
STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING PEACE AND NATIONAL PROGRESS THROUGH COMMUNITY POLICING

**Chibuzor Chigozie NWEKE, Anthony EMELIFE, Chinenye Blessing OBI,
Christian Chidi OKEKE**

*Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University,
Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.*

Abstract

Economically vibrant and peaceful communities breathe a fresh air of peace and progress for the nation. Harassed communities signal a dysfunctional State system. This study is on the strategies for fostering peace and national progress through community policing in Southeast, Nigeria. Three research questions and three hypotheses were formulated for the study. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Four hundred respondents were randomly sampled using the Multi-stage sampling technique. Both quantitative and qualitative tools were employed for the study. Instrument for quantitative data was the questionnaire. While for qualitative data, in-depth interview guide was used. Quantitative data collected were subjected to percentages, mean, t-test and chi-square test. While qualitative data was thematically analyzed. The study revealed that the collaboration of community police and law enforcement agencies reduced criminal activities. The study equally shows that peace was sustained by engaging community members, worship centers, banks, market squares etc in policing. Further findings revealed that socio-economic activities are significantly associated with community policing ($p < 0.05$). The study recommends among others that, there is a need to support community policing for effective policing in the country. Not just institutionalizing the types of machinery, but adequate operational facilities should be given to security agencies to assist in their proper functioning.

Key Words: Security, community, policing, peace, engagement

Introduction

A nation's lifeline is its community. Without community, a nation cannot exist. A nation does not make a community; communities make nations. Instead of the community being forced to serve the "almighty" nation on an ongoing basis, the nation should serve the community. Communities that are prosperous and peaceful give the country a fresh breath of progress and serenity. However, communities that are harassed reveal a broken government system. The foundation of a society's development relies on having a peaceful atmosphere in order to set up human capital formation, infrastructure development, and markets that abide by the law. If there is no peace, educational and health systems become ineffective, infrastructure is destroyed, and legal business is disabled (Roshan, 2011).

The possibility of achieving true nationhood in Nigeria is becoming more and more unlikely. Is there a reason why this should still remain the case, 63 years after Independence and 109 years since the 1914 Amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates, which gave rise to contemporary Nigeria? Many areas of our communities are suffering from violent disputes and economic deprivation. By economic exploitation, social neglect, and environmental deterioration, the Niger Delta has seen its villages raped. The Middle Belt is analogous to that time now, particularly in light of the herdsmen's unjustified violence against its populations. It has also reported herdsmen attacks on Enugu villages in the Southeast. Almost all the communities in the nation deal with some kind of criminal activity, like cultist confrontations and harassment, kidnapping, and armed robberies. Some of these tragic events are essentially the result of the central government's inability to manage with a clear sense of direction by safeguarding people's lives and property in the crucial fields of community policing and peacekeeping (Para-Mallam, 2018).

If nothing is done to stop this trend, a nation would inevitably collapse when several groups are routinely violated by poor governance and various forms of violence, as we currently witness in Nigeria (Para-Mallam, 2018). The Southeastern region of Nigeria, in particular, is currently at a crossroads due to armed robberies, kidnappings, cult activities, ritualism, and unidentified gunmen. If the ongoing, fatal attacks on our communities continue unchecked, we are in danger of losing our communities and the internal cohesion required to achieve nationhood. This is mostly because of the excessive, largely ineffective concentration of power and security control that is present in Nigeria today (Para-Mallam, 2018). Therefore, to have a nation where development is sustained, may require grassroots mobilization.

The need to empower local communities for the progress of man and his community, former President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2004 introduced community policing into selected pilot Police Divisions in the country. The aim of community policing is to provide an atmosphere in which the police and law-abiding citizens can work in partnership to solve problems, share resources, prevent crime, promote inter-agency collaboration, bring offenders to justice, reduce conflict and improve the overall quality of community life (Para-Mallam, 2018). Community policing is a policing style established to build a strong partnership between the people and the police in an attempt to address criminalities such as vandalism, robbery, kidnapping and other social vices that constitutes a threat to lives and properties (Abdulraham, 2007). The partnership that exists between these parties is key to the success of policing. Indeed, this method advocates for a paradigm shift. Rather than leaving entirely the job of policing to the state and police, people are more than ever tasked to play many complementary roles in the security affairs of their communities. Historically, community policing as a concept originated from the United States in the 1970s as a philosophy and tactic of policing to integrate the public into police institutions, not as police personnel but as

collaborators in the security affairs of the nation for optimal efficiency and responsiveness (Wong, 2009).

