

The Benefits and Challenges Emanating from Community Policing in Kenya: A Criminological Perspective

Jasper Edward Nyaura and Margaret Njeri Ngugi

Department of Peace Security and Social Studies,
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Egerton University,
P.O.Box 536 (20115),
Njoro, Nakuru County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: Community policing is an integral component in ensuring that there is no insecurity in the community. More so, the Kenyan government in the Kibaki regime introduced the concept of community policing which was seen as the interaction of the police and the community members with the view of ensuring that they are safe from criminal activities especially from the vigilante groups. Community policing has been seen as an effort to prevent crime and at the same time ensure communal participation towards stamping out crime at communal level. This paper is a critical review of the various attempts to identify the concept of community policing and more so identifying the benefits and challenges of Kenyan community policing system. This paper recommends that concerned stakeholders should devise ways of ensuring that policies on community policing reflect the needs and aspirations of all the citizens in all regions in the country. This can be done by ensuring the full government's and all sectors commitment towards community policing efforts, the ability to address community policies to the public through public participation forums.

KEYWORDS: Kenya Police, Community Participation, Security, Collaborative efforts.

1 INTRODUCTION

According to Kenya Police (2009) as cited in Masese and Mwenzwa (2012), community policing is the perceived effort to enhance security thus recognizing the interdependence and shared responsibility of the police and the community in ensuring a safe and secure environment. Furthermore, an active partnership between the police and the public to combat crime and enhance community safety is the core theme of Kenya's community policing. More so community policing responds to the decline in public buoyancy in the police and the need for partnership between different stakeholders to fight crime (Coquilhat, 2008). Through the approach, the community gets to know and understand that it has a role to play in ensuring its own safety and that of property (Masese and Mwenzwa, 2012). Community policing, recognizing that police rarely can solve public safety problems alone, encourages interactive partnerships with relevant stakeholders. The range of potential partners is large and these partnerships can be used to accomplish the two interrelated goals of developing solutions to problems through collaborative problem solving and improving public trust. Community policing is therefore a tacit acknowledgement that official security apparatus including the police cannot solve all security problems single-handedly (BJA, 1994; Kenya Police Service, 2014). Therefore, the public plays a role in prioritizing public safety problems.

Accordingly, the 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 neighbourhoods. Fear of crime has become a substantial component in enhancing the theme of community policing. Thus, highly visible police presence helps reduce fear within the community.

To begin with, community policing can be traced back to the introduction of community constables, known as 'bobbies', in the London's Metropolitan Police District during the early 19th century (Patterson, 2007 ; Brogden and Nijhar, 2005). Sir

Robert Peel who introduced the concept articulated the fact that “the police are the public and the public are the police” (Fridell, 2004). Accordingly, Fridell (2004) notes that the key principle of community policing is that the police should not be detached from community policing, thus emphasizing that community policing is aimed at creating partnership between them and the public at large.

In the United States, community policing as a concept was first introduced in the 1960's to intensify the police-community contact and reduce the fear of crime among the citizenry (Cordner, 1999; Innes, 2003). Accordingly, other authors have noted that the concept became a dominant policing strategy in the United States during the 1990's with the introduction of 100,000 new community police officers (Cordner, 2007a). The introduced concept of community policing presented the transformation that encouraged problem solving and community engagement with the police as opposed to reactive policing (Innes, 2003).

Accordingly, it is believed that community policing emerged as a result of a number of social trends relating to the quest for human rights thus human movements. Furthermore, it advocated for the police to be more accountable to the public by being more responsive and connected to the community (Weisheit *et al.*, 1994). Accordingly, authors have argued that community policing emerged in response to the evolving technology, such as the police radio and patrol vehicles, changed the relationships between the police and the community. Heretofore, officers developed personal relationships with the community and needed the community to be willing to share information. Additionally, the police used pragmatic scientific principles to policing, which created the perception police were responsible for keeping the community safe. Previously, the community understood that ultimately the communities were responsible for reaffirming the social norms that promoted public safety (Bucqueroux, 2006; Bucqueroux, 2004). With the above view, this paper critically reviews the various attempts to identify the concept of community policing and more identifying the benefits and challenges of Kenyan community policing system.

