

Challenges Faced By Community- Oriented Policing Trainees In Nigeria

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Abstract

Community oriented policing training prepares the police trainees on how to partner with the public in crime prevention and control in Nigeria. The trainees after leaving the training grounds still find it difficult to integrate with their colleagues and members of the public in crime prevention and control in Nigeria. The crisis of theory and practice of community oriented policing in Nigeria emerges as the trainees are confronted with both organizational and environmental obstacles in the field. The training of community oriented policing officers need not be in isolation of the operational environment after training.

This study unveiled some of the challenges and difficulties experienced by community oriented policing trainees after the training in Nigeria. The study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. The Gap theory of George J. Thompson was adopted to understand the effects of police interactions with the public after training in community oriented policing in Nigeria.

The study revealed some of the challenges faced by police trainees after community oriented policing training in Nigeria and recommended adequate posting and monitoring of the police after training.

Key words: Operational environment, Training, Challenges, prevention, crime

1. INTRODUCTION

Community policing, just as the name implies, requires a unique partnership with the public and police in crime prevention and control within the community. It is a modern policing strategy which allows the police to proactively act beyond mere crime fighting, but to partner with community members in setting the security priorities in the society and fashioning ways of resolving identified problems in the community (Trojanowicz, Kappeler, Gaines, Bucqueroux, Sluder, 1998). This synergy between the police and the public is anchored on mutual trust and respect between both parties, and could be enhanced through adequate community policing training.

According to Arase and Iwuofor (2007) community policing has come to remodel recruitment, training and placement strategies, so that the best wield the baton, as well as elicit public cooperation and partnership in policing Nigeria. Community policing training prepares the police officer mentally, and physically to meet up with many demands of his job (Andrews, 2009). This partnership, according to Jerome and David (1998), will make both the police and the people “co-producers of safety” in the community. The Nigeria Police has a mission statement that aims to create a safer and more secured environment conducive for meaningful socio-economic development through community policing, and crime prevention (Arase & Iwuofor, 2007). The major challenge now is how to empower the police with the needed skills through community policing training to achieve these noble goals in Nigeria.

The emergence of democracy in Nigeria has placed additional demands and challenges on both police training and operational strategies. People are now expecting the police to respect their human rights and rule of law while carrying out their operations in the society. Also, the global shift from traditional approach in policing to a more humane, problem solving and community participatory policing style has necessitated a commensurate change in the training of police officers in the society (Palmiotto, Birzer, & Unnithan, 2000).

1.1 Statement of the problem

As beneficial as community oriented policing might be, it faces difficulty in its operation and implementation in the society after training. This difficulty in implementation has become a major police concern. The resistance can come from both the police and members of the public. Sometimes the police perceive community oriented policing to be too soft to suspects and inadequate for violent crimes. Though the police have spent much time and resources training their officers, yet police operations were guided by professional orientations. Members of the public are still alienated by the police in carrying out their duties.

The police officers that benefited from the imperfections of the traditional style find it difficult to change their orientations even after undergoing community oriented policing training. The perception of law enforcement rather than service to the people still dominates police actions to the people. Some of the deviant sub-cultures within police organization sometimes makes it difficult for the police to effectively operate community oriented policing strategy in their community.

Despite police focus on crime fighting and law enforcement, crime rate still soars and there is equally an increase in the fear of crime among the people. Most police operations were designed and carried out without much input from the people within the communities. This reactionary policing style and lack of respect for people's rights, dignity and security concerns by police while performing their duties in the community, created a gap between the police and the people. Community oriented policing training aims at reducing this gap between the police and the people by increasing people's confidence and trust of the police. This study therefore focuses on the challenges encountered by the police after community oriented policing training in Nigeria.

1.2 The Study Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives;

1. To examine the nature of challenges police trainees face after training.
2. To observe the perceptions of police trainees after training.
3. To find out how the identified challenges were resolved by the police

1.3 Significance of the study

This study brought to the fore the common challenges faced by the police after community oriented policing training in Nigeria. The study helps the police as an organization to understand how to deploy and monitor their officers after training better to achieve the goal of community policing in Nigeria. The study helps the police to provide decentralized and humane services that empower the community to participate as partners in crime prevention creating a safe neighbourhood to live and work. Members of the public get a better understanding of their role and responsibility in the general security of their community. The government benefits by using the findings in this study to shape community policing training and operations so as to prevent crime and enhance police- public interactions in Nigeria.

1.4 Scope of the study

The study was carried out in two states capitals, Ikeja in Lagos state and Makurdi in Benue state. The population of study consisted of both the police and members of the public in Makurdi and Ikeja. The study populations were police officers who have undergone the community oriented policing training and adult members of the community who have stayed at least five years in the community.