The democratic tenet that police are trusted by their fellow people to uphold their fundamental rights to liberty, equality, and the rule of law is the basis of community policing. The police must be an integral part of the communities they live in and serve in order to fulfil this privileged duty. Also, the strong relationship between the police and the community, built on mutual trust and respect, motivates residents to take responsibility for their own security and the general standard of living in their town. In order to safeguard lives and property at the neighbourhood level, community policing is strategically oriented to foster a solid partnership that is focused on cooperative efforts between the police and the general people (Para-Mallam, 2018; Musuguri, 2018; Omowunmi, 2016). As part of this police strategy, the Nigeria Police Force must transform its officers into community change agents who partner with local residents to lower crime rates (Para-Mallam, 2018).

The basis for how the police and community effectively cooperate to identify, prevent, and quell crimes in the community with the aim of enhancing general quality of life is a partnership created between community members and the police. In order to increase the safety of their neighbourhoods, all members of the community can join forces actively with law enforcement agencies under the guiding principle of protecting the community. This kind of partnership could therefore open the door for a local vigilante to work with law enforcement organisations like the Nigerian Police, the Nigerian Civil Defence, etc. to gather information, make arrests, report crimes, and prevent crimes in communities, all in an effort to maintain peace in their neighbourhoods. Of course, no one would object to live in a neighbourhood where they can go about their daily business without fear for their lives or their property. A community that is free from fear and violence provides the needed enabling atmosphere and environment for individuals to aspire and work towards the socio-economic development of the society, which goes a long way affecting a nation well-being in general (Groenwald & Peace, 2004; Ukwayi, Agba, Inyang, & Eraye, 2011).

There have been studies that established the fact that community policing can be used to control criminal activities in Nigeria (Ukwayi, Angioha & Ayi, 2018; Owagbemi & Olaseind, 2021; Ogbonnaya, Iheanyi & Agodi, 2019; Chikwendu, Nwankwo & Oli, 2017). However, there is very little if any evidence-based research on community policing most especially as a security strategy for fostering peace and national progress in Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria. Hence, the present study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine community policing as a strategy for strategies for fostering peace and national progress in Anambra State. In particular, the study examine:

1. how community partnership was used as a strategy by community policing to prevent criminal activities in Anambra State;
2. how the collaboration between community police and law enforcement agency help in reducing criminal activities in Anambra State; and
3. the impact of community policing on the overall quality of community life in Anambra State

Research Questions

1. What are the community partnership strategies used by community policing to prevent criminal activities in Anambra State?

2. To what extent has the collaboration between community police and law enforcement agency help in reducing criminal activities in Anambra State?
3. To what degree is the impact of community policing on the overall quality of community life in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

1. Partnership strategies used by community policing to prevent criminal activities is not associated with the overall quality of community life in Anambra State
2. Collaboration between community police and law enforcement agency in reducing criminal activities is not associated with the overall quality of community life in Anambra State
3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the impact community policing has on the overall quality of community life in Anambra State

Methodology

Research design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This type of research enabled researchers to employ questionnaires to determine the opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of people about issues confronting food security in Southeast Nigeria.

Area of the study

The study was carried out in Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria. Anambra is one of the States that make up the Southeast region of Nigeria.

Population and sampling technique for the study

The population of the study comprised 4177821 persons that 18 years and above. The 2006 population figure for Anambra state is fourmillion, one hundred and seventy seven thousand, eight hundred and twenty one (4,177,821) (NPC, 2006). The sample size used for the study was first determined using Taro Yamani. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting 400 participants. Sampling was done in two stages. At the first stage, the purposive sampling technique was used to select Anambra state. The choice of these states was based on proximity. At the second stage, 400 participants were selected purposively.

