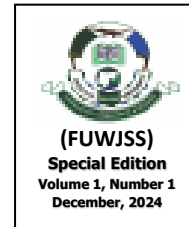# RESTRUCTURING COMMUNITY POLICING TO CURB INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study interrogates community policing in Nigeria as a proactive policing strategy that shifts from the reactive policing paradigm which is no longer effective in modern-day policing. Nigeria is currently deviled with insecurity in form of terrorism, banditry and ritualism – this has resulted in the wanton destruction of human lives and properties. Calls for community policing have heightened in Nigeria as it is believed that police personnel drawn from a community would definitely understand the geographical terrain of the community than, non-natives that are brought from other states and regions of the country. Thus, the need to engage natives and local community members in enforcing tight security of a community has become more imperative. Data for this paper emerged through a systematic review of secondary data sources such as textbooks, online journal articles, newspapers, government publications. The Broken Window Theory forms the theoretical foundation of the paper. Findings established that community policing is considered a viable alternative to traditional or conventional policing in Nigeria. The paper concludes that community policing seeks to ensure a constructive engagement with community people, thereby making the community co-producers of security, justice and social order. The paper recommends the use of technology in community policing.

Keywords: Security-architecture, community policing, insecurity, police

Introduction

Insecurity is not a peculiarity of any region of the world. It is therefore a global phenomenon. From Europe, the America, Asia to Africa; in as much as a place is being inhabited by humans, the prevalence and occurrence of crime and violence cannot be ruled out. The menace of insecurity in form of kidnapping, banditry, ritual killings, domestic violence of different shades have become so ubiquitous that, it has become a concerning issue for governments at all levels. Hence, the need to complement the efforts of the traditional police force in crime prevention and investigation in Nigeria. This is with a view to ensuring a reduction in the notorious activities of the men of the underworld. Particularly, since the return to civil rule in Nigeria, in 1999, that brought with it some measure of freedom for the people, it appeared as though, the floodgate of crime has been opened. Otto and Ukpere (2012) observed that, as the Nigerian society progresses in infrastructural development, especially with the advent of the current democratic dispenation, new forms of violent crimes have also emerged and the society has become more insecure with many people getting involved in diverse sophisticated and notoriously atrocious criminal activities. Therefore, security of lives and property should therefore not be handled with levity. Since an insecure society will not be conducive to economic and other productive activities. In reinforcing this assertion, Imobighe (2003), posited that without security, individuals within a state will find it difficult to engage in productive activities. And self–security measures seem to be the order of the day in recent times across the globe. This is in view of the fact that, Nigeria, a country that is battling with pervasive and endemic corruption, has added yet another menace-insecurity- to the list of the odds she is stacked against. For instance, in Ogun State in 2014, many banks closed down their branches in some parts of the state due to the incessant cases of bank robbery, some of which claimed human lives (Ugwuanyi, 2014). Policing in any human community is very vital and a sensitive issue as far as security is concerned. That is why it is often conceived that, policing is everybody's business.

This much has been reinforced and corroborated by Remington (1965) when he submitted that the police occupy a vital position in any democratic society and their relationship with the public

influences how they are perceived and supported by the public. Policing therefore is everybody's business as the police alone cannot effectively solve criminal activities in a society. The complexity of the contemporary security challenges like increasing trans-border crime, terrorism, human trafficking, armed robbery, homicide, to mention but a few, overwhelm the public security sector as many governments have subscribed to the need to extend the security sector to include private security providers and the citizens (Kasali & Odetola, 2016). Within the framework of the community policing concept, concentration of power at the centre will give way to the dispersion of power of crime monitoring and control to the communities, thereby making it a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement. This is the prevailing condition in the Western clime where the idea was borrowed from, especially the United States of America.

