EFFECTIVE POLICING: A PANACEA FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT BETWEEN POLICEMEN AND THE PUBLIC

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Abstract
The article studies police-public relations. It exposes the factors inherent in the structure and administration of the Nigerian Police Force that influence the conflicts encountered by field officers in their dealings with other citizens. Prominent among these factors are centralized police structure, failed recruitment system and most importantly, police improvisation to resolve crises where the law is silent. It finds out that effective policing is achievable in Nigeria only if the present central structure of the Force is decentralized to allow for State policing. This in turn will create space for community policing which would help to correct the flaws in police-civilian relations as it were in the present status quo. Among other things, the article recommends training and retraining of men of the Force and improved welfare packages as necessities that would enable the police overcome some of their excesses in the course of the discharge of their duties.
Keywords: Police, Policing, Effective Policing, Community Policing, Police-civilian Relations

Introduction
Policing is a critical aspect of the organization of any society. The police play a crucial role in the maintenance of peace and other in society. The significance of the police is occasioned by the penchant of some persons in the society to perpetuate crime and unleash terror on others. The police's role is to tame this brutish appetite in the society. Hence, the police apart, maintenance of law and order in the society would be impossible.

In spite of this invaluable role played by the police in the society, there are concerns that the police, if not properly trained and taken care of, can transform into a more problematic security threat themselves than the ones they were formed to eschew. A good example of the consequence of poor policing is the mayhem the now defunct SARS (Special Anti-Robbery Squad) of the NPF unleashed on many innocent Nigerians in their quest to satisfy their selfish ends. The concern on the quality of the relationship between the men of the NPF and ordinary Nigerians has been a perennial feature. The relationship continued to deteriorate until it eventually led to the #ENDSARS protest that claimed lives and properties across the federation.

What are the challenges of policing in Nigeria? How do these challenges affect the police-civilian relationship in the country? Is effective policing achievable in Nigeria? These questions embody the problem tackled in this article. Hence, the article exposes the ills within the NPF and how same ills undermine police-civilian relations. It projects community policing as the solution to the conflicts in police-civilian relations with emphasis placed on the need to restructure the organizational formation of the NPF.

Literature Review

Okonkwo, Azubuike Lawrence (2001, 45) in his dissertation "Policing in Contemporary Nigeria: A Critical Analysis of Police Compliance with Rules of Arrest and Interrogation" grappled with the problem of controlling police discretion. The issue dealt with in the study specifically concerns how to ensure that policemen comply with the law during field operations in spite of the fact that they are permitted to apply discretion in the discharge of their duties. Okonkwo argues that the problem of controlling police discretion with a view to achieving compliance is seen as especially acute with police patrol officers for two major reasons. First, the police potentially or actually use physical force in their operation. Second, current police practices are characterized by deficiency in awareness of procedural requirements leading to increasing pretrial delays (2001, 89). Chief among the findings of the study is that "although the police are aware of the procedural laws of arrest and interrogation they do not always comply with these laws in their actions" (2001, 109).

In "The Nigerian Police and the Challenges of Security in Nigeria," Adegoke, N. suggested that poverty, unemployment, leadership and religion are the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria (2014, 1). The article argued that the effort of the police alone is sufficient to curb insecurity in Nigeria (Adegoke 2014, 1). It recommended that the government meaningfully engaged the youth through creation of employment opportunities. Such would help reduce unemployment and crime in the society; hence, the task of the police (Adegoke 2014, 33).

Okafor, Jude C. in "Policing the Community or Community Policing: Implications for Community Development in Nigeria" exposed some of the flaws of the practice of community policing in Nigeria. According to him, community policing rightfully implemented is supposed to foster community development. Such cannot be said of the practice in Nigeria (Okafor 2018, 3). The article concluded that so long as the Nigerian Police engages in policing communities instead of partnering with the community in matters of security, safety and development in the communities will continue to elude Nigeria (Okafor 2018, 71).

