

An Assessment of Community Policing-Oriented Training Programme in Benue and Lagos States, Nigeria

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Abstract

The increase in crime rates and poor police-public relations in crime prevention and control has led to the dissatisfaction with traditional policing style of enforcement. The clamor for change in policing focus has led to the emergence of community oriented policing. Community policing is a policing style that allows the police to partner with the public in crime prevention and problem solving in the community. This change in policing style requires a corresponding change in training focus and methods.

Studies on community policing-oriented training have largely been general in nature without paying much attention to the training content and post-training challenges. This study therefore, assessed the perceived influence of community policing-oriented training on police interactions with the public in crime prevention in Benue and Lagos States.

Gap theory was adopted as theoretical framework Questionnaire was administered to 600 respondents selected through simple random sampling method, while post-training observations, twenty one in-depth interviews (IDI) and six Focus Group Discussions (FGD) sessions were conducted among purposively selected police trainers, divisional police officers and key community leaders. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square test, and T-test while qualitative data were content-analyzed.

There was a significant relationship between years of policing experience and the perceived relevance of training materials to daily policing experience ($p < 0.05$). There was a significant relationship between years of policing experience and effectiveness of community policing-oriented training in crime prevention among the trainees $p < 0.05$. However, post-training field observation indicated the complaints of unfriendly attitude on the part of officers towards the public. The study concluded that community oriented policing style is good for Nigeria, but the police need to demonstrate a positive attitudinal disposition towards the public so as to earn their trust and confidence in crime prevention and control. Emphasis of the training should be more of practical rather than theoretical demonstrations in class. The members of the public needed to be adequately sensitized to embrace this new policing style and form a synergy with the police in their community.

Keywords: Community policing; Training orientations; Crime prevention

Background to the Study

Every society desires one form of policing or the other to protect life and property, and regulate the conduct of its members. In the pre-colonial era, policing in most communities in Nigeria was informal in nature. Modern policing was introduced in Nigeria by the colonial masters to protect their interests and enforce colonial laws. The training focus of the police then was mainly to maintain and enforce colonial laws which were anti-people in some cases. The police therefore paid little or no attention to service to the people within the community during the colonial era and in some instances up till now.

There existed negative apprehension, distrust, and disgust on the part of the public and their relationship to the police [1]. Over time the police-citizen relationship in Nigeria is characterized by deep suspicion and violence [2]. It is these suspicion and violence that influenced police training operational orientations.

These militaristic and unfriendly training orientations of the police and their brutality to the people created a gap between the police and the people they were meant to serve. Community policing emerged to bridge the policing gap between the police and the people. The challenge now is how to train the police to change from their old policing methods to this people centered "consent policing". How will the people who have been victims of police brutality begin to have confidence and trust in the police again?

Statement of the Problem

The role of the police in the maintenance of law and order in a society cannot be overemphasized. What is of concern to people is how the police carry out their task of crime prevention and control within society. The Nigeria police have a negative history of public mistrust and maltreatment. The manner the people are treated in the streets and stations by the police determines the level of cooperation and support they will give to the police. Nigeria as a diverse society requires a police that will appreciate and work with various segments of the Nigerian society while carrying on their duty of crime prevention and control in the community. The old policing style and training curriculum focused much on fighting crime, rather than preventing crime in partnership with the people.

The police in Nigeria behave as if they only existed for the

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government rather than for the people whom they are to serve and protect. So, right from recruitment to training, the police pay more attention to law enforcement as against service and crime prevention within the community. This alienation of the people by the police created a negative apprehension and bad blood between the police and the public. In an attempt to salvage their communities and take their security in their own hands, various vigilante and neighborhood watch groups were formed by the people.

The influence of community-oriented policing training on police attitudes towards the people are yet to be noticed. The people are still confronted with unfriendly police officers who maltreat them daily in the streets and at the police stations. The young people who ought to form the back bone of this new police partnership are themselves the major victims of police brutality and harassment in the society. The inability of the police to translate training orientations to improved interactions with the people after training makes the adoption of community-oriented policing training fruitless and another waste of public resources in Nigeria.

Research Questions

This research focused on the following questions:

1. Are the main contents of community-oriented policing training curriculum relevant in crime control in Nigeria?
2. Are there observable changes in police attitudes and tactics after training?
3. What is the common post community-oriented policing training challenges the police encounter?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to assess community-oriented policing training programme in Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study include, to:

1. Examine the relevance of community-oriented policing training curriculum content to crime prevention in Nigeria.
2. Assess changes in police attitudes and operational tactics after community-oriented policing training.
3. Examine common post training challenges in community-oriented policing in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The study will help to enrich existing literature on community-oriented policing training in Nigeria. The study is equally expected to reveal some of the common post training challenges encountered by the police trainees in community-oriented policing training programme in Nigeria. The findings of the study will help to reduce the gap between the police and the people by sustaining the partnership provided by community-oriented policing training programme.

