Exploring the Willingness of Nigerian Community Policing Stakeholders to Adopt Technology Through Survey

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Abstract: Community policing (CP) is widely acknowledged for its role in enhancing safety globally. However, in Nigeria, the effectiveness of CP is diminishing despite advancements in CP technology. This decline highlights a lack of understanding regarding citizens' awareness, concerns, and willingness to adopt technological solutions for CP. Our study investigates Nigerians' awareness and concerns about CP initiatives and their readiness to use technology to support these efforts. By surveying 1200 participants from all six geopolitical zones online, we discovered a significant lack of awareness among citizens about key aspects of CP, despite its potential to reduce crime, improve safety perceptions, and strengthen community-police relationships. Nonetheless, a large majority (86%) expressed willingness to use technology for CP engagements. This research marks the beginning of a Human Computer Interaction study aimed at integrating technology into CP in Nigeria. The findings provide direction for future research phases and offer valuable insights for policymakers to improve law enforcement practices and community engagement strategies in Nigeria.

1 INTRODUCTION

Community policing stands as a cornerstone in modern law enforcement strategies, yet its effectiveness hinges greatly on the awareness, concerns and willingness of citizens to participate in the initiative (Cammett et al., 2024; Obi et al., 2024). This initiative is not merely a law enforcement tactic but a philosophy that emphasizes collaboration between police officers and the citizens, aiming to address underlying issues of crime and disorder. It is widely regarded as an effective approach to enhancing public safety and building trust between the police and citizens (Ojobo et al., 2024). Despite the global recognition of CP and existence of technologies like surveillance and social platforms in this context, CP practice decreases in the global south, more especially in Nigeria (Onuoha et al., 2021; O'Reilly, 2023), thereby resulting to low effect of CP within the global south region (Rukus et al., 2018; Blair et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, citizens who are supposed to be working with the police to achieve community policing objectives dislike and avoid the police (Quinn et al., 2023; Girardi, 2022; Drakulich et al., 2023). Surprisingly, many of those who show dislike for the police have not had personal encounter with the police, but show dislike based on what they hear from families or friends against the police or what they inherited, in line with the hate culture principle (Fisher, 2024). Reasons abound regarding why there is dislike for the police, consequently low participation in community policing. While some studies point at police brutality as a major set back (Quinn et al., 2023; Nalla & Gurinskaya, 2022), some point at lack of awareness and dialogue (Dlamini, 2023; Enang et al., 2022), and others point at lack of trust and accountability (Rukus et al., 2018; Blair et al., 2021). Also, people love freedom; freedom to do

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anything they want as humans (Theodoridis et al., 2024), including the good and wrong, but the police stand against the freedom to do the wrongs (Bäckström & Schwarz, 2024). Of course, why would one be over speeding in his own car and suddenly reduce the speed because the police vehicle is sighted in front? Why would one suddenly lower down the hand or cut the phone call when he or she sees the police while driving? These are very common actions which prove that the presence of the police startles wrongdoers and reduces their freedom to do wrongs (Bruus, 2024), thereby igniting a mild discomfort with the police presence. With the above in mind, some pertinent questions regarding why citizens do not participate in community policing have been responded to, but without any effective solution at the fore. Also, despite the numerous studies in community policing, no research has examined the awareness and concerns of Nigerians towards CP, and their willingness to participate in the initiative should the necessary digital technologies be provided. These are significant gaps, which this study addresses.

2 RELATED STUDIES

Community policing (CP) has garnered significant attention in both academic discourse and practical law enforcement strategies as a promising approach to enhancing public safety and building stronger police-community relationships. Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of citizen awareness and engagement in the success of community policing initiatives (Sani, 2022). Aston et al. (2023) underscored the pivotal role of community participation in crime prevention efforts, emphasizing the need for collaborative partnerships between law enforcement agencies and local residents. Similarly, Holliday and Wagstaff (2022) conducted a comprehensive review of community policing programs and found that initiatives with higher levels of citizen involvement tended to be more successful in achieving their objectives. Researchers globally have consistently demonstrated the positive impact of community policing on crime reduction and safety perceptions (Aston et al., 2023; Nalla & Gurinskaya, 2022). Studies by Sani (2022) and Weisburd et al. (2022), neighborhoods with active community policing initiatives experienced lower crime rates and higher levels of perceived safety among residents compared to areas without such programs. These findings highlight the tangible benefits of community policing in fostering safer communities and improving public trust in law enforcement.