The paper is segmented into the following parts, for easy of navigation. The first section introduces the study, and the next section addresses the methodology of the study. This section is followed by appraising community-police force relations in Nigeria; this is followed by, restructuring community policing in Nigeria, after which the study looked at the challenges of community policing in Nigeria. Prospects of community policing in Nigeria then followed it and it ended with conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptualizing Community Policing

The word police is related to the Greek word politeuein, which denotes to be a citizen or engage in political activity. (Roberg, Crank & Kuykendall, 2000). To be sure, the need for policing people in any human community cannot be over-emphasised. This is in view of the inevitability of crime and other forms of wrong doings among people, of which their basic duty is crime prevention and control. Explaining this point, Moore, Trojanowicz and Kelling (1988) contended that, the core mission of the police is to prevent crime. In Nigeria, Inyang and Abraham (2013) similarly posited that, the Nigeria Police System is predominantly controlled by the formal police institutions that is, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and other legalized security agencies such as the Nigerian Security Corp and Civil Defence (NSCDC).

Classical social scientists have observed that, violence is part of human existence, hence the need for policing. The question then arises, what is policing? The term policing is used with many different meanings in mind; most notably it is referred to as the process of 'ensuring compliance with the law' (Anneke, 2007). Some use police and law enforcement interchangeably, this is to some extent correct, however, Anneke (2007) contended that, Police themselves however tend to prefer the term 'police' as policing is not the same as law enforcement. He asserted further that, although police are always law enforcement officials, most countries also have non-police agencies whose officials enforce the law, for example border guards or customs officials.

Policing in Nigeria can be situated with three epochs, these are: the pre-colonial era, colonial era and post-colonial era. In the pre-colonial epoch, crime prevention was the duty of indigenous institutions responsible for crime control (Inyang & Abraham, 2013). Ikuteyiyo and Rotimi cited in Inyang & Abraham therefore concluded that, the absence of codified laws and social structure provided the necessary basis for the regulation of behaviour which was largely enforced by various institutions responsible for crime prevention in different parts of the country e.g. secret societies, messengers and palace guards.

Community policing around the world has become inevitable in view of the rising spate of crime. Since it is also axiomatic that, the conventional policing can hardly successfully do their work without some support from the community where they operate. In reinforcing this assertion, Olusegun (2016) contended that, as a matter of fact Nigerian Police Force can sustain or maintain crime free communities without voluntary local efforts to complement theirs. The notion of community policing has other names such as: neighbourhood policing or proximity policing (Aiche and Okafor, 2018). Community in the opinion of Umebau (2008, p.75) cited in Okafor and Aniche, 2018) community refers to "a social group occupying a defined geographical area and whose members share common interests historical background, cultural values, economic activities as well as basic social institutions". In conceptualizing the notion of community policing, Ikuteyijo and Rotimi (2012) wrote that community policing

entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all in which people take active part in their own affairs. On a related analytical plane, Rooyen (2001) conceives community policing as a philosophy and strategy which is based on a partnership between the community and the police to find creative solutions for contemporary community problems, crime and other related matters. Community Policing is a kind of cooperation between the community people and police in checking crimes and ensuring the general security of citizens (Omoruyi, 2001 cited in Olusegun, 2016). In trying to explain community policing, Ferreira (1996) identifies three major models of community policing, viz, crime prevention and peace preservation policing, communications policing, and community building policing. This first presupposes that, there is need for an active participation of the community to keep crime in check and inexorably engendering peace. The second model addresses the importance and significance of information sharing by the community in form of tipping off the police, in order to nab and apprehend criminals. The third model, addresses itself to the issue of capacity building by the police. In other words, police must develop the capacity to integrate itself into the community where it operates for ease of operation.

In looking at forms and characters of community policing in Nigeria, Olusegun (2016) submitted that it takes different forms ranging from Community Development Association (CDA), Peace and Security Committee (PSC), landlords and tenants security harmony in which certain able bodied men in the community are organised to watch over the community rotationally, Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) (in the northern region), Vigilante service group etc. In most communities, concerted efforts are being made, to further boost the efforts of the traditional police. This is in view of the lopsided constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that places the job of policing in the hand of the federal government. State governors are just Chief Security Officers (CSOs) by name alone, but in actual fact, the Commissioner of Police of such states; report directly to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) who in turn reports to the President and Commander –in- Chief. On this basis of this anomaly and dilemma, Nwogwugwu and Odedina (2018) concluded

that, the state governors are nominal security chiefs without direct control of policing in their states. This singular fact, further brings the importance and relevance of community policing to bold relief in the broader analysis of issue.

