

COMMUNITY POLICING AND NIGERIAN SECURITY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE SOUTH-WEST GEO-POLITICAL ZONE

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Abstract

Community policing as a public policy has been adopted by many countries of the world in the 21st century. The need for community policing arose from the need to prevent crime and maintain peace in a country. This paper examines the community policing as a security challenge, in the South-West region. The study adopted qualitative method using secondary sources of data like textbooks, newspapers, and online materials. The paper realised the need for community policing in Nigeria, based on the fact that there is continuous demand for restructuring of the federation in order to allow for more decentralisation. Through the provision for community policing, there is the decentralisation of the police force for more effectiveness. Moreover, the issue of manpower shortage currently experienced by the Nigeria police force necessitate the provision for community policing. There is also the issue of internal security challenges. There are however some threats to community policing like the issue of corruption and extra-judicial killing in Nigeria. The paper concluded that community policing has become an important means of enhancing peace and order in the country. It recommends enhanced salary for the community police officers and regular training for them.

Keywords: Police, community, security, crime.

Introduction

Community policing is a public policy that has been adopted by many countries of the world in the 21st century. Most, if not all, developed countries like United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia have seen community policing as an effective means of dealing with crime and preventing crime. The idea of community policing had also been imbibed by developing countries like Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya and India.

The development of community policing can be traced to the civil rights movements in 1960s with widespread riots and protest against racial discrimination and injustices promoted by the government (Police, 2019). As could further be seen, the civil right movements exposed the shortcoming of traditional police. The need for improvement in police-community relations come to the fore with the civil right protests, and it was realized that the police was part of the sources of racial discrimination and tension (Police, 2019). From studies, it was realized that the blacks were treated more harshly by the police than they were doing to the white citizens, the (blacks) were also under represented in police departments.

Community policing attracted the attention of academics in the 1970s when researchers began to examine the role of the traditional police and its effectiveness. An idea that became prominent is that there should be a close partnership between the police and local residents in order to reduce crime rate (Police, 2019).

In Nigeria, the idea of community policing evolved in 2012 or thereafter, however, what was being canvassed for then was state police. The entire Governors Forum, spoke with one voice on the support for state police. The then Chairman of the Governors Forum and Governor of Rivers State, Rotimi Amaechi posited that the governors “identified the increasing need for state police as a strategy for combating the rising insecurity” (Akinkuotu, 2012:62). The Governors, through Rotimi Amaechi opined that though, the 1999 constitution vested them with powers as Chief Security Officers of their states, in the real sense of it, it was the Police Commissioner that took critical sensitive decisions where there was need for it. The 'unitary system' that Nigeria was running in a supposed federal system had also led to the state's inability to set up their own police or even the local governments having their own local police. However, the Inspector General of Police, Muhammed Adamu has said community policing was better than state police that Nigerians were clamouring for (Jimoh, 2019). This is in the sense that state police would require each state government to create, recruit and manage its own police separate from that of the federal government.

There is the belief that community police would take care of all the demands and agitations for state police. The idea of community policing was approved by President Muhammadu Buhari in order to combat the growing insecurity threats across the country (Udegbunum, 2019). The community policing model

would involve the establishment and utilization of special constables, drawn from the different communities where they reside, with their activities managed by the federal government, specifically, the Inspector-General of Police.

The general objective of the study is to attempt an overview of community policing and security challenges in Nigeria with special reference to the South-West Geo-political zone. The specific objectives are to: examine the nature of community policing in Nigeria; attempt a justification for community policing in the South-West of Nigeria; explore Amotekun as a version of community policing in the South-West; and examine the threats to community policing in the South West.

This is a departure from previous research works that are focused mainly on responsibilities of community police officers, challenges and prospects of community policing in Nigeria, without considering the nature and versions of community policing in Nigeria and the justifications for community policing in the South-West which this paper has dealt with.

