



## **DEVELOPING GOOD WORK SYNERGY IN THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL POLICING SYSTEM: A PANACEA TO ARMED ROBBERY MENACE IN NIGERIA.**

**Dr. Kenneth Adinde U., Oyeacho G. Onyeacho esq, Nlemchukwu, Emmanuel PhD, Anuka Anthony Onyebuchi, Emele Austin C. and DR (MRS) oluchi dike, (UAES UMUAGWO)**

Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

**Abstract:** Security of life and property is considered very crucial in every social setting. This explains why societies; no matter how crude would always map out strategies of securing the life and property of its citizens. In spite of this obvious, armed robbery attack in the country has assumed a malignant effect. Armed robbery activities in Nigeria is no longer for financial gain alone, but a means of ethnic, vendetta good working relationship is a functional prerequisite to achieving efficient and effective policing system. The involvement of citizens in the security business is quite important hence crime takes place in a social milieu. The Nigeria Police Force appears to have discarded this all-important security idea of maintaining good working relationship with the public but rather usurp the security architecture and operations alone. This has contributed to numerous crime and criminal activities particularly armed robbery in the country. The Broken Window theory and the Marxian Conflict theories formed the theoretical thrust of the paper. Criminals cashed on the poor working relationship between the public and the police to exhibit nefarious acts. The political class has continued to use the police as an instrument of oppression against the public which ultimately provide a trajectory to abuse of power by the police. Consequently, the public has to withdraw their cooperation. The paper recommended total restructuring of the Nigeria Police Force. Also, there is the need for the reorientation of the police force

**Keywords:** Security, Working Relationship, Formal Policing, Informal Policing.

### **Introduction**

Good working relationship entails building trust, respect for one another and developing a good mindset about individuals and colleagues one meets in a workplace. It involves a symbiotic relationship with people within and around the workplace. Tongum (2019) affirmed that trust, teamwork, communication and respect are crucial elements for effective working relationship. Implicit from this idea is that human beings require one another in order to achieve success in all engagements. It is a good working relationship

that synergizes respective individual role play for the attainment of societal or organizational goals. A good working relationship provides an ideal environment for human sustenance.

Human beings' quest for an environment that is free from threat to life and property appears a topmost propriety after satisfying the need for cloth and shelter. However, inequality which is a social creation tends to subject certain class of people who are in the majority to poverty and misery whereas a very insignificant number swell in

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affluence. There is the tendency for the majority who are subjected to penury to opt for other means of survival and in many instances negating the social approved means of goal attainment. Merton K. Robert in his theory of anomie referred to this group as rebels. Armed robbery is one of such rebellious activities that cut across societies. Samaha (2008) affirmed that armed robbery consists of two crimes namely theft and assault. Theft is accomplished under circumstances calculated to terrorize the victim. The negative effect of armed robbery presents no irony on why protection of life and property of the citizens is one of the fundamental functions in any policing system in all societies. Ugwuoke (2010) observed that armed robbery is one of the worst criminal activities. It is the most dreaded, violent and prevalent criminal act. Armed robbery is a form of robbery which involved theft of property and carrying (or pretence) of a weapon. It is considered a higher category of offenders relating to thefts and the use of force (Johnson, 2012). The author affirmed that theft allegation is the first charge in the process of armed robbery litigation. Theft is taking personal property that belongs to another with intent to deprive them of the property (as opposed to) just borrowing the item. The second element of an armed robbery charge is the use of force. The use of force is not limited to a physical touch. It can also be through other actions or words. Actions could include destruction of other property, such as throwing coin or breaking objects to get a victim intimidated or frightened enough to comply with a theft. The third and most crucial element of armed robbery charge is the use of pretense or display of weapon. Thus, a robbery is committed while in possession of a weapon, the crime will be labeled as an armed robbery. The weapon or deadly weapon is what sets a theft allegation apart from a robbery without a weapon

Formal policing refers to a bureaucratized policing system carried out by trained personnel for the fundamental purpose of peace and order maintenance in the state. Ugwuoke (2010:128) noted that the word police is derived from the Greek word 'polis' which refers to the secular segment of the society responsible for the maintenance of law and order. The author further stated that the police as a

formal institution emerged as a vital segment of legal administrative apparatus specifically designed and equipped for the maintenance of law and order through the enforcement of societal laws and regulations especially in a free democratic environment.

