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## Community Policing: A Panacea for Insecurity Challenges in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Globally, insecurity has become one of the major threats to development especially in developing societies. In Nigeria, the state of insecurity is beyond words as the impunity with which crimes are committed is catastrophic. Innocent human lives are continuously tormented and violated on a daily basis by hoodlums despite the promises of change by the government. The unabated and dehumanizing increase in the activities of the ruthless Boko haram insurgents, rape, kidnapping, banditry, killer herdsmen, and other crimes has spurred a rise in the clamor for the establishment of community police in Nigeria. The paper argues that the centralized security system in Nigeria is a major threat to national development and should be jettisoned to save the nation from imploding. The study is anchored on Social disorganization theory as its framework of analysis. The study relied on secondary sources of data and analyzed the data using content analysis. It concludes that community policing is the way forward to addressing the numerous crime issues in Nigeria as it involves grassroot participation. The paper recommends that proactive measures should be undertaken by government in a bid to assuage these activities by initiating actions to amend the Nigerian constitution with a view of devolving powers, duties, and responsibilities to states by establishing state policing in order to enhance Nigeria's national security.*

**Key Words:** Constitution, Insecurity, Nigerian Police, Community Police, Crime.

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### Introduction

The problems of public security are perhaps the biggest challenges to Nigeria's consolidating democracy. Since 1999, the Nigeria Police Force has been central to managing and responding to those challenges. Without an effective police force, the wider state, society and economy will find it difficult to function effectively and maximally. Today, challenges to policing Nigeria include rapid urbanization, population growth, rising inequality, unemployment, mass migration, breakdown of older systems of social order, neighboring weak states, and the opening of new economic arenas, which give rise to a huge

range of criminal challenges including robbery, kidnap, corruption, fraud, terrorism, sexual assault, domestic violence, communal strife, and criminality in politics. Although specialized bodies exist to deal with some of these, the primary agency in the frontline of these challenges is the Nigeria Police Force (Owen, 2014).

The insecurity in the country has made citizens to live in continual fear and danger of violent death, consequently upon the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents in the Northern part of the country which has threatened the existence of the Nigerian state; the activities of the Niger Delta militants in



the Southern part of the country which almost harmed the nation's economic life wire (oil production); the activities of the Killer Herdsmen that has rampaged the entire parts of the country; banditry; kidnappings; ritual killings among others (Nnaji & Ojiego, 2019). The resultant effect has been the loss of lives, destruction of valuable individual and or government properties which has threatened national security leading to a corresponding spike in budgetary appropriation and expenditure on security. This increase has undeniably inhibited growth and development in some vital areas such as the educational, health, and agricultural sectors.

Security and welfare of the people, is one of the fundamental objectives and directive principles underpinning the policy of the government of Nigeria towards the people within its jurisdiction and is declared boldly in Chapter II of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999. In adherence to the above directive, the paramilitary agency (the police force) as an arm of the executive was created by the Police Act of 1996. The core function of the police force includes the implementation of laws in the society thereby protecting life and property, preserving law and order, and the detection of crime. Like every democratic setting, it is expected that Nigerians should turn to the police for security and crime control but they are only considered as the 'Friend of the People' ironically.

The Nigeria Police Force has fallen to its lowest level and has indeed become a subject of ridicule within the law enforcement community and among members of the enlarged public, its duties having been commercialized leave officers at the mercy of rich individuals and corporate entities (Udefuna, Madu, Akalefu and Jumare (2014). Security for the common man has become a mirage. Among the four arms of the

state security system in Nigeria; Army, Navy, Air Force and Police, the latter is closest to the people and should be able at all times to protect and defend the people but reverse has been the case. This is further demonstrated in the Nigerian Non-Governmental Organization, CLEEN Foundation's comprehensive national survey of criminal victimization in 2009 where only 20.2% respondents reported crime to the police; 52% of respondents reported crime to their family; 3% to traditional leaders, 2.3% to religious leaders and 2.4% to vigilante groups.

The inability of government to provide a secure and safe environment for lives, properties and the conduct of business and economic activities has led to resentment and disaffection among business investors. This has resulted in communal clashes, and religious violence and crime in different parts of the country that has destroyed lives and properties, disrupted businesses and economic activities, and retarded economic growth and development in Nigeria (Okonkwo, Ndubuisi & Anagbaogu, 2015). The recent surge of insecurity has raised questions on the centralization of the Police Force in the country while progressing the need to decentralize the force to ensure that states establish, maintain and control their police formations. The clamor for the establishment of community police as a fortitude for the several security challenges that has bedeviled the country is supported by the inherent desires of the people to live peaceably in a secured and chaos-free environment.