However, despite the potential advantages of community policing, challenges persist in effectively implementing and sustaining these initiatives. One key issue is the lack of comprehensive citizen awareness and understanding of community policing practices (Aston et al., 2023; Boehme et al., 2020; O'Reilly, 2023). Several studies have also pointed out gaps in knowledge among community members regarding the objectives, strategies, and roles within community policing efforts (Fisher et al., 2022; 2022; Zakimi et al., 2022). This limited awareness can hinder citizen participation and cooperation, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of community policing programs. Cultural and contextual factors may influence citizen perceptions and attitudes toward community policing (Aston et al., 2023; Boehme et al., 2020). In their study on community policing in diverse communities, Fenn and Bullock (2022). found that cultural norms and historical experiences shape residents' trust in law enforcement and willingness to engage in collaborative policing efforts. Understanding these nuances is essential for tailoring community policing strategies to effectively address the unique needs and preferences of diverse communities.

In the Nigerian context, several recent studies have explored various aspects of community policing and citizen engagement. Achoba and Irefin (2023) conducted a study ?Community policing as a panacea for mitigating armed banditry in central Nigeria to assess citizen perceptions of community policing practices and experience of intercommunity security relations in Ankpa, Nigeria. Studies exist about systematic research in relation to community policing. A systematic review by Ike et al. (2022), on Public perspectives of interventions aimed at building confidence in the Nigerian police, revealed mixed attitudes toward police-community partnerships. Zhang et al. (2020) conducted an interview with 13 police and citizens to explore the experience of police-citizen relationship. They recommended that HCI researchers and designers of community policing technologies should build devices that will enhance digital trust between the police and citizens.

Overall, the literature underscores the importance of citizen awareness and engagement in community policing practices and highlights the need for tailored approaches to address the unique challenges and opportunities in the Nigerian context. By building trust, fostering collaboration, and empowering local communities, community policing has the potential to significantly enhance public safety and strengthen social cohesion in Nigeria.

3 METHODS

A descriptive research design approach (Svensson, 1984) was followed, after conducting an online survey with 1200 citizens. The reason for the choice of an online survey method was because of geographical distance between the researcher who is in the United Kingdom and respondents who are in Nigeria. The participants were recruited through Nigerian Facebook and Whatsapp groups. The 1200 participants were representatives of the 6 geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Two hundred persons represented each of the zones (South-East:Ebonyi, Enugu, Anambra; South-South: Delta, Bayelsa, Cross River; Southwest: Lagos, Ekiti, Osun; Northwest: Kano, Kaduna, Katsina; Northeast:Gombe, Adamawa, Yobe; North Central: Niger, Benue, Kwara). The selected states were in no preference or order but were selected because the participants from these states accepted to participate in the studyby clicking on the study link shared via different states Facebook and Whatsapp groups. Meanwhile, these selection criteria were important because the process gave no room for undue influence on the respondents since they were all total strangers to the researcher. The researcher informed all participants about the research with a little note accompanying the questionnaire link which was designed using google form. Additionally, there was a consent approval page that popped up as soon as the link is clicked by any respondent, revealing the details of the survey. The respondents all signed the consent page before proceeding to the questions page. 1250 participants filled the form, but after performing data cleaning, 50 records were removed. Therefore, 1200 participants returned the questionnaire, and the responses were extracted through an excel file.

Reliability
Pilot Study was conducted on the questionnaire to check its communicability by a native English speaker. To measure if the items of the questionnaire agree, we used Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which resulted into a value of 0.785, hence, showing an acceptable reliability of the questionnaire. To validate the final version of the questionnaire, it was sent to two independent Human Computer Interaction experts, who gave approval feedback. IBM SPSS was used to code and analyse the extracted data for targeted results as discussed in the next section.

Data Analysis
The binomial test of proportion using Z-approximations on Likert scale data was adopted. Binomial test of proportion is a non parametric test

statistic used to analyze questions involving qualitative binomial mutually exclusive categorical (Agreee/Disagree, Strong/Weak, Satisfied/Dissatis-fied, etc.) responses (Gonçalves et al., 2023). A non-parametric test is a distribution free test (Jimenez-Mesa et al., 2023). To perform the binomial test of proportion using Z- approximations on Likert scale data, our data from Likert scales "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree", and "Strongly Disagree" were firstreduced to the nominal level by combining all five categories into two categories of " Agree " and "Disagree" or "Satisfied" and "Dissatisfied". This is a case of one sample binomial test (Jimenez-Mesa et al., 2023; Orsini et al., 2023).According to Mogey (2014), data from Likert scales can be reduced to the nominal level by combining all agree and disagree responses into two mutually exclusive categories of "Agree" and "Disagree". The Binomial tests of proportion are common statistical procedures used after this transformation (Diamantopoulos et al., 2023; Sullivan & Artino, 2013). This is necessary to give the study empirical results and conclusions. Likert scores are then summarized using the mode for easy interpretations (Aguboshim & Otuu, 2022; Gonçalves et al., 2023; Mogey, 2014; Sullivan & Artino, 2013). The copyright form is located on the authors' reserved area.