Informal policing which is also referred to here as vigilantism or neighbourhood watch is conceptualized as a cultural non-bureaucratized social control measure designed for the maintenance of peace, order and providing security services for the community. Somerville (2005) contended that the informal policing is the everyday routine autonomous policing supported by ethnically based framework of law. Informal policing is that form of policing that is achieved informally by the people going about their everyday businesses, observing their behaviour and that of others. The author further stressed that policing that is autonomous and generated by the people themselves in relation to rule of conduct agreed by them is generally preferred than the police that is heteronymous upon the people from outside or relating to rules of conduct that people do not whole heartedly accept. The implication of this is that the people have to accept the security system as presented to them by the police without which the effort of the police in fighting crime will be in futility.

Within the traditional setting, every society had its own method of putting up security, some of which are tied to their cultural patterns and belief systems. For instance in some communities in Nigeria, before the advent of colonialism, security of life and property was left in the hands of certain deities. Priests and priestess of these deities appease and appeal to the gods on behalf of the members of the community for any wrong doing unwittingly done and equally to protect them against any form of attack. During the period of slave trade, these deities were said to have provided shield for all those who ran into the coven. Even during the Nigeria-Biafra War (1967-1970) it was alleged that many communities in South-East, Nigeria; the home of Biafra used these deities to challenge the Nigerian soldiers. The result was said to be quite outstanding. The second means of providing security in the traditional setting was through direct human efforts. As Alimika and Chukwuma



(2004) in their study entitled ‘The Poor and Informal Policing in Nigeria’, it was found that the methods of operations of informal policing identified include divining methods, traditional protection method, praying and fasting and mob action. The praying and fasting and mob action were direct human actions against any form of attack or violation of the mores of the land like adultery, homicide uprooting of premature yam seedlings among others. These actions were considered discretion of the land and perpetrators were never allowed to live.

However, following the introduction of the formal policing system and formal laws, the informal policing system was expunged from the security network in Nigeria. The security architecture not only became alien to the people but equally the law which is a tool for social control seems not in tandem with the people’s way of life. Alemika and Chukwuma (2004) observed that the emergence of the state as an entity with the claim of monopoly over the means of legitimate violence in the society resulted in the creation of specialized agencies such as the police and the armed forces for the controlling of violence by other groups. The police are considered as the specialist carriers of the states’ bedrock power; the monopoly of legitimate force (Alemika and Chukwuma, (2004b). Price (1977) in Adinde (2012) maintained that the police see themselves as the only organization that could protect the citizens against any threat to life and property and they are the only organization permitted under the law to use arms and apply force in the discharge of their duties. The implication of this empowerment is that in Nigeria, the police have assumed themselves the lords in the security business of the land disregarding and discrediting the efficacy and functionality of the informal policing system. The consequence of that act is not unconnected with unabated beehive of criminal activities prominent among which is armed robbery Shehu (2015) stressed that armed robbery is now common in every part of the country, although it is more prevalent in the South-East and the South-South geopolitical zones than any other part of the country. Every class of people is a potential target even though the highly placed in the society are more vulnerable. Ugwuoke (2010) observed that amongst all the

violent crimes, armed robbery is the most prevalent, most dreaded and perhaps the most dangerous in Nigeria. The author specifically noted that in a situation where armed robbers could easily walk into the house of the then late president of Federal Republic of Nigeria seem not to conjure any hope for the security of life and property in the country. Today in Nigeria, armed robbers kill and loath property with ease and every effort made by members of the Nigeria Police Force to contain the challenge recorded little or no positive result. Virtually all the federal roads in the country have turned into dens of armed robbery and kidnapping. The Nigeria Police Annual Report (NPAR) showed that a total of 2704 armed robbery offences were reported in 2015, 2863 in 2008, 2327 in 2007 and 2340 in 2006 (NPAR 2006, 2007, 2008) Center for Law Enforcement Education in Nigeria (CLEEN), (2012) reported that there have been rise in cases of armed robbery from 11% in 2010 to 17% in 2012. Odinkalu (2008) noted that heightened perception of the prevalence of insecurity and violent crimes in Nigeria, especially of armed robbery and associated violent behaviour or killings could be found even without reference to crime statistics. Since armed robbery has its target on money, the Central Bank of Nigeria introduced the cashless [policy to limit the carriage of cash while on the road (Otomewo & Gamba, 2015) Despite the stringent law of capital punishment upon conviction of armed robbery, the Nigeria Police Force has not been able to address armed robbery menace effectively. Scholarly works and literature have dealt principally on the police-public face-off resulting from police brutality on the public and menace of armed robbery in the country. However, such studies have dealt little on how best to tackle the challenge. It is therefore the thrust of this paper to close this gap in literature. Crimes take place in a social milieu The Nigeria Police seem to negate the efficacy of the public in crime control yet, criminal activities are all about people and their environment.

