

COMMUNITY POLICING AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: *A contemporary community challenge requires a symbiosis between the police and the community. This paper examined community policing and security in Delta State with focus on vigilante groups in Abraka kingdom. The survey research method was adopted, with a combination of both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Questionnaires were administered and data were also generated from books, journals and newspaper articles. Data collected was tabulated and analyzed using the simple percentage. The study revealed that the Nigerian police force alone cannot secure lives and properties of citizens of Delta state, without complementary efforts from the community. The paper concluded that the police and the community can actually work together to provide security for the state. The paper recommended amongst others that the law making body of the state, which is the State House of Assembly, to enact laws that will encourage the establishment and training of the vigilante groups to enhance community policing in Delta State as it has being in other States of the Federation.*

Keywords: *Police, Policing, Community Policing, Crime*

Introduction

The phenomenon of crime has been a major subject of private and public concern throughout human history. It will be untrue to say that we dwell in a society free of crime, in fact, no society can boast of being a crime free society. However, the big question often asked is, though crime is a part of an inevitable human behaviour, to what length should a society tolerates it? This question actually link to man's natural thoughts for survival, the ability to reciprocate to any threat to his life and properties. The rise in violent crimes in Nigeria has created an enormous vacuum of uncertainty in the safety and security of lives and property of individuals and the whole community general. The incidents of local and inherent crimes like armed robbery, drug trafficking and abuse, arson, kidnapping, murder, hired assassinations, rape, and ritual killings are examples of the most ferocious and violent crimes which have increased tremendously in recent past. The aggregate of the traditional crimes mostly committed call for a change in the strategies for the abstinence and control of crime in Nigeria. Community policing is centered on a systematic relationship between the regular police and the entire citizenry.

The duties and functions of the Police are not only for enforcing the law alone, it also include tackling a huge and gruesome range of community issue and problems. The foresight and transition from traditional or regular policing to community policing is a global phenomenon which has been welcomed and also making wave globally and the Nigeria police cannot be an exception. Indeed, community policing as a strong philosophy and practice is a veritable vehicle and extremely essential machinery for police reforms (Okiro, 2007). In 2004, the Nigeria police welcomed the idea of community policing as a pragmatic approach to police reforms. The stage was set for a glaring departure from the

traditional policing, that was incident based and reactive, to a problem-solving oriented policing that is proactive and in support with the community as the nexus of policing aims and values (Abdulrahman, 2007).

Like several other nations of the world following the trend of this new development, the Nigeria police force embraced the philosophy of community policing on the bases that in a democratic inclined society, the police are enjoyed by their fellow citizens to guard and protect, serve the public's interest when inline to do so and equally uphold the fundamental rights to liberty, equality and justice under the law. In order to fulfill these privileged roles, the police must have a symbiotic relationship, which is, being a part of, not apart from, the communities they serve. Community policing was formally and legally launched throughout Nigeria On 27th April, 2004, (The Dawn Newspaper, 2011).

Police forces are organized to defend, protect and preserve the interests of the people in all spheres of the in society. Incidentally, the importance of police as facilitators, inhibitors and mediators of change programme will rest on the behaviour posed by their society. In a society frustrated totalitarianism and economic downcast, the role of the police will be more of defending the status quo ante of those that are oppressed politically and also the economic injustice inherent in the community. In contrast, in a democratic society the police are most likely to render services that enhance development and also ensure the survival of democracy (Alemika, 1993b). Failure of the state and its security agencies to guarantee security has transform issue from a public service rendered by the government to a private necessity that individuals and groups have to provide for themselves through various means. This largely explains the proliferation of vigilante groups as an agency in community policing, obviously to fill the vacuum created by the inefficient, ineffective and corrupt ridden the Nigerian police force (NPF)(Ode, 2007). In America for instance, during the 19th century a group of self-appointed member of the society emerged at the frontiers and occasionally in lawlessness and disorder. Their emergence therefore, was in response to the recognition was given to American indigenous institutions and as such their activities were very noticeable where lawlessness and disorder was on the increase. Thus, their first noticeable activity was on the frontier among the “claims association” - group of settlers on public land who came together to ensure that, speculators did not outbid them when the land which they occupied was placed on public action (Silberman, 1980, Dumke, 1992). In traditional Africa, security maintenance, crime prevention and the enforcement of general laws are based on each society's historical circumstances and desires. Thus, most members of each society willfully partake in programmes and activities to prevent and control crime and deviances. Community members, individual and collectively play roles in each society's law enforcement efforts (Okafor, 2007). However, within the Nigerian context, the dominant machinery for enforcing and maintaining law and order in the pre-colonial period was based on different socio-political arrangement. For instance, young men's age-grade among the Ibos are mandated with the sole responsibility for the security, maintenance and the enforcement of the general laws of the land. Community members may tend to make it mandatory and also use commonly sanctioned vigilante persons to prevent crimes by noticing, apprehending and prosecuting persons who are suspected of committing crimes (Okereafo, 1996, 2002).