The idea of community policing is based on the notion of cooperation between police officers and private citizens in communities to grapple with crimes and sundry social vices. Central to the idea is the neighborhood principle that presupposes that everyone in the vicinity knows each other, thereby

making it easy to monitor deviants in the community (Odeh & Umoh, 2015). The police can achieve this role only when they are recognized by the people as indeed “a helper and a friend”. The public at large has to first understand the nature of the policing function and consent to be policed, thereby not merely obeying instructions but also actively participating in the duty of the police through assisting in the prevention and detection of crime. All this cannot be achieved if the police is far away from the community.

It is the duty of the Nigerian police force to work in the interests of the public by ensuring human rights are not only respected but protected and that the whole community is aided to live in peace and stability. This paper therefore seeks to examine the level to which the Nigerian police force has lived up to its duty and its implication for grass root governance while strongly suggesting devolution of power to enable the state establish community police.

### **Literature Review**

#### **The Concept of Insecurity**

Generally, security is fundamental to every nation’s survival in the sense that it helps forestall lawlessness, chaotic situations and possible disintegration of the entire system (Adegoke, 2014). Security therefore, denotes a dynamic condition of safety as well as the relative ability of a state to take all necessary measures to counter threats against her core values and interests (Umede, 2011). Security is usually taken as the topmost of the state as a nation can come to a halt in the presence of insecurity and other unforeseen pandemics. This explains why states use the police and or other armed forces unit to combat any form of insurrection when they occur.

The concept of insecurity connotes different meanings such as: absence of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety. According to Beland (2005),

insecurity is “the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection.” It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from danger. Achumba, Ighomereho, & Akpan-Robaro (2013) defines insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune. These definitions of insecurity underscore a major point that those affected by insecurity are not only uncertain or unaware of what would happen but they are also vulnerable to the threats and dangers when they occur. (Okonkwo, Ndubuisi, & Anagbogu, 2015).

According to Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013), Olabanji and Ese (2014) the divergent approaches to the conceptualization of human security in the theoretical literature can be categorized into two major strands. One is a neo-realist theoretical strand that conceptualizes security as primary responsibilities of the state. The second strand, a postmodernist or plural view, conceptualizes security as the responsibilities of non-state actors and displaces the state as a major provider of security. Proponents of this approach argue that the concept of security goes beyond a military determination of threats. They are of the view that government should be more concern with the economic security of individual than the security of the state because the root causes of insecurity are economic in nature. Security embraces all measures designed to protect and safeguard the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups, businesses and the nation against sabotage or violent occurrence (Ogunleye, Adewale, Alese, & Ogunde, 2011). According to this study,

security therefore means the presence of peace and tranquility in the society characterized by the freedom from danger, panic and pain associated with fear of the unknown.

### **Police and Community Policing**

Policing is an essential component of good government. According to Adegoke (2014), major responsibility of the state is the protection and security of lives and property of the citizens. This role is fundamental even in Nigeria where the 1999 Constitution, Section 14(2) (b) made it explicit that “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government”. The Constitution has therefore empowered the Nigeria police with the onerous duty of detecting and preventing crime, preserving existing peace and order and seeing to the enforcement of all laws and regulations pertaining to this.

The police occupies a pivotal position in the enhancement of the national security of every nation. Constitutionally, the police sees to the maintenance of peace, order and security of the state. In addition, the police is also duty bound to protect the lives and property of the citizens. As an arm of the executive, the police is the para-military agency of the state that relates better and closer with the grassroot. The closer relation the civil society is expected to enjoy with the police is to enhance national security as well as ensuring effective policing of the society and nation (Alozie, 2019). The police is centrally responsible for controlling the use of violence by other groups through enforcing the law, crime prevention, protection of lives and properties, maintenance of peace and order and providing a wide range of services to the general public.