4 RESULTS

This section presents the results of the study in partitions of satisfaction on community policing practices, awareness, importance, agreement with some practices, and willingness to use technology to support community policing.

4.1 Community Satisfaction on Community Policing Practices in Nigeria

This analysis aimed to investigate whether the rating of current community policing practices in Nigeria significantly deviates from a neutral standpoint, suggesting widespread dissatisfaction. Two hypotheses were posited: the null hypothesis (H0) stating that the proportion of dissatisfaction with current community policing practices is not significantly different from the expected proportion of 0.50, and the alternative hypothesis (H1) suggesting significant deviation from this proportion. The Binomial Test of proportion using Z-

approximations was adopted to examined the observed proportions of dissatisfaction among 1200 respondents against a test proportion of 0.50.
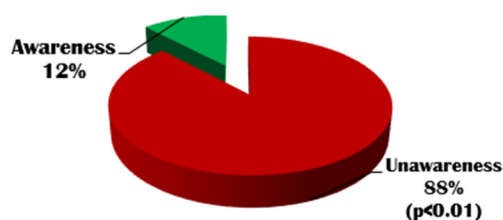

Figure 1: Awareness pie chart.

Results revealed that 88% expressed dissatisfaction, significantly deviating from the expected proportion (p=0.88, P=0.50, p<0.01), indicating substantial discontentment with current community policing practices in Nigeria. These findings highlight the pressing need to address these concerns and potentially reevaluate and improve existing community policing strategies. Additionally, the modal value, which indicates the most commonly chosen response for the factor "How would you conclusively rate community policing practice in Nigeria at present"?, on the Likert scale, was computed. This modal value, being 1, indicates the most frequent response, corresponds to "Very dissatisfied," with a total count of 555 respondents, indicating strong dissatisfaction.

1. Community Awareness on Community Policing Practices in Nigeria

The research question aimed to determine the levels of awareness among respondents concerning different facets of community policing in Nigeria and whether significant disparities existed in these awareness levels. Two hypotheses were formulated: the null hypothesis (H0) suggested that the proportion of respondents' awareness regarding various facets of community policing would not significantly differ from the expected proportion of 0.50, while the alternative hypothesis (H1) proposed otherwise. Utilizing the Binomial Test of Proportion with Z-approximations, the study findings revealed substantial disparities in awareness levels.

The study reveals significant disparities in awareness levels concerning different facets of community policing in Nigeria. Findings from the Binomial Test of Proportion with Z-approximations indicate a substantial lack of awareness among respondents regarding various aspects of community policing. Specifically, there is statistically significant unawareness regarding collaboration between communities and police to combat crime (p=0.61, P=0.50, p<0.01), police communication with

communities about objectives and strategies (p=0.62, P=0.50, p<0.01), citizens secretly aiding the police in crime prevention (p=0.54, P=0.50, p<0.01), and police patrolling neighborhoods on foot to build relationships (p=0.81, P=0.50, p<0.01). Respondents also demonstrated a lack of awareness regarding police making themselves easily accessible through substations closer to people (p=0.62, P=0.50, p<0.01), police engagement initiatives like mentoring and youth programs (p=0.86, P=0.50, p<0.01), and citizens' willingness to participate in community policing efforts or involvement (p=0.62, P=0.50, p<0.01.

On the other hand , respondents demonstrated significant awareness regarding police disrespect the orders of the leadership of communities while performing their duties (72% awareness, p=0.72, P=0.50, p<0.01), lack of trust between police and communities (83% awareness, p=0.83, P=0.50, p<0.01), Police finding it difficult to arrest offenders because the police don't work with communities (57% awareness, p=0.57, P=0.50, p<0.01), and Police reluctant to share information with communities (57% awareness, p=0.57, P=0.50, p<0.01), and police actions conflicting with community leadership, indicating a recognized issue in police-community relations (p=0.64, P=0.50, p<0.01). Awareness of police adherence to cultural values was evenly divided (p=0.52, P=0.50, p>0.05), suggesting no statistically significant awareness discrepancy on this aspect. Overall, the findings underscore significant gaps in awareness regarding various aspects of community policing practices in Nigeria, highlighting the need for enhanced community engagement and awareness campaigns to improve understanding and collaboration between police and communities.

