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The Impact of Contextual Factors on Community Policing in Nigeria: A Qualitative Exploration

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Abstract

Community policing in Nigeria faces significant challenges due to societal factors that hinder its effectiveness by impacting officers' job commitment. This study, therefore, explored the contextual challenges impacting officers' job satisfaction and commitment. The paper adopted the phenomenological methods, which included in-depth interviews and focus groups employed for data collection and thematic analysis to unveil recurring patterns in the data. The work adopts Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Open System Theory, which argues that: (i) hygiene factors, such as work environment lead to job dissatisfaction, and (ii) organizations are influenced by external factors and must adapt to their environment to thrive. Hence, the study draws on these theories to understand how contextual challenges affect officers' job satisfaction and commitment to community policing. Findings revealed multifaceted challenges in the job context, including societal attitudes towards law enforcement, socio-political dynamics, and economic constraints. Participants highlighted low public trust, fear of reprisal, political elitism and perceptions of policing as oppressive impede effective policing. Cultural norms such as deference to authority in some regions of the country or resistance to police in others further complicate community policing efforts. There is, therefore, the need for collaborative, transparent, and accountable community policing to rebuild trust and enhance cooperation. Structural changes and police reform are crucial, along with addressing corruption, promoting cultural competence among officers and addressing societal attitudes towards law enforcement through education.

Keywords: Community policing, Nigeria Police Force, Job context factors, political factors, culture

Introduction

Community policing, as a philosophy and strategy, emphasises collaboration between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve(Trojanowicz, 1998; Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1990). Ikuteyijo & Rotimi (2012) characterised community policing as a collaborative partnership between law enforcement and community members, where individuals actively contribute to maintaining a safe and secure environment. It emphasises collaboration and problem-solving to address the root causes of crime and disorder. Unlike traditional policing, which focuses primarily on reactive measures, community policing seeks

to build trust, enhance communication, and empower communities to play an active role in crime prevention and public safety. However, despite its principles and intentions, community policing faces challenges that hinder its effective implementation. While community policing aims to foster positive police-community relations and enhance public trust (Kelling& Moore, 1989), various obstacles impede its success. Challenges such as institutional resistance, inadequate resources, and societal factors undermine the core principles of community policing (Oliver, 2000; Skogan, 2006a).

Moreover, the dynamic socio-political landscape of Nigeria presents unique challenges to community policing efforts, requiring a nuanced understanding of the local context. Exploring the local context is crucial for understanding the gaps and limitations within the current community policing framework, thus addressing the overarching problem

of ineffective community policing practices. Through a comprehensive analysis of these challenges, this study aims to contribute to the discourse on enhancing community policing strategies in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The primary aim of community-oriented policing is for law enforcement to collaborate with communities, empowering them to take an active role in ensuring neighbourhood safety (Trojanowicz, 1998). However, even with the introduction of modern and community policing training programs to the Nigerian police force, the described changes are still perceived as predominantly "combative and reactive rather than proactive" (Daniel, 2011). Hence, the relationship between the police and the people leaves much to be desired as police brutality and other human rights violations are well documented (Abubakar et al., 2022). The success of community policing initiatives heavily depends on the sociopolitical and cultural context in which they are implemented. Sociopolitical factors, such as government policies, funding allocations, and the level of political stability, can significantly impact the effectiveness of community policing programs (Rosenbaum, 1988). These societal factors present complex challenges in community policing.

Research globally emphasizes the importance of public perception, trust, cooperation, and socio-economic dynamics in shaping effective community policing initiatives (Cordner, 1995; Skogan, 2006a; Weisburd et al., 2003). Extant literature also underscores the crucial importance of community engagement, communication, and collaboration between law enforcement agencies and the public (Braga et al., 2019; Lum et al., 2011). A significant determinant of commitment to community policing is the perception of law enforcement within society. Additionally, there persists a challenge in reconciling the notion of the police force as an institution established to combat crime with the perception that many police activities are deemed bothersome (Ikuteyijo, 2009).

These societal factors provide the context that influences the effectiveness and acceptance of community policing initiatives. The intricate relationship between job-related contexts, such as public perceptions of police legitimacy, levels of cooperation, and societal attitudes toward law enforcement, underscores the complex dynamics that shape community policing outcomes. Understanding these interactions is essential for crafting and implementing community policing strategies that address societal concerns, enhance police legitimacy, and cultivate positive police-community relations. Community policing, hailed as a transformative approach in law enforcement, emphasizes collaborative efforts between police officers and the communities they serve (Ikuteyijo, 2009). Despite its significance, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) faces notable challenges in implementing community policing initiatives. Previous research has primarily focused on understanding these challenges through the lenses of changes in crime rates and public satisfaction, with limited attention given to how the societal environment influences community policing implementation from the perspective of police officers.

