

## **Effects of Governance and Community Policing in Nigeria: A Focus on Karu Community in Federal Capital Territory, (FCT)**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the effect of governance and community policing on Karu community in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The paper analyses the inability of government and the security agencies to protect lives and properties of Nigerian citizens as the reason for the establishment of community policing to complement the efforts of the formal institutions. The threats to lives and properties have hindered business activities and retarded development. This study employs documentary research method of data collection, analysis and interpretation in order to meet the objective and the findings. Some of the findings revealed that community policing has brought synergy in the area of information sharing to check criminal activities in most communities. Night patrols by members of community policing, jingle of bells and whistles are operative warnings to the would-be armed robbers and these have brought peace. The study recommend that community policing should be sustained since the formal institutions of government can't provide security alone but the personnel and volunteer of community policing should be adequately trained in modern technology in line with global best practice.

**Key words: Community, governance, insecurity, policing, Nigeria.**

### **Introduction**

Globally, security and protection of lives in any society are germane to the survival of such society. Be it a developed or underdeveloped society individuals are confronted with the need to improve their security in order to achieve their progressive objectives. The upsurge in human population has negatively threatened both the peace and development of human activities. For instance, since

the Boko Haram terrorists launched attack in the North east zone of the country in 2009 the entire nation had not known peace. Insecurity and crimes have infiltrated all facets of human presence. Boivin (2018), opined that due to increase human presence in a particular community there is bound to be an associated challenge of either increased or a decreased criminal tendencies. Hence, for the survival of the community an encompassing delivery of security is necessary.

The desire to protect the society from criminal's activities pre date the colonial period. In most communities since then youths are always engaged in this service with different nomenclatures suitable to their environment. These include names such as local hunters, vigilantes, magic boys, neighborhood watch, operation rainbow, joint civilian army task force, amotekun etc. but vigilantes has gained popularity for this informal policing globally. Scholars in different schools of thought have argued concisely to support the presence and establishment of vigilantes but Okenyendo (2018), opined that the evolution of community policing stresses that they form part of the old arrangement of policing that never gone with the colonial administration.

The return of democratic rule in 1999 brought a renewed optimism among Nigerians who believed that the government would not only enhance political solidity but deliver sound economic growth as well as provide security for peaceful existence. No sooner than expected the administration was characterised with massive insecurity that led to the rise and formation of vigilante outfits across the breadth and length of the nation signifying government inability to provide its utmost task of security (Smith, 2004). Adigwe (2013), cited in Sa'adu (2020, pg. 29), argues that the advent of vigilante outfits in Nigeria is traceable to 1999 as a result of the change from the military to civilian rule which ushered in the foundation of high proportion of armed-robbery. The development generated tension and conflict in several communities which led to the destructions of lives and

properties and the police force which supposedly accountable for the protection of lives of the populace was unable and could no longer deliver on mandate largely due to lack of contemporary working equipment. Hence, the formation of community policing was conceived to superintend the efforts of the conventional security agencies by providing them with relevant information through access to very remote areas and buses which ordinarily are difficult for the former to penetrate and for the safety of the communities mostly at night hours.

The formation of vigilante groups generated debate between the Nigerian Police Force, (NPF) and well-meaning Nigerians. For instance, Baker (2002), stated that Nigerians having observed the inadequate police operative mechanism to confront the upsurge in criminal actions throw their weight to back up the operation of supportive sets such as vigilante in tackling the threat considering police grievance of poor ammunition to confront the hoodlum of rebellion.

In governance protection of lives and properties of the citizens is the primary concern of government but directly resulting from the federal government's inability to provide basic human security. In Nigeria the democratic practice has violated its principles which was entrenched to accomplish the provision of welfare, equitable and security of every facet of life of the society. Security is one of the basic demands of human race has compelled many communities to resolve for do-it-yourself and established organisations like the vigilante as security watch for the safety of their communities respectively. To battle the escalating insecurity states mostly in the south west agitated for the establishment of State police but the demand was countered by the federal might, alternatively operation amotekun as a community policy was launched and later supported by Buhari's administration which according to Ogundele (2020), receive a take-off grant of Thirteen billion Naira (N13b). However, the security plan was expected to halt killings,

kidnapping, banditry and insurgence in many parts of the country with instructions to relevant stakeholders to meet on modalities of operation.