Brief Literature Review

The rationale for policing in the society

The philosophical rationale for the existence of the police is the need to promote institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and norms that are designed to regulate conflicts and enhance the total well-being of members of society [3]. Policing therefore started as a

communal effort to maintain order and protect properties such as farm lands and flocks of animals [4].

So policing is a concise effort by a society or community to regulate human behaviours and to protect a society from any external attack. The family usually plays a dominant role in the control of conducts of its members within a society. Where the security needs are beyond the capabilities of one family unit, many families come together to work out the modalities for the effective policing of their environment. The dynamism of society affects the structure and functions of the police, but the purpose still remains to maintain law and order in the society.

Origin of modern policing

Modern policing began with the formation of the London metropolitan police founded by Sir Robert Peel in 1829 [4]. Peel's main aim of setting up the Metropolitan Police in London was to promote a healthier police-public relation in London. He brought to the fore, the ethical issues in police operations and its implications on the public perceptions of society. Peel's principles emphasised the interdependency of police and the public as well as the prevention of crime and disorder [4].

The challenges of policing in a democracy

The social environment plays a unique role in the nature and pattern of social problems in a society. As Sociologists, a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the social realities in society enables crime to be adequately analysed in society. Most of the predisposing factors that cause crime in a society are from the political and economic environment [3]. It sometimes requires good governance for these crimenogenic situations to be resolved. Bad leadership coupled with corruption has deprived the generality of Nigerians the benefits of democracy.

Policing Principles

Although Peel discussed the spirit of some of these principles in his speeches and other communications, the historians Susan Lentz and Robert Chaires found no proof that he compiled a formal list [5].

The nine principles were as follows:

1. To prevent crime and disorder, as an alternative to their repression by military force and severity of legal punishment.
2. To recognise always that the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.
3. To recognise always that to secure and maintain the respect and approval of the public means also the securing of the willing co-operation of the public in the task of securing observance of laws.
4. To recognise always that the extent to which the co-operation of the public can be secured diminishes proportionately the necessity of the use of physical force and compulsion for achieving police objectives.
5. To seek and preserve public favour, not by pandering to public opinion, but by constantly demonstrating absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy, and without regard to the justice or injustice of the substance of individual laws, by ready offering of individual service and friendship

to all members of the public without regard to their wealth or social standing, by ready exercise of courtesy and friendly good humor, and by ready offering of individual sacrifice in protecting and preserving life.

6. To use physical force only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient to obtain public co-operation to an extent necessary to secure observance of law or to restore order, and to use only the minimum degree of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective.
7. To maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police, the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.
8. To recognise always the need for strict adherence to police-executive functions, and to refrain from even seeming to usurp the powers of the judiciary of avenging individuals or the State, and of authoritatively judging guilt and punishing the guilty.
9. To recognise always that the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, and not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them.

Community Policing Strategy

Community policing, the first major reform in policing in a half century, changes the way police think and act. This revolutionary movement broadens the police mandate beyond a narrow focus on fighting crime to include efforts that also address fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and neighbourhood decay. The community policing philosophy provides an organisational strategy that challenges police officers to solve community problems in new ways.

Community policing rests on the belief that contemporary community problems require a new decentralised and personalised police approach that draws citizens into the process of policing themselves [6]. According to Bertus Ferreira [7], "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."

Community Alienation

The experience of community alienation among police officers is closely tied to the experience of *mastery*, the state of mind in which an individual feels autonomous and experiences confidence in his or her ability, skill, and knowledge to control or influence external events [8]. Community policing requires departments to flatten their organizational pyramid and place even more decision-making and discretion in the hands of line officers. As the level of community alienation or isolation that officers experience increases, there will be a corresponding decrease in officers' sense of mastery in carrying out their expanded discretionary role. Second, a strong sense of community integration for police officers would seem to be vital to the core community policing focus of proactive law enforcement. Proactive enforcement is usually defined as the predisposition of police officers to be actively committed to crime prevention, community problem-solving, and a more open, dynamic quality-oriented law enforcement-community partnership [9].

A lack of community support resulted in an increased sense of alienation and a greater degree of apathy among police officers [10]. A lack of community support and working in a larger populated community was associated with an increased sense of alienation and a greater degree of inactivity among police officers [11]. An increased sense of alienation resulted in a greater degree of negative feelings and lethargy among police officers. The more police officers felt socially isolated from the community they served, the more they withdrew and the more negative they felt towards its citizens.

Theoretical Framework

The study relied on the combination of Gap, Community-driven development and Skill acquisition Theories to understand the police-public partnership in crime prevention and control in Nigeria through community policing strategy.

Gap theory

This theory argues that there is a growing 'gap' between the police and the community in too many areas. People mistreated by the police withdraw from the police and are never eager to help the police. Until officers are taught to care for the people, the 'gap' increases. Crooks and criminals benefit from the 'gap' between the police and the people. However, the better the police treat the people, the safer the people feel and the more the 'gap' closes. As the 'gap' closes, it closes on the crooks and bad guys in the community. Community policing training will therefore promote trust and confidence building between the police and the people in preventing crime in the community [12].