The research methodology that is adopted for this paper is qualitative. This implies that secondary sources of data like textbooks, newspapers, magazines and bulletins would be utilized for the paper.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of police in any society cannot be overemphasized. This is because of its traditional responsibilities as a law enforcement agency. However, as the society is developing and social institutions are on the increase, conflict increases. There is also increase in crime rate, coupled with increase in population in a developing country like Nigeria. Security challenges that come up on regular basis in Nigeria are banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, assassination, communal clashes and herdsman/farmers clashes. For instance, between April and June, 2019 the Nigerian Police arrested 2,175 suspects as a way of stemming the tide of crime and violence in the country, Nigeria. Out of this number, 852 were arrested for kidnapping, 865 suspects for armed robbery, 359 for murder and 99 for cultism (Sahara Reporters, 2019). These security challenges pose serious threat to peaceful co-existence of Nigerians and also impede development. The need for community police to deal with some of these issues cannot therefore be overemphasized, as it has become clear that the National Police and other security agencies cannot tackle these challenges alone. The current realities within the different parts of the country is also to establish structure for self-protection in view of the prevailing activities of criminals who have been harassing people in their residents, offices, banks, weddings and funerals, restaurants and religious houses (Ekpu, 2020).

Literature Review

The concepts that would be reviewed in this work are community, police, and security.

Community:

The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus (2020) defines a community as "the people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group, or nationality".

The people of a community often share a lot of things like housing, language, religion and interest with one another on daily basis. As opined by Mauver and Pase in Mahajan (2014), the word community is "the term we apply to a pioneer settlement, a village or city, a tribe or a nation. Wherever the members of any group, small or large, live together in such a way that they share not this or that particular interest, but the basic condition of a common life, we call that group a community". A community thus has lot of features, and shares a lot of attributes.

A community can also be defined as a group of people living in a particular place possibly a village, town or city having some things in common and also thrives to protect those things they value as a group.

Police:

The police is a body established by the government in line with constitutional provision, to maintain peace and order in a country. The police in Nigeria is the principal law enforcement agency, whose activities cover the Federal Capital Territory and the 36 states of the federation (Kasumu, 2017). The five major roles of the Nigerian Police are (i) prevention of crime, (ii) enforcement of laws, (iii) maintenance of peace and order, (iv) protection of lives and property, and (v) the provision of a wide range of services (Kasumu, 2017). The implication of the assertion is that the traditional responsibilities of the police are enormous and basically they have to do with internal security of a country.

Security:

Security has to do with freedom from danger or threat to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the wellbeing of its people (Ogaba, 2010, in Afolabi, 2015). Security can also be seen as human emancipation oriented. This is in the sense that people must be liberated from the challenges, difficulties and constraints that may hinder them

from carrying out what they want to do freely, and these include, poverty, oppression, political crisis and epidemics (Afolabi, 2015). This invariably implies that people in their day-to-day activities are faced with security challenges which can prevent their optimal performance. Security in a sense is protection from anything that can harm or is potentially injurious to the individual or a group of people.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that is considered suitable for this work is the Broken Windows theory.

The Broken Windows theory can be seen as an academic theory proposed by James Wilson and George Kelly in 1982 (McKee, 2013). The theory employed Broken Windows as a metaphor for disorders that occur within neighbourhoods. The theory links disorder and incivility to subsequent occurrences of crime. The Broken Windows theory is a theory that has influence on police policy in the 1990s through to the 21st century (McKee, 2013).

The Broken Window theory is a theory that believes that primary attention should not be on serious crimes, rather, serious crimes such as rape, robbery and murder should be seen as final results of lengthier chain of events. It is the belief of Kelly and Wilson that crime emanated from disorder and as such without disorder, there would be no serious crimes. Kelly and Wilson further opined that when there is disorder there is fear in the minds of the citizens, who feel that where they are living is unsafe (McKee, 2013). As people withdraw from the community, social controls that check criminals weakened. As a result, disorder instigates crime, and crime instigates further disorder and crime. The Broken Windows Theory in essence argues that lesser crime should be dealt with first so that this will help in curbing or preventing serious crimes. The community police help in dealing with lesser crimes in their community as such.

