

Community Policing in South-West Nigeria: Finding a Nexus between the Police and the People

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Abstract

The joint efforts of the police and the communities in south-west Nigeria to tackle the alarming rates of crime in various societies has over the year been adopted as a strategic way of curbing crime in Nigeria. This paper examines the divergent views of community policing in south-west Nigeria. The paper is empirical in nature though related textbooks, journals, and other publication were consulted. The perception of the police and the community remain the fact that the police force alone given their observable inadequacies cannot successfully tackle crimes in the society without adequate supports of the members of the community.

Keywords: Community, Policing, Crime, Crime prevention and control, Fraud and technology

Introduction

Community policing in Nigeria is a security strategy being adopted as an alternative or supplementary effort from the immediate community to buttress the efforts of police force in combating crime and criminal activities. As a matter of fact the police in Nigeria cannot sustain or maintain crime free communities without voluntary local efforts to complement theirs. It is also believed that the people residing in a particular community can easily identify those people perpetrating evils in their immediate milieu and will be easy for them in tracking them down, They have adequate knowledge of geographical settings of their areas.

Community policing in Nigeria takes different forms ranging from community development association (CDA). Peace and security committee, landlords and tenants security harmony in which certain able bodied men in the community are grouped to watch over the community rotationally, civilian joint task force (in the northern region), Vigilante service group etc.

Community policing in Nigeria has aided the Nigeria police and other security agencies in crime prevention in each areas as a result of the cordial relationship between the community people on security and security agencies which has aided the security agencies to cut down evil perpetrators/criminals in various societies. In spite of these conscious efforts it is still noticed that there is no harmonious working relationship between the police and the communities in the south west Nigeria. The thrust of this paper, however, is to find this missing link between the people and the police in a bid to achieve a crime free society

Statement of the Problem

There is no cooperative effort between the community people and the police in curtailing crime in south-west Nigeria and there are certain challenges facing effective community policing in Nigeria such as attitude, facilities, lack of proper training of officers, poor infrastructural facilities, logistics, godfatherism among others. This paper examines the various strategies to tackle these problems and basically considers the perceptions of the police on community policing and that of the community members as a way of finding the missing link between the people and the police.

Research Questions

- To what extent is the awareness of the existence of community policing to citizens of south-west Nigeria.
- To what extent does community policing help in preventing crimes in south-west Nigeria
- To what extent do people and police support community policing in south-west Nigeria
- What are the Challenges/problems of effective community policing in south-west Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

- To determine the extent of the people awareness of community policing in south west Nigeria.
- To determine how community policing has helped to reduce crime in south west Nigeria.
- To identify challenges facing effective community policing in south west Nigeria.
- To proffer possible solutions to the identified problems of community policing in south west Nigeria.

Conceptual Definitions

Community Police is a kind of cooperation between the community people and police in checking crimes and ensuring the general security of citizens (Omoruyi, 2001).

Ikuteyijo (2009) community policing entails community partnership in creating safe and secure environment for all. It is an effort whereby the people take active part in their own affairs.

Community policing is a strategy that centers on the involvement of citizens in the design, implementation and evaluation of public safety activities (criminal justice municipal Sept. 2014)

Community policing is a policy and a strategy aimed at achieving more effective and efficient crime control, reduced fear of crime, improved quality life, improved police services and police legitimacy, through a proactive reliance on community resources that seek to change crime causing conditions (Robert R. Friedman, 1992)

Community involvement is also frequently justified by pointing to the growing customer orientation of public service agencies, and to the political and social forces lying behind it. It is argued that by opening themselves to citizen input the police will become more knowledgeable about, and responsive to, the varying concerns of different communities. One strand of this argument is that police have "over-professionalized" themselves and their mission, and as a result systematically overlook many pressing community concerns because they lie outside of their narrowly defined mandate (Skogan, 1990). These concerns (which can range from public drinking to building abandonment) frequently have deleterious consequences for the communities involved, expanding the scope of the police mandate by making them more "market driven" helps the state be more effective at its most fundamental task, maintaining order.

Community policing is, in essence, collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problems. With the police no longer the sole guardians of law and order, all members of the community become active allies in the effort to enhance the safety and quality of neighborhoods.