2 METHODOLOGY

This paper used a desk review design to critically review the community policing concept in Kenya. The paper also analyses the benefits and challenges of community policing in Kenya as perceived in the grassroots level. Furthermore, the concept of community policing in Kenya is significant in providing the much needed security in grassroots level thus there is need to focus on the benefits and perceived challenges with a view of providing empirical recommendation

3 LITERATURE REVIEWED

3.1 UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY POLICING

Community policing is considered as a modern-day policing approach in response to the decline in public confidence in police and the increasing indications that police cannot fight crime by themselves (Skogan, 2006; Virta, 2006; Innes, 2003; Tilley, 2003; Fridell, 2004). Accordingly, Fleming (2005) believes that policing requires communal involvement both at individual and organisational level outside of law enforcement and beyond the public sector. Community involvement in community policing is crucial in identifying community issues, addressing public fear of crime and increasing police visibility thus encouraging increased trust in police (Smartt, 2006; Joyce, 2006; Virta, 2006).

Furthermore, law abiding citizens deserve to participate and contribute towards community policing thus they participate and support the idea of community policing and the police process that comes as a result of stakeholder participation (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990; Skogan, 2006). Community policing not only involves the community members but more so incorporates the police responsiveness to community concerns towards ensuring full benefits of policing (Skogan, 2006). Community policing involves communal identification of their security needs, which in turn the police take up the matter seriously even if the problems they define differ from police priorities (Wycoff, 1988).

Moreover, community policing determines community needs thus participation is required to identify problems, assist police to drive the solutions, and maintain community ownership of the issues (The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2007). Community policing not only assists the stakeholders in identifying problems, but also in prioritising and finding solutions (Cordner, 1999; Carroll Buracker Associates, 2007; Skogan, 2006).

Accordingly other authors have indicated that there are a number of mechanisms for achieving community engagement, that include systematic and periodic community surveys, fora, community meetings, and meeting with advisory groups and businesses (Cordner, 1999). Skogan and Hartnett (1998) suggest that the public have a great deal informing the police, and that they are grateful for the opportunity to have their voice heard. However, Reno *et al.*, (1998) warns that the type of

neighbourhood determines whether the community is good at dealing with their own problems. For example, if the community has more social capacity then they were more likely to deal with their own problems and attend arranged meetings than those without such investment. Crime prevention is central to the concept and ultimate goal of community policing (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988) and will have long term benefits (Segrave and Ratcliffe, 2004). Skogan (2006) suggests community capacity to prevent crime will be strengthened by encouraging communities to enhance community safety.

3.2 UNDERSTANDING KENYA'S COMMUNITY POLICING

Accordingly, the Kenya police (2014), creates the understanding that community policing works by creating an understanding between the police and the community about their role in crime prevention; Supplementing police patrols through private guards and neighbourhood watch groups; Providing educational, capacity building, enhancing Kenya Police personnel and members of the community to enable constructive participation in addressing the problems of crime; Forming community policing victim support centres and training response teams (units); Improving street lighting (security lights) to reduce crime (the use of adopt-a-light programme for the slum population). Moreover, community policing aims at evaluating community policing programmes; Giving special attention to vulnerable groups whom include the women and children that are crime prone; Share responsibility and decision-making as well as sustained commitment from both the police and community, with regard to safety and security needs; Encouraged enhancement of accountability of the police to the community they serve; Conflict resolution between and within community groupings in a manner which enhances peace and stability; further basing problem solving activities on a consultative approach that constantly seeks to approve responsiveness to identified community needs. Furthermore, participation of all members of the Kenya Police in community policing and problem solving initiatives and ensuring that community policing informs, guide and sustain all policing activities is part and parcel of community policing in Kenya thus it is an all-inclusive activity between community members and the police.

3.2.1 ROLE OF THE POLICE AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TOWARDS COMMUNITY POLICING

The role of community members towards community policing entail the fact that they need to volunteer information on suspicious characters or activities, working closely with the police through Community Policing Forums, helping the police to help you by offering any kind of support, encourage greater contacts between neighbours. More so, the community members support the victims of crime through counselling, safeguarding your own neighbourhoods and eventually, security begins with one-self; hence you should be alert always (Kenya Police, 2014).

The police are the most perceptible institution of the security sector and their functions impact on the entire citizenry. Community policing is a new style of policing that is reactive to the needs of local communities; a force multiplier that contributes to conflict management. The role of the police in community policing as stipulated by the Kenya Police (2014), entail the fact that they communicate with the community and provide give feedback regarding crime and security information; providing a listen ear and understand public needs; being part and parcel of problem solving towards community satisfaction; being transparent, accountable and effective; carrying out their day today activities and other police duties; providing a platform for the formation of Community Policing Forums. Moreover, the police are encouraged to maintenance law and order in crime prevention strategies, enforcement of law and order and conducting patrols in their beat areas to ensure that there is enhanced security.

