Community Policing in Nigeria: Challenges, Prospects and Implications for National Security

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A b s t r a c t

The major socioeconomic problem in Nigeria that constitutes a challenge to the national security is crime. The formal policing strategies alone is relatively deficient and cannot effectively control crime without public support, this paper tries to adopt community policing as an alternative to crime prevention and control, which involves strategies that include partnership, problem solving, and change management. The paper equally examined some serious challenges facing Policing in Nigeria such as corruption, institutional constraints, police brutality and under funding that constitute a bottle neck in effective policing in Nigeria, however, the prospect of community policing was outlined to give its implication to national security.

Keywords: *Crime, Security, Community partnership*

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Background to the Study

In Nigeria today, individual security and peace in the neighborhood command the highest priority. The growing specter of crime ensures that this is so, increasing social dislocation and economic hardship resulting from massive unemployment and the general state of despair amongst our adult population, the collapse of our moral and ethical values, the easy availability of deadly firearms, the rise of urban gangs and the trans-bounty-reach of organized crime-profiting from the opportunities provided by globalization together contribute a great challenges to the National security which ensures that, on this eve of time crime prevention and control have become paramount.

Government and law enforcement agencies focused mostly in combating crime problems through repressive or police force related method (Barreto, 2002). While it is still clear that the police are constitutionally saddled with the responsibility for prevention and detection of crime and the preservation of law and order in the society they play important roles without which the sustenance of development and democracy may be relatively difficult, their effectiveness has been limited by various factors including: inadequate manpower, inadequate training, inadequate materials/equipments, poor logistics, poor remunerations, poor motivation and corruption within the system (soyombo, 2009). Chief Akinlolu Olujinmi, SAN, F .C.I. Arb. Attorney-General and Minister of Justice Federal Republic of Nigeria in a keynote Address: Crime and Policing in Nigeria outlined other institutional constraints, which contribute to the uncomplimentary image of the police and thereby undermining their capacity to deliver efficient crime control and policing services. These include inadequate manpower, lack of expertise, lack of adequate equipment, low level of education, low morale, shabby appearance, lack of training facilities and poor conditions of service of the average policeman.

The prevalence of crime like Murder, forcible rape, armed robbery, burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and terrorism in our society is a cause for serious concern to national security, the Nigeria police force as an indispensable arm of the criminal justice system saddled with the responsibility of crime prevention and control are relatively deficient. There is need to evolve a new strategy of law and order which will consciously seek to integrate, regulate, mobilize, empower informal policing outfits that are willing to preserve law and order in an acceptable manner to complement the effort of the government on issues of crime preventions and control.

While it is still clear that the police alone cannot effectively control crime without public support therefore, crime control is a collective responsibility. There is need for all peace loving citizens to support various crime control measures (Soyombo, 2003). Ikuteyijo (2009), stressed that the unfriendly nature of the relationship between the police and members of the public has enjoyed a wide coverage among scholars. It was in reaction to this development that the concept of community policing was introduced. Therefore in order to reduce the over growing crime rate and to minimize the impact of crime on the citizenry, more focus should be given to community-based crime prevention, since they are already playing major and commendable roles in crime control and prevention.

Community-based crime prevention programs include those that operate within the community and involve community residents actively working with their local government agencies to address issues contributing to crime, delinquency, and disorder. Community members are encouraged to play key roles in problem identification and planning solutions to problems in their communities. There is wide variation in community-based crime prevention programs based on factors such as program focus, program rationale, community context (e.g., racial and social class composition in the community), and level and type of community involvement. Community-based crime prevention programs are operated by neighborhood residents, police, and faith-based organizations. Some of the community-based crime prevention programme include: Neighborhood; Comprehensive programs; Ad hoc law enforcement activities related to crime prevention: and community policing.

