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Role of Gender in Determining Women's Participation in Community Policing; The Nigerian Experience

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Abstract

The desire for a more peaceful society and the need to involve the people in crime prevention has led to the adoption of community policing as a policing strategy in Nigeria. Community policing emerged due to the inadequacy of the police in preventing crime and maintaining order in the society. This people-oriented partnership intends to make the people part of policing within the community. However, just like many other aspects of human life, security issues are often regarded as a "man's" job and therefore the contributions of women are neglected. Though women occupy a vital position in the family, they are still treated as part of property to be protected by men and therefore are left out of the synergy between the police and the public in crime prevention through community policing in Nigeria. This paper utilized Talcott Parsons Structural Functionalism and George J. Thompson's Gap Theory to explain the challenges of women participation in community policing operations and the need to include them in crime prevention and security operations in Nigeria. The study methodology comprised a combination of both quantitative and qualitative. Questionnaire and in-depth interview constituted the instruments of data

collections, while simple percentage and manual content analysis were utilized for analysis. The study showed that women were neglected in all community policing operations activities, from the planning to the execution stages within the study area.

Introduction

Community policing is a modern policing strategy which allows the police to proactively act beyond mere crime fighting but to partner with community members in setting the security priorities and fashioning ways of resolving identified problems in the community. Just as the name implies, community policing involves members of the community in their overall protection and maintenance of law and order. Community policing, according to Jerome (1988), makes the police and the public, "co-producers of safety and public order than the police alone".

Community policing makes the society healthy by preventing crime and nipping on the bud crime causing situations in the community. This policing style justifies the old maxim which states that prevention is better than cure.

Gender as a social construct should not becloud the competence and capacities inherent in human beings regardless of their sex or biological make up (sex). Community-policing as a people-oriented policing strategy must give every segment of the community equal opportunity to participate and contribute in crime prevention and control in the society. There is a connection between gender diversity and organizational change in policing through community policing (Amie Schuck, 2017). Female police officers play a significant role in community policing strategy by relating with and understanding common security issues affecting women and children. According to Vanessa Garcia (2003), women are more humanistic in dealing with issues of women and children (social service) within the police as an organization. Vanessa Garcia, (2003), further posits that this social service or role has made women to be treated differently from men and equally limited women in the lower ranks of the police as an organization with attendant conflicts to the women involved Community policing should view women as a valuable resource needed in actualizing the aims and principles of community policing in the society. In the same vein, women in the community will provide vital information on the best way to secure them and reduce fear of crime among women in a community. Community policing gives women a voice in the way their security issues are managed by the police in the community.

Security is often said to be everybody's business and community policing deserves the partnership and contributions of every member of the community to succeed. Women as a vital component of the population in any community cannot be neglected or underrepresented in the oppressions of community policing in Nigeria. All the cultural and religious biases and barriers against

women must be removed for the community to benefit from the potentials and contributions of women in promoting justice and social order in the society.

Statement of problems

The increase in crime rates despite all the donations from the government, banks and other corporate organizations in Nigeria have necessitated the need to re-appraise the operational effectiveness of the traditional policing training strategy. The emphasis on law enforcement against service to the people has created a 'we' and 'them' feelings between the police and the people in Nigeria. So in looking for an alternative policing style, emphasis has now moved away from the militaristic police force, to a more human, preventive and people oriented policing as the way forward.

So, since the adoption of community policing strategy in Nigeria in 2004, women have continued to be ignored in the implementation of this people oriented policing style. Ironically, women constitute a greater percentage of victims of crime in Nigeria, yet they are not given a voice in the way their security challenges are managed through community policing strategy in Nigeria.

So in looking for an alternative policing, emphasis has now moved away from the militaristic police force, to a more humane, preventive and people oriented policing style as the way forward. Statistics has shown that there are more women than men in Nigeria, why then is this human resource not adequately tapped in to in security operations in the community? Women constitute major victims of crime as mothers, wives and sisters in the society, empowering and engaging them in community policing will reflect the conscience of the society both in theory and practice.

The general objective of this study is to access the operations of community policing as a pilot project in the Adatan Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State. The specific objectives are to:

(1) examine the level of public awareness of community policing in Adatan.
(2) investigate the level of women participation in the new policing strategy in Adatan.
(3) discover ways of re-orientating the public for a better community policing in Adatan.

