

ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN COMMUNITY POLICING IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

The prevalence of violence and other criminal activities in Nigeria in recent times is evident on the inability of the police alone to stem the tide of general insecurity. This necessitates community policing, which emphasizes on partnership between the police and the law-abiding members of the public to effectively prevent and control crime in the society. The study was conducted in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria. The study combined functionalism and broken windows theories as the theoretical framework. The total sample size for the study was three hundred and fifty-six people purposively selected among members of Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) in Kano, staff of British Council/Department for International Development (DFID), Justice for All, Officer-in-Charge of community policing in Kano State Police Headquarters, Bompai, and officers from Police Academy, Wudil, Ward Heads, Religious Leaders, Elders, and Youth Leaders. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software was employed to analyse the quantitative data. The study discovered that the Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are crucial in community policing and offered recommendations, among others, that in order for community policing to succeed, the police should effectively partner with CBOs, especially for information sharing on crime which is crucial for effective community policing.

Keywords: Nigeria, Community-Based Organizations, Community Policing, Police.

Introduction

The prevalence of violence and other criminal activities in Nigerian society in recent times is evident on the inability of the police alone to stem the tide of insecurity in the country. Although, the police is officially charged with the

responsibility of crime prevention and detection but they cannot singlehandedly ensure the security of lives and properties without the effective partnership and collaboration between members of the public. Therefore, a police service supported by the members of the

community and capable of arresting insecurity can have a far-reaching impact in facilitating lasting economic, social and political development (Groenewald and Peake, 2004).

The realization of most people and governments that the police cannot combat crime effectively by themselves and the old British conception that the “police are the public and the public are the police” made the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), in collaboration with the British Council's Department for International Development (DFID) under its Security, Justice and Growth (SJG) program to launch community police in Nigerian states. In order to start the community policing in the country, a project team of seven officers and eighteen trainers was constituted and mandated in 2003 to introduce community policing project in Enugu state Command as a pilot of pilot States. The success of Enugu experiment convinced Police Headquarters to approve the take-off of the project in more states, including Kano Metropolis in 2005 (Okeke, 2013; Ojukwu, 2011 and Dickson, 2007).

According to Malumfashi (2010), Kano Metropolis comprises of eight Local Government Areas. These include Dala, Gwale, Fagge, Nassarawa, Tarauni, Municipal, Kumbotso and Ungogo Local Government Areas. Kano is a cosmopolitan area. It serves as host to many communities that made up Nigeria as a result of its commercial nerve. Kano is the most populous state in Nigeria (NPC, 2006). This implies the need for community policing in the state.

Community policing suggests a unique partnership between the police and

members of the public in order to prevent and control crime within a particular community or society (Arisukwu and Okunola, 2013). This implies the effective collaboration between the police and members of the community as well as groups, such as community-based organizations (CBOs) to effectively tackle the menace of crime and criminal behavior in the society. The CBOs have contributed to the security of lives and properties in Nigerian society since before independence (Okereke, 2013). The increasing rates of insurgency, violence and property crime in Nigerian states have induced public outcry towards crime. It is against this background that this paper explores the role of the community-based organizations in community policing, so as to curb the surging wave of violence and other criminal activities in the society. The paper raises the question: are the CBOs important in community policing?

Literature Review

A convenient starting point for discussing issues on community policing is to attempt and clarify the ambiguity associated with the definition of the concept. Generally, every conception of community policing implies police-community partnership in policing. However, the word “community”, on the one hand, refers to a geographical entity, with definite legal boundaries and population engaging in interrelated economic activities and sharing common security interest (Dambazau, 2007 and Shorter, 1977). It refers to people living in a particular geographic area or neighbourhood and sharing a common culture, religious beliefs, ethnicity, values,

norms and concerns (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; OSCE, 2011).

The concept “policing”, on the other hand, is the process of enhancing the safety of lives and properties of individuals and groups in a community. It is a set of activities or processes aimed at preventing and controlling crime, which can be performed by a wide range of groups and processes (Ojukwu, 2011). Thus, many individuals, groups and organs of government engage in one aspect of policing activities and processes or the other aimed at ensuring the safety of lives and properties within a geographical entity, as policing is becoming a more demanding process (Muraskin and Robert, 2005).