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnership and

problem solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. It embraces community partnerships and collaborative partnerships between the law enforcement agency and the individuals and organizations they serve to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in policing in Nigeria in the recent time (Eme & Anyadike, 2011). It may be seen as a form of police democratization based on community participation, cooperation, accountability, transparency and mutual responsibility for effective safety management. Community police forces add a vital proactive aspect to the traditional reactive police model, which promotes the development of innovative ways to tackle crime and promote safe communities. In this perspective, it is necessary to engage citizens in dialogue and active participation (Chalom, Leonard, Vanderschueren & Vezina 2001).

Community policing is a paradigm shift that seeks to focus on constructive engagement with people who are the end users of the police service and re-negotiate the contract between the people and the police thereby making the community co-producers of justice and a quality police service. The most recent attempt made by the Nigeria police force to improve its performance was the introduction of community policing programme in 2004. This was part of the Force's effort to change policing to a modern and professional policing capable of providing maximum security of lives and property in Nigeria. Community oriented policing is a proactive philosophy that promotes solving problems that are either criminal, affect the quality of life, or increase citizens fear of crime. It involves identifying, analysing and addressing community problems at their source (Okeshola & Mudiare, 2013).

Community police forces are central and will remain most significant in criminal justice systems. Okiro (2007) avers that community policing is anchored on a systematic relationship between the police and the entire citizenry. Police roles and functions are not simply law enforcement but also include tackling a huge range of community problems. The transition from traditional policing to community policing is a global phenomenon and the Nigeria police cannot be an exception. Indeed, community policing as a philosophy and practice is a veritable vehicle for police reforms.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Social Disorganisation Theory**

The Social disorganisation theory can be traced to the Chicago School and the work of Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay, (1942, 1969) and it has come a long way since its original conceptualization. Social disorganization refers to “the inability of a community structure to realize the common values of its residents and maintain effective social controls”. Shaw and McKay explain social disorganisation theory as the breakdown or disruption of community social organization resulting from low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity and residential mobility. Scholars of that period reasoned that crime was the result of weakened social relationships. Williams and McShane (1988) provided a list of the major points that are apparent in social disorganisation theory. Those points include 1) humans are a product of their environment; 2) cultural values govern behavior; 3) communities are characterized by many cultural values; 4) as different cultural values compete, traditional values breakdown; 5) deviant behavior results when one acts in disregard to the dominant cultural values; and 6) deviant behavior, delinquency, and crime are more prevalent in the inner cities. The social disorganization theory further argues that

there exists a direct relationship between higher rates of deviance and the increased complexities of urban life. It argues that criminal behaviors occur in neighborhoods with low social bonding. One of the major principles of community policing is the creation of a social bond between the police and the citizens. Therefore, having the theory in mind, police organizations can work on creating a social bond both with the citizens and among the citizens. Some scholars (Rosenbaum, 1987) argue that if crime is the result of social disorganisation, police departments should work to improve social control by strengthening community ties and by encouraging behaviours that provide a basis for regulating conduct; in essence, work with communities to help them regulate the conduct of their members.

Shaw and McKay (1942) formulated a structural theory of crime according to which poor neighborhoods, inhabited by heterogeneous and residentially unstable groups, are more likely to lack social organization and, as a result, experience higher rates of juvenile delinquency. As such it can be rightly said that communities suffering from increased unemployment, poor educational opportunities, and residential immobility also lack the social organization needed to control delinquent and criminal behavior. In such communities, the process of community policing becomes difficult. This critic does not invalidate the relevance of the theory to the study.

#### **Methodology**

The study applied theoretical and qualitative methods. The research design used is content analysis as data was sourced secondarily through scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, newspaper reports and relevant materials downloaded from the internet.



**Challenges to Insecurity in Nigeria**

**Weak Security System:** Nigeria's poor security system has been a major concern over the past decades. The security system faces the problem of 'two sides of the same coin' problem. The first one is its inadequate supply of weaponry and equipment which has been a challenge in the fight against insurgency in the country. The irony is that it has remained a major challenge despite the huge amount of money budgeted for the purchase of modern equipment every year. The second face of the coin portrays the negligence of some security personnel at the point of discharging their duties. Instead of maintaining peace and security, they become threats to peace and security (Epron, 2019). This is in addition to poor attitudinal and behavioural disposition of security personnel. In many cases, security personnel assigned to deal with given security situations lack the expertise and equipment to handle the situations in a way to prevent them from occurring. And even when these exist, some personnel get influenced by ethnic, religious or communal sentiment and are easily swallowed by their personal interest to serve their people, rather than the nation. Thus, instead of being national watch dogs and defending national interest and values, and protecting people from harm by criminals, they soon become saboteurs of government effort, by supporting and fuelling insecurity through either leaking vital security information or aiding and abetting criminals to acquire weapons or to escape the long arm of the law (Achumba & Akpor 2013).