Recognizing community policing officers' perceptions of the communities they serve and the challenges they encounter is crucial, as it directly impacts the effectiveness of community policing endeavours. These perceptions shape officers' interactions with community members, influencing cooperation and the overall success of crime prevention efforts. Moreover, socio-cultural and political factors within society serve as the direct job context for community policing officers, significantly influencing their experiences of community engagement dynamics and job motivation. Understanding these factors enables law enforcement agencies to tailor their approaches, effectively address challenges, and promote positive police-community relations, thereby enhancing public safety and well-being.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

i) to examine the challenges officers encounter in community policing.
ii) to explore the societal factors that hinder community policing.
iii) to highlight the nature and impact of these challenges

Theoretical Framework

The Herzberg Two-Factor Theory

The Herzberg Two-Factor Theory, also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, was proposed by Herzberg (1959). It is an organisational psychology theory of employee motivation that suggests that certain factors in the workplace cause job satisfaction (motivators) and others that lead to job dissatisfaction (hygiene factors). Motivators include factors related to the nature of the work itself, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and the work itself. Hygiene factors, on the other hand, are extrinsic to the work itself and include aspects such as salary, job security, working conditions, company policies, and interpersonal relationships. Certain external job factors can contribute to job dissatisfaction among community policing officers. For example, inadequate salary and benefits, lack of resources, poor working conditions, including the prevailing societal factors in which officers operate, and insufficient support from organisational policies or leadership can all act as hygiene job factors in community policing.

Herzberg proposed that there are two sets of factors influencing job satisfaction and dissatisfaction: hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors, such as working conditions and salary, can prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily lead to satisfaction. Motivators, such as recognition and achievement, are intrinsic to the job and contribute to satisfaction. Herzberg argued that improving hygiene factors alone would not increase job satisfaction but that motivators must be present for individuals to feel satisfied in their work. Critics argue that Herzberg's theory oversimplifies the complexities of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. However, the theory remains relevant in understanding how contextual factors, such as working conditions, organisational policies, and societal factors can impact officers' job satisfaction in community policing. By examining the challenges officers encounter in community policing, the study can identify specific hygiene factors that may contribute to dissatisfaction and inform strategies to address them.

If these hygiene factors are not adequately addressed, they can lead to decreased morale, job dissatisfaction, and ultimately, lower commitment to community policing initiatives among law enforcement officers. Therefore, law enforcement agencies must recognize and address the hygiene factors to create a supportive work environment that reduces job dissatisfaction and enhances officers' commitment to community policing efforts.

The Open Systems Theory

The open systems theory, initially proposed by biologist von Bertalanffy (1950) and further developed by organisational theorists, conceptualises organisations as dynamic entities that interact with their external environment. Unlike closed systems that operate independently, open systems exchange resources, energy, and information with their surroundings to achieve their goals. This perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of organizations with their environment and highlights the importance of adaptation and flexibility for organizational survival and success. In the context of community policing, the open systems theory provides a framework for understanding the intricate relationship between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Community policing initiatives, by their nature, operate within a complex socio-cultural, economic, and political environment. Just as organizations

in the open systems theory must adapt to environmental changes, community policing strategies need to be flexible and responsive to the unique needs and dynamics of diverse communities.

The theory assumes that organisations are influenced by their environment and must adapt to external changes to survive. Organisations are viewed as dynamic entities that interact with their surroundings, exchanging resources and information. Changes in the external environment can impact the internal functioning of organisations, requiring them to adjust their structures and processes accordingly. The open systems theory emphasises the interconnectedness of organisations with their environment and the need for flexibility and adaptation. Critics argue that open systems theory may overlook the role of internal factors in shaping organisational behaviour. However, in the context of community policing, the theory provides a framework for understanding how societal factors, such as cultural norms and socio-political and economic dynamics, influence officers' job satisfaction and commitment. By exploring the societal factors that hinder community policing, the study can elucidate how external forces shape organisational practices and outcomes in law enforcement agencies.

This underscores the necessity for law enforcement agencies to engage in continuous dialogue and collaboration with community members, local organizations, and other stakeholders. By functioning as open systems, law enforcement agencies can effectively exchange information, resources, and support with the communities they serve, fostering trust, cooperation, and mutual respect. Moreover, this approach allows for the incorporation of community feedback and input into policing practices, promoting transparency, accountability, and legitimacy. By embracing the principles of the open systems theory, community policing initiatives can better adapt to the ever-changing social and cultural landscape, ultimately enhancing public safety, reducing crime, and strengthening the bonds between law enforcement and the community.