The best panacea to the prevalent problems of kidnapping, abduction, robbery and stealing and even insurgency is community policing, the people in each localities can easily identify evil perpetrators in their localities as the case with Civilian Joint Task Force and the activities of Vigilante Service Group(VSG) in the North Eastern part of Nigeria in which they serve as local guide to the security operatives in apprehending the members of the notorious terrorist group (Boko Haram) in the country.

Theories of Community Policing

There are many existing theories being used to explain the concept of community policing. Some of them are briefly stated below

The Broken Windows Theory (BWT): This theory suggests that the slippery slope to lawlessness begins simply when a community starts tolerating relatively minor violations of public order- vandalism of abandoned structures, taking illicit drugs, loitering, street fighting etc. factually conscious and deliberate efforts are needed to crack down on these menace which in eventuality prevents bigger crimes such as burglary and assault, robbery, assassination etc. (Brian, 2012)

The theory emphasizes that the police and the criminal justice system are not enough to carry the heavy burden of security of lives and properties of the citizens. Hence, the need to involve the community (skolnick and Bayley, 1988)

Social Resource Theory: Social resource theory sees state police/community police as a social resource. It looks at the nature of crime and functions of the police from the people perspective and not state's perspective. It further postulates that crime as a problem to individual can best be dealt with by providing them with resources via the police and other quarters. Police is seen as a social resource person that individuals can turn to temporarily relief. Therefore community must collaborate with them. (Kam, 2009)

The Gap Theory: This emphasizes the gap between the people (public) and the police. Perhaps the gap arise as the way people are treated by the police. Based on this, people withdraw their cooperation and never eager to help the police. The theory equally emphasizes the "90 – 10 principle" i.e. in every community 90% of the people are believed to be honest, hardworking, law abiding etc. while 10% are crooks, lazy, law breakers, etc. Unfortunately, the police usually have contact or relationship with these crooks. Therefore the police see the entire community as bad thereby creating the gap. However, community policing training will therefore promote trust and confidence between the people and police (George, 2006)

Contingency theory: Contingency theory places emphasize on the fact that different environments place different requirement on any society/organizations. Environments are marked by uncertainty and rapid change. Different environments present different demand both positive and negative than relatively stable environment.

The theory suggests that design decisions depend on environment conditions which means that societies/communities will need to match their internal arrangements including security to the demands of their environment in order to achieve the best adaptation- (Lawrence and Jay, 1967)

However, the ultimate goal of community policing is not to arrest offenders but to reduce crime and sexual disorder problem and enhance trust in policing, though most efforts to reduce crime and social disorder will involve apprehending for arresting offenders but it should not be confused with the ultimate public safety and public sense of security.

Forms of Community Policing

- Police community relationship committee (PCRC)
- Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN)
- Civilian Joint Task force
- Community Development Association (CDA)

Problems of Community Policing in South-West Nigeria

Attitude: The opinion of the people about the police is one of the major threats to community policing in south west Nigeria, the “*wetin u bring*” attitude of the police has caused lacuna between the stake holders involved in community policing.

Facilities/equipment: Aside the bad attitude of police to public, there are indications that the Police lack sophisticated and modern equipment’s like ICT, armory to combat crimes as there are cases where police claimed that arm Robbers possessed sophisticated weapons than they and thereby led to police running/escape from crime scenes.

Lack of Proper training: The six months training avail to police cadet is relatively not enough to be trained as Police as Plato (in Platonian state) believed police should be exposed to gymnastic and music to enables them know appropriate pattern of behavior for various situations, on the contrary, there have been cases of Police brutality, accidental discharge, shooting of commuters who refuse to pay #20 bribe, all these resulted from inadequate training of the police officers in Nigeria.

Infrastructural Problem: In situations where the police ready to move to crime scene, there are problem of infrastructural deficiency like bad roads, bad layout, poor house numbering, bad road networks among others.

God-fatherism : God-fatherism is the funding and abetting of vices and shielding ‘connected’ criminals from justice by government agents and highly placed officials entrusted with the power and authority to investigate and prosecute such vices. Many highly placed public officers in Nigeria are known to pervert the course of justice by the virtue of their closeness to the seat of power, often, police get sucked in, and this account for their complicity in several unresolved crimes across the country.

Application or Justification of broken window Theory

A decaying community or neighborhood tends to attract greater crimes and if nobody does anything to prevent such decay and show that people are conscious of their environment, it will gradually tend to metamorphose into capital criminal act.