A strength of this theory is that it allows for the use of initiatives, within the sphere of criminal justice policy in order to effect change. This initiative bothers on determining the criminal act that will be prioritised by the state in order to maintain peace, law and order. It is also less costly in its application when compared with other theories (McKee, 2013). The theory has been criticised on the ground that it has not been able to demonstrate through empirical evidence that when disorder is left unchallenged, it leads to crime. For this theory to be validated thus, there is the need to show empirically that disorder induces fear, and fear induces breakdown of social control (McKee, 2013). The relevance of the theory can be seen in the fact that, it has been a driving force in community policing programmes. This is based on the belief that a behaviour that is not attended to can lead to inability of community to exercise control, thereby leading to crime. Wilson and Kelly therefore implore the police to pay attention to disorder in the society. In other words, when disorder is attended to on time, it prevents the outbreak of a more severe violence.

History of Community Policing in Nigeria

Community policing is something that evolved in Nigeria in the pre-colonial era. As Oyenwinmina and Aibieyi (2016:62) opined, the era “witnessed a type of policing arrangement that was purely indigenous to the community of people involved, and emphasis was on the use of able-bodied men for administration of justice”. The traditional rulers utilised the community police to maintain law and order within their domains. With the annexation of Lagos in 1863, the 30 member consular Guard was renamed Hausa Guard based on the ethnic composition of the men recruited into the unit. It was in 1896 that the Lagos Police Force was formed and armed like the “Hausa Constabulary”. The police forces for the Southern and Northern regions were brought together in 1930 and became known as the Nigerian Police Force (Oyenwinmina & Aibieyi, 2016). Currently, the federal government has resolved that communities should take over the responsibility of policing their respective areas, while the conventional police should give the much needed supports (Olatunji, 2019). Officers that will be recruited will be those who are born and bred in the respective communities, in order for them to be able to function effectively (Olatunji, 2019). It is envisaged that this would meet up with the yearnings and aspirations of those clamouring for state police.

Nature of Community Policing in Nigeria

As observed by Pala and Balcioglu (2016), community policing have taken different forms depending on the country concerned and its challenges. This range from delegating a few extra police officers to a particular place, to a system that involves the police working in collaboration with local/national agencies to deal with some challenges which may or may not be crime related. In a country like Nigeria, local hunters and vigilante groups have been seen as vital to its community policing programme because of knowledge of the thick forests in their areas.

Community partnership has been described as the cornerstone of community policing. Since the public exist as the 'ears and eyes' of the police, it behooves on both the police and community to work in partnership (Pala and Balcioglu, 2016). This is necessary in order to be able to effectively deal with crime.

This is the type of situation envisaged by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) in Nigeria.

The intended community policing model for Nigeria according to the spokesman of the NPF, Frank Mba, is to be in partnership form, engagement in nature, accountable, transparent, accessible and improves the visibility of police officers (Idris, Mutum, Emmanuel and Alkassim, 2019). The community policing would be tailored towards the peculiarity of each community as Mba further asserted.

Volunteers for the community policing programme of the Federal Government would be trained and drawn from various fields of human endeavour, when there are volunteers. The police would function as special constables with full powers of policemen.

In terms of workforce, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) would recruit 40,000 community policing officers with average of 50 being engaged in each of the 774 Local Government Areas (Toromade, 2019). In terms of payment, it can be perceived that since enlistment is voluntary, those that enlist will not be paid by the police force. This situation had also been confirmed.

Rationale for Community Policing

The need for community policing can be attributed to some reasons. These are: the demand for restructuring of the Nigerian Federation, Politicians, bureaucrats in the South-West have been clamouring for restructuring over the years based on the need to promote decentralisation of power. As a result, there is the argument that the Nigerian police should be regionalized for it to be able to effectively tackle vices in the Nigerian society (Aguanwo, 2014, Egunjobi, 2016 in Alli & Sani, 2018). It had been asserted that the police has not been effective in its constitutional duties because of its over-centralization (Aguanwo, 2014, Egunjobi, 2016 in Alli & Sani, 2018). This has thus led some Nigerians to posit that state police should be established in order to enhance decentralization of the force (Alli & Sani, 2018).

