Building Bridges: The Relevance of Mass Media in Community Policing: Study of Kano Metropolis

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A b s t r a c t

The study examines the relevance of mass media in community policing. Survey method was adopted. The population of the study consists of all the people in Kano metropolis. The study employed simple random sampling technique. A total of 240 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents but only 232 were retrieved and used for the study. The instruments used in collecting data were questionnaires. From the findings of this study, it was discovered that majority of respondents are aware of the existence of police offices. In addition, it was discovered that through the mass media, majority of the respondents have positive perception of the police force, findings showed that the media are doing a lot as far as community relations and policing is concerned. On these bases, the study comes with following recommendation: In order to clear all misconceptions of the entire police force, the mass media need to further improve in its awareness creation. More awareness campaign should be carried out in relation to community relation. And, the rate at which they disseminate information should be improved upon. Based on the findings of this study, only few people are not aware of the existence of police activities and don't receive messages from it. As such, more efforts should be geared towards ensuring that the entire community is kept abreast of such relevant matters that concern them which will go a long way in changing their negative perception of the entire police force. Media should listen at random from different communities to talk about police activities and their relevant to the community. Lastly, all the activities of police personnel assigned the duty of community policing should be carefully monitored and evaluated in relation to the established guidelines.

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Background to the Study

Mass media are tools for communication which have unique responsibility to keep members of the society informed, educated, and entertained. It is through the mass media the society gets to know what is happening within and around the country. Aondover, and Yau (2018), The influence of the media, particularly broadcast media, continues to grow with time. This demonstrated by the increasing number of media outlets such as radio stations. Because of the influence it has, the media can play a significant role in fostering peace. For instance, media events can be used in times of conflict to build confidence, facilitate negotiations or break diplomatic deadlocks. In any society, youths are the primary consumers of media services, thus media events targeted at them such as music concerts or radio programmes can facilitate community policing.

The media also has significant initiative as a gatekeeper which sets the agenda for public discourse, filters the issues which promote peace in any given society. During war, crises or violence, broadcast media plays an important role in promoting peace by organizing panel discussions to curb the violence. Broadcast media also provides information about the possibilities of terrorist attacks and precaution and thus create awareness about these kinds of attacks.

Broadcasting news by using community radios can help reach people in different areas even with different languages more easily. The close relation between the media and the community policing is focused much more closely in radio and TV broadcasting.

Mass media alert the public of the changes that takes place around them. Television conveys an impact of immediacy in its reporting and just like surveillance cameras, viewers feel what they see is happening at the moment (Asemah, 2011). Mass media helped in promoting peace, it can also act as a gatekeeper who sets agendas, filters issues and tries to maintain a balance of views. Broadcast media like to portray themselves as "balanced and fair" even when they privately seek to promote a particular ideological set of ideas and limit the public's exposure to a wide array of information. For instance, an American Television Show "Nightline" regularly invites two or more people from different sides of a public policy issue to be on the show and dialogue with each other. The host makes a point of trying to find common ground between the two sides.

Mass media can prompt positive relationships between groups particularly people and the police. Mass media play the role of being a bridge between government and the people (Asemah, 2011). It plays the role of intermediary between the governors and the governed. By so doing, the media ensures transparency in governance, recognition of public opinion in the policy formulation and offer citizens an opportunity to discuss policies and issues without fear of intimidation. On the other hand, community policing is a philosophy of full service personalized policing, where the same officer patrols and works in the same area on a permanent basis from a decentralized place, working in a proactive partnership with citizens to identify and solve problems (Bertus 1996).

The central idea behind community policing is for the police to build relationships with the community through interactions with local agencies and members of the public, creating partnership and strategies for reducing crime and disorder (Bertus, 1996; Brown and Wucoff 1987; Gold 1990; Ankonu 1999; Bobsky 1994; Burden 1994). Community policing in most cases targets low level crime and disorder, in actual sense, this can reduce more crime (Braga, 2001). Another scholar explain community policing as related to problem oriented policing and intelligence led policing, and also contrasts with reactive policing strategies which were predominant in the late 20th Century.

The overall assessment of community policing is positive due to the fact that both the police officers and community members attest to its effectiveness in reducing crime and raising the sense of security in every community (William George 2017, Karpiak, 2014). Community policing have almost started in the global domain. The term only gained purchase in the late 20th Century and then only as a response to a preceding philosophy of police organization. In the early 20th century, the rise of automobiles, telecommunications transformed how the police operated (Kelling 2002).