According to Thompson et al. [12], the quality of contact with the people by the police affects the way the people in turn perceive the police. Alemika and Chukwuma [13] supported this position by arguing that, the nature, scope and extent of contact between the police and the community they serve affect the way the public perceive and interact with the police. If the scope and nature of interactions between the police and the community they serve are restricted to involuntary law enforcement encounters such as arrests, stop and search encounters, detention etc. the relationship that would ensue from such contacts would be involuntary and hostile. Whereas if the people and the police have other avenues of meeting and understanding each other their relationship would be less hostile and friendly.

Therefore, to improve on the quality of contacts with the public, the police should be taught the '90-10 principle' of the community. Thompson et al. [12] stated that in the worst areas of the cities, 90 percent of all the people in those communities are good, hard-working, decent folks trying to make a living with dignity. Ten per cent are murderers, drug dealers, kidnappers and other criminal elements that need to be taken off the streets.

However, the problem with police work is that too often, 90 per cent of police contacts are with those 10 percent [12]. So, it distorts police view of the community. The police easily become cynical and tend to 'go to war' against those communities rather than taking on a protective role. This according to Thompson et al. [12] explain why the police are most hated where they are most needed. People who have been mistreated do not give intelligence to those who have mistreated them. So adequate community policing training will help close the gap of mistrust and lack of confidence between the police and the people and make police more humane in carrying out their services within the community.

Research Design

This research utilized survey research design. This research design was complemented with qualitative research method. The qualitative methods used were in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions, Unstructured non-participant observations and the training curriculum provided secondary source of data.

Scope of the Study

This study was conducted in Benue and Lagos states of Nigeria. Though the study was located in areas predominantly populated by the Tivs and Yoruba speaking people of Nigeria, it was not restricted to them alone as other ethnic groups resident in these areas were part of the study too. This was done so as to reflect the general perceptions of the communities towards community-oriented policing. Apart from being among the states piloting community-oriented policing in Nigeria, Benue and Lagos provided a contrast in both socio-economic realities and security challenges in Nigeria. The dynamics of the population and peculiar social environment in Makurdi and Ikeja provide security challenges and problems for the police in the states selected. The choice of the states was purposively done to complement the data emerging from the two states.

Study Area

Benue state

Benue is a state in the north-central geo-political zone of Nigeria, with a population of about 5,181,642 million according to the 2006 census figure. Benue state was named after the Benue River and was formed from the former Benue-Plateau state in 1976. Benue has 23 local government areas. Makurdi the state capital is a home for people from all walks of life. Makurdi is a relatively peaceful town. Tiv, Idoma and Iggede are spoken predominantly in addition to English language. Other ethnic groups in Benue include, Etulo and Abakwa. The state is rich in Agricultural products, and is known as the food basket of the nation. Other commercial activities equally take place in the state. The state capital Makurdi is relatively peaceful and low in volume of commercial activities when compared to Ikeja in Lagos.

Benue state police command structure

Benue state police command has 27 police Divisional Headquarters out of which 5 are located in Makurdi the state capital. Benue State police command has police staff strength of 4,705 officers and men (www.npf.gov.ng). Benue state police command is led by Commissioner of police (CP) Christopher Kartzo. Like all state police command structures in Nigeria, Benue state has a commissioner of police at the top followed by Area commanders and Divisional Police Officers (DPO). The DPOs are the closest police structure to members of the community. Apart from managing the divisional police Headquarters, the DPO also meets regularly with the community leaders on crime prevention and control issues within their community. It is at this level (Divisional police headquarters) that members of the public observe community-oriented policing activities more. The way the people are treated in the police stations and on the streets could make or mar the implementation of community-oriented policing style.

Lagos

Lagos State is the second most populous city in Africa, behind Cairo in Egypt and is estimated to be the second fastest growing city in Africa. Lagos is the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria. The presence of Air and Sea ports make the city unique for all forms of business

activities. Lagos was purposively selected to explore its population dynamics and security challenges with respect to community-oriented policing implementations.

Lagos has 20 local government areas, with a population of 7,937,932 according to the 2006 Census figure. The State was created on May 27th 1967. While the State is essentially a Yoruba-speaking environment, it is a socio-cultural melting pot of both Nigerians and Foreigners alike. Lagos with its large population and volume of economic activities poses some security challenges to the police.

Lagos state police command structure

Lagos state police command has 8 area Commands and 95 Divisional police Headquarters. Ikeja the state capital falls under Area F Command with 10 Divisional police Headquarters. Lagos state police command has police staff strength of 29,122 officers and men (www.npf.gov.ng). The office of the commissioner of police at the state command headquarters Ikeja is on top of the state police command structure. The Area commanders and the DPOs make up the other command structures respectively. The study dwelt more on the experiences of the police and the public at the lowest command structure because that is where police-public interactions through community-oriented policing interactions take place more.