The Concept of Community Policing
Community policing has been defined variously by different scholars but there is still a conspicuous lack of conceptual clarity and agreement because community policing is either being defined by purpose and functions or by structure and programmes. Others looked at it as a philosophy. Since the inception of community policing, police agencies worldwide have been adopting new strategies for delivering services to their citizenry, this include community based vigilante formations, neighbourhood watch groups, religious based vigilante groups and the likes, all engaging in the business of providing safety and security in the Nigerian society (Etannibi et al., 2009). These new strategies have been called community policing; problem oriented policing: neighbourhood oriented policing, problem solving policing and a host of other things. According to the U.S Department of Justice office of community oriented policing – community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategy which supports the systematic use of partnership and problem solving techniques', to proactively address the immediate conditions that gives rise to public safety issue such as crime, social disorder and fear of crime. To Community Policing Consortium, community policing consist of two core components, community partnership and problem solving.

Community policing is in essence a collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problem with the police no longer the sole guardians of law and order, all member of the community become active allies in the effort to enhance the safety and quality of neighbourhoods. Community participation can be an important factor in crime prevention. Without community participation, there are obviously no developments, no security and no program (Aref & Ma'rof, 2009).

Community involvement in neighbourhood policing most especially in African is an old practice. In Nigeria the practices even predates the formation of the Nigerian police. Indeed, most local communities across the country had their own community based policing arrangement to ensure the security of the population. Usually these groups were composed of industrials from the local community and often derived their credibility and unofficial authority from the community in which they serve. Lack of community participation in the crime prevention programmes can lead to failure in the social security

(Miranda, 2007). The primary role of police is policing - securing compliance with existing laws and conformity with percepts of social order. But the police are not the only agency involved in policing in the broad sense of the term. Policing has always been necessary in all societies for the preservation of order, safety and social relations. The necessity of policing become even more evident in modern societies characterized by diversities and contradictions arising from population heterogeneity, urbanization, industrialization, conflicting ideologies and appropriate socio political and economic form of organization, therefore, the police cannot succeed in solving or preventing crimes without the assistance of the community (Palmotto., 2000). Thus, to prevent crime successfully there must be community partnership and involvement. Therefore, community policing is the best way of policing currently working together with the community on the basis of partnership should be the primary condition of the police (Abebe, 2002).

Community policing is achieved on a systematic relationship between the police and the entire citizenry. Police roles are not simply law enforcement but also include tackling a huge range of community problems, (Okeshola & Mudiane, 2013). Community policing has far reaching implications. The expended outlook on crime control and preventing the new emphasis on making community members active participants in the process of problems solving and patrol officers pivotal role in community policing require profound charges within the police organization. Ashley & Roe, (1998) describe community participation as a spectrum from passive to active involvement to full local participation, where there is active community participation and venture ownership.

In general terms, community policing is not a program; it is not a set of activities; it is not a personnel designation. Rather, community policing is a law enforcement philosophy, a way of thinking about improving public safety. While there is a lack of standardization regarding specific terminology and strategies of community policing across cities, community policing efforts can generally be grouped into three broad Lawrence S. and McCarthy B. (2013)

Strategies for Community Policing
Policing strategies that worked in the past are not always effective today. The desired goal, an enhanced sense of safety, security, and well-being, has not been achieved. Practitioners agree that there is a pressing need for innovation to curb the crises in many communities. The implementation of community policing necessitates fundamental changes in the structure and management of police organizations. Community policing differs from traditional policing in how the community is perceived and in its expanded policing goals. While crime control and prevention remain central priorities, community policing strategies use a wide variety of methods to address these goals.

Community policing strategy projects a working relationship between the community and its police agency. The major elements of community policing are partnership and participation by members of the community to reduce crime, deal with community problem-solving and improve the quality of life for the community. It enables the citizens to partner with the police in dealing with crime, fear of crime and other social issues in the

community. A community policing perspective differs in a number of ways from a traditional policing perspective. In community policing, the police must share power with residents of a community, and critical decisions need to be made at the neighborhood level to address not only the causes of crime and fear of crime but all quality of life issues in the community. Achieving the goals of community policing requires successful implementation of three essential and complimentary components or operational strategies: community partnership, problem solving, and change management (www.communitypolicing.org/conpubs.html).

Community Partnership
Community partnership means adopting a policing perspective that exceeds the standard law enforcement emphasis. This broadened outlook recognizes the value of activities that contribute to the orderliness and well-being of a neighborhood. To develop community partnership, police must develop positive relationships with the community, must involve the community in the quest for better crime control and prevention, and must pool their resources with those of the community to address the most urgent concerns of community members.