Police forces moved to using a reactive strategy versus a proactive approach, focusing on answering emergency calls as quickly as possible and relaying almost on motor vehicle patrols with intension to prevent crime (Gau, Wilson and George, 2018). Some police forces in the Chicano police department transferred officers between different neighborhoods which served as a measure to prevent corruption (Skogan 2000, Herbert 2006). These helped to reduce foot patrols. They also changes significantly altered the nature of police presence in many neighborhoods. Similarly, a study by the US based police foundation in 1981 suggested that this had caused the police to become isolated from their community (Chriss 2016).

In response to some of the above problems many police departments in the United States began experimenting with what would become known as community policing (Chriss 2016). Research by Michigan Criminal Justice academics and practitioners started being published as early as the 1980s. As a Professor of Criminal Justice, Bob Trajanowcz in the late 1990s influenced many future law enforcement leaders on how to implement elements of community policing.

One experiment in Flint Michigan, involved foot patrol officers is assigned to a specific geographic area to help reduce crime in hotspots. Community oriented policing was promoted by the Clinton Administration. In 1994, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act established the office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) within the Justice Department and provided funding to promote community policing (Codner, 2010, Zedner 2005).

The main idea behind community policing in any society or Country is to:
1. Encourage the community to help prevent crime by providing advice, giving talks at schools, encouraging neighborhood watch groups and a variety of other techniques.

2. Increased used of foot or cycle patrols.
3. Increased officer accountability to the communities they are supposed to serve.
4. Creating team of officers to carry out community policing in designated neighborhoods.
5. Clear communication between the police and the communities about their objectives and strategies.
6. Partnerships with other organizations such as government agencies, community members, non-profit service providers, private businesses and the media.
7. Decentralizing the Police authority and allowing more discretion amongst the lower ranking officers and more initiative expected from them.

Statement of the Problem
This study is set to focus on how the mass media can bridge the gap between community members, and the Police Officer so as to have a crime-free environment of some sort. The mass media can therefore be of help to the police in ensuring truth and accuracy in their communication of information to the community members whom they render their services which will in turn lead to smooth-running of the community by both parties. Therefore, the study takes a step further to examine the role and impact of mass media on the public they are protecting against criminality in order to ensure order, stability and understanding between the police and their publics with specific reference to Kano metropolis.

Objectives of the Study
i. To ascertain people's perception of the police force
ii. To find out the communication channels utilized by police officers for disseminating information to the community
iii. To find out if the people are satisfied with the rate of information disseminated by the Police officers through the mass media.

Research Questions
i. What is the perception of the people about police force?
ii. What are the communications channels utilize by police office for disseminating information to the community?
iii. Are the people satisfied with the rate of information disseminated by Police officers through the mass media?

Review of Related Literature
Mass media has influence on the members of community towards policing, which means that, despite the spread of positive media messages, the reputation of law enforcement rests largely in the media's influence on the majority community. As long as the mass media holds the power to impose a positive police image on the majority.

According to Weiss (2005) the mass media are at force that police organization must contend with in order to manufacture a legitimate reputation. On the other hand, the

police organization must strategically control their external environment in order to maintain organizational legitimacy and one way to accomplish this goal effectively is by exploiting their relationship with the mass media.

Mass media are also an important element in every society because they present the means of public control over institutions and individuals with power (for example, government institutions and functionaries, police organizations and politicians) by doing this; they represent the fourth branch of government. Chermark and Weiss 2005:503 argued that news organization cannot afford to be perceived as simply a propaganda tool that government agencies use to manipulate public opinion with the help of the media the public can be made aware of illegitimate actions. This is important especially in the case of exerting control over those institutions.

Based on the theory of media socialization, lessons about reality are taught and learned and media can influence on that (McQuail 1994:361). The agenda setting model, presented by McCombs and Shaw (in McQuail, 1993:104) presumes that the mass media have an effect on public opinion simply by paying attention to some issues and neglecting others. Asemah (2011) concluded that the media direct public opinion; they expose certain issues to people which will subsequently shape their opinion. The connection between the media and the public also works in reverse because in many cases the media create their agenda in accordance with public opinion. These characteristics are also typical for information about crime and police activities. Most people find out about the majority of crime events and police activities from the media.

According to US Census Bureau Survey from 2011, the L.A. Country is not only the most populous Country in the Country, it is also a minority Country, meaning that the total population of white non-Hispanic residents (US Census, 2003) out of the subjects interviewed, those with only informal police contact (primarily whites) had high approval of police performance and officer demeanor where as those with formal police contact primarily non whites had low approval of them. Additionally, community members who have only had informal contact with the police are typically more reliant on the news and other forms of media when it comes to their perception of law enforcement, and because of their heavy reliance on the media, their perception of law enforcement is much more positive and distorted than that of minorities (Aschcroft, 2003). The media can present information to a much bigger audience than any other community channel, the number of people that come into contact with the news.