In "Community Policing in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects," Gbeneme and Adishi conceptualized the problems of policing in Nigeria. Among other issues, they argue that two of the major obstacles to community policing in Nigeria included the centralized structure of the Nigerian Police and the semi-military command structure where the police aware used to the application of force and brutality (Gbeneme & Adishi 2017, 44). The article opined that quality implementation of community policing in the country will reduce crime rate because the public will assist the police in crime fighting by becoming the eye of the police in the community (Gbeneme & Adishi 2017, 47). There are other relevant literatures on community policing in Nigeria with related theoretical conclusions with the ones already reviewed. They include; Omowunmi J. Olusegun (2016), Lanre Ikuteyijo (2009), Usman A. Yusuf (2014) and Mosuru & Rafiu (2016).

Inyang & Ubong in "Policing Nigeria: A Case for Partnership between the Formal and Informal Police Institutions," explored the Nigeria Police system with particular reference to corporations between the formal and informal sectors. The article argued

that "the inability of the NPF to control the rising spate of crime and the fact that the institution is regarded as oppressive tool in the hands of the rich has given room for public distrust…" (Inyang &Ubong 2013, 56). The paper recommended synergizing between the formal and informal sectors of policing in Nigeria in order to deal satisfactorily with the spate of crimes in Nigeria.

The above review demonstrates that effective policing and community policing are no new subjects in intellectual discourse concerning quality policing in Nigeria. However, no literature available at the point of this research has studied community policing as the effective means of policing in Nigeria. The closest literature to this is Onyeozili (2005). Onyezili's work was however limited to exposing the obstacles to effective policing in Nigeria.

The Nigerian Police Force: Brief Historical Analysis
The Nigeria Police Force is the principal law enforcement agency in Nigeria. Newburn (2004, 12) rightly observes that policing and police work, as global phenomena did not start as a paid profession; rather, it started as a noble, incorruptible profession with considerable responsibility and distinction. Such cannot be creditably said of the Nigerian Police at its epiphany during the colonial era. In this period, the primary purpose of the police was to advance the economic and political agenda of the colonialist. In many areas, the police engaged in the brutal subjugation of communities and the suppression of resistance to colonial rule. Thus, the use of violence and repression from the beginning of colonial era, marked a dislocation in the relationship between the police and local communities, which has characterized law enforcement practices in Nigeria ever since (Idowu, 2013, 71).

Nigeria Police was first established in 1820. In 1879, a 1200 member armed paramilitary Hausa Constabulary was formed. In 1879, the Lagos Police was established. A similar Force, the Niger Coast Constabulary was formed in Calabar in 1894 under the newly proclaimed Niger Coast Protectorate. In the North, the Royal Niger Company set up the Royal Niger Company Constabulary in 1888. When the protectorate of the Northern and Southern Nigeria were proclaimed in the early 1900s, part of the Royal Niger Company Constabulary became the Northern Nigeria Police and Part of the Niger Coast Constabulary became the Southern Nigeria Police (History of Nigeria Police, npf.gov.ng/aboutus/history_Nigeria_police.php, para. 1).

During the colonial period, most policemen were associated with local governments (native authorities). In the 1960s, under the First Republic, these forces were first regionalized and then nationalized. The Northern and Southern Regional Police Forces were later merged in 1930 to form the colony's first national police- the Nigeria Police Force- NPF (History of Nigeria Police, npf.gov.ng/aboutus/history_Nigeria_police.php, para. 1). Section 214 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution reads: "There shall be a Police Force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigerian Police Force, and subject to the provision of this section no other Police Force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof." At present, Nigeria Police has staff deployment across the 36 states of the federation, FCT inclusive. The command and control of the Nigeria Police Force is under the Inspector General of Police. For administrative ease, the Force is divided into 12 operational

Zonal Command and 37 State Commands including the FCT. While the zone is headed by an Assistant Inspector General of Police, the State Command is headed by a Commissioner of Police.