Partnership in Community policing is seen by Dolling and Felters (1993), as a change to increase the integration of the citizens who constitute a community and to build or rebuild social structures in the community. Community policing entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all. It is a policing whereby the people take active part in their own affairs. With community policing, the police is not seen as a stranger whose presence stands for danger and imminent hazard, but as partners in development, Ikuteyijo (2009),

According to Inyang J. D and Abraham U.E (2013) It is widely believed that no one agency alone can succeed in reducing crime. This fact is acknowledged by security experts who argue that, 'any comprehensive strategy to reduce crime must not only include the contribution of the police and the criminal justice system but also the whole range of environmental, social, economic and educational factors which affect the likelihood of crime'. To this end, many countries of the world due to the ravaging security challenges and the apparent inability of the conventional police to handle the situation alone satisfactorily have encouraged the establishment of partnerships between government organisations and private/community organisations in addressing crime.

Establishing and maintaining mutual trust between citizens of a community and the police is the main goal of the first component of community policing. The Police have always recognized the need for cooperation with the community and have encouraged members of the community to come forward with crime-fighting information. The police no longer view community as a passive presence connected to the police by an isolated incident or series of incidents. The community's concerns with crime and disorder become the target of efforts by the police and the community working together (Bohm and Haley, 2002).

Problem Solving

Problem solving requires a lot more thought, energy, and action than traditional incidents-based police responses to crime and disorder. In full partnership, the police and a community's residents and business owners identify core problems, propose solutions, and implement a solution. Thus, community members identify the concerns that they feel are most threatening to their safety and well-being. Those areas of concern then become priorities for joint police-community interventions. For this problem-solving process to operate effectively, the police need to devote time and attention to discovering community's concerns, and they need to recognize the validity of those concerns (Bohm and Haley, 2002). Perhaps the most transformative aspect of the community policing movement has been the shift from the reactive crime-response model to a more proactive problem-solving or "problem-oriented policing" (POP) model. This approach puts a heavy focus on efforts to prevent crime before it happens by systematically identifying and addressing specific social issues associated with criminal activity. Problem-oriented policing tends to encourage creative problem solving among officers, analysts, and community members to identify the root causes of a problem and then figure out how best to address them. A 2010 review of the research literature found that as a whole, problem-oriented policing approaches had a statistically significant impact on improving public safety.

Advocates of community policing recommend the use of four way problem solving processes popularly known as SARA model, meaning – Scanning; - means identifying the problems. Analysis; - means understanding the underlying conditions. Responses;- Developing and implementing solutions, and Assessment.– means the determination of the solutions effects (Bohl & Haley, 2002. Wrobleski & Hess, 2003. Schmalleger, 2003).

As police recognize the effectiveness of the problem-solving approach, there is a growing awareness that community involvement is essential for its success. Determining the underlying causes of crime depends, to a great extent, on an in-depth knowledge of community. Therefore, community participation in identifying and setting priorities will contribute to effective problem-solving efforts by the community and the police.

Change Management

Forging community policing partnerships and implementing problem-solving strategies necessitates assigning new responsibilities and adopting a flexible style of management. Traditionally, patrol officers have been accorded lower status in police organizations and have been dominated by the agency's command structure. Community policing, in contrast, emphasizes the value of the patrol function and the patrol officer as an individual. It requires the shifting of initiative, decision making, and responsibility downward within the police organization. The officer must become responsible for managing the delivery of police services to the community. Patrol officers are the most familiar with the needs and concern of their communities and are in the best position to forge the close ties with the community that would lead to effective solutions to local problems. Under community policing, police management must guide, rather than dominate, the actions of the patrol officer must ensure that they have the necessary

resources to solve the problems in their communities. Management must determine the guiding principles to convert the philosophy of the agency to community policing and then to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies implemented (Bohm and Haley, 2002).