Study Population

The population of study consisted of both the police and key community leaders in Makurdi and Ikeja. In Benue, Makurdi the state capital was purposively selected for this study, while in Lagos, Ikeja the state capital was purposefully selected for the study because the police officers in the area form the bulk of the community-oriented policing piloting divisions within the states. The Police divisions covered in Makurdi included Wadata, High level, North bank, Ankpa ward and Akpehe/Wurukum. These police divisions represented Makurdi (A-E) divisions respectively. Areas covered in Ikeja included, Toyin Street, Adeniyi Jones, Opebi, Allen Avenue, Ikeja GRA, Area F Police Station, Ikeja police station, Police Training College, State command headquarters, and Ogba police station. The two states were among the piloting states of community policing operations in Nigeria, and were used for the comparative analysis of training experiences and operational challenges.

Six Police divisional headquarters were selected from each state through a purposive sampling method representing community policing piloting Divisional Headquarters in the states. The police stations were selected to cover both residential and commercial areas within the study areas purposively. 600 questionnaires, 50 for each police division were administered on the policemen, who had undergone the community policing training, through a simple random sampling method. This population was obtained by relying on Cochran's (1977) sample size formula determination table. This is a table for determining minimum sample size for a given population size for continuous and categorical data.

For the qualitative method, eight (8) community Policing trainers, six (6) Divisional Police Officers (DPOs), and six (6) key Community leaders were purposively selected to cover community policing piloting divisions in Benue and Lagos states for in-depth interviews. Six (6) Focus Group Discussions were conducted with the police to find out their pre-training, training, and post-training experiences.

Their training experiences were explored to determine the relevance of the community policing training curriculum. Also the Officer in

charge of police training and education in the Force Headquarters Abuja was interviewed. In addition, the officer in charge of community policing was interviewed. In all, a total of 600 respondents for the quantitative method, and 27 respondents for the qualitative methods were involved in this study.

Method of Data Collection

The research combined both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. A total of six divisional police headquarters were selected from each state through purposive sampling method. The purpose was to cover both residential and commercial settlements within the study area, and to select only police stations implementing community-oriented policing style. At each police station a list of those police personnel that have been trained for community-oriented policing was obtained by the researcher from the DPO. The questionnaire was administered to these trained police personnel through a simple random sampling technique.

The questionnaire was collected by hand by the research team from the police respondents. Out of the 600 copies of questionnaire distributed, 588 were retrieved and cleaned up for analysis. The questionnaire focused on the demographic variables of the police respondents, their pre and post community-oriented policing training experience and relevance and challenges of community-oriented policing training in Benue and Lagos states Nigeria.

Members of the public used for qualitative data collection were made up of adult male and female members of the community who have stayed in the area not less than five years. They included transporters, market women and men, family heads, community leaders and youths. In-depth interview was conducted on purposively selected police trainers, Divisional Police Officers (DPOs), and key community leaders.

Also Focus Group Discussion was conducted with the police, and the training curriculum contents observed. The general police personnel were observed while on duty at their various beats to see how they interacted with members of the public. The way the police interacted with the public while on the street controlling traffic and at police check points were observed to see if the people were treated with respect. This observation took place during the field work. The community-oriented policing training took place in Benue and Lagos from 2006 to 2012. The trainers were made up of superior police officers and the trainees were made up of both senior and junior police personnel. Some of the community leaders, youths and family heads interviewed constituted members of the Police Community Relations Committee in their areas. Some of them were identified at the station after meeting with the police DPO in their area. The field work took place from September 11th 2010 to February 18th 2012.

Ethical Considerations

The Social Sciences involve studies of real people in real situations, and this raises ethical questions regarding the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

In carrying out this study, the respondents were not deceived or misled about the purpose of the study.

The identity and views of the respondents were protected, particularly that of the police officers involved. The community members were treated courteously and respectfully. They were not subjected to any form of stress or coercion while conducting this research. The respondents were not exposed to any harm and they were

free to leave at any stage of the study. Also the study will be published in journals for the Police and the public. The publications will aid access to the main findings of the study to both the police and the public.

Data analyses technique

The collected questionnaires were processed and managed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data was analysed at univariate and bivariate levels. The profiles of the respondents were analysed using simple percentages, while chi-square was used to analyse the association between independent and dependent variables. The in-depth interview and the focus group discussions were transcribed according to various headings representing the key issues raised in the interviews, and discussions. Simple descriptive and narrative technique was used to report the interviews. Also a content analysis of the interview was done using the research objectives and purpose of study as guide.