Though some eminent Nigerians like Dr Goodluck Elebe Jonathan and the incumbent President, Muhammadu Buhari have argued to the contrary in the sense that the state police can be misused by some sitting Governors just like in the era of Native Authority police in the Western Region (Egunjobi in Alli & Sani, 2018). It was in view of this that they recommended the reform of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) so that it can serve the citizenry better (Alli & Sani, 2018). As part of the reforms, the Buhari-led administration has given the Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Mohammad Adamu, the go-ahead with the idea of community policing. The national police would be in charge of the community policing model, and would involve the establishment and use of special constables (Udegbunam, 2019). The special constables model, according to the IGP was mirrored after the United Kingdom's Police community support service (Udegbunnam, 2019). The IGP further opined that the special constables would be drawn from among members of the community and are to exist as voluntary community police. There is the belief that the community police would complement the activities of the national police in combating crime.

The Nigerian Police Force is also currently experiencing manpower shortage as it needs additional 116,590 personnel in order to reach maximum strength to police the entire population (Okafor, 2016). As at 2018, based on the information from the former IGP, Ibrahim Idris the workforce of the police was about 334,000 (Ameah, 2018) while the population of the country was estimated at 184 million people. This is an indication that only one police officer served about 551 Nigerians. This number of the police workforce no doubt is grossly inadequate for effective policing of the country.

Internal security challenges have also necessitated the provision of community policing in Nigeria and South-West in particular. These range from terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, banditry to militancy and rape.

Amotekun: AVersion of Community Policing in the South West

The Amotekun security outfit was launched on 9th January, 2020 by the Governors of the six South West States. As Ekpu (2020), posited, Amotekun in Yoruba is Leopard in English. It is fierce looking, spotted animal that is largely found in Africa and Asia. The position of Ekpu (2020) was further reinforced by Aneansoranye (2020), who posited that Amotekun cannot be seen as an ordinary animal as it exhibits conflict, jumps and runs with extraordinary speed to get at its target. This therefore must have influenced the decision of the South West Governors to adopt the name, Amotekun. The concerned states are Ondo, Ekiti, Lagos, Osun, Oyo and Ogun.

Objectives of its Formation

The primary objective behind the formation of Amotekun is to have a security outfit that will defend the region, in view of the rising insecurity in the country, which has manifested in indiscriminate killings, kidnappings, banditry and wanton destruction of farmlands (Aneasoranye, 2020). Suffice it to say that the South-West geo-political zone experienced incessant attacks from armed robbers, herdsmen and

kidnappers in recent times. The situation in the country as a whole has been such that criminals had upper hand in the last few years in the battle for the soul of Nigeria in spite of the gallantry of the Nigerian Armed Forces and the police who appeared overwhelmed (Ekpu, 2020). With the knowledge of the forest, and the nooks and cranny of their communities, it is envisaged that the Amotekun will be able to contain the activities of the criminals within the geo-political zone.

Another objective of Amotekun is to have a security outfit that will complement the efforts of the police and the other law enforcement agents (Egbas, 2020). The states did not have the intention of making it a State Police like the regional police of the Old Western region as opined by some prominent politicians in the North.

Amotekun was also formed with the aim of granting her the power to disarm unauthorised persons possessing arms and weapons considered dangerous and help prevent crime and assist accident victims (Oluwole, 2020). It is believed that this will also help to reduce crime rate in the society and impact death incidences arising from illegal arms possession in the concerned states. However, in spite of its laudable objectives, the formation and operation of Amotekun has been criticized on the following grounds:

It has been asserted that, as laudable as Amotekun initiative is, its founders did not put in place the necessary legal framework before its official launch (Kupoluyi, 2020). This could possibly be as a result of the initial regional outlook it had. However, following meetings and amiable resolution between the Federal Government and the six states that formed Amotekun, each state had come up with a law to back the setting up of the outfit. For instance, the Oyo State Amotekun bill, known as Oyo State Security Network Bill was signed into law by the Governor, Engineer Seyi Makinde on Tuesday, March 10, 2020 (Adejumo, 2020).