Vigilante has become a common and essential feature of the Nigerian socio-political perspective. The creation of vigilante group as responses to the increase in theft and armed

robbery has a long and varied articulation in the history of Nigeria. Since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, Nigeria has witness a high proliferation of vigilantism (Pratten, 2008). The Odua People's Congress (OPC), the Bakassi Boys and the Hisba illustrate the large, coordinated, and well organised indigenous organisations for security, crime prevention and law enforcement in Nigerian societies. As indicated, these organisations which were initially conceived as purely unofficial, indigenous groups for law enforcement have since 1999 assumed positions as official, indigenous-based (or in the case of Hisba, religious based) groups. Their new positions stem from the fact that the Sharia is a legal and justice system based on Islam. Apart from the large coordinated and well organised indigenous organisations of community policing found in many African countries there are numerous other groups, such as neighbourhood watch and guards found in most African communities.

Again, the groups result from the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the official law enforcement organisations (Nonso, 2007). In Nigeria, for example, the vigilante groups exist to help guarantee security, law, order and stability to the citizens of each community. Generally, the groups are known to be more active at night than during the day. Usually able-bodied young men of each community supported financially and/or materially by the other community members (those not involved in community policing, but are members of the community) are empowered with the task of safeguarding the society and enforcing laws, often with the assistance of small weapons such as machetes, spears, bows and arrows and some guns.

Statement of Problem

In spite of the government's promises to tackle crime, Nigeria continues to have high rates of armed robbery, political assassinations, ethno-religious killings, and other forms of crime (Chukwuma, 2002). Frustrated by the incapability of the regular police to respond swiftly and adequately to their safety and security needs, citizens have resorted to some self-help measures. The incapability of the police to contain crime has led to the creation of vigilante groups in community policing. The unconstitutionality of these organizations notwithstanding, they have made their presence known in South-West Nigeria where the Odua People's Congress (POC) dominate the scene, and South-East where the Bakassi Boys hold sway, and in other parts of the country where other vigilante groups and neighborhood watches are active (Obioha, 2007).

According to Chukwuma (2002) public opinion of community policing and vigilante activities are divided. A part of the public argues that community policing and vigilante activities should be regulated and closely supervised by the police. Another part calls for outright disbandment of community policing and vigilante groups and trail of their operatives, who take delight in judging potential offenders without trail and in administering brutal punishment. Yet, it is a fact that the police alone cannot adequately protect citizen's safety and security without the involvement of community policing and vigilante groups. The observation however cannot be generalised unless an empirical study is carried out. In regards to the above, this study focuses on examining the perception of community policing and security in Delta State using Abraka vigilante as a study.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to examine community policing and security in Delta State with special focus on Abraka vigilante. The specific objectives of the paper are to:

- i. Determine the essentials of community policing due to the laxity of the Nigeria police force.
- ii. Determine the role played by community policing in the safety security of the state.
- iii. Ascertain the positive/negative effect of community policing in security matters.

Research questions

The following research questions have been formulated in line with the research objectives:

- i. Is the laxity of the Nigerian police force responsible for the rise of community policing?
- ii. What is the role played by community policing in the safety and security of the state?
- iii. What are the effects of community policing in security?

Theoretical Framework

The social disorganization proposed by Shaw and Mckay (1931) explains and predicts deviant behaviours as being influenced by basic social factors such as differences in economic status, residential mobility and physical nature of neighbourhood in which heterogeneity manifests. Rather than the individual based explanation of the social learning perspective, the theorists assumed that deviant behavioural manifestation are commonplace in large complex societies. They believe that as the societal structure and contexts progress from simple to complex natural deviation and nonconformity to societal norms and values increase. These behaviours become stronger as the limits of social interaction extend from local, face to face to large human settlements of cities and urban life where the social consequences of various forms of personal conduct become discernable.