This study draws theoretical insights from Herzberg's two-factor theory and open systems theory to explore challenges in the job context affecting community policing in southwestern Nigeria, leading to job dissatisfaction and lower commitment to community policing initiatives among law enforcement officers. Bridging this knowledge gap is crucial for devising strategies to enhance officers' capacity to navigate the societal dynamics they encounter, mitigate job dissatisfaction, and improve commitment to community policing, ultimately bolstering the efficacy of community-oriented law enforcement.

Methods and Materials

This research adopts a qualitative approach, employing a phenomenological methodology (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Lester, 1999). Utilizing this method allows for the exploration and understanding of individuals' lived experiences and the subjective meanings they attribute to these experiences (Lester, 1999; Merleau-Ponty, 2012). This approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of the societal context and systemic challenges faced by community police officers in their job roles and the factors influencing their commitment to community policing. The study utilizes in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD) for data collection, guided by a questioning guide developed based on the study's propositions. These open-ended questions aim to gather detailed insights into the challenges encountered by community police officers and the societal factors affecting their dedication to community policing.

Description of the Study Area

The study involved two state commands, Ondo and Oyo, within the Nigeria Police Force, selected randomly from the southwest region. These commands represent typical characteristics of the broader Nigeria Police Force, including various divisions and departments. Data collection consisted of four In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) conducted at

divisional police stations and two IDIs held at the commands' headquarters. Additionally, three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) took place at divisional police stations. The distribution of IDI and FGD sessions across the research sites is outlined in Table 1.

All IDI and FGD sessions occurred in participants' offices, providing a natural setting conducive to qualitative research. Although social conditions were uncontrolled, the physical environment was managed to ensure focus, with no extraneous activities or non-participants allowed in the offices during sessions. Participants were categorized into IDI and FGD groups. The six IDI participants included three Divisional Police Officers (DPO), one Divisional Crime Officer (DCO), and two heads of the community policing department. Two IDI participants held the rank of Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP), while four were Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSP), all males. The selection of male participants was based on availability as designated by the head of the division or department.

The FGDs accommodated 7, 9, and 10 participants, respectively. In the 7-participant FGD, there were four rank-and-file officers, two inspectors, and one superior officer. The 9-participant FGD comprised three rank-and-file officers, two inspectors, and three superior police officers. Lastly, the 10-participant FGD included four rank-and-file officers, three inspectors, and three superior police officers, with both male and female officers randomly selected from three divisions.

Table 1: Pattern of Participant Selection for In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

Command	Division	IDI	Rank	Position	FGD	Rank	Position
Ondo	A Division	1	Chief Superintendent of Police	Divisional Police Officer	1	Constable to Deputy Superintendent of Police	Investigating Police Officer to Divisional Crime Officer
	B Division	1	Chief Superintendent of Police	Divisional Police Officer	1	Corporal to Deputy Superintendent of Police	Investigating Police Officer to Divisional Crime Officer
	Headquarters	1	Assistant Superintendent of Police	Officer Commanding of Community Policing	-	-	-
Oyo	Eleyele	1	Deputy Superintendent of Police	Divisional Police Officer	-	-	-
	Mokola	-	-	-	1	Constable to Assistant Superintendent of Police	Investigating Police Officer to Patrol Guard
	Sango	1	Deputy Superintendent of Police	Divisional Crime Officer	-	-	-
	Headquarters	1	Deputy Superintendent of Police	Officer Commanding of Community Policing	-	-	-

Source: Field data, (2015)

Data Collection

Interview Guide

The study utilised an interview guide that aligned with the research objectives. The questions were non-leading, allowing insights to emerge naturally from participants' responses. The interview guide remained dynamic during both In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), enabling on-the-spot revisions and spontaneous follow-up questions to explore emergent themes thoroughly. This flexible approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the research objectives. The study objectives informed the main themes of questions and responses from participants led to further probing. Examples of the questions are: First, the participants were asked to articulate challenges encountered in community policing, with questions such as "Please describe your thoughts about your job; second, questions aimed to elicit responses from participants and lead to further probing; and third, the participants were asked how the identified issues affect their job, with questions like "How do the issues you mentioned affect your job?"

Digital Recording Device

To ensure accuracy, comprehensive documentation, and data integrity, a digital audio recording device was employed to record all IDI and FGD sessions. This method captured nuances and subtleties in participants' responses, enhancing the quality of the data collected.

Participant Recruitment and Data Collection Procedures For this investigation, two state commands, Ondo and Oyo, were randomly selected from the southwest region. The community policing units within each command facilitated the identification of willing divisions for participation. Divisional Police Officers (DPOs) were contacted to assess the availability of officers for research, and divisions with responsive personnel were included. The community policing unit officers played a crucial role in coordinating and facilitating both in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Before commencing data collection at each site, the study's purpose and procedures were elucidated to the officers. Interested individuals were provided with informed consent forms, furnishing detailed information about the study's objectives. Participants willingly affixed their signatures to the consent forms, affirming their commitment to partake in the study. The IDI and FGD sessions followed a consistent modus operandi, with researchers introducing themselves, delineating the study's purpose, and emphasizing its academic nature.