Data presentation and analysis

Table 1 above shows that 41.8% of the respondents have spent between 1-5 years in the Nigeria Police force as at the time of this study in Benue and Lagos States. Those who have spent between 6-10 years are 31.6%, while only 26.5% have spent 11 years and above in the police force. This result shows that the majority of the respondents (73.4%) have spent between 1-10 years in the Nigeria police. These “fresh” pools of police officers constitute a better policing resource for the training and implementation of community-oriented policing in Nigeria. However, in the class rooms, the experiences of police trainees with more years of policing become vital in discussions and contributions in learning. This position supports the argument of Bizer and Tannehill, (2001) that trainees should be taught as adults with experiences in the class using andragogy (adult) teaching style.

From Table 2 above, the result reveals that 64.3% of the respondents found the training material relevant to their daily policing experience. This shows that the community policing trainers succeeded in empowering the trainees with the basic information on how to implement community-oriented policing in their daily activities. However, despite this knowledge, some police officers still find it difficult to practically implement what they have been taught on the field. This was mainly due to some deviant behaviour already internalised by some police officers and lack of practical exposure to the field as part of the training programme.

Table 3 above shows that there is a significant relationship between the years of policing experience of the police trainees and the relevance of their training materials to daily policing experience. The result

Years	Frequency	Percentage
5-Jan	246	41.8
10-Jun	186	31.6
11-above	156	26.5
Total	588	100

Source: field work 2011

Table 1: Years of policing experience.

How relevant was training material?	Frequency	Percentage
Relevant	378	64.3
Not relevant	126	21.4
Total	504	85.7

Source: field work 2011

Table 2: Relevance of training material.

Years of experience	Relevant of training material to daily policing experience		Total
	Relevant	Not relevant	
1-5 years	180 (81.1%)	42 (18.9%)	222
6-10 years	108 (66.7%)	54 (33.3%)	162
11-above years	90 (75.0%)	30 (25.0%)	120
Total	378 (75.0%)	126 (25.0%)	504
$X^2=10.378$; $df=2$; $p<0.05$			
Source: field work 2011			

Table 3: Years of experience versus relevance of training material to daily experience.

Years of experience	How effective is community policing training in crime prevention in your community		Total
	Effective	Not effective	
1-5 years	228 (95.2%)	12 (5.0%)	240 (100.0%)
6-10 years	150 (83.3%)	30 (16.7%)	180 (100.0%)
11-above years	108 (85.7%)	18 (14.3%)	126 (100.0%)
Total	486 (89.0%)	60 (11.0%)	546 (100.0%)
$X^2=16.133$; $df=2$; $p<0.05$			
Source: Field work 2011			

Table 4: Years of policing experience versus effectiveness of community policing training in crime prevention.

shows that (75%) of the respondents who have 11 years and above years of experience said that training material was relevant to their daily experience while (81%) of the respondents who have between 1-5 years of experience said the training materials were equally relevant to their daily experience after training.

The implication of this result is that the training curriculum contents of the community-oriented policing training in Nigeria captures police daily experiences in the community.

Table 4 above shows that police trainees with 11 years and above policing experience (85%) said that the training is effective in crime prevention in their community, while police trainees with 1-5 years policing experience (95%) equally said that training is effective in prevention of crime in their community.

This shows that what the trainees were taught in the training helped them in relating and partnering better with the community after training with the aim of preventing crime.

A comparative Analysis of police perceptions after training in Benue and Lagos

The Nigeria Police is a homogeneous group with the same vision and training focus. The police in Benue and Lagos were trained with the same community-oriented policing training manual and their trainers were equally trained together. Nigeria is not operating state police as at the time of this study so analysis will only focus on police perception of the public after training in Makurdi and Ikeja.

The distinctive character and composition of the study areas were explored by the research team to reveal major differences in police perceptions after community-oriented policing training. Lagos area was a total contradiction of Benue in terms of general life style and population dynamics. This contradiction equally reflected on police-public perceptions and willingness to partner together through community-oriented policing training strategy. While the police in Benue where eager to trust and partner with the public in crime prevention through community-oriented policing, the police in Lagos were still sceptical in partnering the public in crime prevention and control.

Lagos as a mega city has unique security challenges not only in terms of population, but even the diverse backgrounds of the Lagos population. The unique composition of the Lagos population makes it difficult for the people to be adequately mobilised to partner with the police through community-oriented policing. Lagos state is populated by people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds which can create problems in community-oriented policing operations.

Markurdi on the other hand has a relatively less population of “outsiders” in the state. This relatively homogenous population makes it easier to manage crime through community-oriented policing style. Also, Markurdi has a manageable size of police stations than Lagos. This relatively smaller number of police stations makes it easier to coordinate community-oriented policing in the area than in Ikeja. Generally the public in Makurdi have a more friendly disposition towards the police than the Lagos public. The work environment in Makurdi was not too stressful compared to that of Lagos. So the police and the public in Markurdi had more “time” for each other than the Lagos public that were always in a hurry and no quality time for themselves. This transient contact and interactions has implications for police-public interactions through community-oriented policing in the area.

