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Evolution, Implications and Challenges of Community Guards Operations in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The Nigerian state is currently confronted with several security challenges which seem to be on a steady course in undermining the capacity of formal law enforcement agencies. Like many states in the country, Oyo state, South-Western Nigeria is no exception; hence, the initiative of Community Guards in supporting the state in its efforts at providing basic community security, is commendable, but emerging indications suggest that challenges confronting their operations may thwart the laudable idea. Therefore, a study to examine, the emergence, implications and challenges of their operations was conducted using Ibadan Metropolis as case study. It was a mixed study anchored on the Broken Window Theory. Data were sourced from 2 urban and 2 semi-urban settlements in the Metropolis deploying stratified sampling option to elicit relevant information from Vigilante groups, traditional Night Guards, as well as the Police while data collated were content analysed using descriptive approach. Confirming assertions in literature, the study traced the emergence of Community Guard operations to limited capacity and reach of the Nigeria Police Force and NSCDC, affirm synergy and collaboration with state-owned security outfits which undoubtedly has positive implications on security in the selected areas. Meanwhile, a number of factors such as logistics and training inadequacies, restriction to bear certain firearms as well as poor and irregular remuneration were discovered to constitute challenges to the groups' operations. Regular payment of wages with appropriate annual incremental ration was recommended in addition to strict firearms authorization while consistent interface through training and re-training for improved cooperation, efficiency and effectiveness were also not left out.

Keywords: Community policing, Security guards, Night guards, Criminality

Introduction

Across the globe, provision of security is never a sole responsibility of the state as often erroneously believed; rather it is a corporate assignment for the state and the populace alike. This assertion is neither a mere supposition nor a sheer assumption but a clear statement of reality. Many communities have witnessed crimes in various dimensions and can attest to the assertion above that security is both a fundamental right and a social prerequisite for the survival of any individual or society. However, it is never served *a la carte*; yes, the chores of protecting lives and property of people is a mutual responsibility of all, for which every society strives to design appropriate measures. In this process of providing security, collaborative effort is ultimately required to achieve desired success. Simply stated, this fundamental essence of security is the reason why societies from time immemorial made efforts to police their communities to safeguard law and order. In every society, security of lives and property of the citizens with respect to their fundamental human rights are important for economic and social development. Human safety and security are indeed human rights of esteemed value of their own serving as an instrumental function in the build-up to human contentment and prosperity (Odinkalu, 2005). Peace, safety and security are necessary and indispensable requirements

for development and the attainment of good quality of life for any human society which provide the enabling environment for citizens to live and work towards social, economic and political development of the society (Groenewald & Peake, 2004). This clearly explains the justification that the major responsibility of modern states is the protection of the welfare right of the citizens (which security is a fundamental part). Literally, security means safety and absence of dangerous conditions (Ajayi, 2015), a situation which cannot be relegated by any individual, corporate entity or state, else calamities beset. However, no state can claim exclusive capacity to provide security for her people, because no state is devoid of crime and other security challenges (Iyang & Abraham, 2014). As noted in the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime, states are to play primary role in public safety and crime prevention but these are not the sole responsibilities of government or public law enforcement Agencies; individuals, communities and non-governmental organizations are equally critical partakers expected to collaborate with the state. According to Bosch and Zitho (2011), the state agencies, civil society groups and the private sector have significant roles to play in enhancing security and community safety. This implies that the attention of the world has widened in redefining security and

looking for the best approach that could guarantee effective security management, different from the conventional ones that had failed to address the increasing security threats across the globe, particularly in the developing and underdeveloped countries. The search for a viable approach led to the emergence of the community policing option (Kasali, 2010), an appendage of which, the community guard system of local security is predicated. In Nigeria, the perpetual fear of insecurity ranges from burglary, kidnapping, insurgency, armed robbery, cultism and terrorism left one with no option but to admit that augmenting efforts of the state in the provision of security is imperative. Nigeria has consistently ranked low in the Global Peace Index (GPI, 2015), among the five least peaceful in Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrating continued decline in the state of security of the country (Gregory, 2016). Unfortunately, social life in Nigeria is now characterized by fear and insecurity in a manner that clearly suggests incapacitation of the country and her security apparatus in the discharge of their security obligations.

Consequently, insecurity at the community level is a trend in many states of the federation creating some disturbing experiences in the last one decade. In Oyo state, South Western Nigeria, the situation is not really different and Ibadan Metropolis (the most developed part of the state) is not

an exception either. Expectedly, diverse means of managing insecurity have been experimented and one of such options is the community guard security practice which many residential communities and private organisations patronize in keeping their immediate environment safe and free from criminals and their nefarious activities. Addressing these challenges is the constitutional and statutory responsibility of the Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and other public security agencies, but the obvious observation is that their fight against crimes are unsatisfactory to many (Oladele, 2017). Put differently, it is obvious that the public is skeptical about the ability of state security actors in providing adequate security services without the involvement of the community security initiatives like Vigilante groups and Corporate Security Guards.

In view of the aforementioned, this study aims at examining factors that are responsible for the emergence of Community Guards in the study area; the roles of Community Guards in combating crimes as well as the inherent operational challenges faced by the group in Ibadan Metropolis of Oyo state, Nigeria.

Despite the obvious security threats in Ibadan, Oyo state and the country at large, there are regular accusations that the elites and the rich are better protected by the Police

and many state armed groups than the poor the masses. Amnesty International (2002) affirmed that the police are sometimes used as private body guards and thugs by rich politicians; this is at the expense of providing real time security for the vast majority. All these perceptions of the people of the police obviously disconnect them from the people they are meant to protect. The perceptions of the people of the police worsened to the extent that community members perceived as police informants are derided. Under this state of affairs, many Nigerian communities no longer look up to the Nigerian Police Force for their protection from violent criminals or from other sources of danger. Instead, they have resorted to other means like self-defence or mob action for their own protection including unregulated and often violent reprisals against suspected sources of their collective endangerment. (Amnesty International, 2002; Ekeh 2002).