An area populated by young unemployed youths with unregulated behavior tend to have a Broken Window Theory principle as those youths, may start from playing football, cards, drinking and smoking hard drug in the productive hours of the day which may tend toward various activities ranging from gambling to street fighting, raping etc. which if not curtailed may lead to other bigger crimes. In area experiencing such, the activities of (community policing) is sine qua non to avert a worst scenario.

Slum areas in various localities in the south west Nigeria emphasizes this theory that these areas (slum) inhabited series of seemingly destitute individuals, who stay/reside in the areas because of the cheap accommodation, and the living standard of the area can suit their livelihood. Slums are known for various social ills such as prostitution, drug, gambling, street fighting and habitat for rugged (hooligans) individuals etc. thus, Broken Window Theory is much applicable in such areas which require the amalgam of police and community effort to ensure perpetual peace and orderliness.

Unnecessary mob gathering in the street, campus and major metropolitan areas may kindle social unrest, if not checked, reported by other occupants in that area. This justifies why some localities or institutions frown at unnecessary gathering of students which may at first be an avenue for bad students to influence the seemingly good ones and try to either lure them (the good ones) into bad group/cultist. Hence, the utility of Broken Window Theory need to be exhumed to explain why pandemonium upheaval and social unrest on campus and

the host community(s) are ignited and the need for quick action.

Broken Window Theory is also applicable in every homes, if a child, perhaps at juvenile stage which tends to believe that he is grown and needs freedom, child at this stage tends to display some characters like arrogance, independency, waywardness and demanding for some attention and if such child is not check and the parent/guarding prevaricate, his characters may tend to make the child grow wild, indiscipline and thereafter constitute a social problem. Thus, the parent/guardian needs to take frantic efforts against such a child at juvenile.

The golden question is, who is to correct deviant behavior in a society where indiscipline has become the order of the day? Where both old and young people see certain criminal activities as part of their lives?

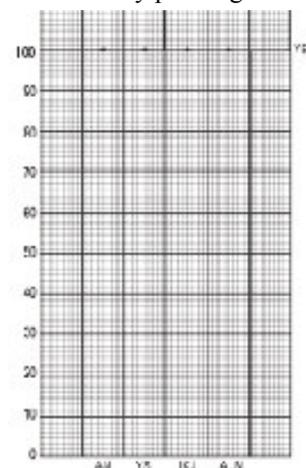
Data Analysis and Interpretations

Table and Figure 1

Are you aware of Community policing?

This question is to seek the knowledge of the respondents about the existence of community policing.

| Local Government | Yes | % | No | % | Total |
|------------------|------|-----|----|---|-------|
| Abeokuta North | 250 | 100 | - | 0 | 250 |
| Yewa South | 250 | 100 | - | 0 | 250 |
| Ikeja | 250 | 100 | - | 0 | 250 |
| Alimosho | 250 | 100 | - | 0 | 250 |
| TOTAL | 1000 | | | | 1000 |



Field Survey, 2016

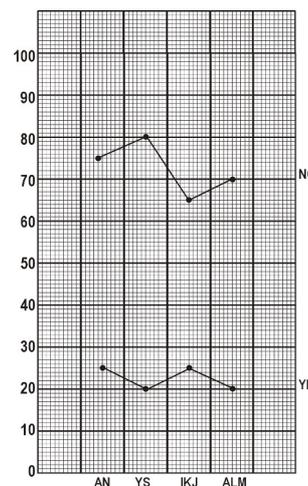
Analysis: All the respondents claimed that they are aware of the existence of Community Policing

Table and figure 2

Do you feel the police is well equipped to fight crimes?