Confidentiality was paramount, with a commitment to excluding personal identifiers from the data collection process. FGD sessions were structured to reflect group opinions, with participants encouraged to express concurrence or dissent with fellow discussants (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The interview format employed open-ended questions, utilizing phrases like "tell me about" to elicit diverse responses. Basic counselling skills, encompassing non-verbal understanding, active listening, reflection, and nodding, were employed to cultivate a comfortable environment for open sharing. Careful consideration was given to avoid straying into tangential paths that did not contribute meaningfully to the study's objectives. The duration of IDIs averaged around an hour, while FGDs spanned approximately an hour and forty minutes on average.

Data Analysis

As part of the analysis, audio recordings were transcribed into written text. Utilizing English throughout the interviews and discussions facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the audio data. Multiple readings of the transcribed documents were conducted to immerse the researcher in the data and discern the underlying ideas' tone and overarching meaning. Thematic analysis was conducted using Nvivo software, initially employing a deductive approach followed by an inductive one. This method allowed for a nuanced interpretation of participant responses. The thematic analysis involved identifying patterns (themes) within the

data, utilizing both deductive and inductive approaches. Following the guidelines outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006) and building upon them, the analysis comprised several steps:

Data Immersion: Thorough reading and re-reading of transcripts to familiarize with participants' responses and grasp the data's essence.

Deductive Initial Coding: Coding guided by the research objectives, focusing on job content factors impeding and encouraging commitment to community policing.

Inductive Code Generation: Examination of initial codes to uncover underlying patterns and meanings, labelling them accordingly.

Theme Development: Grouping of codes into themes based on relevance and relationships, organizing data into coherent clusters.

Theme Review: Scrutiny of emerging themes to ensure coherence and consistency, with careful wording to accurately capture each theme's essence.

Narrative Writing: Recounting data narratives, incorporating selected quotes to support each theme and provide context.

Theme Validation: Confirming theme validity by revisiting the data to ensure alignment with participants' experiences. Reflective practices were employed throughout the analysis process to address personal biases and preconceptions, fostering reflexivity.

Results

Job Context as a Factor Militating Against Commitment to

Militating factors relating to job context emerged from the data. These are factors that are present in the environment and obstruct the delivery of community policing services to the people. The job context factors include those relating to police institutions, people, socio-political and economic environment, administration of law and culture.

Socio-Political and Economic Environment Job Context Hindering Community Policing

The socio-political and economic environment militates against the optimal manifestation of community policing. Indeed, this position was highly supported by accrued data. Among such socio-political and economic factors are ***Community Policing*** corruption and elitism. Many participants recognized the importance of social dynamics in policing. A participant noted how developed countries tend to organize their lives meticulously owing to their level of social development. The position of this participant is recounted below:

> *So what they do over there is they add a lot of innovations, they tied so many things to it so that it will be facilitated. Their knowledge and exposure and experiences in that place, coupled with their years of independence have exposed them so much compared to this part of the world. We are still struggling to come out of our dark ages* - IDI Sango Division

Apart from socially related factors, the economic environment is not friendly towards the optimal manifestation of community policing in Nigeria generally. This was the position of Several participants which is distinguishable from poor funding of the police force. An interviewee reasoned that the poor socio-economic environment fosters engagement in criminal activities thereby complicating the job of policing. His position is presented as follows:

> *If the country is buoyant the people will not be committing crime as such because they will be viable, they can easily have their way. They can have food, they can have other things that can make life comfortable for them. That is why I can say that the environment affects the type of policing we are practising* - IDI Headquarters

In addition, the poor economic situation affects the psyche of the average individual leading to misconduct towards police since police are agents of government. This was the position of a participant:

> *And at times when people are poor there is what we call a transfer of aggression. Poverty makes people to be angry. Seeing you as an agent of the government, they will feel that what the government is doing for me is that they are now coming to disturb me. That may make them avenge anger on police because they see us as an agent of government. If people are happy they will not make things difficult but when poverty is reigning in any community, policing will also be affected* - IDI Eleyele Division

The economic situation of the country also dwindles the resources available for policing. This was the position of an interviewee:

> *Apart from that, the economic situation also affects policing. If the country is buoyant then materials and logistics will be available* - IDI Headquarters.

Partly related to the problem generated by the economic environment is the problem of environmental planning and infrastructure. Nigeria seems to lack an adequate address system which makes it difficult to ascertain where people reside. Some participants recounted this problem in the following data:

> *If you go to No 16 Oba Adeshina Road, there are like 5 or 6 buildings attached to that number. You cannot identify and you do not know who and who lives in such buildings. This inhibits community policing* - IDI Eleyele Division.