**Unemployment/Poverty:** The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2019 put Nigeria's unemployment rate at 23.1%, of which youth unemployment is 55.4%. This figure has continued to increase yearly as Nigerian institutions keep graduating batches of youths with the prior impression of getting a better job and opportunities after graduating

(Epron, 2019). Unemployment has a severe negative implication on national development in Nigeria as most of its productive force is unemployed. What this means theoretically is that poverty and unemployment increase the number of people who are prepared to kill or be killed for a given course at token benefit (Nwagbosa, 2012). Adebayo, (2018) concur with the view of Nwagbosa, (2012) when he noted that "Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty, with an estimated 87 million Nigerians, or around half of the country's population, thought to be living on less than \$1.90 a day" (Adebayo, 2018). The appalling failure of successive governments in Nigeria to address challenges of poverty, unemployment and unequal circulation of wealth among ethnic nationalities, eventually caused a revolt against the Nigerian state by some individuals and groups. Such crimes include militancy, kidnapping, bombing, armed robbery, destruction of government properties, among others (Albinus, 2012). The civil unrest led to a breakdown of the peace and order of the country, and the law enforcement agencies charged with keeping the peace, with specific reference to the Nigerian police, were crippled as a result of certain underlying factors (Val-Ogu, 2017).

**Ethic/Religious Conflicts:** These conflicts are caused by suspicion and distrust among various ethnic groups and among the major religions in the country. Ethno-religious conflict is a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation (Achumba et al. 2013; Salawu, 2010). Frequent and persistent ethnic conflicts and religious clashes between the two dominant religions (Islam and

Christianity), present the country with a major security challenge. In all parts of Nigeria, there exist ethno-religious conflicts and these according to Ibrahim and Igbuzor (2002) have emerged as a result of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness and identity often structured around ethno-religious identities. The claim over scarce resources, power, land, chieftaincy, local government, councils, control of markets and sharia among other trivial issues have resulted in large scale killings and violence amongst groups in Nigeria (Adagba, Ugwu & Eme, 2012).

**Systemic and Political Corruption:**

Corruption and insecurity are the two major challenges plaguing Nigeria today. Corruption is the antithesis of progress and development which can lead to instability of all forms, social unrest and an unsafe environment. According to Osayande (2008), Corruption which crept into the Nigeria Police Force has gradually assumed greater dimension in recent times. Today not only are individual officers involved in corrupt practices, Police officers also engage in other offences such as, escape from lawful custody, obtaining money from suspects' closure of case files, escorts of contra-banned and stolen goods, stealing from suspects and accident victims, supply of police arms and uniforms to armed robbers for a fee (Osayande, 2008 cited in Val-Ogu, 2017). It has been described in the academic circles as cancer militating against Nigeria's development; corruption is deeply threatening the fabric of the Nigeria society (Iduh 2011 cited in Okonkwo et al, 2015). The existence of two anti-graft agencies; Independence Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) since 1999 appear to have done little in an effort to totally eradicate corrupt practices in Nigeria. The ICPC and EFCC seem to have come under severe criticisms owing to what

appeared as selective prosecution in handling corrupt related matters under the Obasanjo administration (Okonkwo et al, 2015).

**Over-centralisation of the Police Force:**

Operational control of the Nigerian Police Force is bestowed on the Inspector General of Police who in turn reports to the president. Located within the exclusive list, the Federal Government thus exercises absolute control over the security institution whereas the heads of other political units that make up the federation are helpless in issues pertaining to the routine maintenance of law and order in their constituencies (Arase, 2018). Central to the inability of the Nigeria police to efficiently perform their statutory duties of maintaining law and order and secure the lives and property of Nigerians could be said to revolve around the over-centralization of the police force in Nigeria. This has given rise to a situation where by a police officer who may be from the North, being posted to the Eastern part of Nigeria, where he/she does not have a grounded knowledge of geographically, culturally, economically and 'criminologically'. The police man/woman posted to this "foreign land" would not be able to understand the people they are to serve. This has made effective policing extremely difficult in Nigeria (Anagwu, 2014). As a heterogeneous state, Nigeria is too large a country to subject its security issues in the hands of the Inspector General of Police. The administrative bottleneck and bureaucratic redtape associated with this over-centralization is detrimental to efficient policing.