Community policing is therefore, a philosophy and organizational strategy that promotes a partnership-based collaborative effort between the police and the law-abiding members of a community to improve the quality of life for everyone more effectively and efficiently identifying, preventing and solving problems of crime, eliminating fear of crime, reducing physical and social disorder, enhancing safety and security, preventing neighbourhood decay and fostering community well-being (OSCE, 2011). Similarly, it is a proactive philosophy that promotes solving social problems that are either criminal, affect the quality of life, or increase citizens' fear of crime (Okeshola and Mudiare, 2013). It entails community partnership with the police to effectively combat crime and create a safe

and secure environment for all (Ikuteyijo and Rotimi, 2010 and Siegel, 2009). Thus, such participation is necessary because the informal social control created by concerned members of the public together with the police efforts can facilitate crime prevention and control. The participation of citizens might be in a form of providing information to the police on criminal activities, forming associations and vigilante groups to complement the police efforts and creating security awareness in the community (Ogunlowo, 2007).

Community-based organizations refer to organized local initiative groups or grass-root associations whose purpose is to secure and protect their community from both internal and external aggression. They are self-help or voluntary associations established with the main objective of social and economic development of the communities concerned. These include, among others, youth associations, faith-based security groups, town unions, age grades, neighbourhood associations and locally security initiative groups like neighbourhood watch, vigilante group whose purpose is to safeguard the security of their localities (Kurfi, 2011). Thus, CBOs are established to maintain peaceful co-existence among community members and for the protection against external attack. Tamuno (1993) asserts that:

Whether or not regular, local police had existed in all the various villages and towns in old Nigeria; it is true that in the final analysis, the community remained the main

police force of the country. The vigilance of members of not very large communities where the presence of a criminal character could not be hidden for long, the force of religious sanction and the swiftness and efficiency of age-grades and other open or secret societies in executing the administrative and judicial orders of elders, adequately met the not too onerous demands of preventing and detecting crime before the advent of Europeans in old Nigeria (Tamuno, 1993:144).

Thus, the key elements of community policing is not new in African society like Nigeria, for instance. The pre-colonial Igbo society did not distinguish between policing and fighting crime with the overall role of the society. The role of policing in the traditional Igbo society was diffused in that there was no specialized institution like the modern police with the primary objective to fight crime but the age grade and masquerade society comprised of all adult male members of the community played a crucial role of policing. However, the advent of European colonialism changed everything, as the colonial police alienated themselves from the members of the public which continued hitherto and the consequence of such alienation is difficulty in combating the prevalence of the security challenges in Nigerian society (Okeke, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

The study combines functionalism and broken windows theories as the theoretical framework. The former holds

that society as a complex system, consists of various parts working to produce stability and solidarity. The earlier pioneers of the functionalism include Comte, Durkeim and later Parsons and Merton. The approach emphasizes on moral consensus, which exists when most people share the same values in maintaining order and stability in a society. Accordingly, to study the function of a social phenomenon is to analyze its contribution towards the continuous existence of the society (Giddens, 2001). Structural functionalism portrays society as a social system, made up of interrelated parts operating harmoniously for the realization or satisfaction of some functional prerequisites (basic needs), which most fulfill if the society is to continue to survive. Therefore, CBOs, such as the vigilante and other local security initiatives by members of the community contribute in maintaining the security of lives and properties in the society.

The latter i.e. broken windows theory is traced to the work of Kelling and Wilson in 1982. The theory is based on the assumption that when broken window is left unrepaired, it gives crime promoting signal to would be offenders that members of the community and the police are uncared about security of lives and properties. This implies, therefore, that the police should partner and collaborate with members of the public through their various community-based organizations, such as the vigilante and other local security initiatives so as to prevent and control crime in the society. The broken windows theory depicted that community crime are more often than not perpetrated

by offenders who reside near the victims. Thus, the problem of crime can best be solved through effective partnership and collaboration between the police and the CBOs (Ikuteyijo and Rotimi, 2010). Partnership between community members and the police enhances the intelligent information gathering for the police, an indispensable tool for policing, which is effective for crime prevention and control; thereby enhancing the security of lives and properties in the neighbourhood.

Methods

Survey research design with the combination of both quantitative and qualitative (mixed) methods of data collection was used. The population include all the people living in the eight Local Government Areas in the Metropolis. Also, participants from relevant organizations and institutions, such as Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) in Kano, British Council/Department for International Development (DFID), Justice for All, Kano State Police Headquarters, Bompai and Police Academy, Wudil, as well as Ward Heads, Religious Leaders, Elders and Youth Leaders formed part of the study population.

