Community Policing and Crime Control in Isiala Mbano Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.

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Abstract: Some communities in Nigeria are faced with unprecedented increase in criminal activities such as robbery, arson, kidnapping for ransom, and murder etc. This have become worrisome to stakeholders and the people. Notwithstanding the effort of the police, crime appears not to abate in these communities. The recent clamour for community policing as proactive measure towards fighting crime in these communities have given impetus to this study. So this study was undertaken to determine the impact of community policing on crime control in Isiala Mbano Local Government area of Imo State, Nigeria. This study was survey in nature and a sample of 812 respondents were drawn from three communities purposively selected for the study. Data was collected through questionnaire and interview (KIP). Chi-square statistical tool was used to analyze the hypotheses formulated for the study. The analysis of the hypothesis revealed that the calculated value x^2 at 8.2 is more than the table value at 7.815, and in the second hypothesis the calculated value x^2 at 4.8 is less than the table value at 7.815. The findings revealed that police patrol of the community has helped in control of crime and that police partnership with the community did not contribute to crime control. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the police should increase their foot and motorized patrols in the communities, the members of the community should be educated through the mass media, workshops and seminars to understand the importance of collaborating with the police in combating crime in the community and that a forum be established in the community to enable members meet freely with the police to discuss crime related issues. It further recommended that the government should vigorously embark on comprehensive training aimed at attitudinal change and professional efficiency among the rank and file and other officers' cadre of the police.

Key Words: Community policing, police patrol, police partnership

I.   INTRODUCTION

Many communities in Nigeria are faced with unprecedented increase in criminal activities such as robbery, arson, kidnapping for ransom, and murder etc. This have become a source of to the government, stakeholders and the populace. Notwithstanding, the effort of the police to combat crime, crime appears not to abate in these communities. The clamour for community policing as proactive measure towards fighting crime in these communities in Nigeria have gained currency. Community policing is a strategy that focuses on the police building ties with community members. These ties enable the police to work closely with community members in the fight against crime. Community policing approach to crime detection, fighting, and prevention became active in Nigeria in 2004, during President UmaruYar'adua's administration. According to Olaolu (2015), community policing is a policy that requires the police to adopt a proactive approach to address public safety concerns. Tope (2016) see community policing as a strategy which does not only allow the police to proactively act beyond mere crime fighting, but also to partner with the community members in setting the security priorities in the society and fashioning ways of resolving identifiable problems in the community.

It entails a systematic investment and inclusion of credible local guards, vigilante groups, able-bodied youths, traditional rulers, and chiefs in the conventional police system for achieving a far-reaching success in crime prevention and control at the grassroots or community level. Community policing advocates that police should be highly visible in community through foot patrols and should integrate themselves into communities to ensure confidence and trust from communities, Folashade, Okeshola and Mediara (2013). Community policing have without doubt, been embraced in Nigeria as a model of crime control. In Isiala Mbano, the police have partnered with the community in effort to combat crime, the patrol strategy was introduced to make the people feel the presence of the police in the community.

Scholars have made several contributions to the issue of police patrol team and crime control in Nigeria. Odinkalu (2005) for instance argued that the effectiveness of the police in the communities will reduce the rate of crime. He further argued that if the police do not have good vehicles, gadgets and all the necessary instruments and equipment needed to combat crime in these communities, the rate of crime may continue to increase. In the view of Igbo (2007), community policing since its introduction in Nigeria in 2004, has witnessed the increase of foot and motorized patrol teams which is referred to as Beat Patrol System (BPS). This involves the training of some police officers to squad some stations, and protect some sensitive areas. The Beat Patrol System increases the chances of criminals being apprehended and in this way deters or diminishes criminal activities wherever they establish a presence. Mobolaji and Akim (2014) point that a community that wants its own style of policing should provide the necessary tools for the police to enable them combat crime effectively.

In the view of Nnam (2013), the use of police patrol teams in the practice of community, policing is one important approach to fixing the problem of crime in the neighbourhoods and communities. Sherman and Eck (2004) opined that police patrol can reduce crime, but if only it is specifically targeted at crime hotspots (high crime locations). In the words of Dalgleish and Myhill (2004), police patrol and particularly foot patrol teams of the police create a positive impact on the public perceptions of the police. Innes (2004) posits that the visible presence of police officers patrolling especially on foot, may also act as a "control signal" which is a sign that the authorities are taking the problems of the local people seriously.

