUCTION: LAGOS CASE STUDY

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Dear Respondent,

I am carrying out a study on "Importance of Community policing in crime reduction: Lagos Case study" and you have been chosen to be part of the study. This questionnaire is only for academic purposes. Kindly select the response which applies to you and all information will be kept confidential

SECTION A:

Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )

Education qualification

     a)   OND/NCE   ( )

     b)   B.Sc./ HND   ( )

     c)   M. Sc./MBA   ( )

     d)   Others   ( ) Specify…………………

Occupation

     a)   Civil servant   ( )

     b)   Private worker   ( )

     c)   Artisan   ( )

     d)   Self employed   ( )

     e)   Police officer

     f)   Other   ( ) Specify

SECTION B:

Instructions: Please tick **(√)** as appropriate where

SA   = Strongly Agree (SA), A   = Agree, D, Undecided,UN, = Disagree (D), SD = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Key: Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), undecided (3), Disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	UN	D	SD
RQ1	**What is the influence of police-community partnership on crime reduction in Lagos state?**					
1	Specific crime and disorder concerns are identified and the most appropriate remedies to counter the problem(s) implemented.					
2	Community is familiar with common trends of crime acts due to frequent notices from the police.					
3	Confidence between community and police makes reporting of crime easy.					
4	This partnership increases resources and ability to solve problems					
RQ2	**What are the challenges of implementing community policing in Lagos state?**					
5	Failure to adapt to changing technological trends deters the process of identifying criminal activities					
6	Lack of training on community policing to the public					
7	Lack of qualified human resource as police officers lack skills on how to the management, investigation and proactive prevention of potential occurrences of crime					
8	High level of turnover of police officers due to low salary and challenging nature of the work					
9	Low budget allocation for the implementation of community policing programme					
RQ3	**What is the attitude of local residents and police officers towards community policing?**					
10	Residents are actively engaged in community policing					

	works					
11	Residents support community policing officers by providing information and cooperating with the officers to prevent crime					
12	Material support and provision of information when necessary is increased after the introduction of community policing.					
13	There is frequent and sustained communication between community residents and police personnel to build mutual trust and cooperation					
RQ4	**What are the prevention strategies adopted in community policing?**					
14	Door-to-door contacts is used as a crime prevention strategy					
15	Watch programs in which residents observe possible criminal activities are used					
16	Community is encouraged to share intelligence with the police.					
17	Community members are provided with hotlines to report crime related incidences or signs					
18	Police patrols are easily accessible visible and familiar to their community.					