In this process of societal transformation, the extended family and close-knit neighbourhood relationship and interaction, which enhance conformity relatively, disappear. In its place individuals indifferent attitudes to actions that surround the urban life become pre-eminent. The social disorganization theory lays the background to the idea that closer individual are bonding into an informal network of social relationship, the greater the degree of conformity. When individuals are in heterogeneous environment where there is variance in economic and social status, there will be no value consensus due to nonconformity of social values, which creates conflict situation. This theory therefore predicts conditions under which antisocial behaviours are most likely to thrive due to the opportunities and lapses created by structural heterogeneity of values. When there is cultural heterogeneity, conflict in values and rules, the social control mechanism will also be in conflict. Apparently, individuals will deviate from the norms because the rules existence may either be too loose or too harsh in application.

Hence, for Hirschi (1969) in his control theory, the quality and measure of control exercised on the individuals can be used as a predictive measure for their propensity towards antisocial behaviours. In his proportion, presence of effective control system prevents individuals from engaging in antisocial behaviours. This effective control is embedded and sustained in the collective consciousness of the society that limits

individual's actions. Hirschi identified individual attachment to the significant others, commitment to the conventional values, involvement in conventional activities and belief in the validity of social rules and norms as adequate control measure like in simple societies which are not expressively punitive in any way. Durkheim and Tonnies originally proposed this idea in their analysis of social relationships existing in the simple, traditional society referred to as mechanical solidarity and *gemeinschaft* respectively. Hirschi attributes conformity to social values on one hand and deviance on the other hand as outcomes of strong and weak attachment to the conventional society. Most deviants are characterised by lack of strong ties, bond or attachment to the conventional society. This lack of strong attachment induces development and maintenance of excessive relationship and stronger ties with deviant social work over that of conventional others.

Theoretically, the social deviant according to Hirschi (1969) do indeed lack strong social assurance, confidence and interpersonal skills to the point of social disablement. However, the theory further holds that commitment to values, aspirations of the society and the route to achieving those values make individuals less willing to jeopardise those values through deviance. In relating this framework to our study in Nigeria urban crime, it is observed that “development” in societies with particular reference to Westernization has not help matters. Instead it has been destructive and damaging to the socio-cultural values of the Nigerian society. Factors that contributed to the increase of crime in contemporary Africa in general include wide spread plantification and urbanization which in turn is spreading more rapidly than the improvement in the social and economic conditions, Lopez-Ray (1970). This rapid urbanization process and urbanism relatively affected the nature of social organization and structure in the emergent African societies.

With this development, sociologists and urban anthropologists envisaged the collective sentiments and the wills of the people transcribed in the “community” spirit as in the Durkheim's “mechanical solidarity” and Ferdinand Tonnies “*gemeinschaft*” being replaced by the individualistic orientation and attitudes of “strangers” (Obioha, 2002). Thus, the tribal like existence in societies to industrial characterised by greater heterogeneity of its population and complexity of its social network system is prone to growth in crime rate as we are experiencing in Abraka. What happens in the urban perspective is change in the values and orientation. The change in the structure of the society (urbanization) do not only influence the general trend of criminality, rather crimes of particular types have been proved to be more prevalent in the urban setting than in the rural country side. In Nigeria, crimes of violence committed in villages are usually the results of family quarrels or long standing feud and sometimes over farms or boundary disputes.

In the villages, the family ties are still intact and there is still respect for the father or head of the family whose decisions or orders are never disputed or gather with those of the village or district heads over the conduct of their peoples help to synchronise values and actions, and therefore stabilize relationship with the result that there is a high degree of guilt-feeling and shame which enforces a high degree of conformity. In the urban areas, on the other hand, society appears to be disjointed because the “family unit” is not so closely knit as in the villages; the relationships between persons or groups is therefore no longer stable.

As a result, there is de-synchronisation between values and action, hence a high degree of unpredictable behaviour persists which disorients the behaviour of others (Danmadami, 2000). Where there is intimate knowledge and sharing of values, guilt feeling may

internally help to suppress crime. In the Nigerian society, the traditional norms and values assumes varying dimensions which weakens the collective conscience. If every member of the society conformed to the same values and behaved reasonably, there would be no need to employ the services of the police to enforce obedience. Many Nigerians have been disoriented and do not have the capacity to feel guilty.

