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INFORMATION SHARING AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY POLICING FOR ETHICAL PRACTICES TOWARDS RESILIENT NATIONAL ECONOMY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This article explores the significance of information sharing and community participation in community policing to foster ethical practices and contribute to a resilient national economy in Nigeria. Community policing involves a collaborative partnership between the police and members of the public, aiming to protect lives and properties at the neighbourhood level. Ethical practices within community policing ensure public safety, and this can be further enhanced through effective information-sharing systems and community participation, particularly in the form of police-community information sharing. The paper discusses key concepts such as community policing, information sharing, and community participation. It also examines the challenges associated with information sharing and community participation in community policing in Nigeria, including the timely provision of information and obstacles to effective community engagement. The paper concludes with recommendations to address these challenges and promote ethical practices within community policing.

Keywords: community policing, police force, information sharing, community participation, ethics.

1. Introduction

The rapid development and modernization happening worldwide have significant implications for economic transformation. However, this progress has also led to an increase in crime, including armed robbery, kidnapping, and drug-related offences, which has made people feel insecure. In response to these challenges, community policing was introduced as an initiative to encourage collaboration between the police force and the public. The aim is to create a partnership in crime prevention and management where both civilians and the police work

together on a common platform to share timely information, recognize problems, and identify effective actions and solutions to combat crime and social issues that contribute to criminal behaviour in their community. For the community to experience economic resilience, active participation is required from the local government and the average citizen in making community policing effective.

The police force has unfortunately been plagued by various forms of unethical conduct among its personnel in recent times. These unethical practices include bribery, involvement in patronage politics, compromising the integrity of the criminal justice system, financial corruption, leadership shortcomings, and violations of human rights (Glenn, 2011). Law enforcement officers must perform their duties with the utmost ethical conduct to safeguard the public trust. The trust of the public is greatly influenced by the ethical behaviour exhibited by law enforcement personnel. When members of the police force engage in unethical conduct, it undermines the trust and confidence that the public places in them. Ethical conduct within the police force is essential for maintaining law and order, upholding justice, and ensuring the safety and security of communities. It involves adhering to a code of ethics that promotes integrity, honesty, fairness, respect for human rights, and accountability. By maintaining high ethical standards, law enforcement officers can demonstrate their commitment to serving and protecting the public. Ethical conduct also fosters transparency and accountability within the police force, allowing for effective collaboration with the community in addressing crime and maintaining public order. Building a resilient national economy requires a strong foundation of trust between the police force and the public. When the police are perceived as ethical and trustworthy, it enhances community cooperation and participation in community policing efforts. This partnership between the police and the community is vital for promoting public safety, preventing crime, and fostering economic growth and stability.

2. Conceptual Clarification

Community Policing

Community policing is a philosophy and approach to law enforcement that emphasizes collaboration and partnership between the police and the community to prevent crime, address public safety issues, and maintain order. It involves a shift from the traditional reactive model of policing, where law enforcement primarily responds to incidents after they occur, to a proactive model focused on problem-solving and prevention. The concept of community policing recognizes that the police cannot effectively address crime and maintain public safety alone. It highlights the importance of building trust, mutual respect, and strong relationships between the police and community members. By working together, they can identify and address the root causes of crime and social disorder, as well as the factors that contribute to fear and mistrust within the community. Historically, the origins of policing can be traced back to the need for societal protection and the maintenance of order. In Nigeria, for example, traditional institutions and community-based vigilante groups have played a role in ensuring public safety. Over time, these institutions have collaborated with formal policing agencies like the Nigerian Police Force through community policing approaches.

Emphasizes problem-solving techniques and partnerships with community organizations, local government agencies, businesses, and residents. It involves initiatives such as neighbourhood watch programs, community patrols, community-based crime prevention projects, and community engagement activities. The goal is to create safer and more secure communities by addressing the underlying causes of crime, enhancing public trust, and promoting a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members. By embracing community policing principles and practices, law enforcement agencies can foster a sense of shared responsibility for public safety, improve the quality of information and intelligence gathering, and enhance the overall effectiveness of crime prevention and law enforcement efforts.

Community Participation

Refers to the active involvement of community members in various aspects of decision-making, problem-solving, and taking responsibility for the well-being and development of their community. It is based on the belief that individuals and groups within a community have valuable insights, knowledge, and resources that can contribute to positive change and improvement. In the context of community policing, community participation plays a crucial role in establishing a collaborative partnership between the police and the community. It aims to empower community members to actively participate in addressing crime, maintaining public safety, and addressing community concerns. The objective of community policing is to create a sense of shared responsibility and ownership of public safety within the community. By involving community members in decision-making processes and problem-solving activities, community policing seeks to harness the collective wisdom, expertise, and experiences of the community to prevent crime and enhance overall security.

Information Sharing

Is a crucial aspect of community policing that involves the exchange of relevant and timely information between the police and community members. It plays a vital role in promoting effective crime prevention, detection, and overall public safety. The willingness of community members to share information with the police is essential for the successful operation of law enforcement agencies.