Similarly, an interviewee asserted as follows:

> *We do not have adequate addresses and house numbers in Nigeria. If we go for an assignment, addresses are usually a problem such that by the time we locate the right address the suspect is nowhere to be found any longer* - IDI B Division

In addition, poor road network which are borne out of the poor economic environment is a problem of community policing as identified in the following data:

> *Good roads are among the factors making it difficult to respond to distress-call* - IDI Headquarters

Participants tended to compare the situation of policing in Nigeria with what occurs in other countries, especially the developed ones:

> *In the Western world, policing is friendly which they have given us the footprints to follow and implement. We are on it now* - IDI Eleyele Division.

> *The way we practice community policing here in Nigeria is different from the US or other countries* - IDI Headquarters.

Participants also express the hope that divine grace will help to better Nigeria's policing to live up to the standard obtainable in Western countries:

> *It is only God that can help us to be effective in this area of community policing so that we can meet up with other countries. I have not been to America but I know it cannot happen like that there* - FGD B Division.

Political factors as a job context also have a huge role to play in community policing. For instance, a participant noted that long years of military rule have affected our political culture so much that we are just beginning to learn the democratic spirit that community policing requires. He submitted as follows:

> *We have experienced the military system for a long and it affected us but now we are imbibing a democratic policing system. It is an acculturation process that is gradual.*

> *At a certain stage, we will equate with the Western world but we are not there yet* - IDI B Division

A major manifestation of political factors in community policing is the problem of elitism, especially among the political elites. Many participants submitted that it is difficult to police Nigerian elites owing to several factors such as unwillingness to be corrected. This is the point of the following data:

> *The people you see in the community as elite sometimes the way they behave when it comes to the issue of police is unfortunate. The elite do not like to take to corrections but to show that they are rich* - IDI B Division

In addition, elites are difficult to police because they tend to feel above the law because of their advantaged social situation. Some group discussants stated as follows:

> *The elite do not want to admit that they are doing anything wrong even when you are explaining to them that what they are doing is wrong and that the law will take its course. They see themselves as above the law, that they made the law, they are the custodian of the law. They believe that is the masses who cannot afford three square meals a day that should obey the law. These are some of the challenges of community policing especially in Akure here* - FGD B Division.

Some participants also recounted that elites, especially political elites maneuver the justice system in their favour because of their advantages condition:

> *Also, the issue of the "we dey" dichotomy is still there. If I belong to a powerful family and I do anything wrong the people there too will not give police information about the incident. Even If people still give the information to the police they will still treat it as "we we " so long they are from a powerful family e.g. the governor's brother - FGD B Division*

Similarly, participants noted that political elites corner social resources for their policing at the expense of larger community members. Some group discussants recounted as follows:

> *For instance, if you attach five officers to one person to protect him, his wife and his children, he will so much take care of you, you are going out and coming in, and whatever that will affect you not to do your job he will take care of it. Perhaps he will go to the station and ask for better ammunition, such as smoke, tear gas, chemicals etc. to make sure they can protect him excellently. He is in government and in a position that can make policies that can change the situation but he will not* - FGD B Division.

A Participant recounted the abduction of Chibok girls and the inability of authorities to save them to buttress the problem of elitism in the Nigerian system:

> *I think what we can do is to have the fear of God as a country, especially the powerful people. Imagine the case of the Chibok girls, if the children of powerful people were among them there would have been a solution to it by now. So we need prayers in this country* - IDI A Division

Cultural Environment Job Context Hindering Community Policing

Another major job context factor which emerged from accrued data was culture. Indeed, cultural norms are of pivotal importance which cannot be overemphasized. People's conduct is very much in tune with their cultural dictates. A participant opined as follows:

> *Every environment has its way of doing things because there are so many factors that influence action. Policing in Nigeria may be different from other countries because*

number one, we are of different tribes, different cultures, different beliefs and many other factors - IDI A Division

Many participants believed that culture hinders their performance and practice of community policing. However, culture can be an asset for community policing. For instance, some group discussants submitted that the culture of Northern Nigeria which expects the people to accord high regard to their leaders helps community policing:

The rate of crime in the north in the olden days was low. The reason is that culturally they respect their elders. When there is an issue they do not go to the police first, they go to the Emirs. It is when they cannot solve the problem that they go to the police. You can see that it makes the job easy and when you are relating with the leaders, the policeman or the DPO of that environment will not have so many challenges because they are already assisting you to do the job. It is when they believe that they cannot cope that they call you - FGD A Division

Contrarily, some participants noted that in the East, individuals hardly accord special respect to their leaders which complicates the work of policing:

In the east, it is worse. They believe in democratic rule and do not have regard for authority, for instance, their Eze. So when a policeman enters a community in the east there will be nobody to assist you. And the youth may even gang up against you. It may not be easy for you to penetrate. Unless you now go back to reinforce. So police may find their job easy or difficult depending on the environment they are operating in, depending on their cultural value, and many other factors. The environment makes the difference - FGD A Division.