The formation of Amotekun security outfit has been perceived as an attempt to establish a regional state outfit that will be used to terrorise non-indigenes residing in the South-West and also undermine sovereignty of Nigeria (Feyisipo, 2020). This has however been debunked by the Chairman of the Governors Forum and the Governor of Ekiti State, Kayode Fayemi who made it clear that the Western Nigeria Security Network, otherwise referred to as Amotekun was neither a state police nor an alternative to existing security outfits (Feyisipo, 2020). It is not surprising that this fear was being nursed because in the First Republic in Nigeria, the regional police was used to oppress political opponents and non-indigenes.

The Attorney General of the Federation, Malami (2020) had also shortly after the establishment of South West Governors' Amotekun declared it illegal. This was on the ground that it was not known to the constitution of Nigeria. Malami further reiterated that the Nigerian Constitution does not make room for a regional army and that this should not be seen as government being at war with the states (Daniel, 2020). The position of the Attorney-General has been seen as more political than legal in the sense that he had shun his eyes away from Hisbah Police (a State Police), Civilian Joint Task Force and other security agencies in the North (Ogun, 2020). Prominent Lawyers and activists in their reaction to Malami's position and by extension, the Federal Government's position on Amotekun held that Malami goofed. This is in the sense that there is no law that prevents citizens from protecting their lives and property. His argument had also been faulted on the ground that the police does not enjoy exclusive jurisdiction on issues of protection of lives and property.

Malami's (2020) argument is also faulty in the sense that only the court of law could declare Amotekun illegal (Adeyemi, Agboluaje & Akingboye, 2020). Moreover, the Governors are the Chief Law Officers for their states as stipulated by the 1999 constitution and as a result can come up with policies that would help protect the people against attacks. The positions of state governments in the South-West and eminent personalities in the North demonstrate rivalry and mistrust among the regions in the country.

There are also concerns and doubts concerning the ability of the State Governors to effectively sustain a funding regime for the Amotekun security outfit. This is because the issue of funding goes beyond donating vehicles, fuelling of the vehicles as negligible as it is can pose a challenge to the outfit (Odivwri, 2020). This is as a result of the unending complaints of paucity of funds to pay salaries and invariably meet the demands for minimum wage. The issue of paucity of funds is currently compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to further reduction in revenue accruing to states and even the federal government.

While the Amotekun might have come to stay, the fact exists that the security outfit must be put in proper shape in order to enhance its consolidation in community policing in order to ensure the desired peace in the states where it exists as a security outfit. As could be seen below, apart from Amotekun, there exist other variables of community policing in the country which are worth examining based on certain criteria like year of formation and composition. From the table below, it would be seen that while the Vigilante Group was formed in 1999, comprising male and female members, the Hisbah was formed in 2003 with male recruits. However, basically all the security outfit have something in common, which is to assist the

law enforcement agents in preventing crime.

Some other Versions of Community Policing in Nigeria

Name of Security Outfit	Year Formed	Composition	Functions/Purpose	Achievement(s)	Challenges/Weaknesses	Remuneration
Vigilante Group of Nigeria	1999	Male and female membership across Nigeria.	To combat crime through neighbourhood policing. To protect lives and property.	It has proved to be effective in neighbourhood policing. It has helped in combating Boko Haram in the North East.	There is the possibility of some of the officials being loyal to political office holders they are serving or benefitting from.	₦10,000 per month
Lagos Neighbourhood Corps	2016	Male and female recruits within Lagos State.	To assist the police in combating crime in Lagos State.	It has helped in reducing crime across Lagos State and maintaining community peace.		₦19,500 per month to about ₦53,000 (unofficial figure).
Hisbah	2003	Male recruits in the Northern States.	Combating crime. Social service functions like dispute resolution, traffic control.	Enforcing Sharia law and order in the Northern States of Nigeria.	Widespread human right abuses like extra-judicial arrests, floggings, seizure and destruction of alcoholic drinks.	₦10,000 and ₦15,000 per month respectively.
Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)	2013	Both male and female	To support military in the fight against Boko Haram. To assist in providing camps for Internally Displaced Persons	It has helped to some extent in containing insurgency in the North.	Sexual violence, mass execution of captives and diversion of food from civilians.	Monthly stipend of ₦15,000