Police attitudes and operational tactics after community-oriented policing training

The essence of community-oriented policing training is to prepare and empower police officers to relate better with members of the community in crime prevention and control within the community. It is therefore expected that both the attitude and operational tactics of the police will be affected positively by community-oriented policing training. With the training on better communication and leadership skills, the police were expected to relate better with the people in the community.

A (DPO) said that;

“This police training is what the nation really needs now our officers after passing through this training change in some of their bad attitudes to duty and human relations. The training has made our job as police DPO simple because you now have a police that is willing to serve and information flows fast from the public to the police.”

(IDI/ police (DPO)/Lagos/2011)

While there were some noticeable change in attitude and conduct of police officers after training, many of them failed to exhibit some of the traits they were taught in class while on duty in the street. From the above quotation, it could be seen that the police understand the benefits of working with the people through community-oriented policing style; implementation of the principles of this policing strategy seems to be problematic to the police.

Though the police claim to be friendlier to the public after community-oriented policing training, some of them did not display courtesy while handling the public. Also because the training did not expose them to the public as part of training they were ill prepared on handling public attitudes and fear. This therefore creates a disconnection between the philosophy of COP and practical operations to meet public expectations. This observation was confirmed by a police respondent who said:

“When we go out on duty you will notice that most of us now willingly want to put the training into practice while on duty, but some officers who are used to the old system still harass and molest suspects

and other citizens I believe with time a lot of people will change after training.”

(Male IDI/police/Makurdi/2011)

This shows that there still exist some police officers who find it difficult to change in the way they handle the public even after the training. It is these “bad eggs” that usually bring the negative perception that the people have about the police. With sustained training and monitoring these bad officers will be reduced.

Some members of the public equally claimed that the police in their area have not changed in the way they relate with the people.

A community leader in Ikeja said:

“The policemen in our area have refused to change from their bad attitudes in fact they have over stayed in this area. Some of them threaten innocent people in the community with arrest and detention over simple issues. So one has to be wise by avoiding them and their troubles by settling them any time you have anything to do with them.”

(Male IDI/Public/Ikeja/2011)

The above quotation shows that not all the police officers were ready to reflect their training on their job while on duty. This negative attitude made the people not to trust the police in their community.

Another respondent in Makurdi however, pointed out that there were noticeable changes in attitudes among the police in his area. He said;

“I can tell you that some of the policemen now make effort to appear neat and friendly while on duty. This change also affects their attitudes now.”

(IDI/Community leader/Makurdi/2011)

The actions of the police officers within their community after training showed that while some officers displayed a better attitude towards the public, others find it difficult to change once they returned to their duty post after training. This positive change was acknowledged by the community members. It was even observed by the researcher that some community members give freely gifts to the police while on duty. Some police check points enjoyed gifts like water and other drinks and food items from the people plying the roads. This equally shows that the public are sensitive to police attitudes and conducts within their community.

The police in Makurdi were observed to be more friendly to the public after training than their counter parts in Ikeja. The Makurdi environment was observed not to be as stressful and hostile like that of Ikeja. The hustle and bustle in Lagos does not allow proper social integration and solidarity between the people and the police. In fact, a complex working environment like Lagos could aggravate the stress of the policemen. Sometimes the Lagos public may prefer to mind their business and avoid partnering with the police in crime prevention through community-oriented policing strategy. This could mean that the police are humans after all who displays good conduct where they were appreciated by the people.

So there is a lot of influence of the policing environment where the police operate and the kind of relationship they have with the people. Another police respondent buttressed this point by saying,

“Honestly when you are kind to people you meet during work at the end of the day you go home refreshed and happy without much

quarrel and stress. So I can tell you that this policing strategy is good for police officers too. It makes you to be fulfilled after being part of solution to problems in the community.” (IDI/Police/Ikeja/2011)

This change in attitude and operational tactics has made the public to relate better and trust the police even when they are stopped on the road for routine stop-and-search. The people now realize that the essence of road block was not to harass the public by the police and extort money from them, but to prevent crime

However members of the public were yet to perceive the police as friendly. In fact the researcher observed that the people were still harassed and brutalised by the police. The youths were observed to be the main victims of police brutality in the areas studied. This attitude by the police created anxiety and fear on the people any time they encounter the police in their community. The youths were very apprehensive when approached by the police in the street even when they were innocent. Though the police hierarchy still acknowledge the relevance of community-oriented policing style in curbing crime, the public are yet to reap the full benefits of community-oriented policing training in their community.

The dilemma of the police in Nigeria is the realisation of whom they exist for. Just like government in Nigeria, the primary purpose of the existence of the police ought to be to protect and promote the wellbeing of the people. Most often the police just like the government fail to realise this singular reason for their existence and alienate the public in their operations. Another police respondent in Makurdi pointing out some of their practical experiences after training said;

“When we go out on duty you will notice that most of us now willingly want to put the training into practice while on duty, but some officers who are used to the old system still harass and molest suspects and other citizens I believe with time a lot of people will change after training.”