The question is to determine the extent of availability of equipment available to the Nigerian Police to tackle crime in south-west Nigeria.

| Local Government | Yes | % | No | % | Total |
|------------------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|
| Abeokuta North | 63 | 25.2 | 187 | 74.8 | 250 |
| Yewa South | 50 | 20 | 200 | 80 | 250 |
| Ikeja | 87 | 34.8 | 163 | 65.2 | 250 |
| Alimosho | 75 | 30 | 175 | 70 | 250 |
| TOTAL | 275 | | 725 | | 1000 |



Field survey, 2016

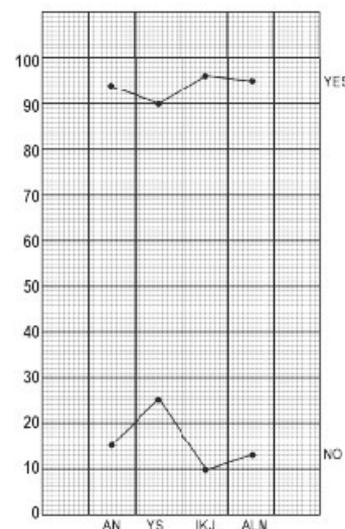
Analysis: 72.5% of the respondents believed the police did not have enough equipment to fight crime in south west Nigeria, though, 27.5% believed the police is well equipped. Base on this, it will be agreed that the police is not well equipped to fight crime effectively in the South West Nigeria.

Table and Figure 3

Do you think community policing help in reducing crime?

This question is to determine the effectiveness of community policing in tackling crimes in south-west Nigeria.

| Local Government | Yes | % | No | % | Total |
|------------------|-----|------|----|-----|-------|
| Abeokuta North | 235 | 94 | 15 | 6 | 250 |
| Yewa South | 225 | 90 | 25 | 10 | 250 |
| Ikeja | 240 | 96 | 10 | 4 | 250 |
| Alimosho | 237 | 94.8 | 13 | 5.2 | 250 |
| TOTAL | 937 | | 63 | | 1000 |



Field survey, 2016

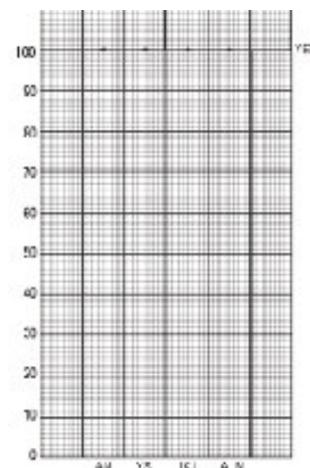
Analysis: 93.75% agreed that community policing help in reducing crime in the south west Nigeria, but 6.25% of the respondents disagreed. The decision of the people that say Community policing help in reducing crime will be adopted

Table and Figure 4

Do you think there is nexus between people and the police in community policing?

This question is to determine whether there is a cooperative between actors involved in Community Policing

| Local Government | Yes | % | No | % | Total |
|------------------|------|-----|----|---|-------|
| Abeokuta North | 250 | 100 | - | 0 | 250 |
| Yewa South | 250 | 100 | - | 0 | 250 |
| Ikeja | 250 | 100 | - | 0 | 250 |
| Alimosho | 250 | 100 | - | 0 | 250 |
| TOTAL | 1000 | | | | 1000 |



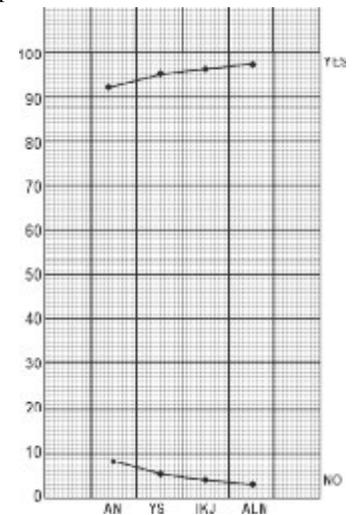
Field survey, 2016

Analysis: 100% of the respondent agreed that there is nexus between the police and the community people.

Table and Figure 5

Do you think there is corruption in Nigeria police force that affect police ability to prevent crime?

| Local Government | Yes | % | No | % | Total |
|------------------|------------|------|-----------|-----|-------------|
| Abeokuta North | 230 | 92 | 20 | 8 | 250 |
| Yewa South | 237 | 94.8 | 13 | 5.2 | 250 |
| Ikeja | 240 | 96 | 10 | 4 | 250 |
| Alimosho | 242 | 96.8 | 8 | 3.2 | 250 |
| TOTAL | 199 | | 51 | | 1000 |