There are critical challenges militating against the thriving of democracy and good governance in Nigeria, security in one of such and it demands attention. This has underscored the concern of this paper. The objective of this paper is to discuss the effects of community policing (vigilante) and the challenges of governance in Karu and to proffer suggestions for a better democratic Nigeria. The paper is structured in different sections. Introduction is in section one, which discuss the problem the paper sets to address. The second section is the conceptual clarification of terms used. The third aspect deals with the challenges and governance, however, the fourth section offers suggestions on the way forward while the fifth section is the conclusion.

### **Community policing and the challenge of Governance**

Governance is a government's capacity to make and impose rules, and to provide amenities, irrespective of whether that government is representative or not (Fukuyama, 2013). Hence, governance implies the exercise of power in order to direct the communal systems and the procedure by which government actions use control over the citizens. Governance is also viewed as a structure and process of safeguarding the overall course, success, accountability and control of organisations (Cornforth, 2003; Adiele, 2017). It is the responsibility of government to protect lives and properties of her citizens. Good governance therefore is the utilisation of socio-economic, administrative and political power to enhance better the actions of a state at all stages (Basu, 2004 cited in Savic, (2006) and Adiele (2013).

The quest for good governance has continue to be a major desire of the Nigerian state since her independence in 1960. The aspiration has been elusive due to lack of people centered leadership demonstrated by our leaders. The country has not been governed by a committed and ready to sacrifice leader but by people who at best can be described as ‘accidental leaders’ with power thrust on them. These leaders had the responsibility of leadership fell on them by evasion irrespective of their ability, experience and in most case, they were not prepared for such challenges. The issue of bad governance as a result of leadership problem has fueled the rise of insecurity in the country. Many lives and property worth billions of Naira have been wasted since independence due to insecurity in various parts of the country, (Aliyu & Isa, 2018).

The issue of community policing originated from the understanding that government alone cannot and has not been be able to provide all the things required for decent living as well as security of life and property. This brought collaborative efforts by the communities and governments. It is founded on accepting that people's security is paramount and such could match the efforts of government in the business of protection of lives and property. (Nwogwugwu, Alao & Ikechi Ekpendu, 2018). The combined efforts between government security agents and local people have checkmated crimes in most communities. It is obvious that the shift from the normal policing approach to a manageable preventive policing model where local people are conscious of their role in taking active part in averting crimes in their localities by means of gathering and sharing intelligence to conventional security operatives, (Nkwede 2024).

## Literature review

Community policing like any concept in Social sciences is devoid of globally acceptable definition. Scholars have expressed views but all seemingly signified the same meaning. Citing (Tamuno 1996) Ndakotsu, 2023 argued that community policing is generally a law enforcement attitude that permits officers to constantly operate in the same environment in directive to fashion tougher union with the citizen living and working in that expanse. Ikuteyijo (2009) described community policing as incorporating communal enterprise in creating a harmless and safe atmosphere for everyone to play active part in their own dealings. Equally, Rooyen (2001) viewed community policing as a plan and attitude which is based on a corporation between the community and the police to find inventive resolutions for current community difficulties, crime and other related issues.

The notion of community policing is not new in most Africa states and in other third world countries. It has been in existence for decades but devoid of all conventionalism of the current day practice. The concept of community policing is that there should be a synergy between the community and the police to unravel security problems. Community policing, according to Umar.& Bappi, (2014) is a novel way to tackle not only the sources of crime and the fear of crime but all quality issues relating to life.

Community watching in Nigeria which preceded the founding of the country's police force has a rich historic experience. Various communities in the country have customarily employed community-based policing strategies to guarantee the safety of their citizens. Adejoh (2013), opined that the legality of these civic-based organisations is usually derived from the individuals

they served. The objective of these community-based security groups, which continued to exist after the official creation of the Nigerian police force, was to assist the force in their efforts by detecting and conveying criminal suspects to proper legal authorities. Moreover, they often acted as communal arbitrators in conflicts.