Conceptual Considerations: Policing and Effective Policing

Policemen perform the functions of law enforcement, maintenance of order and protection of the rights and properties of citizens. In carrying out their mandate, the police possess a vital monopoly on the legitimate use of force (Reiss, 1971). Policing refers to the role played by the police in protecting the property and well being of the citizens in a given country (Idowu, 2013, 72). According to Bowden (1978), the roles of police include standing as a "buffer between elite and masses" and to perform "the essential holding operation against the mal-contents until military force could be applied in a punitive and salutary manner." Alemika (1995) considers policing to be concerned with coercive and/or ideological regimentation of social life through the activities of police and sundry state intelligence and security forces, and through other measures aimed at deducting and suppressing behaviours, actions, and orientations that threatens the prevailing social order. Nwolise (2004, 77) argued that policing involves conflict resolution -conflicts emanating from inequalities in society leading to trade disputes, demonstrations, riots, etc. Seen from a broader perspective, policing goes beyond just the activities of the state police; it involves any organized activity that seeks to ensure the maintenance of communal order, security and peace through elements of prevention, deterrence, investigation of breaches, and punishment (Baker, 2008). It is in fact a mechanism of governance. As such it can be authorized and provided by non-state groups as well as the state (Yusuf, 2014, 13). On the other hand, effective policing also called police effectiveness refers to the extent to which policing achieves its proper, officially sanctioned goals (Cordner, 2014, para. 1).

Conflict between Policemen and the Public

In an era when people are increasingly becoming aware of their rights as patriotic citizens, police abuse of power or intimidation of innocent citizens is gradually being eradicated. The #ENDSARS Protests is a clear demonstration of this fact. Before this movement, policing in Nigeria reached an unprecedented low with cases of bribery and corruption, killing of innocent citizens, stealing from civilians, etc becoming too common and almost regarded as a norm.

Empirical evidence suggests that past encounters with officers, even vicariously reported by significant others, are associated with people's general attitudes toward the police (e.g., Skogan, 2005). Cox and White (1988) reported that people who felt that they had been treated unjustly in the past were more likely to feel that they were victims of unfair police decisions, and perceived the police as verbally harassing them. Similarly, in certain socio-economically disadvantaged areas where crime, graffiti, gang and drug activities, and physical decay make residents' quality of life rather low (e.g., Cao, Frank, & Cullen, 1996), forceful police behavior is found to be prevalent, and this can promote feelings of civilian dissatisfaction (Reisig & Parks, 2000). Naturally enough, the converse is true among those who reside in communities where the crime level is relatively low (Hennigan, Maxson, Sloane, & Ranney, 2002). These findings suggests that public perception of the police depends on both the quality of their living and the quality of their experience of police activities. These in turn

generate conflicts of various sorts between the police and the public depending   on the capacity of the Force to handle and manage public expectations and valuation of their   activities.

Nonetheless, there are internal factors (factors from within the police setting itself) that catalyze conflicts between policemen and the public. Let us reflect briefly on these factors.

- **Failed Recruitment System**

Recruitment processes are essential to get the right raw material into the NPF. The Nigeria Police Force recruits at three levels – as constable entrants, who must have a secondary school certificates; as cadet Inspectors, who must have a further educational qualification; and as cadet Assistant Superintendents, who must be graduates. A system of screening is used to try and uphold standards and ensure equitable recruitment from all areas of the country. The Police Service Commission has a hands-on oversight role in the recruitment of cadet inspectors. The NPF recruitment process is not helped by the decline of the educational system, which produces many inadequately-educated school-leavers. There are a wide variety of reasons why people seek police recruitment in an insecure economy. Some are from areas of the country where it has always been a popular career choice. Many are from families with a background in police, army or other uniformed services. Some want to serve; some like the security of the job and its career prospects; but some deliberately intend from the outset to abuse their uniform to get rich (Owen, 2014, 12). Unfortunately, an overwhelming majority of those who join the Force do so for the last reason- with a deliberate intent to abuse their uniform in order to get rich. And they do so at the expanse of innocent civilians whom they should protect. This leads to failed relationship between the Force and civilians.

- **Inadequate Training and Retraining**

Owen (2014, 12) rightly observes that lots of police cadet training concentrate on producing a character type. There is less focus on teaching skills. Officers learn much of their actual occupational skills on the job, from Inspectors and Corporals. Partly this is a normal aspect of occupational learning, but one of the side-effects is that cadets only learn a narrow selection of aptitudes and skills. This impacts negatively on their interface with the public leading to conflicts. According to Owen (2014, 12), There are three areas which can usefully be addressed in the broader field of training in order to ensure effective policing and better police-civilian relations. The first requires a focus on training institutions: facilities are overcrowded and downgraded, and the numbers being put through them put too much strain on them; training posts are not prestigious – they are seen as a 'punishment' posting away from operational duties, in contrast to the Army, SSS and other institutions where posting to a training institution is seen as recognition for exceptional ability, and as a step on the road to leadership; lecturers are not trained in teaching – they are left to sink or swim, and so are their students.