(IDI/police/Makurdi/2011)

The quotations above shows that even the police officers enjoy a friendly interaction with members of the community. Though there are still some deviants among the police who exhibit some negative attitudes to the people. With constant training and monitoring, most policemen will change for the better when community-oriented policing takes root in the country. This friendly gesture will facilitate intelligence gathering and support from the public. Also regular interactions will reveal the security challenges of the people to the police and ways and means the people could support the police to make their community crime free.

However, there were some police officers who were not ready to change from their old ways of relating with the people even after training. These police officers constitute a clog in the wheel of progress of community-oriented policing style in Nigeria. The activities of these bad police officers pollute the efforts of their colleagues in relating and partnering better with the public in crime prevention. According to a police respondent who attempted to explain why police do not like to relate closely with the people;

“If you relate too much with the community members they take advantage of you and put you in trouble if you don’t take time. Just focus on your job and you will avoid problems.”

(IDI/police Ikeja/2011)

From the above quotation, the police officer has expressed some challenges inherent in relating closely with the people. The interactions

with the police are subject to abuse and manipulations by suspects and other interest groups within the community. The police officer is, however, trained on relationship building skills in the training. Relating this training to who, where and how to relate with the people within the community saves the police from any manipulation from the public. Another police respondent in Ikeja lamented the way they were neglected by the government;

“The way the government treat the police in Nigeria shows that we are not ripe for community policing. Police uniform and kits are not provided as at when due. Junior officers have to struggle to look good. The little money allocated for police kits by government ends up in corrupt officers and government officials’ pockets.(IDI/Police Officer Ikeja/2011)”

The conditions of service of the police are very important in justifying the responsibilities their job demands. The researcher observed that the conditions of the training environment were very poor. Some of the classrooms were dilapidated without enough chairs and tables for effective learning. The government need to adequately provide the necessary kits and motivation to the police to make them efficient on their duty.

Corruption must be tackled at various quarters to dissuade the police to seek illegitimate ways of providing things for their job. It is not enough to expect more from the police when some of their basic needs are not provided by the government and its agencies. According to Chan [14] the welfare and motivation of the police are important in the realisation of the objectives of the community-oriented policing philosophy.

Corrupt officers and government officials should be exposed and punished the same way junior officers who extort money on the roads are exposed and dismissed when caught. The issue of police discipline should be taken very seriously by the police now. Recruitment and training focus now must emphasise police respect of people’s fundamental rights irrespective of their age and socio-economic status in the community. The police must put a system in place to get feedback from the public on the attitudes and behaviour of policemen on duty in the community. Recounting police bad attitudes, a community respondent in Makurdi said;

“The way some of these police people behave, it’s as if they just joined the police to deal with the poor people in the society. They always brutalize the youths at the slightest chance they have.”

(IDI/Makurdi/2011)

The attitudes of the police to the public show a force that was trained to be unfriendly to the people. The traditional policing philosophy still guides police relationship with the people. The passion at which some police officers rough handle the public in the streets as suspects leaves much to be desired. The police that claimed to be the people’s friend are dreaded by the people due to negative attitudes towards the people. In Makurdi and Ikeja, it was observed that the youths constituted the most brutalised groups in the society. Youths that ought to be vanguards of community-oriented policing operations sustenance in the community were made victims of its implementation by the police in Nigeria.

The researcher observed that police operational tactics after community-oriented policing training still reflected that of crime fighting rather than prevention. Most of the major streets do not have foot patrol officers on duty. The motorised patrol method still held sway in the study areas. The motor patrol do not usually stop, park and patrol on foot to get closer to the people. Even when you see

community-oriented branded police vehicles, the officers do not make enough effort to reflect humility to serve others while patrolling the community. They still preferred to wear bullet proof vests and display their guns in a combatant mode while patrolling the streets. This frightening posture alienates the people from the police who were to be more friendly and approachable after training in community-oriented policing.

Community-oriented policing training has led to positive change in attitude of some police officers, while others find it difficult to change from their former ways of handling people within the community. According to a police respondent in Makurdi;

“I would like to add that, most of my colleagues who were trained in community policing have abandoned the major aim and objective of the scheme, e.g. corruption and extortion of money is yet to be totally eradicated.” (IDI/Police officer Makurdi/2011)

The expected attitudinal change from the police by the public remains elusive due to the behaviour of some police officers who refused to change. Though community-oriented policing strategy has been embraced by the police, the public were yet to witness its manifestation by the police in the streets and conduct of the police. The need for adequate monitoring of the police in the street will serve as a deterrent to the bad officers. The welfare and motivation of the police should also be taken seriously by the police. A proper reward system that will take care of crime prevention efforts and not only crime fighting efforts will make community-oriented police officers to serve better. Another officer in Ikeja narrating the challenges faced by police trainees after training said that

“I think this policing style is good for us, but the problem is that it’s not every police officer that is trained yet. So after training you still go to duty with many officers who have not gone for this training and those who were not ready to change. It makes it difficult for you to practice what you were taught. I think the training should be made compulsory for all.”