Community policing was introduced in Nigeria, in 2003 when the Nigerian police force sent a group of officers to England civility of the British Department for International Development (DFID) to learn about the operation of community policing in the UK. Subsequently, in 2004, more officers were educated as Community Development Officers (CDO) in Enugu, South east zone. After training the officers were mandated to extend the message to others in the various states of the federation (Dickson, 2007). The practice of community policing in the UK differs from the Nigerian perspective without required adjustments due to the age-long resentment between the police and the public. Community policing basic concern as specified by Lamber (1994) is to prevent crimes and bring about justifiable peace. It is duty of the police to protect and maintain lively communication and procedure with the community. Community policing includes the participation of community members in monitoring and controlling activities of the police. Supporting, (Trajanowic, 1994) Ndakotsu (2023) argued that the police take social action opposed to legal and become part of the community. By this method, the police enter the community in all its aspects and develop personal relationships at local level and become part of the community. Since communities are dynamic, tractability of the police becomes necessary. The police therefore help to guild communities through multi-agency involvement. The police should respond appropriately and view its function in the areas as a means of re-establishing the neighboring

relations and support the institutions that make a community capable and able to deal with its challenges.

Alemika & Chukwuma (2004), identified four types of community crime control activities which include: community vigilantism, religious vigilantism, ethnic vigilantism and state-sponsored vigilantism. The objective of these is largely to carry out operations relating to crime control, aside the disparity in their classification, Chukwuma (2000). Most property-owner in both rural and urban areas often established community vigilante sets to defend the security and welfare of their residents especially during the nighttime hour. The guard usually patrolled community's streets by streets and providing reassurance to the residents and giggle bells to send warning signal to would be hoodlum. Members of these organisations include physically able young men from the community who wish to undergo old customs such as rituals, prayer,, and sometime initiation. The community most time depends on them for assistance and also entrusted them with the duty of enforcing the law and order with the aid of implements such as machetes, bows and arrows, spears and currently with firearms (Igwe-Okomiso, et. al 2024 pg.138s).

Providing security cannot be realised by the police alone but can be accomplished through community policing and Community Corporation. Community policing thrives where collaboration between parties involved in the procedure is high (Cordner, 2014). A teamwork between the police and the community members is easily accomplished when community members are involved in security matters. Community safety is very vital in influencing the contribution of community policing. Community members are usually heartened when law enforcement officers offer security through steady patrol and it is a sign of good governance and provision of dividend of democracy. Also when safety in the community is guaranteed by law enforcement agencies a



lot of community members will partake in community policing programs and see government as being closer to the grassroots

Ojo & Oladele (2020, pg.8) citing Atiku while canvassing for community, state and zonal policing stated that

Local policing shouldn't be mistaken for an effort to hijack the role of the federal police or a competition with federal government. The obvious inadequacies of the federal police to effectively deal with the rapidly growing security challenges make local policing not only desirable, but also necessary. The police are more likely to be effective in areas where they are well known and trusted by the local communities who in turn are willing to share information about known criminals and crimes before they are even carried out. It is a given perception that people have a role in their own security, they are going to help to defeat the criminal in their tracks and that the more they are involved, the more likely they would perceive the police as their friends; local police structures are closest to the people grassroots, emergency response will more effective than the current unwieldy chain of command that renders local chairmen ineffective when their people are under attack.

Ndakotsu (2023) argued that community policing as an idea is designed to reduce crime and disorder among members of host community by adopting trust, respect and partnership between police and members of community in reporting crime either violence or non-violence. This can be achieved through partnership building among police and traditional organizations of the community and important institutions that assist in decreasing and regulatory criminality. The members of the community are always in better situation to report any complaint in the society with reasonable and balanced tactics, while emphasizing on practical crime control and deterrence employing outdated methods of gathering information such as neighbourhood group

## **Community Policing in Contemporary Nigeria**

Currently in Nigeria, there is hardly any state of the federation that does not contend with some type of security challenges. The security problems are diverse informs and influences and it is incumbent that centrally controlled architecture cannot completely manage with the challenges. Hence, there is need to create additional policing structure in Nigeria to address the rapid rising challenges of insecurity. Consequently, sections 24, 40, and 45 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended) has impose clear responsibility on citizens to ensure security of lives and property.