An average Nigerian inwardly believes that there are certain behaviours in contemporary Nigeria that do not attract guilt, although prohibited by law and the society's conventions. Corruption is particularly debilitating in the society, it promotes other illicit activities, yet permit me to say that every Nigerian is corrupt. There is a vicious cycle of corruption. The sudden wealth of anybody who comes into power or is ear power, the fact that most transactions come to involve giving and taking bribes, the fact that bribery goes unpunished most of the time. All of these tend to create and sustain the belief that crime pays and to encourage criminality in the general population. Thus, we find already that while averages Nigerian do not want to be a victim of theft, burglary, or robbery, he is always ready and willing to buy stolen goods. He does not want to be defrauded but he defrauds his government through tax evasion, inflated mileage and numerous other claims and by buying and relishing smuggled goods. He complains about police corruption but when he is caught, he orders bribe to policemen or taps "connections" to influence their exercise of discretion (Odekunle, 2001).

The illustration above depicts what the social situation in Nigeria generally looks like. Concluding from the theoretical postulation of Shaw & McKay's social disorganisation, it is noteworthy that the problem of crime and policing in Abraka town of Ethiope East Local Government Area in Delta State is a complex one. First, the heterogeneous nature of Abraka town has made it difficult for a particular set of cultural norms and values to be followed. In addition, the coexistence of both vigilante groups and the police makes crime prevention in the town more complex. Individuals and groups are divided in opinion with respect to the works and functions of these opposite security organisations. Hence an empirical and systematize investigation into the existence and operation of these groups especially their effectiveness efficiency in crime control in Abraka town is a challenging area of research.

Literature Review

Research Methods

The survey research method was employed in this study. The population of this study included the entirety of Abraka community which has a total population of 6,940 as at the last census with special interest being paid to those who are directly involved in community policing activities. Abraka, is one of the 25 Urhobo kingdoms in Delta state, Nigeria. Abraka is a town in Delta State, Nigeria. It is one of the main Urhobo community/clan. It is mostly known as a university town and has the main campus of the Delta State University Located there in Abraka. Abraka town is a favourite and fun filled destination for both domestic and international tourists. The Abraka beach is famous for its natural flowing spring water; it also has sports recreational facilities for outdoor activities like canoeing, fishing, swimming, barbecue, picnicking. For the purpose of this study, a sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) will be chosen by the researcher. The random sampling technique was employed in this study. This was used to give equal opportunity to all

respondents. Based on this method, one hundred and fifty (150) respondents were randomly selected from the population which cut across traditional rulers and chiefs, members of vigilante groups, community leaders, residents and community members. In order to ensure maximum objectivity in the analysis of the response obtained, it was important to adopt a statistical technique. For this reason, the researcher adopted the simple percentage statistical technique for the analysis of data collected.

The simple percentage is represented as follows:

$$\frac{x}{\text{Total Population}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Data presentation and analysis

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Distribution of Respondents

	Social and Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Sex		
	Male	80	66.7
	Female	40	33.3
	Total	120	100
2.	Marital Status		
	Single	94	78
	Married	26	22
	Total	120	100
3.	Occupation		
	Civil-Servant	53	44
	Self-employed	36	30
	Unemployed	18	15
	Others	13	11
	Total	120	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2016.

From the socio-demographic table above, it was revealed that 80(66.7%) of the total respondents were male, while 40(33.3%) of the total respondents were female. From the distribution, it was also revealed that 94(78%) of the total respondents were single. However, 26(22%) of the respondents were married. Finally, from the distribution it was revealed that 53(44%) of the total respondents were civil servant, while 36(30%) were self-employed. However, 18(15%) of the total respondents were unemployed. Finally, 13(11%) of the total respondents had other forms of occupation.

Analyses of Questionnaire Items

To address the research questions raised in this paper, responses to the questionnaire items were analysed by means of inferential statistics which includes simple percentages and the result of the chi square (X²) test. The results that emanated from the analyses in this section are presented in the following tables.