Ethics

Within the framework of community policing, it pertains to the adherence to moral principles and professional standards that guide the behaviour of law enforcement officers and their interactions with the community. It involves conducting oneself in a manner that upholds integrity, fairness, and respect for the rights and dignity of individuals.

3. Ethical Practices in Community Policing Encompass Several Key Aspects:

- 1. Integrity and Transparency:** Police officers are expected to demonstrate honesty, sincerity, and accountability in their actions. They should uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct, ensuring that their decisions and actions are guided by fairness and impartiality.
- 2. Respect for Human Rights:** Community policing emphasizes the protection of human rights and dignity. Law enforcement officers should treat all individuals with respect

and ensure that their actions do not infringe upon the rights of community members. This includes upholding due process, avoiding discrimination, and promoting equal treatment under the law.

3. **Confidentiality and Privacy:** Police officers must handle sensitive information with the utmost confidentiality and respect for privacy. They should exercise caution when collecting, storing, and sharing personal information, ensuring that it is used only for legitimate law enforcement purposes.
4. **Non-Discrimination and Cultural Sensitivity:** Community policing requires officers to be sensitive to cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity within the community. They should avoid bias or prejudice and strive to build trust and understanding among different groups.
5. **Accountability and professionalism:** Ethical community policing entails being accountable for one's actions and responsibilities. Police officers should maintain a high level of professionalism, adhering to established protocols, codes of conduct, and legal frameworks. They should also be open to feedback and willing to address any concerns or complaints from the community.
6. **Ethics plays a crucial role in law enforcement, particularly in the context of information sharing and community partnerships in community policing.** Maintaining ethical practices when obtaining and using information is essential to establishing and maintaining trust between the public and law enforcement agencies.
7. **When law enforcement agencies handle information ethically, it instils confidence in the public that their information will be treated with confidentiality and respect and used for legitimate law enforcement purposes.** This trust encourages the public to actively participate in community policing efforts by sharing relevant information and cooperating with law enforcement personnel.
8. **Ethical handling of information by law enforcement agencies also contributes to the effectiveness of community partnerships in community policing.** When the public sees that their information is being used responsibly and that their safety and well-being are prioritized, they are more likely to continue engaging with law enforcement, reporting suspicious activities, and working together to address community issues.

Indeed, information sharing, and community participation are crucial aspects of community policing's ethical practices. When community members actively participate in the policing process and share relevant information with law enforcement agencies, it strengthens the overall effectiveness of crime prevention and control efforts. Here are some key points regarding information sharing and community participation in community policing:

Information Sharing: Effective information sharing between the public and law enforcement agencies is essential for identifying and addressing local policing issues. Community members can provide valuable insights, tips, and first-hand knowledge about criminal activities, suspicious behaviour, and other safety concerns. This information enables law enforcement to take proactive measures, allocate resources effectively, and respond promptly to emerging threats.

Trust and Confidence: Maintaining trust and confidence between the public and law enforcement is crucial for successful community policing. When community members believe that their information will be treated with confidentiality and used responsibly, they are more likely to come forward and share it. Law enforcement agencies must establish clear protocols and safeguards to protect the privacy and security of individuals who provide information.

Some people refer to neighbourhood watch, also known as community policing, as a situation or a system in which the police and community members form citizen advisory committees to facilitate communication between police officers and the public (Sykes, 1978). The goal of community policing is to assist the community in finding the best ways to safeguard its members' lives and property against criminal activity (Miller, Hess, & Orthmann, 2013). Maintaining a discussion with the public regarding methods that limit crime exposure and developing community-based crime prevention programs, as well as moving community policing forward in both urban and rural regions, are ways to put this into practice. Neighbourhood watch and community involvement are therefore components of a larger effort to make community policing more receptive to community needs, develop a partnership approach to the prevention and detection of crime, and act as watchdogs for the force to prevent unethical behaviour (Salomane, 2010).

Three crucial practical strategies—police-community partnerships, police-community information sharing, and police involvement in community affairs—are urgently encouraged if community police and resilience economies are to work in any society. A technique for engaging the public as a serious partner in community policing is the police-community partnership program. Establishing citizen advisory committees creates avenues of contact between the public and the police, which is how this works. These committees typically include charismatic, well-established individuals from the community who are passionate about serving the needs of the entire community. According to Ren, Cao, Lovrich, and Gafney (2005), this program enables the police to interact with neighbourhood people to discuss crime in the area and use initiative to solve problems.

The method for effective community policing is police-community information sharing. The sharing of information aids in the identification of criminal suspects by the police (Kelly & Clark, 2003). Sharing information makes it possible to prosecute offenders in court, which is a strategy that improves community policing (Quinney, 1974).