#### **Police-Public Relationship in Nigeria and its Implication on Armed Robbery Control.**

Schuck and Rosenbaum (2011) maintained that citizens’ dissatisfaction with the attitude of the police during



encounter can lead to host of negative consequences including less compliance and more conflict with the police, less willingness to report crime, less law abiding behavior and less overall participation in the security system of the land. Walker & Kate (2005) maintained that the major shift in policing strategies in democratic societies was brought about by communities policing which implicitly introduced involvement of members of community in the security process. Thus, the success of community policing is a function of the level of community participation by encouraging individuals and organizations to take responsibility for crime prevention in the community (Jones & Newborn, 2002) Tongum (2019) stressed that developing positive relationship with the individuals one interacts with at the workplace makes ones job more enjoyable and productive . Ugwuoke (2010) further affirmed that public cooperation is one of the fundamental assets of an effective and efficient policing particularly in a democratic country like Nigeria. This is so because criminals live with the people in the society and unless informants come up with useful information concerning the identity of criminals, the police would not be able to perform magic of identifying and arresting criminals. However, Marenin (2008) observed that the standard practice for the police is deployment where the rich and powerful live and the protection of political and social elites, leaving most rural areas that are in the majority under policed or complete absence of police. This factor seem not underscore the reason why there is high crime rate particularly violent crimes like kidnapping, rape, armed robbery among others. The informal policing presents a system that is democratic, their members know the terrain and the likely behaviour of people living within their area of security coverage In Nigeria, literature suggests that there is a serious discordance between the police and the public. Such scenario is captured in Alemika and Chukwuma (2004) that the police in Nigeria with the backing of autocratic leaders and repressive laws frequently act outside the rule of law. Often, they constitute laws unto themselves, maiming, killing and detaining persons arbitrarily and with impunity. Ibidapo -Obe and Nwosu (2015) buttresses this point by attesting to the fact that confidence in the Nigeria

police has been eroded and the victims of crime do not trust the police enough to make a formal report at the station. Dambazau (2007) affirmed that the Nigeria Police Force has very serious image problem in the eye of the public it is meant to serve. Consequently, the police in Nigeria are viewed with serious suspicion, a pariah of some sort, perceived to be unfriendly, brutal, trigger-happy extortionist, gross violators of the fundamental human rights. All these negative attitudes credited to the Nigeria Police Force made the people not only to withdraw their collaboration with the police in crime fighting but equally constitute serious threat to the discharge of their duties. Ruledge (1973) in Adinde (2012) noted that a policeman trying to solve a crime in an area is highly dependent on what the local people know or have seen and are prepared to tell him. Nweke (2006) stressed that if we agree that society creates crime then it is only wise to look upon the people that constitute the society for the prevention of crime. The author further stated that in advance countries, neighbourhood watch has proved to be one of the most effective means of preventing crime through their collaborative efforts with the formal police.

#### **Community-Policing as Panacea to Public Participation in Armed control**

The spate of armed robbery attack in Nigeria has come to a point where individuals can no longer sleep with their two eyes closed or feel comfortable when in a journey. Today in Nigeria, there seem to be the merging of kidnapping and armed robbery operations. Commuters are accosted and dragged to the bush by armed robbers, dispossess the victims of their belongings like the automated teller machine cards (ATM) and other valuables. Those that are found to be wealthy are held hostage and ransom demanded. And in many instances go ahead to kill some of the victims whose ethnic groups are not in the good books of the armed gangs. It is a nightmare to go by road in Nigeria because of the activities of armed robbers. Shehu (2015) observed further that some people resorted to the use of armed robbery especially for the purpose of money generation for procurement of arms to protect their communities from incessant attacks. This situation has been very prevalent in



Northern Nigeria where ethno-religious conflict is rampant in recent years. Wermer (2006) in Adinde (2012) affirmed that there can never be enough police officers to break up every street corner, stop every bar fight from escalating into murderous brawl Nweke (2006) buttressing this disposition stressed that successful crime prevention and detection campaigns in any part of the world is never all police affairs. For the author, the police can best perform the vital role of crime prevention when they have whole-hearted support of the segment of society. In seeming realization of the weak population strength and that security cannot be achieved when police claim total ownership of the entire security process, the Federal Government of Nigeria through the then Inspector General of Police ordered the thirty-six states in the country to establish neighbourhood watch. Through this process, communities can now collaborate with the police on the fight against crime. This executive order marked the formalization of community-policing in Nigeria Tyler (2008) rightly notes that to be functional in the process of crime reduction and maintaining safe and secure communities, the police must be able to seek for the unalloyed cooperation from the community residents. Security cannot be provided either by the police or community residents acting alone, but it requires the cooperation of both the public and the police. Such cooperation potentially involves, in the part of the public, both obeying the law and working with the police or others in the community to help combat crime. As Okeshola and Mudiare (2013) noted that community-policing is a paradigm shift that seeks to focus on constructive engagement with peoples 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 quality police service. Mulugeta and Mekuriaw (2007) noted traditionally, the maintenance of law and order in any security has usually been the exclusive role of conventional police and other law enforcement agents in the absence of active participation of the wider members of the community. During those days the police not only faced difficulty in tackling crime but also criticized for unfriendly nature of the relationships with