This work will be restricted only in Adatan community. The police officers in Adatan Divisional police headquarters and the selected residents of Adatan constituted the study population. Other police officers in other Divisions will not be considered in this research. The members of the public outside the study area will not be included in this study.

Community policing appears to be increasingly popular around the Globe, so Nigeria cannot afford to lack behind in the current and contemporary issues in policing. This research aims at fostering a better public-police perception and cooperation so as to maintain law and order better in Adatan community. The research intends to restore public confidence, and trust in the police in Adatan community through gender balancing in operations. The contributions

of women as vital members of the community in the successive oppression of community policing will be recommended in Nigeria.

Review

Trends in policing

The quest for a peaceful society led to the metamorphosis of policing strategies to adapt to a fast changing world (Arisukwu, O. C., 2012). The attempt by the police to always remain relevant in the society by preventing crime and protecting life and property of the citizens led to the emergence of different trends in policing. David Weisburd and John E. Eck, (2004). Wesley G. Skogan and Tracey L. Meares (2004).

During the colonial rule, the police were used to enforce colonial rules which were anti-people in most cases. Tamumo (1970), argued that, "the primary purpose of the police during this time was to advance the economic and political agenda of the colonizers".

The police relied on the use of force to subjugate communities and suppress any resistance to colonial rule. Though the police have started recruiting women in Nigeria, their positions and duties are not yet prominent. Policing has evolved to become people-centred rather than state-centred in both vision and operations (Arisukwu, 2022; Arisukwu, 2012).

The essence of community policing

There has been a reappraisal of policing style as the society develops. These transformations also affect their operational strategy and public perception in the society (S.A. Asemota, 1993).

The limitations of the professional model of policing, has made many scholars and professionals over the past two decades to clamour for a change from this old-fashioned militaristic approach to a community-oriented policing (Thomas Feltes, 2002; George, L. K., 1988 and Mark, H.M. 1992).

Community policing apart from being a people-centred policing style equally helps to reduce the fear of crime in the street (Arisukwu *et al.*, 2020; Crowl, 2017). Police presence through street patrols helps to build public confidence on the police and promotes the feeling of safety in public (Doyle, Frogner, Andershed & Andershed, 2016). Involving of the members of the public in policing of their community increases a sense of belonging by the public and reduces us and them feeling between the police and the public, (Arisukwu *et al.*, 2022).

The police alone cannot on their own prevent and fight crime effectively without partnership and support from members of the community who constitute greater human social capital for effective policing (Pino & Wiatrowski, 2016). Community policing democratizes policing operations in terms of identifying security threat, mode of solving them without violating human rights of the suspects (Arisukwu *et al*., 2022; Bonner, 2020). Studies have shown that policing interest has moved away from results only but to how those results were achieved. The trust of the public is informed by how the police treat them and not on crime statistics alone (Meares, 2022).

Community policing

Community policing appears to be increasingly popular around the globe, yet there is no consensus on what actually constitute community policing. Thomas Feltes (2002) and Jerome *et al.* (1988). This lack of consensus should be expected because community policing makes it possible for the local community to partner with the police in determining their security needs and the means to proactively solve them. Simply put, community policing is a guiding policing strategy that takes cognizance of the security needs and priorities in the community and involves the members for the community in determining how to proactively prevent the identified problems together in the community.

So community policing should not be perceived as a single model or technical specification that can somehow be transplanted in to any policing environment regardless of cultural or socio-economic context. Community policing reflects the immediate security aspirations of the people need to work as partners for community policing to be effective. Lee Brown *et al.* (1988) posited tat community policing entails abating traditional practices of formal separatisms between the police and the public. That is "us" and "them". What will promote this mutual cooperation between police in crime prevention in their community (Lee Brown *et al.*, 1988; Cordner, 1988 and Meese, 1993). Coercive force to a people centered and service-oriented police (George L. Kelling, 1988).

There exists a link between the way the police treat members of the public in the street and the willingness of the public to support or partner with the police in crime prevention and control (Arisukwu *et al.*, 2022). It is equally pertinent to note that their exist a bias or interference on the way the police operate based on race and gender sentiments (Ritchie & Jones-Brown, 2017). So no matter how good community policing may be perceived to be, it is still subject abuse and misinterpreted by the police and the public respectfully (Dunn *et al.*, 2017).