The total sample size of the study is three hundred and fifty-six (356). This sample size comprised of three hundred and thirty-eight people who were administered with questionnaire and eighteen people that included three members of Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) in Kano, two staff of British Council/Department for International Development (DFID), Justice for All, one Officer-in-Charge of community policing in Kano State Police Headquarters, Bompai, and four officers from Police Academy, Wudil, two Ward

Heads, two Religious Leaders, two Elders, and two Youth Leaders were interviewed to generate qualitative data.

Multi-stage cluster sampling methods were used to obtain the responses for the qualitative data. The eight Local Government Areas in Kano Metropolis were considered as clusters. In each of the Local Government Areas, two traditional wards were sampled using purposive sampling and questionnaires were administered, using accidental sampling technique. This is because the questionnaires were distributed to the people who are residing in the area on the basis of immediate availability, ability and willingness to give information for the study. In order to obtain qualitative data, snow ball sampling technique was used to identify particular members of relevant organizations and institutions for in-depth interview, as it was very difficult to reach-out to the entire members of the relevant organizations and institutions, such as PCRC, DFID, Police Headquarters, Bompai and Police Academy, Wudil.

Descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages was employed to analyse the quantitative data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software was used to obtain the frequencies and percentages. The qualitative data were used to complement and support the quantitative data.

Results

The results of the study are presented below:

Table 1: Responses on Whether Community-Based Organizations are Important in Community Policing

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Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	312	92.3
Not Agreed	26	7.7
Total	338	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 1 shows the responses on whether community-based organizations (CBOs) are important in community policing. It indicates that majority of the respondents (92.3%) agreed that CBOs are important in community policing. This shows that the CBOs are vital for effective community policing. A member of police community relations committee (PCRC) during the In-depth Interview (IDI) said:

CBOs are very important in community policing. They complement the police to effectively combat crime in the community. They give useful, secret and effective information on crime to the police that would help them to achieve their specified goals. This is because the police work with information and members of the CBOs are closer to the criminals than the police are. In fact, they live with the criminals. The CBOs give useful information to the police that help them in making effective arrest and prosecution. So, you find out at the end of the day that the CBOs help in combating crime in the community. This accords a kind of symbiotic relationship between the police and the CBOs, which is aimed at community policing (Member of PCRC).

A key informant during the IDI was of the opinion that members of the CBOs have vital role to play in community policing. She said;

Community based organizations have role(s) to play in community policing. Members of CBOs like the vigilante are members of the public, they have better information about criminals and they give such information to the police. Thus, the CBOs help to improve intelligent gathering of information which is very critical in community policing (Staff of Justice for All).

Similarly, another informant was of the opinion that the CBOs help in assisting the police with intelligent information. He said:

For example, the vigilante, age groups and associations assist the police with intelligent information and also help in creating security awareness in their neighbourhoods (Elder).

An informant who was of the opinion that the police cannot combat crime without the collaboration with the members of the CBOs said:

The CBOs have roles to play in community policing because we have the vigilante which we

constitute ourselves to help the police in combating crime. Look, the police cannot do it alone, they are not magicians. They cannot know what is happening without information. That is why the CBOs have important role to play, particularly in giving the police information which is the most important aspect of the police work, that is the aspect of intelligence. Without intelligent reports, the police cannot do the magic; that is why the CBOs compliment the effort of the police for effective community policing (Member of PCRC).

A police officer interviewed during the IDI said:

The CBOs do partner with the police to create security awareness and sensitize the members of the public on community policing. In other words, members of the CBOs, such as local security groups, like the vigilante and associations complement the police efforts to solve the problem of crime in the community where they exist (Police Officer).

Another police officer said:

When you talk of partnership of the police with CBOs, you are talking of information sharing. In community policing, you as a police personnel can sensitize members of the public to a certain level. It is the members of the CBOs that help in carrying the message down to the Mai Unguwa or community head (Police Officer).

A religious leader has this to say when asked whether CBOs are important in community policing:

Our youth associations and groups help us to create the safety of lives and properties in our environment. They assist the police and other security agencies with relevant information on crime and criminality. These information are very important in maintaining peaceful coexistence in the society, especially in this era of insurgency (Religious Leader).

An informant said:

CBOs help the police to deliver quality service to the members of the public. This encourages the public to give information on crime to the police to effectively combat crime in the society (Ward Head).

A youth leader has this to say:

The members of CBOs live in the environment of crime. They know the people of criminal character more than the police. Thus, in the environment where vigilante and other local security groups or associations exist, criminality could be easily detected through effective collaboration with the police (Youth Leader).