4.2 Community's Importance Rating on Community Policing Practices in Nigeria

The research question for community's importance rating on community policing practices in Nigeria aimed to discern the perceived levels of importance among respondents regarding various factors related to community policing practice in Nigeria, along with identifying significant trends favoring the perception of unimportance. Two hypotheses were formulated: the null hypothesis (H0) posited that the proportion of respondents perceiving these factors as unimportant would not significantly differ from the expected proportion of 0.50, while the alternative hypothesis (H1) suggested otherwise. Utilizing the Binomial Test of Proportion with Z-approximations, the study

uncovered a significant trend favoring the perception of unimportance among respondents regarding various facets of community policing practice in Nigeria.The study reveals a significant trend favoring the perception of unimportance among respondents regarding various factors related to community policing practice in Nigeria. Findings from a binomial test of proportions using Z-approximations indicate that across all factors, there is a consensus that these aspects are unimportant. Findings highlighted a consensus that these aspects were deemed unimportant, including prompt police response to emergencies (p=0.90, P=0.50, p<0.01)., installing surveillance systems to monitor activities (p=0.91, P=0.50, p<0.01), using social media platforms to support policing activities (p=0.93, P=0.50, p<0.01), partnerships between the community and the police (p=0.90, P=0.50, p<0.01), police working together to fight crime (p=0.90, P=0.50, p<0.01), police communication with communities about their objectives and strategies (p=0.75, P=0.50, p<0.01), and citizens secretly working with the police to fight crime (p=0.90, P=0.50, p<0.01). Similarly, there was a significant perception that police patrolling the neighborhood on foot police patrolling the neighborhood on foot was unimportant((p=0.79, P=0.50, p<0.01) , and making themselves easily accessible through substations (p=0.90, P=0.50, p<0.01) is also considered unimportant. Conversely, there is a significant perception that police supporting communities with mentoring and youth programs is unimportant (p=0.84, P=0.50, p<0.01). These findings suggest a prevalent belief among respondents that various aspects of community policing practices in Nigeria are not of significant importance, indicating potential areas for improvement and policy focus.

4.3 Agreement with Some Community Policing Practice in Nigeria

The question investigated here is the perceptions among respondents regarding the effectiveness of community policing in various aspects and whether there are significant trends favoring disagreement with its effectiveness. Two hypotheses were formulated: the null hypothesis (H0) suggested that the proportion of respondents disagreeing with the effectiveness of community policing in various aspects would not significantly differ from the expected proportion of 0.50, while the alternative hypothesis (H1) proposed otherwise. To test these hypotheses, the study utilized the Binomial Test of Proportion with Z-approximations.

The results revealed a significant trend favoring disagreement with the effectiveness of community policing across all factors examined. Notably, a prevalent belief emerged among respondents that community policing could not effectively improve police-community relationships (p=0.86, P=0.50, p<0.01), increase community capacity to address issues (p=0.89, P=0.50, p<0.01), enhance safety perceptions (p=0.96, P=0.50, p<0.01), or reduce crime rates (p=0.96, P=0.50, p<0.01). The findings indicated widespread skepticism regarding the efficacy of community policing in achieving its intended objectives, suggesting potential areas for improvement or the need to reassess community policing strategies to better meet community expectations and needs.

4.4 Willingness to Use Technology to Support Community Policing Practices in Nigeria

This analysis aimed to investigate if Nigerians are willing to support community policing if the enabling technologies are provided. Two hypotheses were posited:

Null hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference in willingness to support Community Policing (CP) among Nigerians when enabling technologies are provided.

Alternative hypothesis (H1): There is a significant difference in willingness to support Community Policing (CP) among Nigerians when enabling technologies are provided.

The Binomial Test of proportion using Z-approximations was adopted to look at the observed proportions of willingness among 1200 respondents against a test proportion of 0.50.
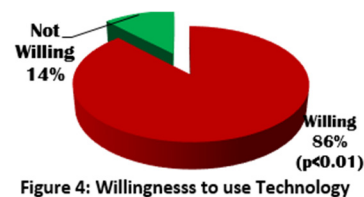

Figure 2: Willingness to use Technology.