- **Use of Improvisation by Policemen**

Formal and informal processes which are used by policemen on field operations rely on public sense of legitimacy. For instance, rather than always sticking to the charge, solutions may be brokered in the presence of all parties to ensure transparency. Or, for example, a driver who has injured someone may be detained until the victim of the accident has been discharged and the driver has paid the hospital bills. This is not recognized in law, but is widely seen as legitimate by the public. Extra-legal techniques such as 'proxy arrest' of the relative of a suspect to ensure the suspect's appearance are used as a tool in the absence of effective ways to apprehend suspects who have fled

(Owen, 2014, 15). These improvisational acts expose policemen unduly to the public, and most times, lead them into unclean deals that dent the reputation of Nigeria Police Force.

Most police cases, except for serious offences (those termed 'non-compoundable' in law), result in negotiated solutions – parties 'settle' with each other. Owen (2014, 15) observes that of a sample of 75 cases recorded in June 2010, only 2.6% were charged to court- 54% were simply not recorded in the crime book, as they had dropped out of the official files into the system of informal resolution. This is a further prove of undue improvisation in policing in Nigeria which often undermines the credibility of the force before the public. Much of police work is enforcing dispute resolution, and police authorities should recognize this and look to enhance it.

- **Poor Management, Motivation and Morale**

Issues inside a police unit easily get translated to officers' behaviour in their interactions with the public. Where managerial officers are respected by their rank and file, morale is better and the interactions with the public are noticeably better. Where managers are exploitative and not respected, the results appear in interactions with the public (Owen, 2014, 16). There is therefore a direct relation between the management of police affairs at the office and how the policemen relate with the public during their various field engagements. Owen (2014, 17) confirms this with practical insights:

> Importantly, there is a direct connection between internal managerial practices and public events. Officers' high awareness of risk and the danger of 'embarrassment' make them deliberately minimalist in approach. A dissatisfied party to a dispute might, for example, complain and cause the transfer of a DPO, and this influences how officers see risk more generally – especially the powerful workings of informal accountability, even despite the lack of formal accountability mechanisms for the public. What officers are most acutely aware of is vicarious risk – the danger of being blamed for something which went wrong outside their control – and therefore they would often rather do nothing than make an intervention without being explicitly ordered to.

Demotivated officers are more likely to turn to corruption and extra-mural activities for fulfillment. It is notable that problems with petty corruption and discipline are lowest where officers are most task-oriented - specialist units like the Anti-Bomb Squads or Police Marine are observably more contented and motivated, and this is not just related to the rewards and perks associated with their roles, but the type of work they do and the recognition they get for it (Owen, 2014, 17). This, as well as observation of the more successful techniques used in donor supported training of divisional managers, strongly suggests the power of positive reinforcement in improving police conduct. What is being emphasized here is that a police personnel, especially the lower cadre staff that is properly motivated and gains the required recognition he deserves from the government and others in charge of his welfare will hardly have time to abuse his position as a policeman. His relationship with the public will therefore be efficient.

- **Poor Structure of the Nigerian Police Force**

The highly centralized command structure of the Nigerian Police Force, covering a very diverse Federal polity, causes some problems. While allowing for easier inter-state co-operation than in decentralized police systems, it tends also to filter human and material resources towards the centre leaving many frontline units underequipped. Decision-making concentrated at the central level can also be restrictive in some contexts. Accountability is also centralized, and largely 'upward-facing' – i.e. the police are answerable primarily to the Presidency, Ministry of Police Affairs, and Legislative Committees, meaning that states and local governments have limited oversight powers. This centralized governance structure of the Nigerian Police Force affects the effectiveness of police operations at the points of contact between the police and the public. This is because the system makes it almost impossible for the public to monitor efficiently the activities of policemen at the grassroots. Every decision concerning the punishment of an officer for poor behaviour in the discharge of his duties, most times, are expected to be taken from the federal headquarters. This causes delay and impedes transparency. The policemen themselves are aware of this defect; hence they throw precaution, prudence and fairness away when relating with the public.