In my opinion therefore, community policing refers to a community –based effort at stemming the tide of insecurity in their community, by making a private or non- governmental security arrangement for themselves.

Theoretical Framework

Brian (2012) cited in Olusegun (2016) averred that, Broken Window Theory suggests that the slippery slope to lawlessness begins simply when a community starts tolerating relatively minor violations of public order- vandalisation of abandoned structures, taking illicit drugs, loitering, street fighting etc. It is crystal clear that, the police and the criminal justice system are not enough to carry the heavy burden of security of lives and property of citizens. Hence, the need to involve the community (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988). This theory holds that, petty criminal behaviours usually metamorphosed into big crimes, which the community people have a good understanding of the perpetrators and can fish them out for onward transfer to the traditional police for further actions.

The relevance of this theory to this study is that, with the engagement of the locales in policing the community to rid it of crime, will be a seamless exercise in the sense that, they know themselves and they also know the geography of the community in such a way that, they will not be confused or be in a state of dilemma when it comes to finding out criminals hideouts and their *Modus Operandis* . Language will not even be a barrier to such community policemen, unlike if a Hausa policeman is posted to Lagos, in his bid to apprehend criminals, if Yoruba language is being deployed by the criminals, even if he is there, he would not understand what is being said.

Research Methodology

Data for this study was sourced through secondary means. Textbooks, journals, newspapers among others have been deployed to gather the needed information for the study. The data gathered was

analysed by identifying patterns and themes in the data (Documented data).

Community –Police Force Relations in Nigeria

Community and police cooperation is a paradigm shift that seeks to focus on constructive engagement with people who are the end users of the police service and re – negotiate the contract between the people and the police thereby making the community co – producers of justice and a quality police service (Mohammed, Liman & Zamani, 2023). The need for community policing in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. From the beginning of the 1980s, there is no doubt that community policing as security management method has become a "buzz-word" in policing circle, replacing such terms as police-community relations, team policing, and problem oriented policing (Kasali & Odetola, 2016). The need for a partnership between the regular police and community people, was borne out of the fact that, the public perception of the police in Nigeria has not been a good one. Besides, the inability of the NPF to adequately protect Nigeria necessitated the need and call for community policy. Kasali and Odetola (2016) averred that, the relationship between the police and civil community in Nigeria has been considered by many as unfriendly such that the men and officers of the police institution are often perceived by the public as those without any sense of responsibility, integrity and commitment to duties, in spite of the slogan that "The Police is your friend". On the same analytical plane, Johnson (2013) posited 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. In spite of this colonial enterprise on policing in Nigeria, the police are at the forefront of the criminal justice process and, for people, the only personal experience they have with that process is the contact with a local police. This is coupled with their lack of decency in turning road blocks in to money- collection points. This is aside their laxity in crime fighting and control.Marenim (1985) corroborated the foregoing, observing that:

> The police in their routine work tend to protect the powerful. The Police are visible enmasse during ceremonial occasions when they cordon off VIPs from the common folk; they are assigned to guard the homes of the powerful, government buildings, and act as body guard for important officials. One rarely sees high ranking officers without a police officer. Police are concentrated in urban areas and within urban areas concentrate on patrolling Government Residential Areas (GRAs) - the home of indigenous and expatriate elites… such practices teach the rank and file who need protection and who does not , who is entitled to services and whose demand can be rejected.