Objectives of the Study

The overall essence of the study is to examine a few concerns on how insecurity has brought about the adoption of Community Guards and their contribution in ensuring peace and security in Ibadan Metropolis. The specific objectives are stated below:

1. To discover factors responsible for the emergence of Community Guards in the study area

2. To examine the roles of Community Guards in reducing insecurity and combat crime in the study area.
3. To identify the challenges faced by Community Guards in the study area.

Conceptual Clarifications

Security

According to Omoyinbo and Akpomera (2013), security is a concept of priority to the state; as such, the state exists in order to provide that obligation. Security is the principal responsibility of the state and this explains why the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended specifically states that “*The security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government*”. Unfortunately, the current and recent successive governments in Nigeria have not satisfactorily delivered on this constitutional mandate as they have obviously failed to provide adequate safety for the general populace. The alarming level of insecurity in Nigeria has reflected in the recent exponential rise in crime rate and attacks in different parts of the country, leaving unpalatable consequences for the nation’s economy and its growth. Surprisingly, to address the deteriorating internal security condition, the government at the federal and state levels, have continually earmarked huge budgetary allocation to security, yet little or nothing is observed as progress. This concern has raised

many queries on the state of security management in the country at all levels. No doubt, the issue of security remains important to the continued socio-economic survival of any group of people (Hyden, 1995). It is for this reason and many others that different initiatives are being experimented to provide necessary safety for the people. One of such efforts in human history was the conception of state-owned community policing, though, it has not taken off officially in Nigeria but it has always been in existence covertly by private arrangement. Examples are the forms of security apparatus created by the different vigilante groups and the community night guards in every nooks and crannies in the country. Conversely, Bucqueroux (2007) argues that community policing emerged in response to several consequences of a modernizing policing profession while several opinions suggest otherwise, claiming it is an outcome of societal resolve to address the protracted state of insecurity. For a clearer understanding of insecurity, a conceptual explanation and discussion would be of necessity here.

Insecurity

As a nation with weak institutions and poor infrastructure (Imobighe, 1990), many unresolved structural deficits are potential triggers of insecurity, little wonder the combined Military-Police operations have

shown no significant impact in decimating the spate of internal crises occasioned by crimes and criminalities. According to Elvins (2017), the impacts of physical threats are usually dwarfed by the structural ones because they manifest gradually with subtle and unsuspecting but debilitating impact. The author holds it high that there are deeper structural problems arising from inherent system summersault and contradictions engendering conflicts and crisis that are manifesting in forms of political, religious and resource-based crises across Nigeria.

Consequently, insecurity has taken diverse dimension in different parts of the Nigerian state. No doubt, the incessant wave of crime such as kidnapping, ritual killings and armed robbery attacks, all point to the fact that insecurity is fast becoming a norm and has somewhat become attractive to many youths who, rather than feel remorseful and apologetic when apprehended, utterly attempt to justify their nefarious actions by blaming the society for being unfair to them. Though, posited from diverse worldviews, scholars in the fields of sociology, psychology and peace and conflict studies have a mutual point of convergence on insecurity; it is a reflection of threats of consequential impact which may be disproportionate in severity from person to person and one society to another.

Causes of Insecurity

It is quite depressing to note that Nigeria has joined comity of near-failed states considering the current magnitude and spate of insecurity in the country. It is indeed a worrisome situation, but hardly could a meaningful attempt be taken to tackle the menace without adequate understanding of the root causes. Agreeing to this, Allan (2013) contended that as the roots of violence and insecurity tend to be complex, sometimes people resort to violence when they are oppressed, discriminated against, socially excluded or economically deprived. The following are few reasons considered as potential causes of insecurity in Nigeria.

Trending Criminalities in Nigeria

In criminal law, crime refers to any misconduct of intense mischief which undermines public safety and so captured in legislative act to attract severe punishment. According to Adebayo (2013), crime is an act or omission which attracts sanctions such as imprisonment, fines or capital punishment. This conceptualization tallies with the view by Dambazau (2007) which sees crime as an act or omission contrary to public interest and which is prescribed by Act passed by the parliament in the general interests of the society and to which prescribed penalty is attached in the occasion of violation and it

involves four basic elements which are moral wrong, public wrong, law and punishment for the criminal. Criminologists conclude that crime has two major features:

- i. **Action or Inaction:** A criminal action which is either a commission or an omission and
- ii. **Intention:** This is a mental element of premeditation otherwise known as the criminal intent.

The two features may pose serious danger to the physical life and property as well as mental health of self or others. Therefore, in legal technicalities, crimes must have these two features because in the absence of one, there is no crime (Archibong, Udobong, & Antia, 2014). Besides, the scourge of insurgency, farmer-herder killings, banditry, cattle rustling and terrorism which are raging in the Northern part of Nigeria, other crimes with almost severe consequences as those mentioned above are obtainable in the South Western part too. According to Amaechi (2015), in addition to a confirmation of cybercrime prevalence in the Southern part of Nigeria (South East, South-South and South West), other crimes include but not limited to those below:

- a. Recurrent Burglary
- b. Kidnapping
- c. Armed Robbery Attacks
- d. Ritual Killings

- e. Gun Running
- f. Campus Cultism
- g. Fraud

Lately, the scourge of this criminalities has overwhelmed the Nigeria Police Force and allied agencies owing to legion of causative factors earlier highlighted. The overall operational control of the Nigeria Police Force is vested in the President in accordance with the 1999 Constitution and the Police Act. As stated in the Section 214 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, “there shall be a police force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section no other police force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof”. The Police Act (2009) equally provides that, the Nigeria Police Force is vested with such responsibilities as: the protection of life and property; detection and prevention of crime; apprehension of offenders; preservation of law and order; the due enforcement of law regulations with which they are directly charged; and performance of such other military duties within and without Nigeria as may be required of them by or under the authority of any other Act (Bello, Magaji & Jamilu 2016).