Folarin (2000), add that the primary function of privately owned newspapers and television stations is to make profit. Other possible roles, such as informing the public, representing the interest of the public, or acting as a government watchdog are of secondary importance in a privately owned media arena.

Theoretical Frame Work

Agenda setting theory was employed by McCombs (1977) as the power of the media to set a nation's agenda and to focus public attention on few key public issues is based on immense and well documented influence (McQuail, 2005). People within every community do not only restrict to receive factual information about public affairs from the media but also learn the importance of the topic. The theory put more emphasis on the ability of the media to structure issues, especially in features, editorials, documentary, news as well as current affairs through which public attention is well focused on a very limited set of issues, while ignoring other media set agenda and influence people. Therefore, mass media can be on immense and well documented influence on community members toward policing.

Methodology

The research employed survey research method as Wimmer and Dominick (2003) suggested that survey deals with people, their perception, knowledge, understanding as well as opinion about condition on a particular phenomenon. The paper used descriptive survey method. A descriptive survey method attempts to described or document current conditions or attitudes. Survey research method has several advantages. They can be used to investigate problems in realistic settings. Secondly, the cost of survey is reasonable when one consider the amount of information gathered. Thirdly, large amount of data can be collected with relative ease from variety of people.

The population of the study consisted of the entire residents of Kano metropolis. Although Kano state is a very big state with 44 local government areas with land mass of 20,131 km. Kano metropolis covers eight local government areas which are largely the economic hub of the state. It includes: Kano Municipal, Fagge, Dala, Gwale, Tarauni, Nassarawa, Ungogo and Kumbotso. Purposive sampling was used in which 30 people from the above mentioned Local governments were purposively selected. Questionnaires was used as an instrument of data collection Hence, total of (240) questionnaires were distributed out of which 232 were retrieved and used
Demographic data of respondents'

Table 1: Gender of the respondents

Sex	No. of respondents	Percentage
Male	171	73.7%
Female	61	26.3
Total	232	100%

Source: Field report 2018

The data in table 1 shows that 171 of the respondents represented by (73.7%) were male while 61represented by (26.3%) were female. There are more males in the sample than females.

Table 2: Age of the respondents

Age	No. of respondents	Percentage
15 – 24	70	30.2%
25 – 34	82	35.3%
35 – 44	62	26.7%
45 – 54	15	6.5%
55 and above	3	1.3 %
Total	232	100%

Source: Field report 2018

According to the table above, 70 of the respondents were within the age of 15 – 24 years, represented by (30.2%) of the respondents. 82 respondents were within the age of 25 – 34 represented by (35.3%) of the respondents. 62 were within 35 – 44 years, represented (by 26.7%). 5 of the respondents represented (6.5%) were within 45 – 54 years while 3 of the respondents were within the age of 55 and above represented by (1.3%).

Table 3: Occupation of the respondents

Variables	No of respondent	Percentage
Civil servant	65	28.0%
Self employed	42	18.1%
Student	64	27.6%
Private sector worker	49	21.1%
Farmer	12	5.2%
Total	232	100%

Source: Field report 2018

The above table shows that 65 respondents represented by (28.0%) are civil servants. 42 of the respondents (18.1%) are self-employed. 64 (27.6%) of the respondents are students. 49 (21.1%) of the respondents are private sector workers while 12 (5.2%) of the respondents are farmers.

Table 4: Respondents views on the relevance of police in their area

Variables	No of respondent	Percentage
Yes	217	93.5%
No	15	6.5%
Total	232	100%

Source: Field report 2018

The table above shows that 217 of the respondents represented by (93.5%) understand the relevance of police in their areas while 15 of the respondents represented by (6.5%) did not understand the relevance of police in their areas.

Table 5: Respondents perception of the police force before any messages from mass media

Variables	No of respondent	Percentage
Negative	107	46.1%
Positive	90	38.8%
Neutral	35	15.1%
Total	232	100%

Source: Field report 2018

Table 5 shows respondents perception of the police force before any messages from mass media 107 of the respondents represented (46.1%) have negative perception before media messages. 90 of the respondents represented by (38.8%) have positive perception before media messages. While 35 of the respondents represented by (15.1%) are neutral. This implies that majority of respondents have negative perception about the police before media messages about community policing.