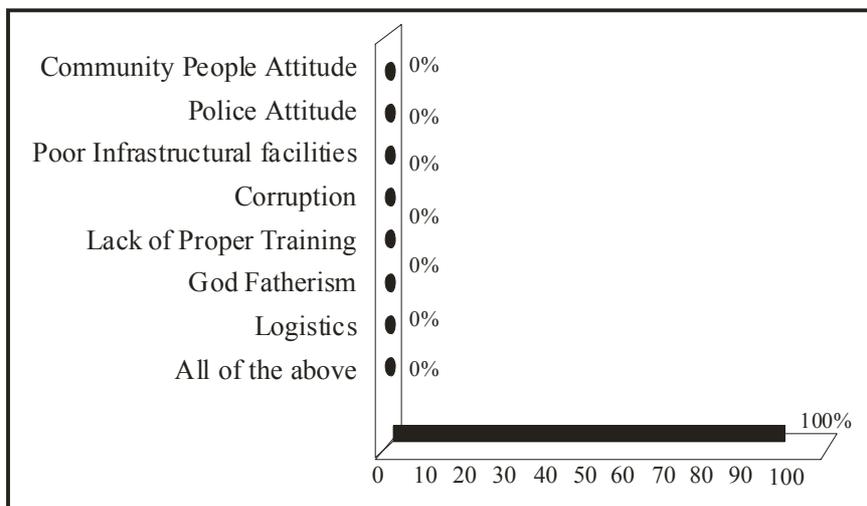
Field survey, 2016

Analysis: 94.25% of the respondents agreed that there is corruption which affects the ability of the police to fight crime effectively in South-West Nigeria, while 5.75% disagreed. So, the decision of the majority will be adopted. It is now believed that there is corruption in Nigeria police which in turn affect the efficiency of the Nigerian Police in South-West Nigeria.

Figure 6

What are impediments to effective Community policing in south-west Nigeria ?

This question is to assert the respondents opinions on the challenges to effective community policing in south-west.

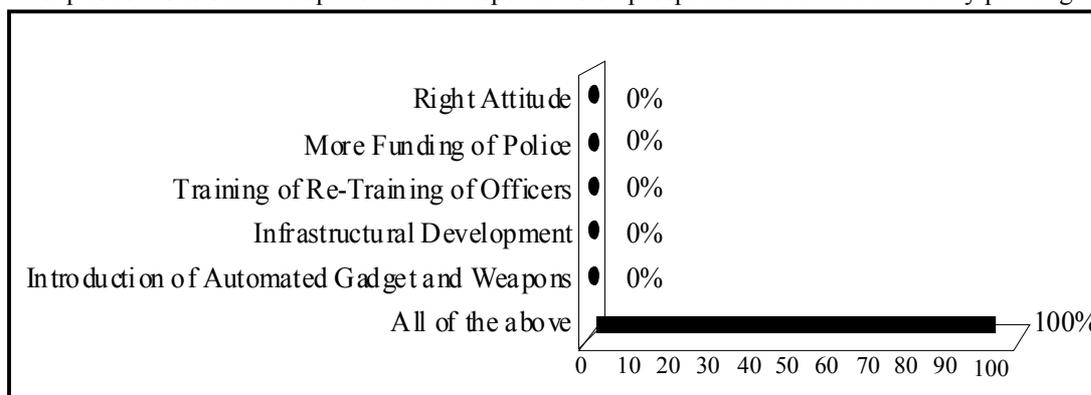


Analysis: all the listed are identified as the major challenges to effective community policing in south west

Figure 7

What are the means to enhance effective community policing in South-west Nigeria ?

This question is to seek the opinion of the respondents on prospect of effective community policing in Nigeria.



Analysis: all the listed are identified by the respondents as a means of enhancing effective community policing in south west Nigeria.

Conclusion

Community policing in South-west Nigeria is not in conformity with the idea of true community policing as there is non-existence of collaborative efforts between the police and the community people, there is no right attitude from both the police and the community people, the police lack automated and sophisticated weapons to tackle crime effectively in the south-west region in Nigeria, the well-to-do in the community also aid and abet criminals thereby, preventing the criminals from facing the wrath of the Law when committed crime.

Recommendations

Based on the before-mentioned challenges, the following are suggested as major panacea for effective community policing in south-west Nigeria.

- Distress call Number should be made known to all citizens.
- Proper and adequate information should be made available to the police
- Police should be more Friendly
- More fund should be allocated to police
- Attitudinal change
- Infrastructural development
- Introduction of automated gadget and weapons

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