Meanwhile, some participants stated the northern culture which abhors males from entering households hinders effective policing:

In the North, you cannot enter their house. If somebody steals a handset for example and a policeman has information, a crime has been committed you have to go for arrest, but cannot just say because you are a policeman you will enter their house; if you enter they will kill you - FGD B Division.

Similarly, some participants noted that head covering among females in the North could compromise policing since the practice conceals identity:

Another issue is that when you go to the north, their women normally cover their heads and you cannot see faces. This can prevent easy identification which is necessary in the apprehension of offenders - FGD A Division

In addition, participants recalled that a Yoruba culture requires that a person who dies in a river must be buried in the bank of the river. This prevents effective policing. This was referenced in the following data:

If somebody died inside the river it is normal for you as a police to exhume that body for investigation but if you go to the Yoruba towns and such things happen their culture does not permit that you exhume the body, it must be buried there and you cannot remove it by force. They will fight you because they believe it will lead to more deaths. So what is on the ground influences how you police an environment. So you have to use your discretion - FGDMokola Division

Discussions

The objective of this study was to explore the challenges officers encounter in community policing societal factors that hinder community policing, and the implications of these challenges in South-Western Nigeria. The research drew upon Herzberg's two-factor theory

and the open systems theory to provide theoretical insights into the nature and impact of these challenges. The findings underscore the multifaceted challenges posed by societal perceptions and behaviours towards law enforcement, significantly impeding the success of community policing endeavours. These factors, which encompass corruption, elitism, economic constraints, political dynamics and cultural norms, collectively shape the operating environment for law enforcement agencies and significantly impact their ability to engage with communities effectively. These issues echo previous research highlighting systemic challenges within law enforcement institutions (Mastrofski et al., 2002; Tyler, 2005). The prevalence of economic disparities and political influence further complicates efforts to foster trust and collaboration between police and communities, aligning with literature emphasizing the need for equitable resource allocation and institutional transparency (Bradford et al., 2014).

Socio-Political and Economic Factors and Community Policing

The data highlights socio-political and economic factors as critical elements affecting community policing, among which are inadequate funding, corruption and elitism. Limited financial resources can hamper law enforcement agencies' ability to engage effectively with communities and implement necessary training and programs, hence, inadequate funding and resource constraints limit police capacity to engage with communities (Cordner, 1995; Skogan, 2006b). This is particularly the case in Nigeria, which is facing pervasive poverty with attendant implications (Anyanwu, 1997; 2013). For instance, poverty is evident in inadequate town planning presents a significant obstacle to both security efforts and community policing. One key aspect of community policing is for officers to be familiar with the areas they patrol. However, Nigeria's deficient town planning hinders this practice, making it nearly impossible to locate addresses during emergencies.

The economic situation profoundly impacts community policing, with a poor economy and high unemployment rates contributing to escalating security challenges in Nigeria. A thriving economy can mitigate crime by providing productive opportunities and reducing poverty-induced aggression, fostering cooperation with the police and decreasing crime rates. Public expectations of the police should be tempered considering economic challenges, as policing success hinges on socioeconomic development (Kayode, 1976, as cited in Okereke, 1993).

In addition to challenges with resources, corruption within law enforcement and political elites poses yet another challenge to community policing. Oluwaniyi (2011) delved into the link between the police and corruption in Nigeria, revealing that corrupt practices within the force are not isolated incidents but rather complex issues influenced by various political, economic, social, and cultural factors. These deep-seated issues have exacerbated corrupt behaviour among police officers. Oluwaniyi's findings echo those of the present study, indicating that corruption within the police force permeates various aspects of national life, posing significant threats to citizen security and national development. The challenges obstructing community policing stem largely from corruption within police management, the elite, and the political class. Political interference and selective law enforcement in Nigeria undermine public trust and perpetuate favouritism toward elites Ordu& Nnam (2017). Such sociopolitical corruption and weak governance structures also erode trust in law enforcement institutions, hindering collaboration with the people (Bradford, 2014). This pervasive corruption has contributed to the negative portrayal of the Nigerian police as oppressive and beholden to the ruling government (Alemika, 1993), consequently exacerbating the decline in national security and the rise in lawlessness. Furthermore, extant literature also flags the disproportionate impact of law enforcement practices on the poor compared to the wealthy, underscoring the need for fairness and equity in policing, especially concerning socio-economic disparities (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000; 2005).