**Arguments against Community Police**

The Nigerian Police Force is one of the items that fell under the Executive Legislative list in the Second Schedule Part 1 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). This therefore implies that the federal government shoulders the responsibility of financing the Force. Thus,

the creation of state police will have to take over the responsibility of financing the Force at the state level. However, argued that the issue of financing the state police when created is unrealistic as many states still struggle to pay salaries of workers. Some critics have gone further to say that the inability of the state governments fund the state police will further entrench corruption in the Police Force (Nnaji & Ojiego, 2019)

The opponents of state police further base their position on politicians who already use all manner of funny-looking guys as personal guards to terrorize the common man. In addition, they argue that state funds will be used to influence a handful of members of the security agencies to intimidate, harass, maim and in extreme cases, kill innocent citizens who perform their statutory duties (Egbosiuba, 2013). Some may resort to the use of security agents to force reporters to do their biddings. They argue on situations, where Governors can order certain uncompromising members of the House of Assembly around for voicing their dissenting views on an election. It will be better imagined than not, if such governors have powers over the police in the name of state police (Egbosiuba, 2013). The solution according to this view is that Nigerians should rise up to canvass for adequate funding, efficient monitoring of disbursement of funds for proper utilization and training of Nigerian Police force for optimal performance and service delivery, instead of subscribing to the provision of state police in the constitution (Odeh & Umoh, 2015).

In the opinion of some stakeholders, creating state police at this stage of the present democratic experiment may be an invitation to chaos. Apart from the impunity of office and the possibility of abuse of power, state police could lead to the disintegration of the country, especially now with the fragile unity

in the country (Eme & Anyadike, 2011). Some scholars have argued that Nigerians have not been able to imbibe that spirit of unity and national consciousness as they are sharply divided along ethnic and religious line. They went ahead to argue that the establishment of state police will further divide the people. The centralization of the Nigerian Police Force for them is thus an instrument of national unity. They went further to argue that Nigerians don't see themselves first as Nigerians and that some state police in a state for one reason or the other may join forces with other groups to challenge the central government (Nnaji & Ojiego, 2019).

The last reason why the establishment of state police in Nigeria of today may not be feasible is the problem of funding. With virtually all the states depending on allocation from federation account stakeholder in Nigeria project are already challenging the feasibility of many states whose incomes are hardly enough to meet their expenditure. To add police responsibility to the affairs of states, most of which are still battling issues relating to the payment of minimum wage appears to be overkill. Even Lagos state which, has been assisting in the funding of policemen deployed to the state have been doing so through the means of a trust fund specifically set up for that purpose (Tamuno, 2014). Some scholars such as Adetumbi (2012) and Tamuno (2014), are of the opinion that states cannot fund community police because of the problem of funding which is far from the truth. The institution of community police means that policing will be removed from the exclusive list of the federal government. The implication of this is that the resources allocated to police at the federal level will be channeled to state level and as such, funding cannot be a problem because it will see to power of devolution.



**Arguments for Community Police**

According to Agwanwo, (2014), police and policing in contemporary political systems have undergone remarkable changes. Advanced democracies have evolved a police system that cut across the federal, state and the local unit. The state form of police and policing is regarded as indispensable feature of a federal system of governance. It allows its constituent units the constitutional right to provide security for life and property of people within the state. A state form of police and policing differs remarkably from the current centralized Nigeria police force in its creation, funding and control. Unlike the present reality, the state police force is one that would be created, funded and controlled by the state government within a federal system.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) put Nigeria's unemployment rate at 23.1%, of which youth unemployment is 55.4% (NBS, 2019). In view of the growing unemployment rate currently in the country, the establishment of community police will create employment opportunities especially for indigenes. These indigenes are fully abreast with the culture, language and pattern of the community they reside in and will be better positioned to handle challenges that are peculiar to their community as opposed to the posting of policemen from the urban areas to the rural areas who are ignorant of the local languages and or topography of their areas of operation.