The unfriendly disposition and the perception of the colonial police has been brought to the post-colonial period such that, there is no love lost between the police and the community people. What with the insecurity that has taken a more monstrous dimension in the country, rampant bribery and corruption, among other irritating tendencies of the police, all coalesce to make the call for community policing more pungent and poignant. Since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999 therefore, in order to contain the security challenges confronting the nation, a number of reforms have been undertaken by police authorities in the country (Arase and Iwuofor, 2007) this therefore, resulted to the creation of the community policing in 2004. To lend credence to the aforestated, Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990) opined that community policing is a philosophy, which is operated based on the belief that changes today will make communities safer and more attractive tomorrow. Kasali and Odetola (2016) noted that, President Olusegun Obasanjo in April 2004, initiated Community Policing in collaboration with police authorities under the leadership of a one-time Inspector General of Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun. Hence, six states including Benue, Enugu, Jigawa, Kano, Ondo, and Ogun were selected for the pilot scheme. Community policing is a philosophy of full service, personalized effective policing, where the same officers patrol and work in the same area on a permanent basis, from a decentralized place, working in a proactive partnership with citizens to identify and attack crime, (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000).

Role of Technology- Surveillance Cameras, Social Media in Community Policing

Since the world has gone global via globalisation, hardly can any sector of any country's sector run adequately without the inclusion of ICT, security issues inclusive. The role of technology in police institutions and police practices has long been recognized as relevant and ambivalent (Ogunbameru, 2008). Technological advances are particularly relevant for policing because they are seen to influence the organization (Adefihan and Ibikunle, un). Similarly, technology is exerting a profound influence on global society, fundamentally altering how we engage in diverse facets of our lives, spanning communication, commerce, education, healthcare, and governance (Hayes, 1998; Alemu, 2017). Technology has been integrated into Nigerian policing to enhance communication and collaboration among law enforcement bodies, supporting data-driven policing via analytics and predictive tools, and introducing surveillance innovations such as body-worn cameras and drones (Ibikunle & Binpe, 2018 cited in Ogochukwu, et al).

Restructuring Community Policing in Nigeria

Historically, policing and police work did not start as a paid profession, rather, it started as a noble, incorruptible profession with considerable responsibility and distinction, (Newburn, 2004). It must be emphasized, that the police as we know it today went through three distinct phases before it became professional. First, the populace, though small was responsible for maintaining law and order, then justice of the peace emerged on the scene to provide both the law and justice at the bar, and in the present era, paid professional police were established to maintain law and order (http://www.nigeriapolice. org/history). The history of policing in Nigeria today can trace its origin back to the colonial legacy. Therefore, pre-colonial experience, traditional African policing systems were rooted in the community and closely interlinked with social and religious structures (Mohammed &Mathias, 2020, p).The need to ensure that Nigeria was well secure brought about the idea of policing in Nigeria. In the opinion of Mohammed & Mathias (2020), they further contended that:

The Nigeria Police Force was first established in 1820. The first person to have the highest rank in the entire police was Commissioner Gen. Colonel KK. In 1879, a 1,200-member armed paramilitary Hausa Constabulary was formed. In 1888, the Royal Niger Company set up the Royal Niger Company Constabulary. In 1894, a similar force, the Niger Coast Constabulary was established in Calabar. In 1896, the Lagos Police was created. In the early 1900s, part of the Royal Niger Coast Constabulary became the Northern Nigeria Police, of which the part of Niger Coast Constabulary became the Southern Nigeria Police. In the 1960s, under the First Republic, of Nigeria these forces were first regionalized and then nationalized. The first attempt in policing Nigeria was created to police the Lagos colony in 1861 and subsequently constabularies were formed in what became the Northern and Southern Protectorates. It is not as though, there was no traditional policing system before the introduction of the western style of policing, but the western style was introduced to subjugate the informal traditional policing system.

Policing in Nigeria took a better shape in 1930, when the Northern and Southern Police forces emerged into the first national police force; called the Nigeria Police Force. This was headed by an Inspector General of Police (IGP) (Mohammed & Mathias, 2020). This was followed by a number of reforms in the policing system of the country, especially as the country adopted a federal system of government.

Mohammed & Mathias (2020) further contended that: In the year 1960, three innovative features of police were established in Nigeria. They include:

(i).   The Police was placed under the executive branch of the government.

(ii).   The Police were given uniforms to wear which made them immediately recognized and accessible to the public.