Discussion of Findings

The research findings revealed that CBOs are crucial for effective community policing, since they help the police in combating crime by facilitating the arrest of criminals and investigation through their intelligent information to the police,

as they live in the environment of the crime and as such know more about the area than the police. As components of the community, the CBOs help in social stability, as the partners and collaborate with the police to solve the problem of crime in the society as a whole. They also help the police in quality service delivery through the useful information they give to the police. These findings confirm Ojukwu's (2011) core principles of community policing that include, among others, quality service delivery, problem solving, partnership, which Dickson (2007) terms consultation, multi-agency collaboration and interdependency principle. The quality service delivered by the police to the public as a result of effective partnership and collaboration with the CBOs help to erase the negative perception of the police by members of the public as incompetent and corrupt.

Community-Based Organizations, such as groups, associations, neighbourhood watch, faith-based security initiatives and vigilante groups etc. provide security services to communities, as such complement the efforts of the police in combating crime and enhancing the safety of lives and properties in the society. This finding is in line with Tamuno's (1993) position that community members have helped and could help in preventing and detecting crime.

CBOs could be a means for solving criminal and other security threats facing Nigerian communities. The increasing violence and other criminal behaviors in many parts of the country today and the inability of the police to effectively curtail the situation

evident the fact that the police alone cannot combat crime without the partnership and collaboration of the members of the community. Adebayo (2013) observes that public partnership and collaboration is very important in assisting the police for effective crime prevention and control, as this is a collective responsibility and cannot be achieved alone by the police. Thus, community-based organizations play a significant role in enhancing the safety and peaceful co-existence of community members. The CBOs could be an important information source to the police for intelligent gathering, as without the intelligent information from members of the community, the police cannot effectively combat crime. Intelligent information is an engine room of policing. Without intelligent information from members of the community, the police cannot know what is happening. The emergent of the Civilian Joint Tax Force in many parts of the North East of Nigeria has helped in reducing the security challenges in the areas, as they provide intelligent information for security operatives.

CBOs help in creating security awareness within their neighborhood through the organization of public fora, seminars and lectures to sensitize the members of the public and partner with the police to solve the problem of crime bedeviling the community. Policing is everybody's business. The police cannot know what is happening everywhere, as the members of the public are the eyes of the police, thus, members of the CBOs are members of the public. They have better information

on crime and criminality which they share with the police thereby improving the intelligent gathering on crime; an aspect that is crucial in crime prevention and control. Without intelligent report, the police cannot effectively solve the problem of crime in community and that is why they seek for complementing bodies, like the CBOs to assist them; the hallmark of community policing. Criminals live among the public. Through partnership with the police, members of the CBOs help to restore the lost public confidence on the police thereby enhancing the public support and cooperation with the police in combating crime and criminality, which improve the overall quality of life of people in the community.

They help to improve the capacity of the police personnel to effectively combat crime in the community. CBOs, such as the vigilante and neighborhood watch partner with the police in performing policing role through volunteer schemes, initiating neighborhood support networks and augmenting police patrol activities so as to tackle the problem of crime in community.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it can be inferred that the CBOs as locally security apparatus are not only crucial but indispensable for effective community policing not only in the study area but in Nigeria as a whole and elsewhere. The functionalist and broken windows theoretical expositions in the paper have shown that CBOs are components of the society whose efforts with the collaboration with the police can be

effective in solving the problem of crime and social stability in the society as a whole. The study, therefore, offered the following recommendations:

1. In order for community policing to succeed, the police should effectively partner with CBOs, especially for information sharing on crime, which is crucial for effective community policing, since it is established that the police alone cannot effectively combat crime without the cooperation and collaboration with members of the public.
2. There should be fora for the police and the members of CBOs to discuss the security problems bedeviling the area and create security awareness in the community. This will enhance public initiatives, trust, confidence and better communication and understanding between the police and the members of CBOs, as well as public satisfaction with community policing.
3. The informal police groups, such as the vigilante groups, age grades and associations should be trained and developed to work in partnership with the Nigeria Police Force to effectively combat crime at the community level. The intelligence reports about criminal suspects from these groups to the police will enhance crime prevention and control, which is the hallmark of community policing.
4. There should be joint police and

CBOs patrol for effectively community policing. This will strengthen the synergy between the police and the informal security apparatuses.

5. The Police should collaborate with relevant opinion or community leaders, such as ward heads, religious leaders, elders and youth leaders, among others for proper implementation of community policing, not only in Metropolitan Kano but in Nigeria in general. This is because the relevant opinion or community leaders play a crucial role in conflict management and will help in sensitizing their subjects on the need to assist the police with information on crime, since the police cannot combat

crime without information from members of the public.

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