2. Brief literature review.

2.1 The reason for the emergence of community oriented policing training in Nigeria

Community policing emerged due to concerns that the prevailing system has failed. The traditional or "professional" policing approach stressed the efficiency of rapid responds as the primary means of addressing serious crime.

Most times citizens watch crime take place in their community without reporting to the police because they do not want to "get involved" or they do not trust the police. So to function better, the police through community oriented policing training and effective partnership with the community now has the capacity to prevent crime and intervene in problems within the community.

According to (George L. Kelling, 1988), in this era when people from all walks of life feel angry and alienated from government and its representatives, moving closer to the people fulfills community orientated policing's mandate to build trust with the consumers of their service. If the police realize that they exist for the people and without working with the people they cannot prevent crime, then the people should form the fulcrum of their services and activities within the community. The overarching goal of community oriented policing should be for the police to become partners with the community, empowering them so that they can shoulder their share of the responsibility and the tough work of making their neighborhoods safer (Trojanowicz, 2011). This partnership is enhanced through adequate community oriented policing training in Nigeria.

2.2 Community policing and training

Police departments face many challenges when dealing with the changes brought about by community policing. Community policing requires major internal changes. It also requires restructuring almost every aspect of the police-community relationship. Therefore, the shift to community policing greatly affects how police officers are trained. By making necessary changes in internal training procedures and providing training programs to community members, police agencies can make a smooth and effective transition to community policing (Sloan et al., 1992). In order to effectively implement the most appropriate community policing training programs, first of

all, basic job assessment should be conducted. Secondly, for each group who will be provided community policing training, the most relevant type of training should be chosen to increase the likelihood of a successful transition to community policing.

The main goal of community policing is to improve the crime control capacities of the police by creating an effective working partnership between the community and the police (Moore and Trojanowicz, 1988). Community policing invites citizens to collaborate with the police to establish a community-specific crime-fighting agenda (Weinstein, 1998). This policy also utilizes problem solving techniques, encouraging police to seek creative, proactive solutions to solve community problems (Moore and Trojanowicz, 1988). In order to use this problem solving approach, community police must exhibit intelligence, analytic ability, sensitivity, and moral character (Trojanowicz and Belknap, 1986).

2.3 The importance of training

Training is crucial for the adoption of any significant change and is the foundation for how people or organizations respond to changes. A comprehensive training approach is essential in institutionalizing the philosophy and practice of community policing within a police agency. However, in designing training that meets the needs of the people who constitute end users of the training outcome, effort must be made to solicit the in-put of the people. As beneficiaries of training outcome, the people will be able to express their expectations and suggest the best ways to realize them.

Proponents of community oriented policing believe that this new paradigm has the potential to serve as a model for reform of the entire criminal justice system. According to (Sloan et al, 1992), the philosophy and mission of community policing can drive all aspects of training. So that training becomes the key to promoting and institutionalizing the shift to community policing. To achieve this, (Sloan et al, 1992) suggested that all aspects of training should be analysed to ensure that they promote the mission of community oriented policing, which is to provide decentralized and personalized police service that empowers the community to participate as partners in the process of making their neighbourhoods better and safer places to live and work.

One of the major goals of community policing is to establish a partnership with citizens and facilitate their involvement in the policy. In order to be able to do that, community members need to understand their roles in community policing. Furthermore, they must be motivated to become active participants in community policing efforts.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

The study relied on Gap theory to understand the police public partnership in crime prevention and control in Nigeria after community policing training.

Gap theory (George J. Thomson): 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. The crooks benefit from the 'gap' between the police and the people. However, the better the police treat the people, the safer they feel and the more the 'gap' closes. As the 'gap' closes, it closes on the crook 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.

According to (Thompson, 2006), the quality of contact with the people by the police affects the way the people in turn perceive the police.

Therefore, to improve on the quality of contacts with the public, the police should be thought about the '90-10 principle' of the community. Thompson, (2006) 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 percent are the 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 percent of police contacts are with those 10 percent. 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, 2006) explains why the police are most hated where they are most needed. People mistreated do not give intelligence to those who 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.

3.1 Research design

This research utilized Ex-post facto design. The survey method was complemented with qualitative research method by using in-depth interview on purposively selected police trainers, Divisional Police Officers (DPOs), and key community leaders from the selected community policing piloting police stations, and communities in

Benue, and Lagos States. Also, Focus group discussions were conducted on the police, and the training curriculum contents were equally observed. The general conducts of the police were equally observed in the study areas.

3.2 Study area

LAGOS

Lagos State is the 2nd most populous city in Africa, behind Cairo in Egypt and is estimated to be the 2nd fastest growing city in Africa (UN-HABITAT, 2008). 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 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 attracting both Nigerians and Foreigners alike. Lagos with its large population and volume of economic activities poses some security challenges to the police.