Instruments for data collection

A structured questionnaire designed by the researcher was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections I and II. Section I provided information on the personal information of the respondents while section II was made up of three clusters according to the three specific objectives/research questions. Responses to the items in the questionnaire were based on a four-point Likert type rating scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, Disagree (D) 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 for cluster one and two. Clusters three was structured on a four point Likert type rating scale of Very Great Extent (VGE) (4 points), Great Extent (GE) (3 points), Little Extent (LE) (2 points), and Very Little Extent (VLE) (1 points) for research questions two and three. The instrument was duly validated by three experts (2 from the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka) and 1 from Department of Computer Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka). Reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha. A reliability coefficient of 0.92 was established which signified very high reliability of the instrument.

Data collection

Direct method was applied by the researcher and two research assistants in distributing and collecting the questionnaire from the respondents at the respective locations of the study area. Before the distribution of the questionnaire, the research assistants were briefed on the modalities for distributing and collecting the questionnaire from the respondents on the spot. This ensured that the respondents appropriately complete the questionnaire. Thus, there was 100% return of the questionnaire, and were duly used for data analysis.

Data analysis

The data analyses employed in this study were both descriptive and inferential analysis. Mean and percentages were used to analyze the research questions while Chi-square test and t-test were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used as the benchmark for decision making for each item, since a four-point rating scale was used for the study. Thus any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was considered as accepted by the respondents, while any item with a mean below 2.50 was considered as unaccepted by the respondents. All computations were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0.

Results

The responses of the respondents on each of the items in the questionnaire were computed and presented on Tables based on the three research questions and three hypotheses that were formulated for the study.

Research Question 1: What are the community partnership strategies used by community police to prevent criminal activities in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean responses of respondents’ on community partnership strategies used by community police to prevent criminal activities in Anambra State

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Members of community take active part in policing	2.90	0.97	Accepted
2	A strong mutual trust exist between local security outfits and community members	2.87	0.94	Accepted
3	A mutual respect exist between local security outfits and community members	2.86	0.91	Accepted
4	Worship centers, banks, market centers etc. work hand in hand with local security outfits	2.92	0.97	Accepted
5	Members of community cooperate with local security outfits in achieving a secured community	3.05	0.88	Accepted
6	Members of community are fully integrated into policing	2.74	0.94	Accepted

\bar{X} = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

From Table 1, it can be seen that all items 1-6 had Mean scores greater than 2.50 indicating that respondents’ identified all item statements as community partnership strategies used by community policing to prevent criminal activities in Anambra State.

Hypothesis 1: Partnership strategies used by community policing to prevent criminal activities is not associated with the overall quality of community life in Southeast Nigeria

The Results of Hypothesis 1 are presented on table 2.

Table 2: A cross tabulation of the association between partnership strategies used by community policing to prevent criminal activities and the overall quality of community life in Southeast Nigeria

Partnership strategies	Quality of community life		Frequency	p-value
	Low extent	Great extent		
Agree	61 (23.37)	200 (76.63)	261	0.00
Disagree	78 (56.11)	61 (43.89)	139	

From Table 2, it can be seen that majority (261) of the respondents agreed that quality of community life is impacted by the partnership strategies used by community policing to prevent criminal activities. Among the 261 respondents', 76.63 indicated that quality of community life was improved to a great extent, while only 23.37 % indicated quality of community life was improved to a little extent. The analysis revealed that majority of the respondents' indicated that there was improvement in the quality of community life. A p-value of 0.00 less than 0.05 shows that partnership strategies used by community policing to prevent criminal activities is associated with the overall quality of community life. Hence, partnership strategies used by community policing to prevent criminal activities significantly improve the overall quality of community life in Southeast Nigeria.

Research Question 2: To what extent has the collaboration between community police and law enforcement agency help in reducing criminal activities in Southeast Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean responses of respondents' on the extent to which the collaboration between community policing and law enforcement agency help in reducing criminal activities in Anambra State

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Stand as strong allies to law enforcement agency in investigating crimes in communities	2.74	0.91	Accepted
2	Stand as strong allies to law enforcement agency in arresting hoodlums in communities	2.79	0.93	Accepted
3	Served as informants to the police	2.71	0.97	Accepted
4	Involved legal apparatus to bring offenders to justice	2.96	0.89	Accepted
5	Stand in the gap between the community and effective policing	3.06	0.94	Accepted
6	Interprets laws for people	2.77	0.92	Accepted
7	The success of the various law enforcement agencies depends on the collaboration with local security outfits	3.07	0.90	Accepted

\bar{X} = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

From Table 3, it can also be seen that items 1- 7 had Mean scores greater than 2.50 indicating that respondents' identified the item statements as ways through which the collaboration between community policing and law enforcement agency can help reduce criminal activities in Anambra State.