members of the public. Community is thus a paradigm shift established at the bedrock of community partnerships in creating safe and secure environment for all. It is a policing system whereby the people take active part in their own affairs, the police are not seen as problem or stranger whose presence stands for danger but as partners in development and those members of the community are co-producers of justice and quality police service. Trojanovicz (1986) in Onuoha (2017) noted that in a bid to acquire public confidence and cooperation, the police opened up with opportunities to gather community based intelligence. The police justified increased flow of information about (potential offence and offender) by promoting better understanding and boosting motto of working in collaboration towards same goal of safer community the intelligence information will not only deter offender, but will increase community cohesion and also enhance police effectiveness. However, in spite of this strategy, members of the Nigeria public still find it difficult to have anything to do with the Nigeria Police.

Alemika and Chukwuma (2000) observed that: Few members of the public see the police as friends. Instead, the sight of police is considered synonymous with trouble. This is partly because in the absence of a social service dimension in police work in Nigeria, the police pre-occupation or routine police work revolves around stop and search/question, arrest, crime investigation, detention, prosecution, riot and crowd control and armed combat against violent criminals and guarding of the rich and powerful. Consequently, there are rather too few positive attributes of policing that can be projected.

Under these conditions, innocent citizens could be arrested, detained and tortured. It becomes pertinent to ask the essence and credibility of the community-policing programme as outlined in the police ten-points community-policing objectives. One of the community-policing strategies is that the police should live among the people they serve and no longer the entire members of the force living in the barracks. The ideas of the police living within the community they serve as part of demystifying the already formed negative view of the police by the public



seems not to yield good results. Alemika and Chukwuma (2000) in their study on “Police-Community Violence in Nigeria” found out that among the respondents, those who have lived with the police in the same compound for less than two years were 32.3% (70), those that have lived with the police in the same compound for two to five years 36 (79%) and those who have lived five years and above 31.3% (68). The relatively lower statistics recorded against those who had lived in the same compound with the police underscores the abysmal failure of the community-policing programme as a strategy to lowering crime in the communities. The reason is not far-fetched. No day in Nigeria without the police brutalizing and or killing the citizens. Recently, There were public out-cry in the media and other public arena regarding the dastardly acts by the Nigeria Police Force on the public. The Federal Government of Nigeria had to proscribe Special Anti-Robbery Squared (SARS) for their unabated use of brutal force on many innocent citizens which most times lead to death of the victims. The Nigeria youths in their large number in the recent past took to the streets across the country to demonstrate against the brutal force and killings perpetrated by members of the Special Ant-Robbery Squad (SARS). This not only indicates the obnoxious police practice but a clear indication of the poor working relationship between the Nigeria Police Force and the public.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopts its theoretical strength from the Marxian conflict theory and the Broken Window theory. The Marxian Conflict theory is one of the grand theories in social sciences. It was propounded by a philosopher, journalist and revolutionary father of classical sociology; Karl Max (1818-1883).The core of Marx’s philosophy is rooted in the concept of class struggle. Marx affirmed that there is a limited amount of power in society which can only be held by one or group of persons- the working class and the ruling class. Under a capitalist system, there is an inherent inequality. The ruling class holds all the powers and uses it to exploit the working class. Marx believes that the structure of the society is determined by the nature of its