Decentralization encourages specialization and efficiency. This, among other things, may be accomplished by placing the appointment, discipline and removal of the state police heads in the hands of an autonomous body or commission. The present structure in Nigeria as it affects the police, does not reflect true federalism and we should not make any pretence about it (Nwogwugwu & Kupoluyi, 2015). Nigeria,

at independence had Regional and Local government Police. If they were left to blossom, the system would not have allowed the security of Nigerians to degenerate to the current abysmal level (Nwogwugwu & Kupoluyi, 2015). Efficiency is a critical factor in developing and sustaining confidence in the police. The establishment of community police will enable state governments properly monitor the activities and checkmate the abuse of power by its police without undue interference by the Inspector General of Police from the federal capital territory. The lacuna between the required and available resources (human and material), operational incompetence, officer misconduct and other source of inefficiency in the police force can therefore be controlled.

Community police is a subject of the wider clamour for "true federalism" and is a veritable choice out of the current security quagmire. According to (Ugwu et al, 2013) in Nigeria, the political ideology of federalism have been adopted since independence, dividing political powers among her regions and states. Based on this adopted political principles, most calls for the decentralization of the Nigeria Police Force, have hinged on keeping faith with this national ideological creed, in terms of allowing each state in Nigeria to create and maintain their own state police that will satisfy their peculiar cultural and social environment. Eboh, (2014)cited in Odeh and Umoh (2015), decries the opinion of abuse of community police by the state governors insisting strongly that this will be far from the case because the State Houses of Assembly will always be there to monitor their activities and ensure compliance.

Community trust and the friendly and cordial relations between the people of the community and the community police will ensure effective information gathering which will assist the police in the detection,

prevention and protection of citizens domiciled in their locality. Egbosiuba (2013) cited in Odeh and Umoh (2015), sees a major problem with the Nigerian Police Force being that they are too removed from the people. Relationships between them and the local communities are virtually non-existent. Effective policing becomes more of a challenge when there is little trust between the police or law enforcement agents and local communities. Local inhabitants who know these criminals are unlikely to report them to the police when trust is lacking. The challenges posed by Boko Haram in the Northern parts of Nigeria, incessant violent crimes and the endemic corruption all over the country make it imperative that other alternatives to the status-quo be explored.

Good governance is a function of effective, visionary, transparent, trustworthy and credible political leadership whose driving force is an improvement in the collective wellbeing of the citizens through well-conceived, effectively implemented economic policies and human development programs. The underlying principle of good governance is the focus on people as the ultimate objective of governance (Oluwa, 2012). The existence of good governance will further birth community governance as an approach to local governance which will see municipal agencies and the community (non-profit and community based organizations, individuals and businesses) viewing themselves as partners, collaborating to address community problems and improve the overall quality of life. Security engagement cannot be detached from good governance as peace and security is determined by good governance.

#### **Criteria for Successful Community Policing in Nigeria**

There is plenty of evidence that enhanced police presence has a tangible impact on crime and disorder. Security challenges in

any community constitutes threat not only to lives but properties also and hampers economic growth and development. Therefore, to ensure stability, peace and order successful community policing requires;

**Proactive tactics oriented to crime prevention:** Response to crime should be restructured from an emergency response based system to proactive techniques. According to Chalom et al, (2001) the police forces must also identify and tackle the primary causes of criminal behavior to refocus patrolling activities, decrease repeated requests for service and prevent recidivism. This way police time can be rerouted to other tasks which help communities develop their own means of ensuring neighbourhood safety and development. Proactive police strategies that mainly revolve around problem-oriented policing, community participation and partnership are vital components in the pursuit of a preventive police mission.

**Decentralised decision-making;** more discretion should be allowed among officers on the field and more initiative should be expected from them. Those at the highest level of command must be aware of the concerns of mid-level managers, who may be particularly sensitive to the shifts in decision making responsibility and to the wider discretion accorded patrol officers....Under community policing, management serves to guide, rather than dominate, the actions of patrol officers and to ensure that officers have the necessary resources to solve the problems in their communities. Indeed, creativity and innovation must be fostered if satisfactory solutions to long-standing community problems are to be achieved (Kasala and Odetola, 2016).

**Transparency and Accountability;** Transparency is essential to positive police-community relationships. As far as possible

the means of ensuring that the police are not only accountable but also transparent to the law and to the community and the avoidance of undue influence by powerful minorities is paramount to the overall success of community policing. This is especially the case when we recognize that the poor and vulnerable will be most adversely affected by lack of accountability.