(IDI/Police/Ikeja/2011)

This shows that it is difficult for some police officers to translate community-oriented policing training philosophies to a practicable reality in operations within the community. This inability to practise what was taught in class on the street supports the argument of Haarr [15] that there is a disconnection between what was taught and what was practised on the street after training. Some police organisational deviant sub-cultures do not provide a healthy environment for community-oriented policing to excel even after training.

So as officers are exposed to negative organisational culture and unfavourable working environment, some of the positive attitudinal changes learnt dissipate as officers interact with their colleagues on the field. Having adopted community-oriented policing strategy; the federal government of Nigeria should equally adopt its training as one of the compulsory training programmes for recruits entering the police.

Conclusion

Community-oriented policing is a people-focused policing style, which is desirable in a democratic society like Nigeria. Democracy as a system of governance takes cognizance of the people’s opinion and mandate in their general governance. The goal of traditional policing is to protect civilians from criminals. They do this by identifying and apprehending criminals while gathering enough evidence to convict them. Traditional beat officers’ focus on duty is to respond to incidents

swiftly, and clear 911 calls. Many officers working busy shifts only have time to respond to and clear 911 calls, this type of policing does not stop or reduce crime significantly; it simply makes a temporarily fix to an on-going problem. So policing which is a major concern of the people should not be left in the purview of the police alone. Community-oriented policing training therefore, promotes the rule of law and respect of fundamental human rights of the people by the police while carrying out their services together with the people in the community. Community-oriented policing training makes security and policing operations every bodies business within the community and no longer the exclusive function of the police alone. This will help to close the gap of suspicion and mistrust between the police and the public.

Community-oriented policing training aids sustainable development by carrying the people along in their overall security needs within the community. This partnership makes the people to 'own' the police within their community. The police become accountable to the people and mutual trust and support is enhanced through adequate community-oriented policing training. The increase in crime has made community-oriented policing training desirable and necessary to bring the public and police together as partners in crime prevention and control in Nigeria.

Though the contents of the curriculum reflected the objectives of community-oriented policing, the method of teaching them affects the implementation of the policing style by the trainees. Enough attention was not given to the practical demonstration of what was learnt in the class. Members of the public were yet to observe enough positive changes in police attitudes in their community even with community-oriented policing training. Though the trainees were enthusiastic after the training, they were confronted with many challenges on the field. The new policing philosophy was not accepted by some bad "eggs" within the police who sometime constituted a clog in the wheel of progress of the system. In terms of tactics, crime fighting and motorised patrol methods still held sway in the study areas after community-oriented policing training. Some graduates of community-oriented policing training programme were still posted to duties that required use of coercion like special anti-robbery squad (SARS) after training.

The government must make effort to train more trainers to cover the entire policing commands within the federation; members of the public have to be carried along in Community-oriented policing training and implementation within their community.

Though the trainees were enthusiastic after the training, they were confronted with many challenges on the field. The new policing philosophy was not accepted by all the police officers and some members of the public were not aware of any positive change in policing due to community-oriented policing training programme. The community-oriented policing trainers were competent to teach others having undergone adequate training locally and internationally before. The training curriculum should reflect the current security challenges and realities in the community.

The community-oriented policing trainees faced various post training challenges on field such as; Lack of logistics support, lack of equipment and kits to work with and sceptical colleagues and members of the public. The main obstacle to the smooth implementation of community-oriented policing programme is lack of trust between the police and the public. This trust will improve and reduce the gap between the police and the public when police trainees practice what they were taught in the class while interacting with the public in their community. However, these challenges could be overcome with

sustained public and government support of the training scheme in community-oriented policing strategy in Nigeria.

This new policing strategy is people centered and facilitates accountability on the part of the police. It makes both the police and the people partners in problem solving and crime prevention in the community.

Recommendations

- To sustain community-oriented policing training and achieve the objectives of its adoption in Nigeria, the following recommendations are hereby made.
- The curriculum contents of community-oriented policing training in Nigeria should include courses in moral instructions and policing skills for a multi-cultural society.
- The training manual should contain modules for practical training sessions within the community during the training.
- The trainees should be posted to beats that will enable them to practice what they were taught in the training sessions in their community.
- There should be a monitoring and evaluation unit in each police area commands to adequately assess the impact of community-oriented policing training on the trainees after training and to identify areas of improvement from the community members.
- Community-oriented policing training should form one of the core training courses for all police recruits at the police colleges nationwide.
- Members of the public must be sensitized on the need to embrace the police as partners in crime prevention within the community to create more awareness about community-oriented policing among the public in Nigeria.

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