3.2.2 COMMUNITY POLICING FORUM (CPF)

Accordingly, Community Policing Forum (CPF) is a group of people from the Police and different committees (local leaders, residents, and community based organizations) who meet to identify and solve problems in their areas. The Community Policing Forums are be established in residential places, business areas and estates near local Police Stations for easy communications and complementary support. The community policing forums play a crucial role in identify the problems that affect your community, providing Contact Community Policing Unit (C.P.U), Organizing joint sensitization workshops together with C.P.U, Planning and implementing community policing programmes and eventually monitoring and evaluate through the committees formed (Kenya Police, 2014).

3.3 BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY POLICING AMONG VARIOUS COMMUNITIES IN KENYA

3.3.1 PREVENTION EMPHASIS

Accordingly, various scholars have indicated that the central theme of community policing is crime prevention (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988) thus this will have long term benefits to the society at large (Segrave and Ratcliffe, 2004). Skogan (2006) suggests community capacity to prevent crime will be strengthened by encouraging communities to enhance community safety. The prevention emphasis of community policing is more proactive than traditional policing models (Cordner, 1999). However, the community do appreciate and value traditional policing, such as rapid response and reactive investigation but would prefer that victimisation be prevented in the first instance. Prevention emphasis entails the fact that community members need to enjoy securing oneself, more so securing their property; therefore, the interests of the community members are well safeguarded.

3.3.2 ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE POLICE SERVICE AND THE COMMUNITY

The essential component of community policing is enhanced partnership. Therefore, the Police need to engage the community in dealing with crime and related problems that may include working collaboratively with other public and private agencies (Cordner, 1999). Police and community should work in partnership not only to solve problems, but to reduce the fear of crime, physical and social disorder, and neighbourhood decay (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990; Wycoff, 1988). Moreover, the police should not take sole responsibility for crime prevention. They need to play a crucial role in developing strategies in partnership with local communities. Measuring the impact of crime prevention should move away from relying on crime statistics and clearance rates and complement the qualitative practice of community policing (Young and Tinsley, 1998). Furthermore, increasing community capacity to deal with issues has enabled them building capacity by mobilising and empowering them to identify and respond to concerns (Segrave and Ratcliffe, 2004). The benefit of an empowered community is a stronger community who want to participate in addressing issues (Mastrofski, 2006).

3.3.3 LOCALITY FOCUS WITH REFERENCE TO SECURING THE COMMUNAL NEEDS

Consequently, authors have indicated that organizing and deploying officers to maximise identification between specific officers and their specific community should result in stronger police-community relationships. This in turn will increase mutual recognition, responsibility and accountability (Cordner, 1999, 2007a; Cordner, 2007 b). Furthermore, this will enable communication and partnerships to develop, and sustain relationships between the officer and community members thus securing their communal needs. Cordner (1999) believes that officers develop knowledge about the community, which enables early intervention and problem identification and avoids conflict based on misperceptions or misunderstandings. Furthermore, the incorporation of the police reservist who understands the terrain and community members should be encouraged for this will bring about enhanced community policing. The permanency of officers is a crucial component as it builds familiarity, which in turn will develop trust, confidence and cooperation from both police and the community (Cordner, 1999). Equally, if a specific officer has permanent responsibility for a fixed area, then they will become more responsible for identifying and dealing with the crime problems and encourage in communication with the community (Farrell, 1988; Skogan, 2006).

However, there are a few challenges that confront communally based officer's officers in securing communal needs. First, the mobility of the urban population, where both victims and offenders cross geographical boundaries, presents a major challenge for geographically based officers (Young and Tinsley, 1998). Secondly, crime related problems do not always develop in identifiable communities but in pockets of several communities. Thirdly, problematic communities are often fractured and difficult to engage with. To address these challenges, models of community policing need to be flexible enough to accommodate the particular character of the area. Accordingly, this paper acknowledges the fact that in most cases the police reservists do not have abled resources be it financial and material towards enhancing community policing. For instance they have inferior weapons and surveillance skills/techniques.

3.3.4 PROBLEM SOLVING

The theme of community policing is the fact that problem solving techniques form an interactive process, involving police and communities in identifying crime problems and developing appropriate solutions (Young and Tinsley, 1998). Problem solving is essential to community policing and as such, problems should not be limited to crimes, therefore solutions should not have to involve arrests (Weisheit *et al.*, 1994). Police and the community should be empowered to adopt problem

solving techniques and take every opportunity to address the conditions that cause incidents (Cordner, 1999, Cordner, 2007a; Cordner, 2007b; Carroll Buracker and Associates Ltd, 2007). The problem solving aspect of community policing relies more on preventing crime than traditional methods, through deterring offenders, protecting likely victims and making crime locations less conducive to identified problems (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2007). Problem solving establishes the fact that community policing encourages the involvement of people in realizing their potential to solve crime incidences. Community policing offers the public a larger the window into police activity (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988) and provides opportunities for 'grass roots' support for police (Palmiotto, 2000). Moreover, communities with existing capacity are more likely to participate in community policing, but are less likely to benefit from it because, in general, they are already proactively addressing issues to increase community safety (Mayhill, 2007).