There are various paramilitaries groups with ethnic feelings in the wake of rising rates of crime in most parts of Nigeria. The apparent incapability of the formal police to halt the development, the local vigilante groups comprising generally members of ethnic militias surfaced to liberate most Nigerian communities. For instance, in 2000, the then Governor of Kano State Kwankwaso formally launched isbah to assist as mechanism for fighting crime and maintenance of law and order in line with teachings of Islam. Hisbah is a vigilante group strictly aligned with Islam in his efforts to introduce Shari'a law, (Olaniyi, 2011).

In the wake of terrorists attack by the Boko Haram set in the North east zone of the country which was characterized by massive killings and destruction of proper. Government was incapacitated to confront them due to the kind of weapons and approach adopted. This led to formation of community development committees with the involvement of traditional healers to confront crime in the community. Also there was an initiative and the formation of a vigilante group tagged, 'Civilian Joint Task Force' (JTF) to assist the security agencies to tackle the depressing security challenges.

In 2012 Gombe state government launched the Youth Rehabilitation and Empowerment Programme (YREP) and recruited about 1,200 young men and women as Officers to support in Security, Traffic and Environmental management in the state. After three weeks of drills and exercise in fighting and anti-crime battle amid other stuffs they passed out in May 2012 and in 2013 additional group of over 1500 were recruited and trained for service of the officers in line with the required ethics of the job and were posted to different parts of the state for their primary assignment (Umar & Buppi 2014).

In Gombe, the state Governor in 2020 inaugurated a 21 member community policing advisory committee chaired by the Emir of Gombe to improve internal security and manage the street boys who sometimes involved in criminal activities within the state metropolis. The state police command used community policing initiatives to reduce farmer-herder clashes and promote a safer environment for all. The officers were directed to enhance visibility patrols and engage with community stakeholders as proactive measures to control incidences of any clash.

Due to the escalating security problem in January 2020 the South west governors came together and set up the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN) codenamed “Operation Amotekun”, to secure the zone and to support the Armed forces since their number is not enough and they can’t be in every community. The operation was initially declared as illegal by the then minister of justice and he was criticised as being legalistic in the face of unabated killings and insecurity. Since efforts were towards addressing the issue of insecurity the federal government later came to agree the Amotekun idea was worthy of consideration but must to be operated within the confines of what the constitution provides.

Aside these, others such as the Egbesu Boys, the Bakassi Boys, the Niger Delta Liberation Force, the separatist movement of Biafra, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), etc. were formed with the main aim of opposing the socio-economic and political relegation which occurred in that environment. Virtually all these groups requested their respective state governments to assist them in the security of lives and property within the state. The general perception has been that the police are corrupt, inefficient, ill-equipped and unreliable while the militias are incorruptible and efficient. In June 2001, the Governor of Lagos State, the Nigerian current President publicly announced his readiness to invite the OPC to assist the state to fight criminals who appeared to have overwhelmed the Police in Lagos State (Babawale, 2001). In Anambra state the state House of Assembly enacted the Anambra Vigilance Services Act in 2001 to confront the issue of insecurity

In Abia state according to (Obidiegwu & Elekwa, 2019) cited in (Sa'adu, 2020, pg. 29) the effort of the community policing assisted in the reduction of extreme criminal actions. The work of the group made the criminals scared of coming out to perform their notorious activities. The collaborative effort of the community policing and the formal institution had drastically reduced criminal activities because most of their hide-outs were identified and dealt with. Nigeria is a massive country facing enormous security challenges therefore, there is an urgent need to create more security structures and collaborate with the community at the local levels to reduce the load on the federal police.