Community Policing and Community Guards

Within the context of this paper, the reformed vigilante and the community night guards are herein referred to as Community Guards. They constitute those personnel recruited with the mandate to provide private security cover to the citizenry under the superintendence of a Commander in the local community settings across the country. As a corporate entity, they are private service-rendering groups with community security mandate to wade off crimes. They are sometimes exposed to some minimal training in intelligence and security operations and observation reveals that many of the Commanders are usually retired uniform personnel who, after retirement, still consider their expertise worthy of sharing in this regard (tactical training). Their operations are otherwise known as “refined vigilantism” wherein they man assigned duty posts in local communities to keep watch over lives and property, track, apprehend and handover offenders/criminals to the Police. Unlike the vigilante orientation of the old, where operators were uncivil, brutal and lawless, the new order has got them refined in terms of recruitment, conduct, operations and in terms of interfacing with the people, there is still room for improvement, though. It is indisputable that they operate in collaboration with the Police; they are duty-bound to handover offenders /criminals to them (Police) for prosecution as they lack the

right of prosecution. In other words, despite their roles in tracking and arresting perpetrators of crimes within their community of operations, they could only rely on the Police to prosecute the offenders as they lack the legitimacy under the law to do so.

Certainly, Community Guards operate in clusters as private outfits whose services are sought by individuals or corporate entities to secure their properties. As a control measure, the personnel are hired under strict contractual condition, same way the enlistment of personnel are conducted through diligent local background checks from community development associations or elders. Therefore, for a comprehensive policing, particularly at the local settlements, the Nigerian Police Force cannot overlook the value addition the Community Guards could create. Interestingly, their being close to the communities where they operate often make them a reliable source of intelligence to all state armed groups; as such, could assist in intensifying internal security. However, Community Guards are not permitted to carry specific weapons like graded guns in Nigeria, and in performing their duties, the lives of many of them are usually at risk. This is because the criminals are often equipped with more dangerous weapons and the community guards face the risk of losing their lives by confronting the armed criminals. This

situation has led to untimely deaths of many personnel of the guards in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, the need to have the groups supersedes the need not to have them, as security is a corporate assignment.

In furtherance of establishing the undisputable nexus between community policing and community guard operations, the Broken Window Theory by Philip Zimbardo is considered apt in providing insights on the discourse. Specifically, the study is anchored on the Broken Window Theory in strengthening the path of analysis to establish theoretical assumptions employed as frame of reference for the study.

Broken Window Theory

The Broken Window Theory propounded in 1982 by [James Wilson](#) and [George Kelling](#) is a theory of criminology which states that visible signs of crime, anti-social behaviour and civil disorder breed a society that encourages further crime and disorder, including serious crimes. This means that the theory affirms that if a society is tolerable of certain minor social disorders, it gradually becomes attractive to criminals who will perpetrate worse crimes. Here, it denotatively explains a crack or a broken part of a window which remains unattended to, it will gradually expand and allow all sorts of unwelcome particles into the house. Same way, security threats in a community or society fester when

the earlier minor ones are neglected both in terms of physical laxity or intelligence deficit, as such there is likelihood of further threats and escalation of created fear or anxiety. Hence, to stop the threat is to act decisively to curb the early signs, else, threats are unconsciously advocated. Applying the broken windows to policing suggests that cleaning up the visible signs of disorder like graffiti, loitering, panhandling and prostitution would prevent more serious crimes. Furthermore, this theory suggests that policing methods that proactively curb minor crimes such as gangsterism and [vandalism](#) help to create an atmosphere of order and lawfulness, thereby preventing more serious crimes.

The Broken Window Theory can be incorporated into the concept of informal policing in the sense that collective efforts by both the police and community dwellers can help deter criminal conduct and consequently alleviate the rate of crime in the community as the police see residents as partners in development and vice versa. The Broken Window Theory assumes that most neighborhood crimes are more often than not perpetrated when the setting or situation allows; this makes crime primarily a local problem which can best be solved locally.

Community Guards in Ibadan Metropolis

As a metropolitan city and a state capital, security issues in Ibadan city can be daunting reflecting one of the typical features of an urban settlement in a developing country like Nigeria. Like in many parts of the country where community guards operate, it is due to the overwhelming security burden on the state-owned actors. The Police in the country is undoubtedly overstretched in the face of incessant crime hype which has subjugated many efforts of the Police and its allied agencies. As their share of the raging insecurity in the country, Ibadan, the state capital of Oyo state specifically, has a lot of challenges in terms of kidnap, armed robbery attacks, burglary, campus cultism and ritual killings. The *Soka Experience* will not be forgotten by many Ibadan dwellers in a hurry; an abandoned storey building-turned kidnappers' den discovered in 2014 was littered with human parts while many abducted persons rescued barely survived (Ogunyemi, 2014). The incessant cult clashes in Agbowo / Sango/ Poly axis are equally common security threats in the ancient city (Akamo, 2016). Indeed, the overall security challenges of the state and the metropolis in particular, will always make the people and the government appreciate any effort geared towards augmenting those of the Police and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.