For Ndudi (2014), establishing and maintaining mutual trust between the citizens of a community and police is the main goal of community policing. He further posits that the police have recognized the need for cooperation with the community and have encouraged members of the community to come forward with crime fighting information. Police partnership with the community involves confidence building measures and capacities in which confidence are fogged in conjunction with other government agencies, community members and groups, human and social service providers, private businesses and the media.

There is need for effective police partnership with the community in reducing and controlling crime, this will help in shaping police objectives and interventions, as well as evaluate them. Effective community policing depends on optimizing positive contact between patrol officers and community members, police departments, supplementing automobiles patrols with foot, bicycles, scooters, as well as adding "mini-stations" to bring police closer to the community. A regular community meeting between the police and the community offers the latter the opportunity to air concerns or views, and find ways to address them. But most importantly, community members would find it difficult to share information with the police if their identity and security are compromised. Hence, the police must show commitment in protecting the identities of concerned citizens willing to share information concerning community safety and crime control.

Igwim (2015) maintains that problem-solving issues require a lot more tough energy and action, than traditional incidents-based police response to crime and disorder. In full partnership, the police and the community residents identify core problems, propose solutions, and implement a solution. Thus, community members identify concerns they feel are most threatening to their safety and wellbeing. These areas of concerns then become priority for joint police-community interventions. Bolm and Haley (2005) points that for this problem-solving process to operate effectively, the police needs to devote time and attention to discovering community concerns. In the view of Alao (2015), the police educate community members through effective periodic community meeting between the police and the people on how to track down criminals in their communities.

In the view of Nte (2012), there is no significant relationship between police partnership and crime control. For him, the community remains alienated and uncooperative to the police, who will naturally rely on crime detection and investigation in an uncooperative environment. The police relationship with the public deteriorates due to corrupt practices, ineffectiveness, inefficiency, and police use of violence in policing the community. The police narrow mindedness and discriminating culture with the public, make the society uncooperative.

Fundamentally, policing the society is said to be business of all; but policing the Nigerian society seems to have been less intriguing in nature. Jaja (2005) has viewed that police police-community relations emphasize the relationship between the police and communities, as co-producers of police services and partners in community policing, bearers of responsibilities for preventing crime, reducing crime and improving the quality of life in communities where the police serves. However, relevant literatures on police- community relations are predominantly on the strain relations between the police and the significant segment of population across communities. Ikufeyijo and Rotimi (2010) expressed "the no-love lost relationship between the police and the public from the colonial era to post-colonial" as a preconceived notion of repressive, exploitative, and hostile policing of our society from the on-set.

A study conducted by Mahmoud and Usman (2014), on community policing and partnership: opportunities and challenges for state Nigeria, found that laudable opportunities could be achieved only when

there is cooperation and synergy between the police and the informal security outfits in the fight against crime. Jean (2016), in his study on Barriers to community participation in crime prevention in low Income communities in Cape Town, South Africa, the study revealed that Khayelisha residents patrol streets during the night under a neighbourhood watch project, and by reporting committed crimes to the police with information on potential crimes, this same community patrol helps to decrease potential criminal activities. Dung (2014), in his study evaluation of community policing forum project, conducted in the 6 geopolitical zones of Nigeria between 2001-2003, revealed that, if community policing strategy is adopted, it could help to eradicate most of the challenges attributed to traditional reactive police culture.

The criminological theory of Broken Windows by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, explained community policing. The theory states that maintaining and monitoring communities to prevent small crimes such as vandalism, public drinking, and other anti-social behaviours help to create an atmosphere of order and lawfulness, thereby preventing more serious crimes from happening in the community. This implies that community partnership with the police and constant patrol of the community will deter major criminal activities in Isiala Mbano.

Fighting crime is one of the major preoccupations of every government in the world, this is because the lower the level of crime the more conducive a society appears. Due to the relevance of combating crime in the rural community of Nigeria; the major objective of this study is to determine the impact of community policing on crime prevention in Isiala Mbano Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. While the specific objectives are as follows:

- To find out whether the presence of police patrol team leads to crime reduction and control in Isiala Mbano L.G.A.
- To examine whether police partnership with community members in Isiala Mbano L.G.A lead to crime reduction and control.