(iii).   And probably most importantly, the functions of policing were conceived to be proactive, to detect and prevent crimes, which included active patrolling in the community.
        According to the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria) which provided for the establishment of Nigeria Police Force under section 214 (1) and section 4 of the Police

Acts (laws of the federation 1990) as amended prescribed the role which includes:

(iv). To uphold and enforce the law impartially, and protect life, liberty, property, human rights and dignity of the members of the public

(v). The protection and detection of crime/offense to reduce the opportunity for the commission of crimes.

(vi). To protect public properties including Pipelines, NEPA, Railways, Bridge, critical installation and establishment against the act of vandalism, violence, or any kind of attacks.

(vii). To protect internal security and prevent and control terrorists, banditry, militants activities and other situation affecting internal security

(viii). To promote and preserve law and public order.

(ix). Perform such military duties, etc. Other role and function in which the Nigeria Police have more specific powers include:

(x). Conducting prosecutions before any court of law in Nigeria.

(xi). Arresting, without a warrant, any person who is found by the police to be committing any felony, misdemeanour or simple offense; or who the police reasonably suspects of having committed those offenses commit such offenses. The Police may also arrest without warrant, a person who is charged by another person with the commission of an offense.

(xii). It should be noted that where a specific offense provides that a person charged with that offense should be arrested with a warrant, then such alleged offender cannot be arrested without a warrant.

(xiii). The Police also have the power to search persons, premises, and belongings. On search of persons, where a police officer reasonably suspects any person of having in his possession or carrying in any form, anything which he has reason to believe has been stolen or is unlawfully obtained, the police officer may search and detain such a person.

(xiv). The police have the power to take and record measurements, photographs, and fingerprints of people who are in lawful custody from time to time. This is for identification.

Challenges of Community Policing

Community policing in Nigeria, is not without some hiccups, some of these challenges are hereunder stated.

The first challenge of community policing in a country like Nigeria, relates to the contradiction between the philosophy that underpin and undergird police operational practice, which is a centralized one but unlike the community policing, where the local people will like to make a lot of input, which will be frown at by the police. Overtime, this has been found to be a clog in the wheel of the smooth operations of community policing in Nigeria.

The second challenge of community policing in Nigeria, relates to the lack of trust that people have for the police. Most time, when offenders are apprehended and handed over to the police for appropriate punishment, it is often found out that, these criminals are left off the hook no sooner they were handed over to the police. This is more so, if they have influential money bags that can "buy" justice for the. So people feel that the same "man know man" mentality will define the operation of the community police.

The third challenge, has to do with the reactive nature of the police. The locals who live within the community often know the perpetrators of crimes within them. So when street associations, vigilante groups want to take some security measures to nip crime in the bud, police might accuse them of being overzealous among other asinine allegations.

The fourth challenge has to do with infrastructure deficit. The traditional police are battling with insufficient resources, with vigilante and other community association, joining the security fray, amenities get overstretched almost to a point of snapping. Vehicles will be needed for patrolling, there is need for the vehicle to be fueled, other accessories of security operatives must be procured foe efficiency and effectiveness, all of these will cost money.

Similarly, training of the personnel is another challenge of the community policing system. To train a security official for maximum productivity is quite expensive and most governmental bodies are not ready to undertake this expenses.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria stands to gain a lot, when there is a collaborative efforts between the traditional police and the community people, it promises to be of benefits to the community in the following ways, even though, and these are not exhaustive. The study has looked at community policing in Nigeria. The insecurity situation in the country has called for a reinforcement by the community people, in order to complement the efforts of the traditional police. And for a more successful and result oriented community policing in Nigeria, the followings must be in place. First, the police must be retrained to conform to modern day policing. The attitude of coercing innocent citizens on trump up allegations must be stopped. Secondly, there should be more transparency in the handling of cases when offenders are handed over to the police. A situation where an offender is handed to the police, but when money exchange hands, such an offender is left off the hook. Education at the primary and secondary level must be made compulsory. This is in view of the fact that, most out-of-school children are ready recruits for criminal activities in society.

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