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Common Challenges and Barriers to Success of Community Policing in Nigeria
While it is still an undisputable fact that police alone cannot effectively control and prevent crime without the public support, despite numerous effort made by various Nigeria Police administration to reduce the level of crime to the barest minimum in the country, crime problems still persist. The Annual Report of the Nigeria Police Force, 2007 reported that the relative ineffectiveness of the police force in the prevention and control of crime has been limited by various factors such as poor remuneration, inadequate training, inadequate manpower, poor logistics, inadequate materials, poor motivation and corruption within the police system. Folashade B. O & Patience E.U. (2013) identified Corruption, Institutional Constraints, Military Orientation, Police Perception, Godfatherism as factors responsible for ineffective policing in Nigeria.

The Nigeria Police Force is being constantly attacked with various forms of corruption such as extortion, bribery on the highways, wanton abuse of human rights, collecting unauthorized fee before granting bail to anyone who is arrested. Etc. this has been a hindrance to positive contribution towards pro-poor change initiatives. The long-term failure of the Nigerian authorities to address police bribery, extortion, and wholesale embezzlement threatens the basic rights of all Nigerians. Therefore, good policy is the bedrock for the rule of law and public safety according to Dufka (2010).While corruption is endemic in all segment of the Nigerian society, it is still objectionable among the police because it is their occupational responsibility to prevent and work at its elimination.

Another factor that has been blamed as constituting a stumbling block to the effective administration of justice and efficient maintenance of law and order in Nigeria is the Institutional Constraints. In Nigeria, the police continue to be plagued by decreasing budgets, appalling living conditions, inadequate training, poor facilities, low remunerations, low morale and general conditions of service, and hostile police public relations, while engaging in the high enterprise of crime prevention and control. Allegations leveled against the institution and its personnel, some of which have proven to be true, include arbitrariness in exercising its power, corruption, perversion of justice, and delays in the administration of justice Onyeozili (2005). The pattern of police service delivery is also relatively and highly visibly subservient to the rich and powerful, even in the rendering of services forgetting their primary function of protecting the lives and properties of its citizens. The institutionalization of community policing through

organizational transformation necessitates sufficient resources and sustained commitment from department executive staff and city leaders. Changing the culture of a department can be as difficult, if not more difficult, than changing policies, procedures, and training. Establishing and maintaining meaningful community partnerships require an education of all stakeholders, the inclusion of missing voices, and a shared responsibility for the outcomes.

Also, the Military Orientation of the police is one of the major obstacles to the prospect of the Nigerian police being a positive factor in pro-poor change initiatives. The police as it is now came out of a military administration. That is probably the biggest challenge we face – turning it from a force into a service. That is why police repression had been institutionalized since colonial rule. However, police repression became increasingly intensified under the successive military regimes after 1966. Police officers often lack the skills needed to police effectively, but refuses to admit the most serious allegations made about the police that they brutally torture and sometimes kill suspects without trial (Iwar, 2009). The police in Nigeria, with the backing of autocratic leaders and repressive laws frequently acted outside the rule of law. Often, they were laws unto themselves, maiming, killing and detaining persons arbitrarily and with impunity.

Nwaubani, Okechukwu, Anyikwa, Blessing & Azuh dominic (2014) in their study, Building support for community policing; challenges and Implications for national security in Nigeria they 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. The finding was 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). The effectiveness of community policing depends on the public having confidence and trust in the police. Trust in the police is not prevalent in Nigeria. Since in most cases the public have negative perception towards the police. Policing agencies are unlikely to be successful in creating partnerships to address crime until they establish trusting relationships with the communities they serve.

Another major constraint on community policing is underfunding. Community policing requires much greater funding than traditional policing, since it requires that all officers be trained and retrained, more modern crime-fighting equipment, and morale-building pay rises for officers. Community policing programs require staffing, and interpreters or intensive language classes for officers – all at a time when police in the country are experiencing budgetary stress.

Prospects of Community Policing in Nigeria
Evidence has shown that formal policing in Nigeria cannot effectively address the enormous crime problems in the country. Since community policing is founded on the democratic principle and Nigeria is a democratic state, the police are entrusted by their fellow citizens to protect their fundamental rights to liberty, equality and justice under the law. To fulfill this privileged role, the police must be a part of the communities they serve.