Results revealed that 86% expressed willingness to use technology to support community policing, significantly deviating from the expected proportion of 0.50 (p=0.86, P=0.50, p<0.01), indicating substantial willingness to support the strategy if technologies can be made available in this context.

5 DISCUSSION

Several significant findings regarding awareness, importance, agreement with various aspects of community policing practices and willingness of citizens to use technology for CP in Nigeria were revealed. For instance, there was substantial lack of awareness regarding collaboration between communities and police, police communication with communities about objectives and strategies, citizen involvement in crime prevention, and other key aspects. Also a significant trend favoring the perception of low importance of community policing practice in Nigeria was observed. Across all factors examined, there was a consensus that police response to emergencies, partnerships between the community and police, among others aspects were unimportant. The results also showed widespread disagreement with the effectiveness of community policing across all factors examined, highlighting major concerns. Respondents generally expressed skepticism regarding the ability of community policing to improve police-community relationships, increase community capacity to address issues, enhance safety perceptions, or reduce crime rates. Furthermore, findings revealed high willingness of Nigerians to support community policing if advanced digital technologies are provided for use.

Meanwhile, the findings of the study have several important implications for the understanding and implementation of community policing in Nigeria as presented below.

5.1 Lack of Awareness

The finding that Nigerian citizens are not aware of some community policing practices suggests a significant gap in public education and outreach. This lack of awareness may hinder the effectiveness of existing or future community policing initiatives. It underscores the need for a comprehensive public awareness campaign to inform citizens about the role, purpose, and benefits of community policing, which is crucial for its success.

5.2 Perceived Irrelevance of Community Policing

The perception among citizens that community policing may not enhance police-citizen relationships reflects a deeper issue of trust and skepticism towards law enforcement in Nigeria. This could be linked to historical challenges with police misconduct or inefficiencies. Therefore, community policing

strategies need to be tailored to address this trust deficit by showing how such practices can foster collaboration, transparency, and accountability between the police and communities.

5.3 Conditional Willingness to Participate

The willingness of citizens to participate in community policing, contingent on the provision of advanced digital technologies, highlights an opportunity to modernize and digitize policing efforts in Nigeria. It implies that the integration of technology such as mobile applications, surveillance systems, and real-time communication platforms could increase citizen engagement. This presents an opportunity for law enforcement agencies to leverage technology to improve the efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness of community policing efforts.

5.4 Policy and Strategy Adjustment

These findings indicate that policymakers and law enforcement agencies need to rethink their approach to community policing. Investments in digital infrastructure, combined with efforts to educate citizens about the importance of their involvement, could transform community policing into a more effective tool for crime prevention and community engagement. This would require not only financial investment but also strategic planning to integrate technology into policing in ways that resonate with local communities.

5.5 Building Trust Through Modernization

Finally, the study implies that the success of community policing in Nigeria may depend on its modernization. Citizens' openness to digital solutions suggests that trust in the police could be improved if the policing system demonstrates adaptability to contemporary technological advancements. This could help bridge the current gap between citizens and the police, fostering a more collaborative and productive relationship.

6 LIMITATIONS

The survey conducted on Nigerian citizens' awareness and concerns regarding community policing while insightful, has certain limitations that

must be acknowledged. Firstly, the online survey method might have introduced sampling bias, potentially skewing the results by excluding segments of the population with limited internet access or digital literacy. Secondly, despite efforts to include participants from all six geopolitical zones, the sample may not fully represent Nigeria's diverse socio-cultural and demographic landscape, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Thirdly, participants' responses could have been influenced by social desirability bias or other factors, leading to potential overestimation or underestimation of certain attitudes or perceptions. Also, the survey questions and response options may not have fully captured the nuanced perspectives or depth of understanding regarding community policing among participants, thereby limiting the comprehensiveness of the findings.

7 CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes the role of technological innovations in community policing success in Nigeria while highlighting disparities in awareness, willingness, and perception. Despite recognizing benefits like crime reduction and improved police-community relationships, respondents showed limited awareness and skepticism. Policymakers should enhance engagement and awareness through diverse communication strategies and training for both law enforcement and citizens. Further research should explore culturally sensitive technological approaches to improve security and trust. Longitudinal studies tracking changes in perceptions and effectiveness can provide valuable insights. Assessing technological needs will aid in designing relevant tools for community policing. Comparative studies between Nigeria and other nations facing similar challenges can help refine strategies. Addressing these concerns will enhance community policing effectiveness, ensuring safer environments for all citizens.

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