The reformed vigilante groups and night guards have their presence in the

metropolis and their mandate is to offer basic security services to communities with fare tags attached. While their evolution would be explored fully in the course of the study, it is clear that unlike in the past when activities of the vigilante groups were manifestly unlawful in the state, they now operate more cautiously with apprehended persons and the public in general (Awosika, 2015). Though, they succeeded in reducing the incidences of community crime to a reasonable extent, and were applauded by many people and groups for threatening notorious criminals in the state, their overzealousness and exuberance could not be overlooked. However, they have transformed in outlook and operations and are present in many parts of the Metropolis. Arguments have arisen as to the kind of leadership they have got to their reformation agenda. According to Yagboyaju (2013) as cited in Yagboyaju (2015), leadership involves certain reciprocal exchanges between the leader and the led, and this was critical in the transformation of the group. Though, the

present groups are referred to as vigilantes, their approach and manner of operation are different, because they have got restructured mandate to work with other law enforcement agents; the Police precisely, to achieve the desired security objectives. They are accordingly vested with powers which include the power to arrest, but are required under the law to hand over such suspects to the Police for investigation and prosecution. Like the night guards, the objective of vigilante group is equally to protect and serve the citizens in an efficient and effective manner through assurance of safety and security of their immediate community. While the reformed vigilante groups are comparatively organized, the night guards are not so organized as their services are mostly contracted individually. For the purpose of this study, the combination of these two groups is herein referred to as Community Guards because they both undertake the task of providing basic security services for various local communities across the state.

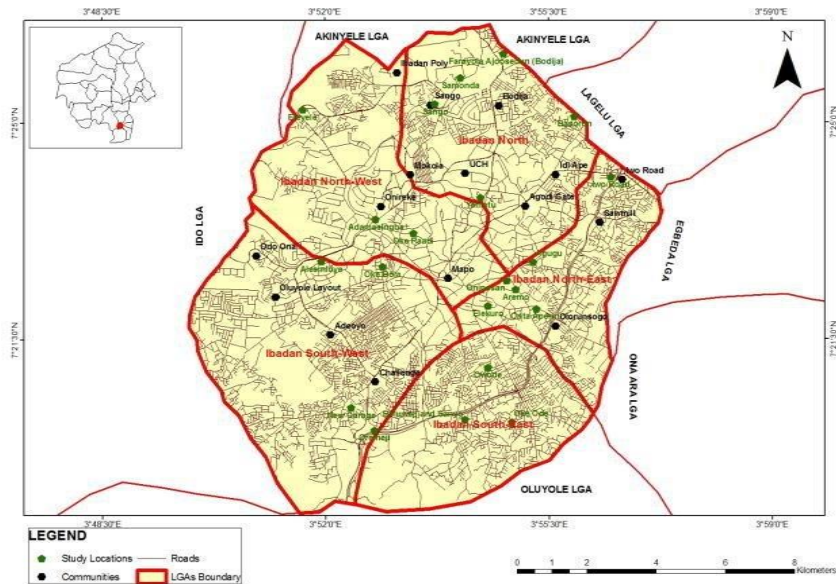


Fig. 1: Map of Ibadan Metropolis Showing Selected Study Areas

Source: (Gabriel Adedeji)

www.researchgate.net/publication/313164705

Methodology

It is a qualitative study which adopted the survey research design with simple quantitative percentage measure. The study area is Ibadan Metropolis denoting eleven (11) of the 33 local government areas in Oyo state. The Metropolis area consists of five urban local governments in the city and six semi-urban local governments in the suburb. The five urban local government areas include Ibadan North, Ibadan North-East, Ibadan North-West, Ibadan South East and Ibadan South -West while the semi-urban has Akinyele, Egbada, Ido, Lagelu, Ona-Ara and Oluyole as its constituent units. Qualitative data were collected using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth

Interviews (IDIs) while quantitative ones were collected using researcher-designed questionnaire to elicit information from target respondents who were community residents and landlords, retired and serving vigilante personnel, retired and serving night guards as well as Police and Civil Defence personnel.

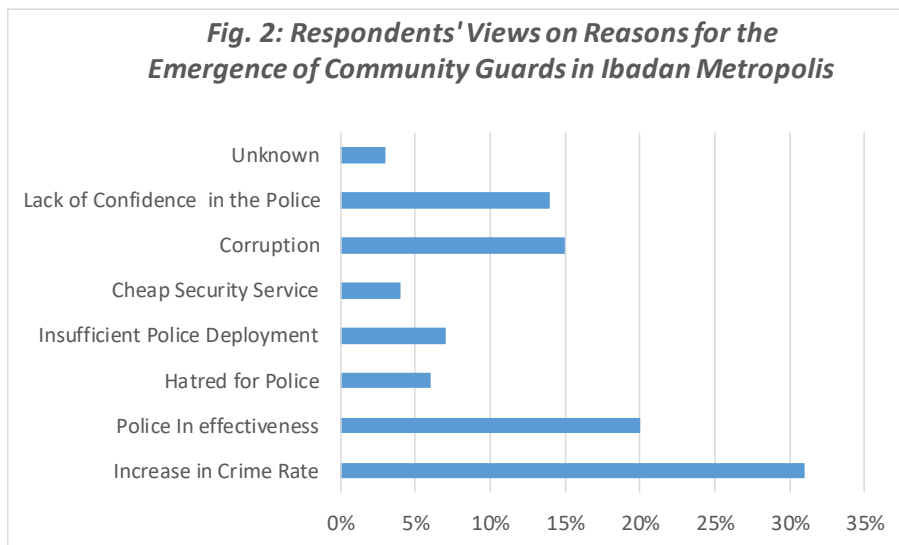
The questionnaire has test re-test reliability coefficient of .67 and divided into 3 sections to capture factors of emergence, the implications and challenges of community guards listed in section 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The questionnaire was administered on 200 respondents (as indicated below in the stratified sample) but 164 were retrieved. The stratified random sampling was employed as sampling method; of the 11 local government

areas (5 Urban and 6 Semi-Urban Settlements) which make up Ibadan metropolis, four (2 Urban and 2 Semi-Urban settlements) that cut across the two settlement classification were randomly selected. From the 2 urban settlements, Ibadan North and Ibadan South-East Local Government Areas were randomly selected. On the other hand, Oluyole and Ido Local Government Areas were randomly selected as the semi-urban settlement constituents. Specifically, wards one and two were selected in each of the indicated local government areas, making a total of 8 wards for the study.