Hypothesis Two: The collaboration between community police and law enforcement agency in reducing criminal activities is not associated with the overall quality of community life in Southeast Nigeria

The Results of Hypothesis 2 are presented on table 4.

Table 4: A cross tabulation of the association between collaboration strategies of community policing and overall quality of community life Southeast Nigeria

Collaboration strategies	Quality of community life		Frequency	p-value
	Low extent	Great extent		
Agree	44 (16.54)	222 (83.46)	266	0.00
Disagree	95 (70.89)	39 (29.11)	134	

Data on the impact of collaboration strategies of community policing on the overall quality of community life show that majority (266) of the respondents agreed that collaboration strategies of community policing improved the overall quality of community life. Among the 266 respondents, 83.46 % indicated that quality of community life was improved to a great extent, while only 16.54 % indicated quality of community life was improved to a little extent. The analysis revealed that majority of the respondents indicated that there was improvement in the quality of community life. A p-value of 0.00 less than 0.05 shows that collaboration strategies used by community policing to reduce criminal activities is associated with the overall quality of community life. Hence, the collaboration between community policing and law enforcement agency in reducing criminal activities significantly improve the overall quality of community life in Southeast Nigeria.

Research Question 3: To what degree is the impact of community policing on the overall quality of community life in Southeast Nigeria?

Table 5: Mean responses of respondents' on the impact of community policing on the overall quality of community life in Anambra State

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Promote safety of live and properties	2.72	0.98	GE
2	Decline in crime rate	2.70	0.99	GE
3	I go about my normal business without fear of intimidation and harassment	2.87	0.96	GE
4	Law and order maintained in your community	2.77	0.95	GE
5	Socio-economic activities maintained in your community	2.93	0.84	GE
6	Am not afraid to go to the farm for my usual farm work	2.91	0.83	GE

\bar{X} = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

From Table 3, it can be seen that items 1-6 had Mean scores greater than 2.50 indicating that respondents identified these item statements as the impacts community policing has on the life of people in Anambra State.

Hypothesis three: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the impact community policing has on the overall quality of community life in Southeast Nigeria

The Results of Hypothesis 2 are presented on table 4.

Table 6: t-test analysis of difference in respondents' responses on the impact of community policing on the overall quality of community life in Southeast Nigeria

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	df	p-value	Decision
Male	205	2.75	0.51	3.55	398	0.00	Sig.
Female	195	2.99	0.84				

\bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; t-critical = 1.96; t-cal = t- calculated value; N = Number of respondents for each category; df = Degrees of freedom; Sig = Significant at 0.05 level; NS = Not significant.

This hypothesis was tested by carrying out an independent sample t-test by comparing respondents' opinions on the on the impact of community policing on the overall quality of community life in Southeast Nigeria. There was a significant difference in the mean response for male ($\bar{X} = 2.75$, $SD = 0.51$) and females ($\bar{X} = 2.99$, $SD = 0.84$), $t\text{-cal} (398) = 3.55$, $p = 0.00$ at 0.05 level of significance. Following this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, the opinions of the respondents on the impact of community policing on the overall quality of community life in Southeast Nigeria differ by the various respondents.

Discussion

The results of this study revealed that community partnership was a strategy used by community policing to prevent criminal activities in Southeast Nigeria. Some of the ways community partnership was used in community policing is demonstrated in the allowing of members of the community to take active part in policing. By this approach, security was made everybody's business. As a matter of fact, it put people at the centre of security affairs, and such would make them feel that the security of their lives and properties lies in their hands. Another community partnership strategy that has proved to be potent in effective community policing is the strong mutual trust and respect that exists between local security outfits and community members. Trust is a necessary component that must be built between two parties for a smooth relationship to exist. This ample ingredient built by local vigilante with community members resulted in successful operations of community policing. With the level of trust built between the two parties enabled community security outfit cooperate and integrate individual members, worship centers, banks, market centers etc. work hand in hand with local security outfits. With this kind of partnership, intelligence is easily gathered and attempted crimes averted.