3.3.5 COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM

Police information systems are central in providing information to assist the community members respond to criminal activities effectively (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). The utilisation of problem solving practices has emphasized the requirement for information systems to aid the identification and analysis of problems faced by the community, including the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS). This information traditionally has not been available (Cordner, 2007b). Further, Cordner (1999) suggests that information can be collected from: community police officers performance appraisals that reflect community activities; evaluating programmes for effectiveness as well as efficiency; and assessing the police's overall performance on a wider range of key indicators. Cordner emphasises the need for qualitative information to measure success rather than traditional '*bean counting*' techniques; for example, collecting information on wider functions than enforcement and calls for service. However, in the Kenyan case the police still do not have adequate facilities that enhance the collection of information and sharing systems. This is seen due to the fact that the government has not done enough to ensure the needs of the police have been meet in terms of information and communication technology.

3.3.6 IMPROVED POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE

Community policing enables police to develop improved police-community relationships (Segrave and Ratcliffe, 2004). This provides the police with the opportunity to meet the community's needs (Ferreira, 1996), while increasing public accountability over police through participation (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988; Palmiotto, 2000). Furthermore, established initiatives have shown a positive improvement in police-community relationships and community perceptions of police (Skogan and Steiner, 2004; Sadd and Grinc, 1996). The introduction police reforms in Kenya have seen the encouraged participation of the community members and the fear traditionally perceived has reduced greatly. Although, the reforms have not been fully implemented to the realization of the whole society.

3.3.7 CHANGING POLICE OFFICERS' ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Accordingly, authors have indicated that there is strong evidence suggesting that community policing has positive effects on police through increased job satisfaction and improved interaction with, and confidence in, the community (Mayhill, 2006; Patterson, 2007). Mayhill (2006) argues that community policing 'embeds' officers within the community where they become more understanding of the local situations and promote a positive image of police. This provides the officers with the opportunity to make positive community-police experiences and contacts, which is said to increase morale amongst police through the encouragement of a supportive and welcoming community (Palmiotto, 2000). However, the implementation of the police reforms is yet to be fully realized therefore the key theme should be the government's commitment towards enhanced police participation towards the securing the needs of the citizenry more so, ensuring that there is people participation. The full implementation of the Kenya's police reforms should be realized to enhance police participation.

3.3.8 REDUCED PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY/DECREASING FEAR OF CRIME

It is widely accepted that community policing increases the perceptions of safety and decreases the fear of crime. Skogan (2006) argues that there is evidence to suggest that increasing community-police interactions are associated with lower levels in fear of crime. However, police and the community have differing levels of perceptions of safety and it has been suggested that police are more likely to perceive a reduction in the fear of crime than the community (Sadd and Grinc, 1994). The community members in order to realize the full benefits emanating from community policing should ensure cooperation and willingness to share and interact with the police in order to reduce crime.

3.3.9 REDUCING CRIME, DISORDER AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Community policing is beneficial as a policing approach to address a range of different crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. For example, community policing approaches have been used to address graffiti and property damage to gang violence and organised crime (Skogan and Hartnett, 1998). More recently it has been an approach adopted to deal with anti-terrorist activities in some communities (Pickering *et al.*, 2007). Sherman and Eck (2002) argue that community policing needs clear objectives that focus on crime risk factors. This is through developing closer liaison between Police and the public thereby improving their relationship and removing fear of Police, enhancing public confidence and trust in the Police ability to control crime, encouraged public participation thereby reducing the demand upon Police Service and eventual improved crime reporting of the community members

3.4 CHALLENGES TOWARDS PROMOTING COMMUNITY POLICING IN KENYA

3.4.1 CHALLENGES IN MANPOWER MANAGEMENT

The ratio of the police force has been seen to be greatly affecting community policing efforts. This gap has been filled by the private security industry that has experienced a dramatic increase in growth, and simultaneously greater demand to be involved in crime prevention (Minnaar, 2005; Minnaar and Ngoveni, 2004). Owing to limited financial and human resources, they cannot meet the diverse safety and security needs of the market. Therefore, the private security industry fulfils the security need the police are unable to satisfy (Schönteich, 1999 as cited in Nyaura and Ngugi, 2014). In addition, the private security sector has the ability to employ security officers on permanent or part-time contracts, which is impossible in public policing because of strict public service regulations (Schönteich, 1999).