Supported by two Research Assistants, the researcher collated primary data from the questionnaire, two Focus Group Discussions and four In-Depth Interviews while secondary data were obtained from relevant books, journals, periodicals and open access sources. The descriptive approach was used in interpretation of obtained data (primary and secondary) after content analysis.

Results

Research Objective One:



Research objective one explored emergence and evolution of community guards in the selected study areas. Firstly, as indicated in Figure 2 above, the rising case of criminality,

Police ineffectiveness and corruption were the most marked factors for the emergence of community guards in the study just as cheap security service was viewed as the least of all

seven proposed reasons. In addition to the above, obtained archival content confirmed some historical narratives to affirm that the deliberate process of protecting belongings was not alien to many communities in Ibadan land. In fact, the process was noted as an age-long practice in the traditional African settings far before the British Constabulary era. It was a period when farmers aimed at safeguarding their crops on the farms and the produces when harvested. Another episode in that era was the protection of village territorial spaces from external aggression by the warlords and their troops who were usually the standing army of the traditional rulers. Often times, the strength of the troop and how fiercely the warlords were, largely determined the command and influence of the reign of a king. Indeed, this was the first replica of community security used to wade off security threats before the advent of colonialism, but later relegated. Later, violent crime which had a long history especially in South-western Nigeria had both rural banditry and armed robbery in the 19th century (Watson, 2000). In the 1930s and the 1940s, recurrent thefts and burglaries organised by gangs also became a worrying issue both for colonial administrators and Native Authorities (Fourchard, 2005; Falola, 2009). The burden of insecurity on the Police was becoming overwhelming; as such, communities began to look inward to identify

different options to supplement efforts of the Police, particularly at nights. Initially, people (usually men) took turn to keep night watch over their communities and this was done in clusters; an option considered very risky but it was reported to have some significant impact in wading off criminal elements from the local communities (Precious, 2010). Specifically, in quest of sanitized operations, night guard system already in use in Osogbo town served as a pattern for Ibadan district, both for villages and cities. The regulations were fixed by the Olubadan and approved by the district officer with instructions thus:

- (a) Village heads must provide hunters for their villages and must instruct them to be guards;
- (b) It should be made imperative that chiefs ... of such quarter should be responsible for providing hunters for their quarter and equip them with gun powder;
- (c) At midnight, everyone should keep indoor and anybody found roaming about should be arrested by the hunters. (NAI, Ibadan div, 1/1, 167, Hunter Guard Instructions, 5 January 1942)

Though, not so named then, this effort heralded the beginning of 'vigilantism' in the South-western part of Nigeria which would later become a widespread support to the

efforts of the state agencies. A respondent affirms thus:

“During the colonial period, armed robbers operated generally by night in many neighbourhoods which were not covered by the Police, the most well-known being the outskirts of Lagos, the large precolonial parts of Abeokuta and Ibadan and the under policed countryside. Native efforts were deployed by the locals to check the menace; native efforts being physical and non-physical” (IDI Excerpt)

The excerpt aligns with the foregoing and both suggest that perpetration of criminality was known all along and beyond the efforts of the state (Native Authorities), the people equally used ‘native effort’ to secure themselves. Though, it was not clear whether the efforts by the people were simply to augment the state’s or it was because the state efforts failed or were considered inadequate, what was clear was that the ‘native efforts’ meant physical strength and metaphysical forte, indicative of the people’s non-latent stance in self-defence. Years after, crimes are still not unknown. In Ibadan, services of the *Agbekoyas*, the early vigilante groups and the night guards cannot be underrated because evidence abound that several security threats unleashed by men of the underworld were quelled by these groups either collectively or individually. Of these groups, the *Agbekoya* group assumed more of

the core ethnic identity of the South-western region than any other while the vigilante groups focused highly on security of specific local settlements in terms of crime detection, control and prevention. The Oodua Peoples’ Congress commonly known as OPC later emerged in the mid-1990s, with a claim of revolt over marginalization of the Yorubas (an aftermath of annulment of the popular June 12 election, won by Chief M. K. O. Abiola, a Yoruba man). With a lot of internal reformation, it has also evolved over the years to lend helping hands to internal security measures and till date the group has conveniently played the role without doubt. However, for the purpose of this study the group will not be considered a constituent of the herein referred ‘community guards’ as no part of its statutory mandate refers to security of life and property but rather the protection of rights of the Yoruba nation. Despite clear observation of the researcher that members of the OPC group are corporately or individually engaged as guards by communities, the group denied the status of a community guard.

The popular rationale behind the engagement of community guards is premised on the perception that adequate mechanism for crime prevention by the state is either insufficient or unsatisfactory. This promote the idea that the state-owned law enforcement agencies are ineffective in enforcing the law thus individuals at community level therefore

devise means of securing their lives and properties; hence, the community guards.

A night guard discussant states:

“We all know that the Police cannot handle the security issues all alone. So we assist them in making sure that our immediate communities are safe. The people have realised this. . . . they come to us to ask for our services and we are very willing to help them in ensuring that crime is reduced to the barest minimum.” (FGD, Male 61years)

Similarly, an Archival content confirms:

“It is often considered probable that the recent rise of vigilante groups in Nigeria means an erosion of the state monopoly of legitimate violence as well as a marked decline in state sovereignty over the national territory. However, this conclusion does not take into consideration the fact that in Nigeria ‘vigilante’ is a term initially proposed by the Police in the mid-1980s as a substitute for an older practice known in the western part of the country since the colonial period as the ‘hunter guard’ or ‘night guard’ system.”