Gender issues in policing

Gender and sex always come to the fore in most social interactions, perceptions and attitudes of people based on their gender in a society. At the family level, work place, sports, choice of career and in politics just like in policing, gender issues are manifest. According to Abiola John Asaleye, Lawal Adedoyin Isoha, Festus Asamu, Henry Inegbedion, Ogadimma Arisukwu & Olabisi Popoola (2018), women occupy the bottom of the ladder in terms of active participation in manufacturing and other economic sectors in Nigeria. Who does what and how in community-policing operations are most often influenced by gender and culture in a society. So from recruitment, training, posting and retention in the police are all influenced and affected by gender (Cordner, G. & Cordner, A., 2011; Carrier, J. 1988).

The relationship between gender and policing

The relationship between gender and policing can be likened to the relationship between theory and practice. It takes a caring police officer to effectively nip problems from the bud before the problems escalate and become serious security challenges in the community. Women by their biological make up and experiences seem to be more caring and understand how to manage families, including young and old better than men. If this trait is deployed in policing by women, the community will be safer and peace will be sustained. Women often constitute the major victims of crime in a society, yet they are equally underrepresented in policing the society. Marilyn Corsianos (2009), argued that through empowerment and involvement of women in policing, the gap between theory and practice of policing will be bridged. Women are often the main victims of domestic violence and police brutality (Lawrence, 2022; Arisukwu *et al.*, 2021).

Materials and methods

This study utilized survey research method to adequately cover the large research area and the study population. This survey method is complemented with qualitative research method by using in-depth interviews on some selected key community leaders police officers in Adatan. In addition to these, non-participant observation method was used by the researcher to observe the operations of community policing in Adatan Police State, Ogun State Nigeria.

Ogun State is one of the piloting states for community policing in the south western part of Nigeria. Abeokuta is the capital of Ogun State. It is made up of two local government areas, Abeokuta North and Abeokuta south local government areas.

The community members selected purposively and interviewed, and those who were administered questionnaires through random sampling method, and the police officers interviewed constituted the only study population in the community. The study population was made up of both the police and members of the public (both men and women).

The research combined both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The questionnaires were administered on the selected areas by the researchers and field assistants through a simple random sampling method. The questionnaires were collected from the respondents by hand by the research team. The in-depth interview were conducted on selected respondents in the language they understood English or Yoruba languages, and responses were transcribed by the researcher. The researcher's unobtrusive observation equally aided in data collection especially on the people's conduct, impression and attitudes towards the topic of study.

Questionnaires were used to collect the responses from the study population already selected purposively and randomly distributed in the area. The questionnaires were designed to capture the objectives and essence of the

study. The questionnaires were only administered on the community members randomly selected within the study area, and not on the police officers.

The police officers and selected key community leaders were interviewed. Two different in-depth-interview schedules were designed and used on the selected officers and community leaders respectfully. Just like the questionnaires, the in-depth-interview schedules captured and reflected both the objectives and essence of the study.

Since community policing is a relatively new field in policing, most people may not be used to this kind of study and so the researcher encountered some challenges in getting people to respond to the questionnaire and interview. Also the selected police officers and key community leaders took some time to actually get them to respond to the interview. Some respondents shield away also from responding to the questionnaire thinking that they may be implicated in any form.

However, these challenges were not enough to alter or change the validity and reliability of this research.

The collected questionnaires were transferred into a code sheet and sent for statistical analysis in the computer. Simple percentages and cross tabulations were used to interpret the results.

The in-depth-interview were transcribed according to various headings representing the key issues raised in the interview. Simple descriptive and narrative techniques were used to report the interviews. Also contents analyses of the interviews were done using the research objectives as a guide.

Results
Table 1 Shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents with the frequency and percentage of responses.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics distribution

	Frequency	**Percent**
SEX		
Male	228	61.6
Female	142	38.4
Total	**370**	**100.0**
AGE		
18-23	66	17.8
24-29	112	30.3
30-35	109	29.5
36-41	57	15.4
42 and above	25	6.8
No response	1	.3
Total	**370**	**100.0**
OCCUPATION		
Student	85	23.0
Trader	107	28.9

Farmer	33	8.9
Artisan	52	14.1
Civil servant	40	10.8
SEX	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Pensioner	21	5.7
Others	30	8.1
No response	2	.5
Total	**370**	**100.0**
MARITAL STATUS		
Married	180	48.6
Single	116	31.4
Separated	41	11.1
Others	32	8.6
No response	1	.3
Total	**370**	**100.0**