Structural and institutional challenges in the Nigeria police force impact their effectiveness and service delivery, with a tendency to favour the wealthy(Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000; 2005). These socioeconomic factors exacerbate tensions between law enforcement and the people, as socioeconomic disparities, including poverty and inequality, contribute to tensions between law enforcement and marginalized communities, hindering efforts to promote community policing (Reisig & Parks, 2000). Marginalized communities may resist or distrust police involvement due to feelings of disenfranchisement. In addition, economic hardship can lead communities to perceive the police as oppressors, complicating trust-building efforts (Skogan, 2006b). Overall, corruption, economic disparity, and infrastructural challenges impede effective community policing(Bradford et al., 2014). Addressing systemic socio-political and economic issues is crucial for successful community policing, requiring political will, policy frameworks, and resource allocation (Skogan, 2006b).

Participants referred to more stable democracies as a comparison to what is obtainable in Nigeria. However, as it is obtainable in Nigeria, formal crime control measures falter in the Western world leading to people resorting to community crime prevention as an alternative to the criminal justice system(Rosenbaum, 1988). Furthermore, socio-political and economic factors can also undermine community policing in stable democracies, with issues like racial discrimination and income inequality eroding trust in law enforcement (Bradford et al., 2014; Tyler, 2005). In such societies, the economic marginalization of minority communities contributes to feelings of alienation and resentment toward the police, hindering collaborative crime prevention efforts (Bradford et al., 2014; Tyler, 2005). Therefore, understanding the diverse policing contexts across countries is crucial for recognizing common challenges that go beyond national boundaries. Consequently, grasping the hurdles faced by police officers in implementing community policing demands a perspective that is both broad and tailored to the specific context. This underscores the importance of contextualizing interventions to tackle the challenges unique to Nigeria while also learning from experiences in other nations. Hence, efforts such as qualitatively exploring the challenges encountered in Nigeria, as undertaken in this study, are essential.

Cultural Factors and Community Policing

Cultural norms significantly influence community policing efforts, as evidenced in the data. Indeed, people's conduct is greatly influenced by the cultural norms they adhere to, which in turn influence their attitudes towards community policing. The interplay between culture and policing practices reveals both facilitating and hindering aspects, highlighting the nuanced relationship between cultural norms and law enforcement strategies. One revelation is the impact of cultural practices on perceptions of authority within communities. For instance, regions prioritizing respect for traditional leaders, like Emirs in Northern Nigeria, often see community members seeking dispute resolution through traditional channels before involving law enforcement. This deference to authority figures fosters collaboration between police officers and community leaders, enhancing trust and cooperation.

Conversely, cultural practices discouraging interaction with law enforcement, observed in regions like Eastern Nigeria, pose challenges. Here, police officers may face resistance or hostility, hindering meaningful engagement and collaborative security efforts, especially with the youth. These barriers underscore the need for cultural sensitivity and localized approaches in community policing. Specific cultural norms, such as gender segregation and traditional burial practices, present practical challenges for policing activities. For instance, face-covering by females in the Northern region and prohibitions against exhuming bodies in Yoruba communities hinder investigations.

Nigeria grapples with the task of harmonizing diverse and sometimes contradictory indigenous and foreign law enforcement frameworks. Policing in Nigeria presents unique

challenges due to its highly heterogeneous nature, encompassing various tribes, cultures, beliefs, and values. The policing approach in different communities is shaped by their distinct values and cultures, influencing the feasibility of implementing certain policing practices. Indeed, cultural perceptions significantly influence community policing, with historical experiences shaping perceptions of police authority (Tyler, 2017). Hence, cultural norms, historical legacies, and socio-political environments shape community attitudes towards policing, impacting the success of community policing initiatives (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000; Tyler & Fagan, 2008). Thus, understanding local cultural contexts is paramount for fostering trust between law enforcement and communities (Tyler & Fagan, 2008; Bradford et al., 2014), particularly in post-colonial contexts like Nigeria.

The prevention of inter-communal conflict in cities, where various religious and secular practices impact security and justice, poses a significant challenge for both governments and inhabitants. Hills (2012 & 2014) illustrates this challenge in Kano, attributing the city's stability to the adept management skills of senior police officers in navigating its complex environment. Walker & Kratcoski's (1985) findings further reinforce this notion, suggesting that variations in police-community interactions stem more from organizational and cultural factors rather than the personal values of individual officers.

Hence, research emphasizes the importance of culturally sensitive policing practices in building trust and legitimacy (Rosenbaum et al., 2015). Adapting approaches to respect local customs while upholding the rule of law is essential, which, however, poses challenges to standardised approaches to policing, indicating that law enforcement agencies can only better connect with communities by tailoring their approaches to enhance public safety by addressing cultural diversity (Alemika &Chukwuma, 2000). Hence, culturally sensitive approaches are necessary to build trust and rapport between law enforcement agencies and members of diverse communities (Oliver, 1998) and build trust through transparent communication and accountability, which is vital for overcoming cultural barriers to cooperation (Braga et al., 2019).