(Laurent Fourchard, 2008)

Though, the need to ensure physical protection and freedom from fears necessitated the existence of law enforcement agencies, particularly the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). By virtue of

Section 214 of the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* and consequently, Section 4 of the Police Act ‘prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders, preservation and protection of law and order’ as basic responsibilities of the state. These law enforcement agencies have fallen short of expectation with several issues attributed to the reduced efficiency in the delivery of their primary assignment. Hence, Ali (2013) argued that communities everywhere had sought to maintain communal order through the creation of home-based security groups that rely on the belief and attitude of the community.

The FGD session which had in attendance at least one executive officer of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and Association of Neighbourhood Watch (ANW) of the selected areas was quite engaging. It clear accord with the reflection as expressed in Figure 2, it was unanimous among discussants that the influx of criminals to Ibadan metropolis in the mid-2000 when Lagos state security architecture was becoming intolerable to them led to unprecedented unity between the two groups and ever since, harmonious relationship has continued to exist. They admitted that each group had got internal problems at one time or the other but they both survived the trying times and the communities they offer to secure are the

better for it. They equally talked about their registration status. An Executive Officer of VGN in Ido Local Government states:

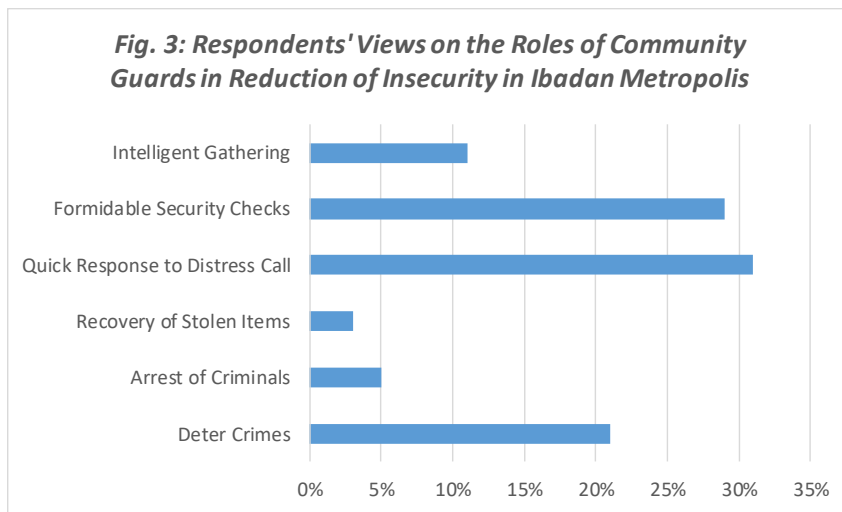
“As an offshoot of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), registered with the Corporation Affairs Commission in 1999, the Oyo state chapter has her tentacles in all local government areas of Oyo state and the activities of the group are monitored by a committee which was re-inaugurated in 2018.”(FGD, Male, 37years)

An officer of the Association of Neighbourhood Watch also submits thus: *“Though, our association is recognized by the government because we have presence in Oyo state and some other states where we work closely with Police, we are currently hoping we could have national registration. The truth be told, before now, we used to engage in extra-judicial torture of criminals, or inflict natural*

harm but now we hand them over to the Police.” (FGD, Male 40years)

Further discussion with the group revealed that despite the two groups working under different commands, they have got cause to work together at different times to curb crimes such as stealing, robbery, burglary, cultism and rape in the areas. The groups have also undergone several stages of reformation in quest of image redemption allegedly plundered in their respective formative era. Reformation here connotes meting out punishment to erring members, eschewing crude security practices and conducting affairs within the acceptable standard operating procedures. Also noted from the foregoing is that the emergence of community guards which the two represent in the study, is due to high rate of criminality and the seeming inability of the Police to curb the menace. The operation of the guards is private and membership strictly voluntary; communities which seek their services take responsible for the bills of services rendered.

Research Objective Two:



The roles of Community Guards in reducing insecurity in the study area was examined by the second research objective. Role factors examined specifically were ability to deter crimes, intelligence gathering, recovery of stoles items, responsiveness to distress calls, ability to arrest criminals and strength of mounting formidable security checks when on duty. From Figure 3 above, in the view of community dwellers, rapid response ability (31%), formidable security checks (29%) and crime deterrence (21%) were ranked high among others factors as the roles of community guards in reducing insecurity; the least being ability to recover stolen belongings which stands at less than 5 percent. The data above were corroborated by interviewees' responses during the in-depth interviews.

Secretary, Community Development Association, Odo Ona Elewe Community and

Environs, Oluyole Local Government Area affirms:

"We have fervent belief in the vigilante group, that is why we hired them. Though, the Police are also cooperative but we don't want to be accused of negligence in handling security matters that's why we have them (the vigilante group). Ever since, there has been a great reduction in crime rate in our community" (IDI. Male, 42years old)

The indication is that people are motivated to complement the conventional services rendered by the police due to the exigency to ensure maximum protection against threats by criminals. The observation on the field is that many communities engage the services of night guards and vigilante groups. The comments of an out-going resident in the area clarifies:

"The mostly patronized neighbourhood security operatives in our community are

the Hausa night guards. We also have other forms of security. The landlord association is most concerned with the welfare service of these men and we feel secure but I have to leave for my own house at Ajibode.” (IDI, Male, 67years old)

Conversely, some responses suggest that security threats in some neighbourhoods in the areas have not abated so much as would have been expected even despite the presence of community guards. They equally sounded as though some community guards are more efficient than the others. According to them, the previous two years were particularly referred to as years of notoriety of men of the underworld, who tormented the area in the night and day times. They alleged some foul play or conspiracy of the sacked community guards in the area but felt the landlords were not considerate of their claims. A member of this category of residents (tenants) says:

“We still experience burglary and petty stealing in the areas (Orita) despite the engagement of community guards. Our suggestion to engage another group of vigilante was usually rebuffed by the landlords but they collect monthly “security charge” from us. In fact, I pay the N500 monthly security charge in advance. Sometimes, the criminals are petty thieves, but we seem to lack the common will to address the problem.” (IDI, Female, 31years old, resident)

Although, the occurrence of crime in the vicinity has not been holly eradicated as reported in the findings, it cannot undermine effort of the Police and community guards in combating crimes. It may be argued in a way that the increase in the level of crime is attributed to lack of willingness to report crimes or provide the Police with intelligence. This point was clearly stated in the words of a Police Officer at Oluyole Divisional Police Station:

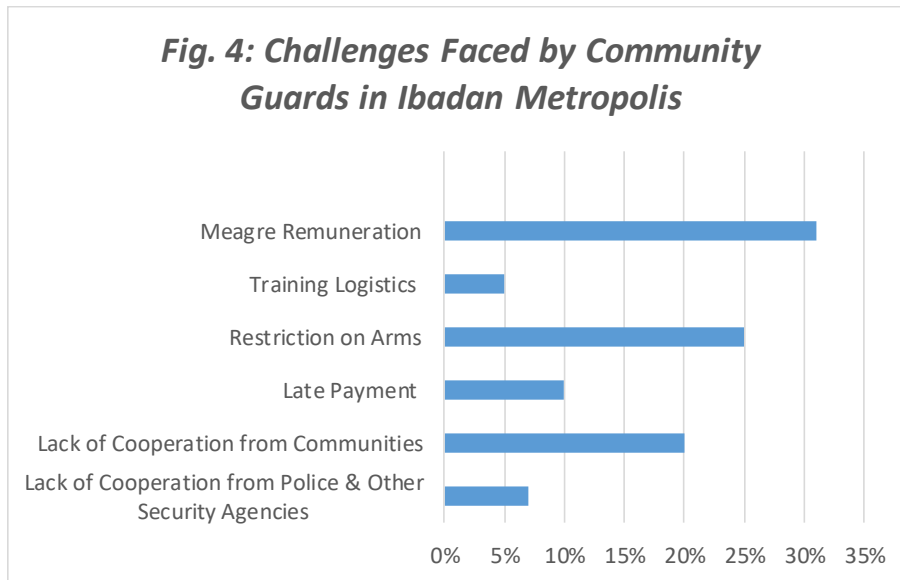
“The several community groups in this area have assisted in security, no doubt, but security is a joint problem solving practice, it is very unfortunate that it is not all crimes committed that get to our notice. We are neither foretellers nor magicians that must know all that is happening outside here (referring to the station). If the Police must help the public, then the public should be ready to help the Police by reporting all crimes and sharing of intelligence.” (IDI, Assistant Superintendent of Police at Oluyole Divisional Police Station)

Established from the foregoing is that, in aggregate, there exists a collaboration between the Police and different community guards. Notwithstanding, the areas have not witnessed total security but the efforts of the guards and other stakeholders in curtailing criminal activities have yielded some results.

However, the different stakeholders and the community guards in particular, have noted that while they are not relenting in their effort

to make sure the communities are safe, the various challenges must be put in context for proper attention.

Research Objective Three:



Research objective three was to examine the kinds of challenges facing the operations of the community guards in the study area. As indicated in figure 4 above, the meagre salaries (31%), restriction to use arms (25%) and insufficient cooperation from communities (20%) were viewed by respondents as the most prominent factors constituting challenges to the operations of community guards in the study area; the least being training logistics as indicated by only 5% of the respondents. In addition to the percentage rating by community guard operatives themselves, the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews conducted further clarify some points/factors thus:

A community guard operative retorts:

“Everyone here can confirm; the job is risky. The risk of the job is facing daring criminals who are, in most cases, in possession of high calibre guns. We are not allowed to use beyond our local guns; all efforts to seek the Commissioner for necessary approval is proving difficult, but our leaders are not relenting. We use charms at times to protect ourselves and arrest the criminals.” (FDG, Male 57years)

Another operative at the discussion session also has this to say:

“Though, I am a retired Policeman doing this job to keep body and soul as one, but the

salary here (referring to the job) is too little. Myself aside, you can imagine many young persons among us who will need to keep their family together, feed them and send their children to school. To be motivated we need to be paid more for this job." (FGD, Male, 56 years)

One reaction during second FGD session worthy of mention was the unanimous chorus of affirmation by discussants to the concluding part (as underlined) of these two discussants. It somewhat affirms the veracity of the assertions. Further to the data elicited through the questionnaire and the FGD on the challenges confronting community guard operations in the study area, two in-depth interviews were also conducted. A respondent posits:

"Two things are challenging us, as vigilante member overseeing vicinity in the night when many people are asleep, I am committed, but I will be more committed if my salary can adequately take care of me and my family. That is one. Another one is that many residents do not cooperate with us; many still come in very late against the general rule while many will refuse to put off their generators till 1 or 2pm."(IDI, Male, 46years)

Similarly, a senior vigilante officer states:

"We have good relationship with the Police but anytime we have slight misunderstanding with them and we call them when in distress, they will refuse to come and claim one logistics problem or another. This is a big challenge. Similarly, the pay is too poor, the salary does not worth the risk and sacrifice we make. If the pay is increased and arms are approved, I bet you, crime will fade away here." (IDI, Male 66years)

The obtained information encapsulated in the data generated for the third research objective confirmed that some factors are the debacle militating against more effective operations of community guards in Ibadan metropolis. These challenges (covert or overt) if unaddressed could thwart the grounds gained against crimes already. Of course, the gradual preference of the community guards to the Police, particularly for basic community security need, is becoming apparent and so, it may be for a long time to come, except if a sudden ground-breaking is attained in the internal security architecture in the country. Hence, no effort is worth sparing to ensure resolution of the challenges herein captured in this study.