Table shows more males responded to the questionnaires than females. This showed the dominance of males as decision makers in the family in a patriarchal society like Adatan. Also security issues were perceived as male's issues in Adatan Nigeria. Males as family heads were more accessible and willing to talk about community policing than females in Adatan. Women are not allowed to take active part in security issues both at home and in the community. There was the need for both gender to be equally represented and adequately mobilized for community policing to thriving in Adatan. The role of mothers in the nurturing and socialization of the children in the family cannot be ignored. So females deserved to be educated about community policing in Adatan so as to facilitate the propagation of this policing strategy in the family.

On the other hand, though most of the women were skeptical about the police, some of them were still willing to partner with the police in community policing operations in Adatan. This view was confirmed by the community interviewee, who said that,

> "Adatan community belongs to everybody both young and old men and women. So efforts must be made to engage the women of Adatan in community policing operations it is not all the women that are lazy and weak, some of us are more responsible than men in the family".

The table equally showed that married respondents, constituted the highest number of the sampled population. This   showed the importance of the family units in the mobilization of support for the police in community policing operations in Adatan. The family exerted a kind of informal constraints and social control on its members which helped in the total maintenance of social order in the Adatan community. Family heads if orientated properly together

with their wives will facilitate the operation of community policing in Adatan, Nigeria.

Table 2: Distribution on community policing awareness

How long you have been in Adatan	Frequency	Percent
Less than 6 months	49	13.2
6 months – 1 year	70	18.9
1-2 years	127	34.3
3 years and above	134	33.5
Total	370	100.0
Ever heard of community policing		
Yes	210	56.8
No	124	33.5
Not sure	33	8.9
No responds	3	8.9
Total	**370**	**100.0**
Werther aware of community policing practice in the community		
Yes	128	34.6
No	188	50.8
Not sure	46	12.4
No responds	8	2.2
Total		
Werther respondents now observe more police presence in their area		
Yes	81	21.9
No	207	55.9
Not sure	79	21.4
No responds	3	.8
Total	**370**	**100.0**
Taken part in community policing operations		
Yes	110	29.7
No	225	60.8
Not sure	21	5.7
No responds	14	3.8
Total	370	100.0

The table 2 above shows that respondents who have stayed longer than a month in Adatan responded to the questionnaire more. This was expected because it was those who have stayed longer than a year that adequately observed the impact of community policing in Adatan. The respondents with less than a year response, lack the adequate experience to pass judgment on community policing in Adatan. Though community policing strategy was a new policing philosophy, it took older residents of Adatan to support and partner with the police for community policing to excel in Adatan. Also those who have stayed

longer in Adatan helped to spread community policing orientation to other new members of Adatan community. A police interviewee said that,

> "The acceptance level is still low, not that the people do not want it, but a lot of them are still ignorant of its operations in Adatan. With time the support for it will come from everywhere even among the youths and may be women if given the chance to participate".

A large percentage of the population has heard of community policing before. This meant that community policing was not a strange concept to about 56.8% of the sampled population in Adatan. A situation where a large size of the population have already heard of community policing, made it easier to further educate and mobilize their support in Adatan community. It equally helped to access public awareness of community policing in Adatan. This large percentage who equally helped to translate community policing were not allowed active role in the policing strategy in Nigeria. An interviewee explained how he knew about community policing by saying;

> I attend meetings in the police station. It was there that the (DPO) told us that the police has now changed and that they need the people to cooperate with them to fight crime.

The response above shows low level of general awareness of community policing operations among the members of Adatan community. For some members of the public, it is in meetings with police officers that they engage in with or participate in Community policing activities. The police and other key community leaders can increase the level of awareness through enlightenment and cooperation with the police to drive the policing style in the community. Community policing strives better when the police treat members of the public better and differently in a respective and courteous manner (Arisukwu *et al.*, 2021).