Effective Policing: The Imperative of Community Policing

Community policing is the best means of ensuring efficiency in police activities. As a matter of fact, policing by its very nature is community oriented. However, attaching 'community' to policing is to emphasize the inevitability of police relations with the community in order to ensure efficiency in police activities. Community policing encompasses a variety of philosophical and practical approaches and is still evolving rapidly. Community policing strategies vary depending on the needs and responses of the communities involved; however, certain basic principles and considerations are common to all community policing efforts (Burea of Justice Assistance, *Understanding Community Policing: A Framework for Action,* 3). Community policing is democracy in action. It requires the active participation of local government, civic and business leaders, public and private agencies, residents, churches, schools, and hospitals. All who share a concern for the welfare of the neighborhood should bear responsibility for safeguarding that welfare.

Community policing is a policing approach embraced by some departments and espoused by national law enforcement organizations. It is described as a philosophy, managerial style, and organizational strategy that promotes better police-community partnerships and more proactive problem solving with the community. It can help solve a wide range of community problems and issues involving crime control, crime prevention, officer safety, and the fear of crime (U.S Department of Justice, *Principles of Good Policing: Avoiding Violence between Police and Citizens,* 2003, 42). Community policing is referred to by several names, most commonly as community-oriented policing, problem-oriented policing, community problem solving, neighborhood policing, and problem-based policing. Community policing is based on collaboration between police and citizens in a nonthreatening and cooperative spirit. It requires that police listen to citizens, take seriously how citizens perceive problems and issues, and seek to solve problems which have been identified. "A fundamental assumption of the community policing approach is that the community is more likely

than the police to recognize and understand its public safety needs," states researchers Vincent J. Webb and Charles M. Katz (Vincent J. Webb and Charles M. Katz, 1998, chapter 22). Effective community policing can result in enhanced quality of life in neighborhoods, reduction of fear of crime, greater respect for law and order, increased crime control and crime prevention, and greater citizen satisfaction with police services.

The implementation of community policing necessitates fundamental changes in the structure and management of police organizations. Community policing differs from traditional policing in how the community is perceived and in its expanded policing goals. While crime control and prevention remain central priorities, community policing strategies use a wide variety of methods to address these goals. The police and the community become partners in addressing problems of disorder and neglect (e.g., gang activity, abandoned cars, and broken windows) that, although perhaps not criminal, can eventually lead to serious crime. As links between the police and the community are strengthened over time, the ensuing partnership will be better able to pinpoint and mitigate the underlying causes of crime.

Police are finding that crime-control tactics need to be augmented with strategies that prevent crime, reduce the fear of crime, and improve the quality of life in neighborhoods. Fear of crime has become a significant problem in itself. A highly visible police presence helps reduce fear within the community, fear which has been found to be "even more closely correlated with disorder than with crime" (Kelling & Moore, 1988, 8). However, because fear of crime can limit activity, keep residents in their homes, and contribute to empty streets, this climate of decline can result in even greater numbers of crimes. By getting the community involved, police will have more resources available for crime-prevention activities, instead of being forced into an after-the-fact response to crime (Burea of Justice Assistance, *Understanding Community Policing: A Framework for Action,* 1994, 4). Analyses of crime statistics show that the current emphasis on crime fighting has had a limited effect on reducing crime. In addition, the concept of centralized management of most police organizations has often served to isolate police from the communities they serve. This isolation hampers crime-fighting efforts. Statistics on unreported crime suggest that in many cases police are not aware of existing problems. Without strong ties to the community, police may not have access to pertinent information from citizens that could help solve or deter crime.

Community policing makes policing the people's activity. It transforms the activities of the police into an activity of the people who the police serve. In this light, policing becomes very close to the people and policemen interface more closely with them. This helps to build a formidable mutually beneficial relationship between the police and the public; hence eschewing conflicts that usually arise from traditional policing operations. This demonstrates the inevitability of community policing as the most viable approach to effective police.