Conclusion

Evidence from the study unmistakably shows that operations of community guards in

Ibadan Metropolis is well entrenched in many communities and these communities clearly expressed preference for their services at the obvious expense of the state-owned security providers. This was affirmed beyond notions, but confirmed as reality of the situation. The public perception of the Police, her operations and relationship with the public insentiently bred some idiosyncrasies among the citizens which gradually gave space for the emergence of community guards. Coupled with the stated unsatisfactory feat of the Police in the eye of the public, the incessant and rising spate of crimes across the state are propelling factors that necessitated the emergence of the groups such as Vigilante Group of Nigeria and Association of Neighbourhood Watch. The Nigeria experience in this regard is related to what was captured by Kyammba (2014) who noted insensitivity and unprofessional conduct as causes of disaffection between the Police and the public with multivariate consequences. In a related survey, corruption of the Police was confirmed as the architect of resentment against the Police by the people they are paid to love and protect (Akinbola & Lewis, 2016).

Another clearly observed outcome of the study was a fact that beyond positive implications for all, the roles of community guards in many communities in the area cannot be relegated, as their services are readily accessible and affordable by residents

for basic community security needs. Though, a few instances reflect contrary, they are not enough to neutralize the applauded feat indicating that they (community guards) have been able to frustrate several security threats and related insidious intents in many communities in the area. And this, the claimed has been largely due to their responsiveness to distress calls and strength of mounting formidable security checks in communities. These can best be summarized as complementary components of community policing being advocated. Eke (2012) asserts that the Police stands the chance to gain more from the presence rather than the absence of the complementary partnership of the community guards in any society. In summary, there is a huge implications of operations of community guards in Ibadan Metropolis in several phases such as creating support for the Police in combating crimes; providing alternative security option to the populace, providing assistance in the maintenance of peace and order and also in the protection of lives and property in the community. By extension, attainment of these feats, at least to a reasonable extent, assures investors and other business owners of hope to see such society as relatively conducive for their operations. Of course, the socio-economic benefits derivable from such assurances and the eventual establishment of economic outlets in the area can only improve the

fortune of the people and serve as revenue generation for the government, both at the local and state levels. Besides, it is an incontrovertible fact that security is an indispensable prerequisite for development; hence, the popular maxim of the author 'assured security is development assured'.

On the other hand, however, the community guards' skill deficit in intelligence gathering and ability to arrest criminals is a source of worry; intelligence gathering in particular. This is not just because intelligence gathering is a fundamental element of internal security measures but also because the nearness of community guard operatives to the grassroots (local populace) is a strength the Police can barely match; all things be equal. It has far-reaching implications as a lost asset to state security. So, it is a source of worry and a clear indication of skill gap which requires attention.

Furthermore, the study unveiled some glitches inhibiting the effective operations of the community guards in the area, prominent among which were the meagre salaries, restriction on arms use as well as the recalcitrance of some residents whose conduct are inconsistent with rules made in their favour. Quite interesting and conversely too, is the last point indicating uncooperative nature of some communities (for whom the services of the guards are required) constituting a body of challenge to the operations of the

community guards. Interestingly, the alleged hostility presumed to exist between the Police and the community guards (and constituting a stumbling block for the effective operations of the community policing services of the community guards) was debunked by the study, as it was not as apparent as peddled. The reason for this could not be unconnected with the new orientation in the security circle (globally) that the state cannot provide exclusive cover for all citizens everywhere but in collaboration with non-state actors that must be considered as partners in progress and not rivals. No doubt, the outcomes of the study have elicited some important concerns as regards the indispensability of the non-state security outfits in augmenting state efforts. Therefore, further investigation could consider this study as a reliable template to examine the possibility of entrenching such structure within the overall state security architecture with clear delineation of roles without necessarily leading to usurpation, encroachment or rivalry.

Recommendations

Although, the study reflects reformation on the part of the community guards and a growing relationship with the Police in the study area but this should not be taken for granted. The need for consolidation on the feat achieved in this regard is hereby recommended, and to do this, the Police as

well as non-governmental organizations should consider it a worthy venture to explore as a project. For instance, intervention programmes in form of roundtable, seminars, conferences and colloquia could be organized to raise awareness of all stakeholders on role delineation, strategic communication and effective inter-agency collaborations approaches. Further to this, the existing Police Community Relations Committee in each community should be supported to function optimally to accord community guards the needed aid to make them more effective in collaborating with the Police. In fact, the request of community guards should, at all times, be prioritized by the committee.

In similar vein, the Police Commission in the state should review its gun licensing protocols to give due consideration to registered community guards. Though, this kind of consideration may be accompanied by stringent conditions; this is better than placing outright embargo on licensing of arms to them. It is understandable that reported cases of extra-judicial killings could have necessitated the restriction on the use of arms by these groups but if private citizens are allowed licensure of arms and such groups, whose activities are collaborative are denied, it may amount to unintended de-service to the state and the general populace.

Furthermore, having established that insufficient salary is a common factor capable

of de-motivating operatives of community guards in the study area, an upward review of their salary should be considered in the immediate. For those working as corporate entity, a formidable team should be set up to negotiate with their respective clients while those working individually, (the conventional night guards in particular) should consider it a necessity to be united under the Association of Neighbourhood Watch, get due registration and ensure enhanced salary package is negotiated for members. However, in the meantime, community associations should encourage members to increase salaries payable to all community guards in the area. One critical factor to be noted here is that a late-paid, unpaid or underpaid security operative is the nearest danger in disguise.

Another factor worthy of recommendation is skill enhancement training for the community guard operatives. Recall, in the course of the study, there were outright admittance of skill deficit in operation competence. For instance, in specific terms, the study revealed that they (community guards) lack competences in intelligence gathering and ability to arrest criminals. This should be an area where the group would require an urgent support in capacity building.

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