## Theoretical Framework

The paper draws heavily on the theory of structural functionalist theory. It is a theoretical paradigm that has been applied over the years to the social sciences by scholars including amongst others (Clifford Geertz, 1926-2006; Harold Garfinkel, 1977-2011 & John Rex, 1925-2011) Almond postulated the functional approach to the study of politics in the 1970s, representing a major improvement over the then System theory of David Easton derived largely from international relations. The brilliant performance of Almond was to outline an approach to understanding political system that considered not only its structural components but institutions and other function within the system. The structural functional theory at its most basic level posits that a political system comprised of institutions (structures) interest groups, communities, political parties, branches of government and bureaucratic machinery.

The central assumption of the structural functionalism is that, the society is a complex systemic structure in which its part are regarded as independent units performing distinct work to promote cohesiveness such that individual member attitudes project solidarity and stability is produced and maintained.

Structural functionalism as a notion is about how institutions function, relates, play its roles, respect the norms that together constitute a society's purpose and act within the political process for the continued existence of the others and of the society as a whole. Interest are served to articulate political issues, parties then aggregate and express them in a coherent and meaningful way, government in turn enacts public policies to address them and bureaucracies finally regulate and adjudicate them, (Scott, 2011).

The structural functionalist theory was adopted for proper explanation of issues bothering on the community policing and security development. This theory is relevant since the society is a complex system with so many distinct and differential parts with various interests in areas such as political, religious, socio and security should corporate to achieve a harmonious inter relationship between its constituent parts. To guarantee a state of stability and crime free society there is the need for community participation to control the affairs and involve people who mostly affect insecurity to participate in protection of their community. Community involvement as opined by (Ojeizele, Akan & Ayemo 2020, pg. 25) helps those who omitted from the main stream society to vigorously participate in their own matters and be part of decision making to defend themselves. Collaborating with (Kreuter, Lezin & Youn, 2000), Ojeizle, et.al, (2020) argue that community involvements improve individual enablement and contribute to gain control of their environment and cross change ideas on how the societal challenges can be handled.

Due to the rising anxiety and inability of formal security institutions in Nigeria to manage the prevailing crimes in the various parts of Karu has necessitated the collaboration of all stakeholders and the community members to involve, control, contribute and recommend how to solve the challenges of insecurity in the community and the country as a whole. Hence, the application of this theory for proper understanding of community policing and the attendant effects.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. A mixed method research (MMR) was employed which involved qualitative and quantitative research. Data collected from secondary sources which journals, textbooks, newspapers and other documented materials while in-depth

interview and email correspondences were from the primary sources. This study analysed theoretical concepts and hypothesis generated from data gathered from the survey conducted on relevant stake holders.

The population for the study was all the members of the community. Respondents to the study were drawn from different groups which comprise of members of the community, officers of vigilante group and other stakeholders. However, ten (10) respondents were purposively sampled and were also literate enough to provide adequate information on the topic. The information by the respondents was fairly representative of diverse opinions since it cuts across the community.

The analysis of the data was undertaken qualitatively where the research analytically discussed the effects of community policing and governance in Karu in Federal Capital Territory. The work also focused on bad governance due to lack of visionary leadership that failed to protect the lives and property of Nigerians, hence there is need for collaborative efforts to secure themselves and the environment.

### **Discussion of Findings and the effects of community policing**

Community policing is one of the foremost functional institutions of fighting and contending crime at local levels which brings about cohesion and seriousness amongst community and the police to share information that are vibrant to arrest and prosecute offenders. In response to what is community policing, a participant asserted that “it is an initiative of the Nigerian police to reaffirm her effort as the leading law enforcement institution in Nigeria by involving community members to participate actively in security issues that affect their existence”. Another respondent viewed it

“as an attempt by the law enforcement agencies to work together with individuals in the community who are in better position to support them in fighting crime”.

According to DFID (2010), partnership is one of the fundamental principles that support community policing. Similarly, a respondent said, that the principle of community policing is mostly partnership with police for contesting crime”. Another informant asserted that community policing is all about police and public cooperation to fight crime and without cooperation and collaboration of the members of the community no meaningful success can be achieved.”. This shows that police need the cooperation of the members of the public and various stakeholders to perform to perform and function effectively in combating crime in the community.