economic base. Thus, if the economy is capitalist, the rest of the social system will assume a capitalist dimension. William Bunge buttressed this disposition by stressing that the crime is caused and perpetuated by the exploitative and alienating conditions of capitalism, although some individuals are at greater risk for crime than others because people vary in their innate social settlement- altruism (an active concern for the wellbeing of others and its opposite, egoism (a concern for only one’s selfish interests. For Bunge, capitalism generates egoism and blunts altruism because it relies on competition for wealth, profit, status and job, setting person against person and group against group leaving the losers to their miserable fates (Walsh and Craig, 2014) Indeed, the powers of the police rest in the hands of the political class particularly in African countries, Nigeria inclusive where the masses are always under tension resulting from reckless abuse of political powers by the political elites. Alemika and Chukwuma (2004) earlier affirmed that the concrete role played by the police are defined by law and conception of order in accordance with the political and economic interests of the dominant or ruling groups in society. The seeming checkered history of the institutionalization of formal policing system in Nigeria by the colonialists and the subsequent adoption of such battered policing system by the political elites of the present times underscores the abysmal abuse of the democratic institutions including the police which these political elites use to perpetuate the seeming unquestionable acts. Stressing this disposition further and without digressing from the point of discourse, the use and abuse of the police powers is a direct consequence of the abuse of political powers by the ruling class. Thus, to avert possible reactions by the public the police are now used as buffer by the ruling class. Under such condition, the Nigeria public lives in fear and ultimately discards any idea of forming a synergy towards achieving success in crime prevention and control.

. The Broken Window theory was propounded by James Wilson and George Killing in an article published in March 1982 entitled “The Atlantic Monthly”. (Giddens 2004, Inciardi, 2009, & Jones, 2005). The theory affirmed that there is a correlation between the appearance of disorder



and actual crime. If a single window is allowed to be in a state of disrepair in a neighbourhood, it sends a message to potential offenders that neither the police nor local residents care about the community. Implicitly when residents neglect minor crimes like prostitution, drunkenness, pick-pocketing, such minor crimes will graduate to major crime like vandalism, kidnapping, assassination, rape, burglary fund (Haralambos and Holborn 2004, Inciardi, 2017 and Jones, 2005). In environmental criminology study otherwise referred to as green criminology, space (geography). is one of the very fundamental factors that must be secured in order to avert possible evasion by criminals, Space here equally include the individuals that live within it. These individuals own the space; know the hidden and red spots that must be guarded better than any security operative. To this end, discarding their input in the security business of the area renders the success rate almost invalid. The obvious face-off between members of the Nigeria Police Force and the public presents a go-ahead signal to criminals, particularly armed robbers that the environment is 'good' for them to operate. Ugwuoke (2010) maintained that in Nigeria, armed robbers operate in broad daylight with reckless abandon and have become more daring than ever before. The author further stated that in most cases, their lucky victims end up with slight wounds while in some other cases, the unlucky ones end up with deep cuts or gun-shoots which often lead to their untimely death. Indeed the ease with which armed robbers operate in Nigeria testifies that the public is not only alienated from participating in the security business but a clear indicator that the public is tired.

### **Conclusion**

This paper aimed at unveiling the need for the police-public work synergy in fighting armed robbery in Nigeria. Policing should be the business of every member of the society. The total clinching of security powers by the police in Nigeria and the removal of the public from the security system paints no irony of armed robbers and indeed other criminals cashing into the opportunity to perpetuate their dastardly act. Crime takes place within a social setting. The police-public ratio in Nigeria is so low, yet the Nigeria Police Force

seems to underscore the efficacy of the public in crime control business. The public remains a security valve which the Nigeria police need to fully and democratically engage in other to achieve a seeming long awaited work synergy between the police and the public.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the discussion, the following recommendations were made:

- There is need for the restructuring of the Nigeria Police Force by forming state police. One of the challenging problems of the Nigeria police is the inability of the officers deployed outside their cultural area to understand the language and indeed the cultural patterns of the people. Nigeria has more than 250 ethnic nationalities with differences in languages and culture. State police will no doubt create an atmosphere of conviviality where the informal policing system could constitute part of the policing system. This had earlier achieved good result in crime control and can as well be used in the contemporary times not only s a measure of crime control but equally cementing the good working relationship between the informal and formal policing system.

- There is need for proper re-orientation of the entire Nigeria Police Force. Government should be honest in this process by allowing the constitution and the established rules of engagement to thrive. Nigeria Police is considered one of the best policing systems when in international engagement but back home, they are nightmare to the public not only whom they are meant to serve, but who would have been giving helping hand to the police in the policing business. If such practice which the Nigeria Police Force is known for in the international frontiers is sincerely carried out in Nigeria, this no doubt will enhance the expected good working relationship between the police and the public. The idea projected by the Inspector General of Police of changing the nomenclature of Special Anti-Robbery Squad to Special Weapon and Tactics Team (SWAT) will rather yield no positive result without a purposeful re-orientation of the Nigeria Police.

- There is the need for the government to attach strong value to the provisions of the constitution. Every



citizen in the country should be given the desired protection he/she deserves. The seeming culture of using transfer as a form of punishment against police officers who may have violated the fundamental rights of persons and the seeming internal containment measure often times adopted to protect officers who have violated the law from being punished by the authority concerned.

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