Sources: Author's Compilation (2020)

Threat to Community Policing in South-West Nigeria

Since the police men are products of the society where they exist and function, their orientation is therefore that of their society. Since community is also a product of a society, it is likely to be confronted with some threats that may affect its image and effective functioning. These threats are as follows:

Assault by Hoodlums or Bandits:Based on the fact that community police officers are to perform low risk functions without carrying arms, as opined by the Inspector-General of Police, they are susceptible to attacks by hoodlums or bandits in the performance of their duties in a place like Lagos. In Lagos State, the officials of Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Corps (LNSC) are to undertake routine motorized patrol day and night, and follow up on arrest of offenders to the court with a view to ensuring justice. For instance, a suspected gang of five cultists butchered an officer of the Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Corps known as Mr. Moshood Bolaji in Surulere area of Lagos (Ugbodaga, 2018). However, with the Amotekun security personnel they are to carry light arms like dane guns. This would no doubt reduce the attacks on the members.

Extra-judicial Killings: Extra-judicial killing in Nigeria is a recurring decimal. Extra-judicial killing implies the killings of an individual by some other individual or the government without recourse to the judiciary. Extra-judicial killing is more or less jungle justice and violates the right of the individual to life as enshrined in the 1999 constitution. In trying to justify Extra-judicial killings, the police often try to quote Police Force Order 237 which permits them to shoot suspect who tries to escape and keep in detention accused individual (Nwakerendu, 2014). Cases of Extra-judicial killings reported by Amnesty International are killings by police of Jubuike while he was relaxing with friends, Anams (age 23) a student in front of a guest house in Enimgbu Rivers State, on 24th July 2009, a commercial driver at a roadblock in Imo State, killed on 15th December, 2008, Mohammed Yusuf, Boko-Haram leader killed in detention on 30th July, 2009 in Maiduguri (Nwakerendu, 2014).

Clashes between Traditional Police and Community Police: It is also envisaged that there can be clashes occasionally between the traditional police and community police. These occasioned clashes can emanate from a lack of political will and resistance to change by some conventional/traditional police officer (Idris, Mutum, Emmanuel and Alkassim, 2019). This type of clashes may not be limited to the South-West. It can also be experienced by other communities where there is community police.

Conflict between the Federal Government and the Concerned States: Since the establishment of the

Western Nigerian Security Network, otherwise known as Amotekun, there has been incessant conflict over the control of the security outfit. While the Federal Government holds that Amotekun should be under the control of the Inspector-General of Police, the Yoruba leaders and eminent Lawyers and civil society groups declared that only the court could alter Amotekun's structure, as it has been established by enabling laws of the respective states. They further posited that the birth of Amotekun was through the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria Commission (DAWNC) (Johnson, Badru, Ajayi & Ogunnaike, 2020). It is doubtful if this conflict will abate soonest as long as the Federal Government has interest in monitoring/controlling the security outfit.

Conclusion

As could be seen, community policing has become an important means of enhancing peace and order in a country. This is based on the fact that it is easier to get to people at the grassroots level through it. It would in no small way help to combat banditry, rape and other vices in the Nigerian society and the South-West geo-political zone in particular. It would have also been seen that in spite of the justification for community policing, there are also threats to it.

The study has been limited by the inability to collect data on the number of the members and the various offices of the four community police outfits in Nigeria. However, the paper would provide the needed platform for further research with regards to community policing in Nigeria and the South-West in particular. It would also help in providing further insight into the study of the various versions of community policing outfits in Nigeria, as independent security outfits.

Recommendations

Community police officers should be well remunerated and provided with the necessary tools so that they can function well wherever they are posted to serve. Enhanced remuneration will help in no small way to motivate them. Regular training should be organised for the community police officers. This is especially true of those that are using or will use ammunitions like Amotekun security outfit.

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