Study Area

Isiala Mbano is located North-East of Imo State capital, Owerri. It is traversed by Owerri, Okigwe, Anara, Umuahia and Okigwe/Umuahia high ways. It is bounded on the north by Onuimo L.G.A. and some parts of NwangeleL.G.A, on the east by Ehime Mbano L.G.A. and on the south by Ikeduru and MbaitoluL.G.As respectively. It occupies a geographical land mass of 148 sq. Kilometers. It has provisional census figure of 198,736 as at 2006 census. The area was carved out from the former Mbano Local Government Area during the creation of additional local governments in September 1989, with its headquarters situated at Umuelemai, a border town along Anara - Umuahia Federal Road. It is made up of 3 clans namely, Osu, Ugri and Mbama.

The local government is predominantly inhabited by Christians. Isiala Mbano Local Government Area has 28 Autonomous communities. All the autonomous communities have markets, but the major ones that attract or enjoy large patronage include Orie-amaraku, Eke-Anara daily market, Eke-Ezeala, Afor-lbeme, Afor-Amauzari, and Orie-Umuozu among others. Majority of the residents are subsistent farmers while small percentage is engaged in trade. There are successful merchants, industrialists and technocrats in diaspora.

The Local Government Area has palm oil mills located at Umunchi, Umuebie and Umunkwo. There are other small scale industrialists and artisans such as welders, dressmakers, vulcanizers, mechanics, bicycle repairers and more scattered all over the local government area. There are sixty-four primary schools; twenty-six government owned secondary schools and fourteen approved vocational and commercial schools in Isiala Mbano Local Government Area. Currently, there are three commercial bank in Isiala Mbano Local Government Area namely: Sky bank, First bank and Union bank located in Umuelemai, Amaraku and Anara respectively. A standard divisional police station is located at Umuelemai, Amaraku and Anara. The state security service, local vigilante outfits, and other paramilitary groups compliment policing the local government area.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study was survey in nature and the data for the study was collected through questionnaire and interview of key persons (KIP) such as top police Officers, traditional ruler, and elders of Isiala Mbano. The Taro Yamane's formula was used to get the sample for the study from three autonomous communities (Umuelemai, Amaraku and Anara) used for the study. These communities have a population of 2862 (NPC, 2006), using Taro Yamane's formular, a sample of 838 was derived.

The study made use of simple random sampling and a proportionate stratified random sampling to assign each community based on its population strength. Finally, systematic random sampling was used to choose households for the study. A total of 812copies questionnaire were returned and this formed the sample for the study. Chi-Square statistical tool was used to analyze the data.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The table 1 below shows that the males are represented with 36.9%, while the females are represented with 63.1%. The implication of this is that the female folks are more interested when it comes to security issues as they constitute the most vulnerable in Isiala Mbano Local Government Area.

Table1: Gender distribution of the Respondents/

Sex	Responses	Percentages (%)
Male	300	36.9
Female	512	63.1
Total	812	100

Table2: Police Patrol Teams and Crime Control

Item	Questions	Positive	Negative	(%)	Total
1	Police patrol teams frequently do not patrol the communities in Isiala Mbano L.G.A.?	170 (20.9%)	642 (79.1%)	100	812
2	Due to the presence of police patrol teams, crime has been greatly reduced in Isiala Mbano L.G.A.?	400 (49.3%)	412 (50.7%)	100	812
3	The police patrol teams have helped in arresting criminals in Isiala Mbano L.G.A.?	511 (62.9%)	301 (37.1%)	100	812
4	The presence of police patrol teams in Isiala Mbano has not contributed in crime reduction and control in the area?	490 (60.3%)	322 (39.7%)	100	812

The table 2 above shows that 20.9% of the respondents responded positively to the question in item one, while 79.1% responded negatively. 49.3%, 62.9%, and 60.3% responded positively to the questions in items two, three and four, while 50.7%, 37.1% and 39.7% responded negatively to the questions in items two, three and four respectively. The responses indicate that police patrol team has a positive impact in the control of crime in the community.