Table 3: Age and participation in community policing

Whether respondents have taken part in community policing operation				
Yes		**No**	**Not sure**	**Total**
Age 18-23	10 15.2%	50 75.8%	6 9.1%	66 100.0%
24-29	27 24.1%	68 60.7%	17 15.2%	112 100.0%
30-35	45 40.9%	57 51.8%	8 8.0%	110 100.0%
36-41	17 29.8%	38 66.7%	2 8.0%	57 100.0%

42 above	11 44.0%	12 48.0%	2 8.0%	25 100.0%
Total	**110 29.7%**	**225 60.8%**	**35 9.5%**	**370 100.0%**

$x^2 = 23,758$; df= 8; $p^{<0.05}$

From the table above chi-square value of 23.758 ($p^{<0.05}$) signified a significant relationship between age of respondents and their level of participation in community policing operations. The level of participation increased with age. Also the age bracket of (42-above) comprising the family heads were the major decision making age within the community. It was the elders that had the highest level of participation in community policing operations in Adatan. From the above table there was the need to sensitize the youths and women who constituted the work force in Adatan to embrace community policing strategy. Community policing was for the entire Adatan community policing to be effectively sustained in Adatan. The youths and women should be oriented to accept this new policing strategy and to partner with the police in crime prevention in their area.

Discussion of findings

The study discovered gaps in police training and orientations against women in the community. There was gender gap in community policing oppressions in the area of study, which is a reflection of the larger Nigerian society (Igbolekwu, Arisukwu, Nwogu, Rasak, Asamu & Osueke, 2021). There was low level of awareness of community policing strategy by both the police and members of the public especially youths and women.

The study reveals that community policing is a more friendly and people oriented policing strategy that will help solve problems and prevent crime in the society than the traditional or professional policing style that focuses more on crime fighting rather tha service to community. This is in agreement with most of the literature reviewed such as George L. Kelling Cordner (1998), David Weisburd and John E. Eck (2004), Lee Brown *et al.* (1988), Cordner (1988) and Meese (1993).

However, this policing strategy, requires changes in police training and orientations to inculcate the values of service, problem solving, accountability and improved police public relations and engagement in crime prevention (Haar, R. N, 2001; Buerger, M. E.; Petrosino, A. J. & Petrosino, C., 1999; George L. Kelling Cordner, 1998).

To facilitate the practice of these values, learn and close the gap between theory or what is thought and practice, more women are encouraged to be empowered and deployed in community policing oppressions in the society. This will help reduce police brutality and high handedness in managing people and suspects in the community. This is in agreement with the view of Buerger M. E., Petrosino, A. J. & Petrosino, C. (1999); Marilyn Corsianos (2009); Cordner, G. & Cordner, A. (2011) & Carrier, J. (1988); Chan, J., Doran, S. &

Marel, C. (2010). However, it is recommended that another study be conducted to actually determine the relationship between gender and crime prevention and control through community policing in Nigeria.

Theoretical interpretations of findings

This study utilized Talcot Parsons structural functionalism to study community policing operations in Adatan community. To this end therefore, community policing made security and policing issues everybody's business irrespective of their gender in the community and no longer an exclusive function of the men and government (O. C. Arisukwu, 2012). On the other hand, George J. Thompson used his gap theory to show how the ways people are treated by the police affect their willingness to support the police in crime prevention in the society. Those brutalized by the police find it difficult to give information to the police and this makes crime to thrive. Whereas where police are humane and friendly the gap will be closed and crime reduced

Conclusion and recommendations

The study concluded that community policing will give the public ample opportunity to participate in the prioritization of their security needs and how they are to be managed together with the police. It will make up for the short fall in number of the police and funding challenges by utilizing members of the public as co-funders and managers of crime in the community.

The following recommendations are made:

1. The gender gap in community policing oppressions in Nigeria should be closed by encouraging more women to participate in community policing. Both female police officers and female members of the community must be integrated into every segment of community policing from recruitment to training and oppressions.

2. There is the need to create more awareness and educate the public particularly youths and women on the community policing strategy and its benefits to the community. Every segment of the community should be involved in community policing so as to create a sense of belonging to all and let the community "own" it.

3. There should be adequate reorientation of police men and male members of the community to see and willingly embrace women as partners In crime prevention and control through community policing in Nigeria. Gender bias and other socio-cultural segregations and marginalization should stop.

4. The police need to have regular town hall meetings with members of the community to review strategies and obtain feedback especially from minority and neglected segments of the community

5. The training focus of community policing should commensurate with the principles and objectives of service, partnership and accountability and not macho and brutal enforcement of laws as in the professional policing style.

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