Table 2: Analyses of Responses $X_{crit} = 7.815$

S/ N	QUESTIONS	RESPONSES				X^2	DECISIO N
		SA	A	D	SD		
1	Only the Nigerian police can provide enough security in the state.	10 (8%)	25 (21%)	62 (52%)	23 (19%)	59.6 5	Reject
2	Vigilante groups and the community have a good relationship	38 (32%)	52 (43%)	25 (21%)	5 (4%)	137	Reject
3	Vigilante group's causes more harm to the community they protect.	11 (9%)	30 (25%)	60 (50%)	19 (16%)	1059	Reject
4	Low level of public confidence on the police is responsible for the rise of community policing	87 (72%)	21 (81%)	10 (8%)	2 (2%)	4514	Reject
5	The lack of capacity arising from inadequate funding of Nigerian police is responsible for community policing	16 (13%)	66 (55%)	29 (24%)	9 (08%)	1935	Reject
6	Community policing plays a good role in the security of the state	22 (19%)	58 (48%)	24 (20%)	16 (13%)	1080	Reject
7	There are negative effects of community policing in securing the state	32 (27%)	56 (47%)	21 (17%)	11 (9%)	1122	Reject

Source: Author's Computation, 2016.

The table above shows that 10(8%) respondents strongly agreed that only the Nigerian police can provide enough security in the state, while 25(21%) just agreed. However, 62(52%) respondents disagreed that only the Nigerian police can provide enough security in the state, while 23(19%) respondents strongly disagreed. Also, the table above indicate that 38(32%) respondents strongly agreed that vigilante group and the community have a good relationship, while 52(43%) just agreed. However, 25(21%) respondents disagreed that vigilante group and the community has a good relationship, while 5(4%) respondents strongly disagreed. Furthermore, from the table above, one would notice that 11(09%) respondents strongly agreed that vigilante group's caused more harm to the community they protect, while 30(25%) just agreed. However, 60(50%) respondents disagreed that vigilante group's caused more harm to the community they protect, while 19(16%) respondents strongly disagreed. Additionally, the table also shows that 87(72%) respondents strongly agreed that the lack of capacity arising from inadequate funding of the police is responsible for community police, while 21(18%) just agreed. However, 10(08%) respondents disagreed that low level of public confidence on the police is responsible for the rise of community policing, while 02(02%) respondents strongly disagreed.

Interestingly, the results in the above table indicated that 16(13%) respondents strongly agreed that the laxity of the Nigerian police force is responsible for the rise of community policing, while 66(55%) just agreed. However, 29(24%) respondents disagreed that the laxity of the Nigerian police force is responsible for the rise of community policing, while 9(8%) respondents strongly disagreed. Also, the table above shows that 22(19%)

respondents strongly agreed that community policing plays a good role in the security of the state, while 58(48%) just agreed. However, 24(20%) respondents disagreed that community policing plays a good role in the security of the state, while 16(13%) respondents strongly disagreed. Also indicated in the table above is the fact that 32(27%) of the respondents strongly agreed that there are negative effects of community policing in securing the state, while 56(47%) just agreed. However, 21(17%) respondents disagreed that there are negative effects of community policing in securing the state, while 11(9%) respondents strongly disagreed.

Findings

Based on the results presented in Table 4.3, the following findings emerged from this study:

- i. It is evident that Nigerian Police alone cannot provide the needed security for communities and states generally.
- ii. Most stakeholders believe that a good relationship has been established between existing vigilante groups and their various communities, such that one cannot really say that such groups had caused more harm to the community which they were established to protect.
- iii. The increasing call for community policing resulted from the attendant problems like poor funding, low level of public confidence etc that may have plagued the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) in the past.
- iv. Community policing is believed to have a significant role to play in the security of the state.

Conclusion

Community policing have become a significant force in the battle to reduce crime in Delta State. The role that community policing have played over the years in complementing the effort of the Nigerian Police Force in fighting crime cannot be entirely undermine. Following the objectives of this study which include assessing public perception of the vigilante groups in Abraka town, the people believed that these groups were effective in their function. The respondents are also of the view that they are quite satisfied with the work that funds used for the operation of these groups were actually gotten from members of the community. The findings of this research work reveal that community policing are an integral part of our society. However, the outcome of this work was actually the resident's opinion on vigilante and not that of these groups, so she will be careful not to make a generalization on the whole activities of these groups in Delta State.

Recommendations

Following the major findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Community policing should be encouraged in the state owing to the important role it plays in the security of the state.
- ii. Community police/vigilante groups should be subjected to some form of training so as to enable them exhibit some level of professionalism.

- iii. Finally, though community policing has its pit falls, its importance cannot in any way be over emphasized due to the important role that it plays in the security of the state and at such should be sustained.

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