The study also shows that the collaboration between community policing and law enforcement agencies helped reduce criminal activities in Southeast Nigeria. This finding is in line with that of Adegbusi (2009), who posited that vigilante service groups partner with the police in every community they operate in, and this partnership has led to a reduction in crime rates.

This was possible because local security outfits stood as strong allies to the various law enforcement agencies in investigating crimes and the arrest of hoodlums in communities. This way, criminal activities are constantly put under check. Aside from forming alliances with the police force and other security agencies, the community security outfits served as a reliable source of information for the police. That way, it would facilitate the operations of the police in fighting crime. This finding is in congruence with the finding of Whisenand et al. (2002), who in their study reported that a better flow of information between the police and the community resulted in a better implementation of crime prevention and crime control activities. Another important way the collaboration strategy helped in fighting crime was by involving of involving legal apparatus to bring offenders to justice. Thus, mischievous persons will not have the opportunity to take law into their hands. For example, in the case of jungle justice. Lastly, the study revealed that community policing improved the overall quality of community life in Southeast Nigeria. This was demonstrated in the safety of lives and properties of member communities, decline in crime rates and growth in socio-economic activities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that community partnership was a strategy used by community policing to prevent criminal activities in Southeast Nigeria. The partnership was built on mutual trust and respect between members of communities and vigilante. Thus enabling the smooth cooperation between parties in running an effective policing. The level of partnership that exist between community members and the community police, gave opportunity for law enforcement agencies to collaborate with community police which facilitate their operation in preventing and reducing criminal activities also. Generally, community policing affected positively the quality of lives of community members by sustaining peace as well as creating an stable atmosphere socio-economic activities to thrive.

Recommendations

1. There is a need for effective community policing in the country. Not just institutionalizing the types of machinery, so adequate operational facilities should be given to security agencies to assist in their proper functioning.
2. The government needs to increase its funding for security agencies so that modern and adequate equipment to combat crimes could be acquired. However, such funds should be properly monitored to avoid diversion into private pockets and also rid the security agencies such as the Nigerian police of its corrupt elements. It is also imperative that security agents must be encouraged through regular promotion, good salary, and decent accommodation.
3. Appropriate training programmes should be organized to acquaint vigilante neighbourhood watch etc on how to carry out investigations especially by working with community members.

References

- Adegbusi, k (2009). Vigilante groups and the task of policing. *Journal of African Crime Studies*, 2(4).
- Chikwendu, S.C., Nwankwo, I.U & Oli, N.P. (2017). Survey of public perception of role and acceptance of vigilante service groups as agents of crime control in Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria. *International Journal Peer Reviewed Journal*, 3(9), 266-271.
- Groenewald, H & Peace, G. (2004). Police reform through community based policing: philosophy and guidelines for implementation. *Policy Paper*, September 2004
- Musuguri, J. N. (2018). The impact of community policing in giving special attention to vulnerable groups: A social work perspective. *African Journal of Social Work*, 8(2), 102-108
- Ogbonnaya, N. U., Iheanyi, K. W & Agodi, K. (2019). Community Policing and Domestic Security in Abia State, Nigeria, 2014-2018. *RUJMASS*, 5(1), 17-24
- Omowunmi J. O. (2016). Community policing in South-West Nigeria: Finding a nexus between the police and the people. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(23), 29-35
- Owagbemi, G.O & Olaseinde, O.S (2021). The perception and measures towards curbing kidnapping in Ondo State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*, 8 (8), 23-31

- Para-Mallam, G. (2018). *Community policing and peace building in Nigeria*. <https://paramallampeacefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Community-Policing-Paper-Presentation-NIPSS-SEC-40-September-26th-2018-.pdf>
- Roshan, P. (2011). Peace as a pre-requisite for development. <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/articles/kissing-the-tiger/?location=&theme=development>.
- Ukwayi, J.K., Agba, A.M.O., Inyang, J. & Eraye, C. (2011). Associate factors in street crimes in Calabar metropolis. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 62 (2), 236 - 247
- Ukwayi, J.K., Angioha, P.U & Ayi, A.B (2018). Security agencies and kidnapping in Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 7(12), 1, 49-58
- Whisenand, M. & Ferguson, F. (2002). *The Management of Police Organizations*. 5th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Wong, K.C. (2009). *A general theory of community policing*. Retrieved from http://works.bepress.com/kam_wong/6.