BENUE STATE

Benue is a state in the north-central geo-political zone of Nigeria, with a population of about 2.8 million according to the 1991 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.

Markurdi the state capital is a home for people from all walks of life. Markurdi is a relatively peaceful town. Tiv, Idoma and Igede are spoken predominantly in addition to English language. 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 Markurdi is relatively peaceful and low in volume of commercial activities.

3.3 Study population

The study population for this study were constituted mainly by the police and key community leaders in the selected study areas. In Benue, Makurdi the state capital was purposively selected for this study, while in Lagos, Ikeja the state capital was purposively selected for the study because they form the bulk of the community policing piloting divisions within the states. Six Police divisional headquarters were selected from each state through a purposive sampling method representing community policing piloting Divisional Headquarters in the states. 600 copies of questionnaire, 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.

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 on 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.

3.4 Instruments of data collection

Questionnaire was used to collect the responses from the study population. The questionnaire was designed for the police officers. The questionnaires reflected the study objectives and significance of study. Questionnaire was used for objectives two and three.

In-depth interview schedule was used to collect data from the selected Police Personnel (DPOs and community policing trainers) and the key Community leaders (religious leaders, family heads, land lords, youth leaders, and women leaders), while focus group discussions was used only on the police who have undergone the community policing training. Objectives one and four were explored with FGD and in-depth interview. The curriculum and community policing training manual contents provided secondary sources of data. In addition, non-participant observational method was used to observe police conducts during and after COP training in the selected study areas.



4.0 Discussion of the study findings

Table 1: Profile of the respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-23 years	60	10.2
24-29 years	198	33.7
30-35 years	126	21.4
40 – above years	204	34.7
Total	588	100.0
Sex		
Male	382	65.0
female	206	35.0
Total	588	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	162	27.6
Married/Cohabiting	366	62.2
Separated/Divorced	60	10.2
Total	588	100.0
Educational Attainment		
Secondary school	306	52.0
Polytechnic	126	21.4
College of Education	36	6.2
University	120	20.4
Total	588	100.0
Ethnic group		
Yoruba	120	20.4
Hausa	78	13.3
Igbo	102	17.3
Others	288	49.0
Total	588	100.0

Source: (field work, 2011)

From table1, above the age category of 40 years and above was 34.7% while that of 18-23 years was 10.2%. This has implication on the sustainability of community policing style in the country. The bulk of the community oriented policing activities take place at the bottom level of police hierarchy populated by youths. Though the older officers present sufficient policing experience, however community oriented policing requires a different training and operational approach to achieve its objectives. The age category of 24-29 has 33.7%. This development needs to be encouraged through regular recruitment of youths into the police force. The future of the police lies in the hands of these young officers who will implement community oriented style of policing after the training. The young officers after training will rely on both their training and the experiences of the older officers to manage crime problems in the community.

The table also showed that males dominated the community oriented policing training with 65% while females had only 35% of the total sampled population. Community oriented policing is a policing strategy that emphasizes more on service to the community rather than enforcement of rules through the use of force or physical strength. Having a gender balanced trained officers in the community prepares the police to adequately reduce crime and solve problems within the community. Police women equally interact with the public while performing their duties, so having them trained too will minimize their negative contact with members of the community.

The marital status of the respondents revealed that 62.2% of the respondents were either married or cohabiting. Policing as a challenging job sometimes makes the officers to have job related stress and psychological breakdown, so having a spouse or partner to share in the daily occupational stress and societal challenges gives the officers a relatively stable mind to perform better on their duties.

The table equally showed that policemen with secondary school qualification 52.0% constituted the highest level of educational attainment among the respondents. This situation is poor considering the expectations of the public from the police. The proper use of police discretion in preventing crime can be affected by the poor judgment of poorly educated police officers. Also the community oriented policing training will be better comprehended and

appreciated by police officers who have already been exposed to the rigors of academic pursuit in tertiary institutions.

The ethnic origin of the respondents revealed that most of the respondents (49.0%) were not from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. This reflected the federal nature of the composition of the Nigeria Police. Community oriented policing training therefore prepared them to understand their community better and tap into the available support and resources in their environment in effectively preventing crime in Nigeria.

4.1 Challenges encountered before and after training

Though the police claimed to relate better with the public after community policing training, there existed some mutual lack of confidence and trust between the police and the public.