Table 6: If negative, what is your reason?

Variables	No of respondent	Percentage
Poor community relation	108	46.6%
Corruption	114	49.1%
Poor performance in the service	10	4.3%
Total	232	100%

Source: Field report 2018

Table 6: shows the reasons for their negative perception of police. 108 of the respondents represented by (46.6%) attribute their negative perception to poor community relation. 114 of the respondents represented (49.1%) attributed their reasons to corruption, while 10 of the respondents represented by (4.3%) said their negative perception was due to poor performance of the police.

Table 7: If positive, what is your reason?

Variables	No of respondent	Percentage
Good community relations	67	28.9%
Corruption free	41	17.7%
Effective performance by the police	124	53.4%
Total	232	100%

Source: Field report 2018

Table 7 shows that 68 of the respondents represented by (28.9%) attributed their reasons to good community relations. 41 of the respondents represented by (17.7%) attributed their reasons to corruption free, while 124 of the respondents represented by (53.4) attributed their reasons to effective performance by the police force.

Table 8: respondents' views on whether they receive police information from the media

Variables	No of respondent	Percentage
Yes	204	87.9%
No	28	12.1%
Total	232	100%

Table 8 shows that 204 of the respondents represented by (87.9%) received police information from the media, while 28 of the respondents represented by (12.1%) said no.

Table 9: If yes, through what medium?

Age	No of respondent	Percentage
Radio	90	38.8%
Television	34	14.7%
Social media	49	21.1%
All of the above	59	25.4%
Total	232	100%

Source: Field report 2018

Table 9 shows that of all the 232 respondents 90 represented by (38.8%) selected radio. 34 of the respondents represented by (14.7%) selected television. 49 of the respondents represented by (31.1%) selected social media while 59 of the respondents represented by (25.4%) selected all of the above.

Table 10: Respondents views on how they feel about the media messages in relation to community policing?

Variables	No of respondent	Percentage
Relevant	180	77.6%
Irrelevant	15	6.5%
Neutral	37	15.9%
Total	232	100%

Source: Field report 2018

Table 10 shows that 180 of the respondents represented by (77.6%) feel that the messages are relevant, while 15 of the respondents represented by (6.5%) said the messages are irrelevant, only 37 of the respondents are neutral.

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that majority of respondents are aware of the existence of police officers and their duties in their areas these can be seen in table 4. As regard to the research question two on what communication channels the police most often send their information to the community, the answer to this research question was treated in table 10, the data showed that television, radio and social media are utilize by police officers with people more patronizing to radio because of its accessibility.

As regard to research question 3 on whether the residents of Kano metropolitan area of Kano State are satisfied with the rate of information disseminated by mass media, this answer was treated in table 10 as majority of respondents represented by (77.6%) feel that the messages they received as regard to community policing are relevant. Findings also revealed that respondents after receiving different messages from the media, now perceived the police activities positively.

Findings are in relation to the theory adopted because of the ability of the media to structure issues. It set agenda in features, editorials, documentary, news as well as current affairs through which public attention is well focused on a very limited set of issue and influence people. Mass media is important in community policing.

Conclusion

From the findings of this paper, it can conclude that the media have an important role in contemporary society. They influence our perception of the world around us. If we want to be informed about the different events the only possible way is to get some kind of information from the media. They do more than merely transmit messages from the original source to the receiver. They are constructors of social reality. Mass media really build bridges between the police and community and it has an important influence upon both fear of crime and public trust in the police organization. If the police want to be effective in their work they have to have a positive reputation in the eyes of the public. Public estimation of the police effectiveness therefore depends on media reports about police activities.

Recommendations

Having critically observed the role of mass media in community policing and having found out the facts why few people still have that earlier misconception about the police force, it is therefore important to recommend these:

1. In order to clear all misconceptions of the entire police force, the mass media need to further improve in its awareness creation. More awareness campaign should be carried out in relation to community relation. And, the rate at which they disseminate information should be improved upon.

2. Based on the findings of this study, only few people are not aware of the existence of police activities and don't receive messages from it. As such, more efforts should be geared towards ensuring that the entire community is kept abreast of such relevant matters that concern them which will go a long way in changing their negative perception of the entire police force.

3. Media should listen at random from different communities to talk about police activities and their relevant to the community.

4. Lastly, all the activities of police personnel assigned the duty of community policing should be carefully monitored and evaluated in relation to the established guidelines. Doing this will bring the best out of them. And also, the police should create a forum for entertaining complaints from the public against police personnel.

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