3.4.2 CORRUPTION AMONG THE POLICE OFFICERS

Studies by Nyaura and Ngugi (2014) entail the fact that community policing is an effort between the security agents and the community that identifies and solves community problems such as insecurity issues. Their paper discussed the challenges facing the local private security guards toward enhancing community policing. Their study findings indicated that poor working conditions, poor pay, lack of recognition from the public, inadequate working facilities, and poor communication channels were among the major challenges facing private guards. These challenges are similar to that of the police, who live in a deplorable condition yet they are supposed to protect the general population. Moreover, the police who are faced with the challenges may result to corruption in order to sustain their families. This in turn affects the core theme of community policing which prevents crime. The police may be forced to collude with the criminals in engaging in crime.

3.4.3 EXISTENCE OF MISTRUST

The relationship between police and the community has long been negative, impacted to a large extent by the police service's role as the visible agent of government, tasked with executing past policies of control and suppression, fuelling distrust and resentment. For police, operating in a sometimes hostile community troubled by violence, alcohol misuse and the increasing presence of illicit drugs has been challenging. Efforts by police and community leaders to improve relations have at times been broken down following violent disturbances. This has been seen where one area has been perceived to be favoured by the police more than the other side. The persisting mistrust is clear manifestation that community policing has not been fully realized up to the grass-roots.

3.4.4 INADEQUATE SENSITIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY POLICING POLICIES TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Accordingly, community engagement in community policing is vital. Contemporary community policing is based on the notion that all residents should be empowered to enhance their quality of life and prevent or eliminate crime and the problems that lead to crime. Community members must be recognized for the vital role they play in accomplishing these goals. Everyone benefits when community members understand the role and function of their police and become active proponents of law enforcement. However, the community members sometimes are not aware of the role played by the police towards enhancing community policing policies. Therefore, the key component of ensuring that community members are aware of community policing is through educating community members about community policing and their role in its implementation policies. Although the Kenya Police have not been seen to fast track this, there is need to sustain and build initiatives that encourage community participation.

3.4.5 ESTABLISHED FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The police participation in crime prevention activities was often constrained by limited resources. The police for long have lacked facilities in ensuring the enhancement of community policing. Dilapidated structures including lack of improved police stations are the order of the day in the police stations. The public may therefore lack confidence in the police due to the lack of facilities. Moreover, the government has not done enough to improve facilities for instance, the police cells and station facilities among the police. However, the government is implementing the police reforms in piece-meal, for example creation of housing. Enhanced facilities will improve confidence among the community members thus this will in turn propagate the participation.

3.4.6 EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT TRAINING OF THE POLICE TOWARDS COMMUNITY POLICING

Inadequate training among the police has been seen to be lacking towards community policing efforts. Effective community policing requires training for both police personnel and community members. Effective training aids the development of new police attitudes, knowledge, and skills and facilitates reorientation of perceptions and refinement of existing skills. Training must similarly target such misconceptions. Tactics that can help overcome misperceptions about community policing include conducting accurate community needs assessments, including all appropriate parties in collecting data to develop community policing strategies; assuring appropriate resources are available for community programs; and evaluating and modifying programs as needed.

3.4.7 LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND OPENNESS

Accordingly, the police culture that cultivates an aura of secrecy also impedes the implementation of a community policing strategy. Openness in the Police service can generate trust and improved relations between the police and the community. Some feel policing cannot be truly effective without such trust. Therefore enhanced transparency and openness should be core theme for community policing. Accordingly there are exceptions among community members, although the one obstacle to creating effective partnerships may be a lack of trust between law enforcement and private security. Despite considerable discussion about partnerships between the two groups, overlapping missions and the need to work together, the level of trust is reported to be quite low. Another major cause of lack of trust is misinformation and misunderstanding. Often, neither law enforcement nor private security has an accurate understanding of what the other does or can do. This can be problematic with regard to crime and disorder.

4 CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that community policing should be encouraged towards promoting enhanced security needs of the local inhabitants in Kenya. Community policing, recognizing that police rarely can solve public safety problems alone, encourages interactive partnerships with relevant stakeholders. There need be collaborative efforts between the police and the community members towards enhancing community policing policies. The introduction of the Nyumba- Kumi initiative can be seen to complement the established community policing polices in the Kenya police, therefore community policing calls for a long-term commitment that entails efficient and effective planning and full participation to eradicate the insecurity challenges among community members. Further, police reforms should be geared to targeting community policing efforts.

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