Security challenges have been one of the foremost concern of government in contemporary Nigeria because there is no crime free environment. Various security measures have been adopted according to the awareness of the age as it is also practiced globally. Community policing (vigilante) is basically one of the means employed in most communities in Nigeria which help to fight crime and force observance to societal values and customs. The vigilantes are volunteered members of the community, attested to be of good character by their families and age groups. Policing the community by the vigilante members is mostly supported by the community because there is always a link holding the community. In response to reason for community policing in contemporary Nigeria, a participant argued that “the police is overwhelmed with insecurity problems such as armed robbery, bandits, kidnappings, insurgency etc. and government can no longer do it alone. This calls for partnership between the police, community and the involvement of the vigilantes both paid and volunteers”.



Most community members are vigilant and very supportive in crimes prevention in their environment. The synergy between community policing and the NPF has enhanced exchange of information in order to stamp out criminals tendencies.

There are community individuals with good information but could not get it across to the regular police officers, however, communication under community policing is given priority because of its closeness to the people. The partnership promotes constant information sharing on securityrelated issue and this has brought the police and the community together,

The primary role of community policing is to check crimes to manageable level. However, the efforts of state governors in contemporary Nigeria are to invigorate their various vigilante groups to be able to secure lives and properties and all is to make their states and communities a safe haven to attract investors to their states.

In response to the interview on the effects of community policing a participant stated that the development has allowed members of the community to contribute greatly on security issues that affects our wellbeing. In short, it has given us the opportunity to participate and decide on how we can secure our environment outside the regular security agents who are always not handy when we need their services. Similarly, another informant said that, there is element sacrifice and commitment by the young lads than the formal policing. The attachment to vigilantes is drawn from the perspective that they are members of the community and share certain characteristics with others.

## **Major Findings**

The major findings of the study are summarized hereunder.

That community policing has meaningfully reduced criminal activities in Karu and members of the community can sleep with their eyes closed

Community policing has encouraged partnership between members of the vigilante and the law enforcement agencies in the community.

That community policing has significantly promoted the protection of lives and property in the environment. The study further revealed that community policing has achieved what has not been achieved by the regular police because of their determination and sacrifice. This is why most State governments have initiated security team to complement the effort of security agents in order to foster security situation in the country.

## **Conclusion**

Presently, in Nigeria the rate of security challenges is on the increase every day which range from stealing, kidnapping, armed robbery etc. and these criminals are living in the communities. This paper has revealed that community policing has a substantial effect on crime prevention in Karu community in FCT. The study found that bad governance has affected the security of the country because the regular security institutions were incapable of challenging the activities of the criminals in the country. The incorporation of communities' policing institutions like neighbourhood watch, local hunters or amotekun as a way of crime stoppage in the community is appropriate and to supplement government inability to defend and provide the much needed security for the citizens due lack of personnel and ammunitions. The study also showed that the level of crime was high before the incorporation of community members in its existing form since the formal agency of government could not march the threats. However, it has reduced

significantly after the participation of rural community policing. It is envisaged that with community contribution and merger of formal and informal methods of social mechanism it will bring about stability in security challenges within rural communities and the nation as a whole.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommend that since community policing is an effective tool in maintaining stability and safety in Karu, members of the community should continue to unite and to fight against crime in order to enhance community and social development.

There is the need for continuous community enlightenment and sensitization program on policecommunity affiliations in rural communities. Legal methods of averting, monitoring crime at the community and provision of modern gadgets should be redesigned.

Community policing is very vital most especially where there is no network service and absence of regular police to reduce crime because they know the criminals who live among them in the community and how they operate.

Government should as a matter of necessity provide good governance to rekindle the hope of the citizens and equip both the formal security agencies of government and vigilante groups with contemporary tools to support their efforts.

Currently, the nation is facing enormous security challenges and there is the urgent need to create more security structures especially at the community level to reduce the burden on the overstretched federal police. Continuous partnership between the formal and community policing should be sustained. **References**

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