Table 4: Common Problems encountered before Training

	Unfriendly Police	Uncooperative Public	Lack of trust from the Public
No	73.8%	79.9%	34.2%
Yes	26.2%	20.1%	65.8%
Total	100%	100%	100.0

From table 12 above, 65.8% of the respondents said lack of trust from the public was the major problem they encountered before community policing training. However, 73.8% encountered unfriendly police, while 79.9% encountered uncooperative public before community policing training. This showed that both the police themselves and members of the public constituted common problems in crime prevention and control to the police respondents before their training. This unfriendly environment made it difficult for the police to gather intelligence needed to prevent crime effectively

This position was corroborated by a police respondent who said:

Before this training if you refuse to collect “rogger” on road block, you will not be part of that beat next time they call you the “bad type” after suffering from the public you also suffer isolation from your police colleagues.
(FGD/Police Ikeja,2011)

This showed that even within the police, officers who have good intentions found it difficult to excel in their duties. They were frustrated by the “bad eggs” and other deviant sub-culture within the system.

Table 5: Problems encountered now after training

	Wrong posting	Uncooperative police	Lack of logistics	Skeptical
Yes	93.7%	73.8%	79.9%	34.2%
No	6.3%	26.2%	20.1%	65.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 13 above showed that majority (93.7%) of the respondents encountered wrong posting after community policing training. They complained that they were not posted where they will practice what they learnt. Also 79.9% of the respondents complained about lack of logistics after training. The basic communication gadgets were not provided by the government after training. On the other hand, 73.8% of the respondents said that their major problem after training was uncooperative colleagues in police. They felt they know the work better than the trainees, and insist on adopting old training style of coercion to solve any crime problem within the community. A respondent said;

After training one expected the job to be interesting but that is not to be you face your colleagues who feel they know more than you. You are posted to anti-crime patrol unit where you drive around without any positive contact with the public.
(Male IDI/Police Makurdi)

Another respondent argued that,

The training is good but the main challenge is how the police will cope with the thinking that power and authority of the policeman is loosed through community oriented policing
(FGD/police/Ikeja/2011)

This showed that it is not just enough to train the police in community oriented policing style, but the proper posting of the trainees after training equally constitute a vital aspect of the entire process. Also the police need to

be educated that community policing training did not make them softer, rather it united them with the people and made their crime control efforts stronger. Even after training, the police should have a feedback structure or mechanism to evaluate the conduct of their trainees after they left the training centres.

4.2 Police Attitudes and Operational Tactics after community Policing Training

The essence of community 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 policing training. While there were some noticeable change in attitude and conduct of the police after training, many of them failed to exhibit some of the traits they were taught in class while on duty in the street. Though the police claim to be more friendly to the public after training, some of them did not display courtesy while handling the public. 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)

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. This uncooperative attitude gave the criminals a conducive environment to operate without being reported and apprehended.

Members of the public equally desired to have a police that is well trained in conflict resolution within the community and wants the government to create more awareness of community policing style among the people. A community leader in Makurdi said that;

This police-public partnership through community policing is a good thing but the police and government need to educate the masses about the benefits a lot of people are not aware of it and are not ready to see the police as partners yet
(Male IDI/community leader makurdi/2011)

This means that there is still the need to sensitize the public through the mass media about this shift in policing focus in Nigeria. This enlightenment of the masses will prepare the mind of the people to accept and work with the police. When the police hear about community oriented policing in the media and from the police, they will be eager to take part in its implementation in the society. With increased acceptance by the people community oriented policing style will thrive. The best form of awareness will equally come when the people witness changes from police conduct and operations within their community.

4.3 Theoretical Discussion of findings

The quality of contact the police have with members of the public could harm or facilitate crime prevention efforts within the community. Where the police were perceived to be extortionists, brutal and corrupt, the “good” members of the community will not feel safe to relate with them and contribute in crime control within the community. This corrupt and unfriendly police will only benefit the bad guys who will operate without being reported within the community. This gap according to Thompson, 2006 makes the entire community victims of police and public poor relationship within the community. It is under such condition that corruption thrives in the country. When leaders know that they will be exposed if they engage in any corrupt act in their community they will desist from such act. The partnership between the police and the public will make the community unsafe for corruption.

Training every police recruit regardless of gender provides the needed social resource to implement community oriented policing strategy in Nigeria. It also provides needed co operations and support from all segments of the community despite the differences in age, religion, gender and socio-economic status in the community. The gap will close on the criminals when crime is perceived by the public and police to be the responsibility of everybody and not the exclusive duty of only a few people in the community.

4.4 Recommendations

To have an effective and efficient police after community oriented policing training in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made;

The police need to be adequately motivated to perform after training.

Crime must be seen as everybody's business and not the responsibility of few police or men in the community.

Officers need to be posted to duties that will bring to bear the training experiences they possess.

Government need to support and promote community oriented policing style and create more enlightenment to the public and monitor the police after training.

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