**Involvement of auxiliaries:** Since one of the main solutions to crime and insecurity depends on the participation of those concerned, the police must adopt the principle of acting for and with local citizens. The effectiveness of police forces in local matters largely depends on social conditions in the area concerned, and information seems to be the critical factor in the solid establishment of police practices. The police must start by forging active partnerships and acquiring a thorough understanding of the specific nature of a given neighborhood in terms of crime, social disorders and incivilities. Doing this requires the consultation and active participation of local residents. To support community participation and mobilization, police forces must rebuild community vigilance, adopt proactive attitudes and behaviors, support local solidarity and respond to the needs of the population (Vourc'h and Marcus, 1996). In relation with local organizations and initiatives such as the classic neighborhood watch, the police plays an essential role in developing and implementing such initiatives and in helping communities themselves resolve delinquency and deviant behaviours problems in cooperation with local authorities, NGOs, citizens, business associations, etc. (Chalom et al, 2001).

**Problem-solving approach:** Problem-solving is germane to community policing and as such, problems should not be limited to crimes, and solutions should not have to involve arrests. Police and the community

should be empowered to adopt problem solving techniques and take every opportunity to address the conditions that cause security breaches (Cordner, 2007 cited in Kasali and Odetola, 2016). Problem solving requires a lot more thought, energy, and action than traditional incidents-based police responses to crime and disorder. In full partnership, the police and a community's residents and business owners identify core problems, propose solutions, and implement a solution. Thus, community members identify the concerns that they feel are most threatening to their safety and well-being. Those areas of concern then become priorities for joint police-community interventions. For this problem-solving process to operate effectively, the police need to devote time and attention to discovering community's concerns, and they need to recognize the validity of those concerns (Bohm & Haley, 2002 cited in Okeshola & Mudiare, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

The discourse on decentralized structure of policing is not peculiar to Nigeria. The debate/argument within the global space has witnessed an increase in the clamour for the practice of 'true federalism'. Community policing is the bedrock upon which policing rests. The over-centralization of the Nigerian Police Force has incapacitated the state governors who are chief security officers of the state with the responsibility of ensuring safety of the citizens at the grass root. This lacuna has led to the introduction of numerous non-formal policing structures in states popularly known as 'vigilante'. The study therefore contends that the implementation of the policy of community policing, in its current forms, will facilitate achievement of its wider goals such as, improved service delivery and actual reductions in crime. Acting as gatekeepers to both the formal and informal justice systems,

it is expected of the police to solve problems of insecurity. This can only be achieved in the decentralization of the force through institutionalizing community policing.

This clamour as a means of resolving the security challenges in the country as seen from the study was borne out of the desires of the people to live in a peaceful, orderly and secured environment where they can actualize their individual and collective goals, as this would be impossible without proper policing that guarantees the safety of lives and properties of the citizens. The elimination of these threats should be the number one goal of government in Nigeria at all levels as the country cannot achieve any significant development amidst insecurity challenges. The study therefore recommends thus;

- i. The establishment of State Police for community policing: The National Assembly should amend the relevant sections of the 1999 constitution to provide for the establishment of state police which will further enhance community policing. Also, to checkmate the misuse of the police structure in Nigeria, at all levels, the National Assembly should through relevant legislative re-engineering, transform the police into a strong institution that will not be subject to the whim and caprices of a president or governor.
- ii. Governments at all levels should ensure that rising poverty indices are drastically reversed by pursuing a realistic and sustainable social security program which will be strategically and systematically implemented to ensure that the people meet their basic needs at all time. This will help reduce the rate of crimes in communities with ravaging poverty and groping unemployment rate.

- iii. Government should take proactive measures by implementing sustainable policies and programmes capable of addressing the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria by investing not only in manpower but also in high technology to facilitate intelligence gathering of all sorts by officers.
- iv. For effective community policing the people and the police should be provided with the required basic resource for action. For the police officers, there should be an improvement in their conditions of service; diverse training of officers to enhance competency; interaction with the people of the community to gain their trust and be accountable and transparent to the people. For the people, there should be sensitized and or made aware of the need to give the police maximum support in order to effectively prevent and detect crime. In view of the increased threats to national security in Nigeria in modern times, the issue of security should not be left for the police alone.

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