Community Trust and Police Integrity: the Soul of Effective Policing
Community trust is an established and highly honored relationship between an agency and the citizens it has been entrusted to serve. It is the key to effective policing, and

law enforcement executives bear the primary responsibility for their departments' honesty, integrity, legitimacy, and competence (*Police Integrity,* 1997). To build community trust, it is incumbent on the heads of the Nigerian Police Force to foster an environment within the Force in which ethical behavior is expected and each individual is responsible for meeting those expectations (*Police Accountability and Citizen Review,* 2002). Police heads who are transparent (i.e., clear, concise, and open about their department's Internal Affairs process) with their constituencies, acknowledge misconduct, appropriately deal with misconduct when it occurs, and include the public in the response to misconduct will not only obtain, but also sustain the respect and confidence of the citizens in their jurisdictions (U.S Department of Justice- Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, *Building Trust Between the Police and Citizens they Serve,* 2008, 7).

Police departments must adhere to the principles of integrity and professionalism as cornerstones of community trust-building. Since officers occupy a position of trust and confidence in their communities and are afforded awesome authority to carry out their duties, any excessive use of that authority, abuse of power, or failure to fulfill their duties can erode public trust and reduce or destroy their credibility within the communities they serve. Every member of a police department must understand that he or she represents the entire agency, that personal conduct is his or her own responsibility, and that he or she will be held accountable for all conduct, whether positive or negative.

Community trust must be built on the foundation of a strong police culture that values integrity and holds individuals accountable for their behavior and actions. This culture must be modeled by the administration and reinforced by supervisors to be effective. Several components must work together to establish and reinforce that organizational culture. When all elements are in place for a culture of integrity, a department of police can be more transparent with its community, and this will help to build a trusting relationship between the police and the community- public (U.S Department of Justice- Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, *Building Trust Between the Police and Citizens they Serve,* 2008, 8).

Recommendations
- There is need to revamp the Nigerian Police Service Commission (NPSC). Nigerian Police Force (NPF) should work more closely with Police Service Commission to evolve standardized tests and scrutiny procedures for constable and inspector recruits as well as senior officer cadets. The NPSC can contribute a lot to improving on the recruitment processes into the Force if given the required approval and capacity to function adequately.
- The NPSC and the NPF should synergize and come out with a blueprint for periodic training and retraining of all police personnel. This is necessary to update the Force personnel with modern policing skills and police-public relations strategies.
- The NPSC and NPF should make the development of effective techniques of mediation and dispute-resolution a crucial part of official training of policemen. This will help improve on the quality of their relationship with the

public leading to a significant reduction in the volume of police-public conflicts due to distrust.

- In order to improve performance of the police institution and of individual officers, managerial culture and practices need to be examined closely and overhauled.
- In order to get leverage with the police and embed reforms, stakeholders in government and wider society should devote specific attention to positive reinforcement, recognizing and promoting positive examples of policing performance.
- Corruption within the police, such as diverting allowances or delay in payment of salaries badly affects morale. The NPSC and NPF should set up a mechanism to identify and prosecute those involved in it. This should be given priority by the NPF's leadership. It will help check the misuse of police funds, a practice that has led to the neglect of the welfare of the average NPF personnel.
- Internal mechanisms for checking corruption need review and updating to avoid being exposed to corruption themselves.
- The Federal Government should consider the idea of state policing. This decentralized structure will reposition the Force to render more quality service to the public. Tensions between Federal and State authorities over policing can be reduced by regularization of the Nigeria Police Council, incorporating both the Presidency and State Governors, which is currently in abeyance.

Conclusions

Every society has a need for a security system that maintains order and protects the lives and properties of the citizens. In Nigeria, the Police Force performs this function. There are a lot of issues that hinder the quality of the service rendered by the police to the citizens of the country. This study demonstrated that most of these issues are inherent in the structural and operational system of the Force itself. These issues are challenges that undermine the status of the police before the public they serve, and hence jeopardize the quality relationship that should exist between the police and the public.

The study reveals that the organizational structure of the police needs rejigging if the Nigerian Police must fulfill her hallowed objectives. The need for a decentralized structure cannot be overemphasized creating a chance for the establishment of state policing. Among other necessities, the need to improve on the welfare and training of the police were also emphasized. These would help straighten the police-civilian relationship in Nigeria and eschew most of the conflicts police encounter in their dealings with the public.

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