The contemporary community policing movement emphasizes changing the role of law enforcement from a static, reactive, incident-driven bureaucracy to a more dynamic, open, quality-oriented partnership with the community. That is why Ikuteyijo (2009), maintain that community policing entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all. It is policing whereby the people take active part in their own affairs. With community policing, the police is not seen as a stranger whose presence stands for danger and imminent hazard, but as partners in development.

Moreover, this positive police-community relationship, based on mutual trust and respect, encourages community members to accept their own share of responsibility for the overall quality of life in their neighbourhood. Community policing enables police to develop improved police-community relationships (Segrave and Ratcliffe, 2004).

Community policing is in everyone's interest as it enables a peaceful, secure and investment-friendly environment that pro-motes development and improves livelihoods. The aim of community policing is to: provide an atmosphere in which the police and law-abiding citizens can work in partner-ship to solve problems; share resources; pre-vent crime; promote inter-agency collaboration; bring offenders to justice; reduce conflict; and improve the overall quality of community life.

The effectiveness of community policing in an area is for officers and key members of the community to set a specific mission and goals when starting out. Once specific goals are set, participation at every level is essential in obtaining commitment and achieving goals. Street-level officers, supervisors, executives, and the entire community should feel the goals represent what they want their police department to accomplish.

Essentially, community policing is a philosophy with operating principles based on the assumption that changes today will make communities safer and more attractive tomorrow, which is achieved by working together towards shared goals (Segrave and Ratcliffe, 2004). Community policing philosophy emphasizes that police officers work closely with local citizens and community agencies in designing and implementing a variety of crime prevention strategies and problem-solving measures.

According to *Obeagu (*2014) It is hoped that in due course, with the appropriate training and enlightenment seminars and workshops being organized for the members, they will attain the desired level of professionalism and competence needed to conduct their duties in a very civilized manner and still achieve results.

Conclusion
Many writers have agreed that police alone cannot effectively control crime. The enterprise of crime prevention and control has attracted considerable attention from all members of the society and stake holders in crime prevention and control. Since community policing relies on the establishment of a clear unambiguous link of values of behaviour, by creating a system of performance that engages everybody in the society, it becomes paramount for Nigeria to support a crime control philosophy that has collective

responsibilities since, communities are now playing a major and commendable roles in crime prevention and control in enhancing national security.

Recommendations

Based on the above presentation, this paper is recommending the following for stakeholders and policy makers in the enterprise of policing to ensure effective community policing in Nigeria.

1. There is need to evolve a new strategy of law and order which will consciously seek to integrate, regulate, mobilize and empower informal policing outfits that are willing to preserve law and order in an acceptable manner.

2. There is need to improve the public image of the police to win the trust of all including members of the community crime control groups. If the two must work together, then there must be trust between them. Therefore, everything should be done to improve the poor perceptions of these groups about each other.

3. The government and stakeholders shall design and Implement community policing strategies that changes the structure of policing and how it is managed so as to helps build up and strengthen the community. It will also links the police and the community together. The partnership that develops over time can ultimately help the police find the underlying causes of crime within the neighborhood. By getting the community involved, the police have more resources available to them to help in crime prevention.

4. Community policing offers a myriad of benefits. Making effective use of the talents and resources available within communities will help extend severely strained police resources. Also, reduced levels of crime will allow more police resources to be allocated to services that have the greatest impact on the quality of community life.

5. The government and stakeholders shall introduce certain incentives or rewards for community crime control groups that play by the rule so as to motivate them for better performance.

6. The Nigeria Police have to demonstrate a strong commitment to the philosophy of community policing to enable police officers and community partners jointly prioritize and tackle public safety issues that are most important to the community.

7. Nigeria being a democratic state, Community Policing is also founded on the democratic principle that the police are entrusted by their fellow citizens to protect their fundamental rights to liberty, equality and justice under the law. To fulfill this privileged role, the police must be a part of the communities they serve. Moreover, this positive police-community relationship, based on mutual trust and respect, encourages community members to accept their own share of responsibility for the overall quality of life in their neighbourhood to enhance national security.

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