Aside from what is obtained in the communities where community policing operates, the organizational culture of the police forces also impacts community policing success. Traditional police culture, characterized by a paramilitary structure, may clash with the community-oriented approach needed (Paoline, 2003). Therefore, resistance to change within police organizations poses a barrier (Chan, 1996). Thus, police organisations need to overcome such resistance and build sensitivity to cultural nuances, recognizing that the integration of diverse perspectives is essential for effective community engagement (Weitzer & Tuch, 2006).

Conclusion

The study illuminated the intricate challenges facing community policing in Nigeria, examining the multifaceted interplay of societal, political, economic, and cultural factors. The findings underscore the pervasive influence of societal perceptions and behaviours on law enforcement, with corruption, elitism, economic constraints, and political dynamics significantly impeding community policing efforts. Policymakers and law enforcement agencies should therefore work towards rebuilding trust, enhancing accountability, promoting cultural competence among officers, and addressing systemic inequalities. The socio-political, economic, and cultural factors outlined above, which pose challenges to community policing, support the principles of the open system theory. This theory suggests that organizations are shaped by their unique operating environments, and the influences from these environments determine the organization's actions and impact. Therefore, the state of the Nigeria police services reflects the societal context in which they operate and the inputs they receive from that environment.

The study shed light on the challenges of community policing as perceived by police officers. Exploring these perspectives through qualitative research offers a nuanced understanding of the experiences officers face in their roles and how these experiences influence their ability to fulfil their duties. It is crucial to comprehend these challenges from the officers' viewpoint and to understand the underlying reasons for the experiences they encounter in the communities. Hence, this study contributes to a comprehensive understanding by considering both the officers' perspectives of the problems and insights from extant literature to explain why the problems exist. Such illumination is vital for policymakers to develop effective strategies and interventions aimed at fostering better cooperation between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Recommendations

Below were actionable recommendations aimed at addressing the identified challenges and enhancing the effectiveness of community policing initiatives:

1. The insights gleaned from this study have significant implications for policy development and the implementation of community policing initiatives. Community-oriented policing models that prioritize collaboration, transparency, and accountability have been shown to enhance trust and cooperation between law enforcement agencies and communities (Kelling& Moore, 1989). Hence, policymakers and law enforcement agencies should prioritise efforts to rebuild trust, enhance accountability, and promote community empowerment. By fostering collaborative partnerships, promoting the cultural competence of officers, and addressing systemic inequalities, stakeholders can work towards building safer, more resilient communities where law enforcement agencies serve as trusted partners in ensuring public safety and well-being.
2. Until fundamental structural and orientation changes occur, effective implementation of community policing remains unattainable (Riechers& Roberg, 1990). Johnson (2013) emphasized that good governance and police reform are crucial strategies for enhancing policing effectiveness in Nigeria. Addressing pervasive corruption and ineptitude among post-independence rulers, Agbiboa (2012) suggests the implementation of new rules, reforming existing laws and institutions, and establishing enforcement mechanisms to foster appreciable development in policing. Hence, building trust and fostering positive police-community relations require multifaceted approaches that address underlying social, economic, and institutional factors. Therefore, policy interventions aimed at improving police accountability, promoting community engagement, and addressing systemic injustices are essential for enhancing commitment to community policing (Weisburd & Eck, 2004).
3. Variations in culture and education levels shape communities' perceptions of law enforcement and their willingness to engage with police services. Okafo (2007) suggests that postcolonial Nigeria should restructure law enforcement to align with indigenous systems, potentially facilitating smoother policing procedures and reducing conflicts. Further, cultural attitudes significantly influence cooperation with law enforcement and community policing programs. Implicit biases based on race, ethnicity, or socio-cultural background can undermine trust and cooperation, necessitating tailored approaches considering cultural nuances (Bradford et al., 2009; Rosenbaum, 1988; Rosenbaum et al., 2015). Culturally competent policing, including active listening and empathy, is essential for accommodating diverse perspectives (Cordner, 1995). Efforts to promote cultural competence should be ongoing and integrated into organizational practices (Miller et al., 2017).
4. Training all police recruits and promoting community-oriented policing can bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community, fostering cooperation across various

demographics. Ultimately, when everyone sees crime prevention as a shared responsibility, criminals find it harder to thrive (Arisukwu & Okunola, 2013). Evelyn(2021) emphasizes the importance of community policing for upholding peace and security in Nigeria. To effectively tackle crime, it stresses the need for strong collaboration among community members. Moreover, it highlights the significance of government support in equipping the police force adequately and ensuring efficient utilization of resources. While community policing has proven beneficial in crime control and conflict resolution, there's still scope for enhancement. By reassessing the program, addressing its shortcomings, and capitalizing on opportunities, its effectiveness can be further optimized.

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