The purpose of community policing is to organize and mobilize the neighbourhood to combat local crime alongside the police, to serve as a liaison between the neighbourhood and the local police station, and to serve as a crime prevention officer, which entails being responsible for all strategies and initiatives to combat crime in the neighbourhood. On the other side, the community's responsibility is to show up to the meetings of the subforum for community policing to share information and talk about action plans with the sector commander to address crime in the neighbourhood. The roles also include taking ownership of community policing and supporting the upholding of the law, as well as participating in neighbourhood initiatives to protect the area in which they live, work, and play. (2011) Turetken, Jain, Quesenberry, and

Ngwenyama. This emphasizes the necessity and value of information sharing and community partnerships to promote a safe and peaceful society.

With regard to the issues of property identification and crime prevention, the police have a responsibility to engage with the neighbourhood. The consultation must show that the community participated fully. Simply put, consultation means that the service should engage with, pay attention to, and learn from the individuals it serves. The police should make sure they stay in contact with the communities they serve by learning what services they need, how they prefer to receive them, and what issues they encountered. The purpose of information exchange between citizens and community policing is to increase communication between the service and the community to promote cooperative problem resolution with a view to providing ethical community service. Only when the community they serve cooperates and has faith in them can the police department provide efficient service.

4. Factors that Encourage Community Participation in Community Policing and Information Sharing

The following methods can help facilitate information exchange and community involvement:

- a. Human relationships and contact: In a world where internet communication is becoming more prevalent, human relationships and contact are crucial for facilitating information sharing between the community police and the public. This included the police taking part in activities, municipal meetings, and educational programs in schools. Building trust in and facilitating information sharing with the police requires direct human contact and long-lasting relationships through face-to-face involvement (Roché & Oberwittler, 2018).
- b. Attitude and behaviour: The police's attitude affects how eager they are to disclose information. It is simpler for young people to communicate with the police if they have a more "human, less tough" attitude (Beugre & Baron, 2001). Information sharing may be hampered by the police's lack of interest in and motivation toward the public.
- c. Accessibility and communication: It's critical that the police communicate well with the public. Finland has placed a strong emphasis on the need for the police to be more approachable to citizens who want to talk about their issues, especially young people who are eager to offer information. The police should also take the time to listen. Accessibility and confidence in facilitating information sharing are related; hence, the police should be more omnipresent and untouchable. Social media and technological advancements like APPS are examples of dynamic and modern communication techniques that make it simpler and safer to share information online.
- d. Response and efficiency: Slow problem resolution or non-response to service requests can prevent users from exchanging information. Providing services promptly is one technique to win over the public's trust. It also emphasizes how crucial it is to follow protocols consistently to facilitate information sharing.
- e. Data security and protection: Information exchange between the public and law enforcement agencies must be effective for community policing to be effective. The public's attitudes toward providing information whenever a crime is committed are

influenced by an individual's perception of safety while sharing information with law enforcement. In essence, Jackson, and Bradford (2011) contend that effective community policing operations depend greatly on the protocols and methods used to protect and secure data.

Community Policing: Difficulties of Information Sharing and Community Participation

The following obstacles to information sharing and community involvement in community policing, as identified by Mbhele (1998) and Van Graan (2008), include:

1. Insufficient police protection and assistance
2. The police's involvement in illegal activity causes the public to lose trust in their ability to disclose important information.
3. The idea of community policing hasn't got enough attention. The service is not widely known in the neighbourhood, and most people are unaware of what it stands for.
4. People from the community are being targeted by criminals because they cooperate with the police.
5. Some local police forces don't represent the community and instead solely reflect the interests of one political party.
6. The police try to employ locals as informants and do not view them as allies.

5. SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

Sharing of information and community involvement in community policing for moral practices toward national resilience are crucial. In actuality, timely information and complete community support are essential for community policing to be effective. We can draw the conclusion from this research that if the community and the police can share information, they will work together to combat crime. To combat crime and promote economic resilience, the community police should organize and mobilize the neighbourhood.

The resilience of the relationships that community policing fosters between stakeholders serves as its litmus test. When communities are attacked or disparaged or the police violate their moral or ethical obligations, the strength of these linkages may be put to the test. The reduction of fear of crime and satisfaction with policing are significantly influenced by a visible and reassuring presence, listening to community issues, and creating big cooperative projects.

5.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Communities should continue the strides that their local police departments have made in examining the reported crimes in their areas.
- ii. To raise public awareness of common policing, there should be campaigns on the topic in the print and electronic media. This can be achieved by handing out pamphlets with information about local newspapers, radio talk shows, and community policing.

- iii. Resources are required to support community policing, and a lack of such resources makes it difficult to carry out its duties. The police are unable to effectively reduce crime because it is difficult for them to carry out their tasks in the local communities.
- iv. The requirement for community support and a positive working relationship between the police to have effective community policing, there needs to be a special emphasis on encouraging residents and law enforcement to interact in a cordial manner. Residents must be eager to work with the police to prevent crime.
- v. Communication. Due to a lack of contact or a breakdown in communication between the police and the community, the police do not provide the community with feedback when crimes are reported. They ought to include a communication plan in their operations' strategy.

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