Table3: Police Partnership and Crime Control

Item	Questions	Positive	Negative	(%)	Total
1	There is good relationship between the police and community members in Isiala Mbano L.G.A.?	130 (16.0%)	682 (84%)	100	812
2	Police partnership with community members is very important in combating crime in Isiala Mbano L.G.A.?	690 (85%)	122 (15.0%)	100	812
3	Police partnership with community members has helped in arresting criminals in Isiala Mbano L.G.A.?	270 (33.3%)	542 (66.7%)	100	812
4	Police partnership with community members in Isiala Mbano L.G.A. has largely led to crime reduction and control in the area?	150 (8.5%)	662 (81.5%)	100	812

Table 3 above shows that 16.0% of the respondents responded positively while 84% responded negatively to the question in item one, 85%, 33.3%, 8.5% responded positively to questions in items two, three, and four, while 15.0%, 66.7%, 81.5% responded negatively. The implication of this table is that negative image the people have about the police affected their relationship and the help rendered to the police towards crime control in Isiala Mbano.

Testing of Hypothesis
Hypothesis 1
H1: There is a positive relationship between the Police patrol and crime control
/
H0: There is no positive relationship between police patrol and crime control

Table 4 Chi-square Analysis for Police Patrol Teams and Crime Control

Item	SA	A	SD	D	Total
1	120	50	520	122	812 B_1
2	300	100	330	82	812 B_2
Total	420	150	850	204	1624
	A_1	A_2	A_3	A_4	

Using the 4x2 contingency table the degree of freedom derived is 3. The calculated value of $\times^2$ is 8.2. With the significant level of 0.05 and degree of freedom of 3 the table value of $\times^2$ at 7.815. Since the table value of $\times^2$ is less than the calculated value of $\times^2$, we therefore reject the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between police patrol team and crime reduction and control in Isiala Mbano L.G.A.

Hypothesis 2
H1: There is a significant relationship between police and community partnership in crime control in Isiala Mbano L.G.A. of Imo State.
H0: There is no significant relationship between police and community partnership in crime control in Isiala Mbana L.G.A. of Imo State.

Table 5 Chi-square Analysis for Police and community Partnership and Crime Control

Item	SA	A	SD	D	Total
2	630	100	62	20	812 B_1
3	400	200	92	120	812 B_2
/Total	730	300	154	140	1624
	A_1	A_2	A_3	A_4	

Using the table 4x2 contingency table.
The degree of freedom = 3
Significant level = 0.05
The table value of $\times^2 =$ 7.815
Calculated value of $\times^2$ = 7.3

Decision Rule Since the table value of $\times^2$ is greater than the calculated value of $\times^2$, we therefore accept the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between police and community partnership in crime reduction and control in Isiala Mbano L.G.A.

Discussion of results
The study discovered that police patrol has helped in crime control in the community. The majority of respondents 511 (64.9%) confirmed this position. And this is in line with views of the key important personnel (KIP) interviewed for the study such as the elders and top police personnel. They agreed that the presence of the police instilled fear in the hoodlums and curb their nefarious activities in IsialaMbano Local Government Area of Imo State. And this is supported by Nnamdi (2013) who maintained that the use of police patrol teams in the practice of community policing is one important approach to fixing the problems of crime in neighbourhood and communities.

The study further revealed that no relationship exists between police partnership with the community and crime control in IsialaMbano. This is supported by the majority negative response of 542 (66.7%) that police partnership with the community has not helped in crime control.

Furthermore, findings of this study also revealed that the community members do not partner with police to reduce and control crime in Isiala Mbano because the community members feel unsafe with the police who may expose the identities of community members that give vital information on criminals thereby endangering their lives. The people interviewed were of the opinion that lack of trust led to the formation of vigilante groups to complement the police.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:
1. The police should increase their foot and motorized patrols in the communities for their presence to be effective felt in the community. By recruiting more personnel and adequately train them in community policing.

2. The members of the community should be educated through the mass media, workshops and seminars to understand the importance of collaborating with the police in combating crime in the community. This will help to increase the cooperation between the police and community members in combating crime.

3. The police should make the community members build trust on them through sensitization and effectively discharge their duties as this will endear them to the community and members encourage them to provide information on criminals.

4. A forum should be established in the community in which the community members freely meet with the police to discuss crime related issues that affect the communities.

5. The government should vigorously embark on comprehensive training aimed at attitudinal change and professional efficiency among the rank and file and other officers' cadre of the police. This is will improve the police public relationship with the communities.

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