



Research article

Community participation in crime prevention and control in rural Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The rural areas in Nigeria have become notorious with all kinds of crime. Inadequate amenities such as good roads and communication infrastructure in rural areas in Nigeria have made it difficult for the Nigeria Police to effectively detect and prevent crimes in rural Nigeria. It is consequent on these escalations of criminal activities that rural communities in Nigeria have evolved community policing to protect their neighbourhoods.

This article presents the benefits of using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection to unravel the potentials inherent in informal crime prevention and control in rural localities in Nigeria. The social capital theory was used to bring out the benefits of community participation in crime control in rural Nigeria.

Findings from the study indicated high theft cases as common crime in rural Nigeria. Youths were observed to constitute greater percentage of suspects at police stations for crime. Unemployment and poverty among the rural populace especially youths were responsible for these criminalities. The absence of social infrastructure, inadequate police presence and government support to unemployed youths made the crime situations worse in rural areas. There was low level of community interactions with the police in crime prevention and control in rural Nigeria.

The study recommended increased police-public partnership in crime prevention and control in rural Nigeria.

1. Introduction

The police are very important in the maintenance of law and order in any democratic society. The police are the closest law enforcement agents to the public, unlike the military and other paramilitary agencies that concentrate on their specific core jobs/roles in the society, police roles cover every segment of group social interactions in the society (Arisukwu and Okunola, 2013).

The police occupy a vital position in any democratic society and their relationship with the public influences how they are perceived and supported by the public. Policing therefore is everybody's business as the police alone cannot effectively solve criminal activities in a society (Remington, 1965). The police play many roles from law enforcement, arrest and investigation of suspected criminals to peace building and maintenance of order in a society.

The crime prevention efforts of the police are more in the urban areas than rural areas (Muhammad, 2002). Often times rural crime pattern and rural policing are different from that of urban centers. Crime rate in the rural areas are assumed to be low mainly due to informal socio-cultural means of social control available in the rural areas. The family and

religious values shape the norms and values in a rural community than the urban centers where such values have loose impact on people who live individualistic lives rather than community life styles in rural areas (Etuk, 2008). Comparing rural to urban crime is like comparing apple to orange because urban population and multi-cultural nature of city lives make life style independent and complicated. On the other hand, rural areas have more quiet and less population of people who are usually related by blood or socially. The common crimes in a rural areas are mainly agriculture related (California Casualty, 2017). Routine activity model argues that increased human presence in a given area is expected to be associated with both an increase and a decrease in criminal activity (Boivin, 2018). Empirical studies in developed countries have used the routine activity model to predict crime occurrences in rural areas (see Cohen and Felson, 1979; Ige, 2018; Ige, 2020). To what extent can this be used in rural areas in developing countries like Nigeria where the absence of data on rural crime makes it difficult to predict the type of crimes that will occur (Grote and Neubacher, 2016). These crimes are mainly committed by unemployed youths who struggle for survival with less education and skill acquisition opportunities in rural areas. There exists higher population of unemployed youths in rural Nigeria than

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urban areas (Iwayemi, 2013; Asaleye et al., 2018). Data from International victim survey suggests that crime is higher in developing countries than in developed countries Grote and Neubacher (2016). Rural areas in developing countries are usually characterized by poverty and food insecurity, Grote and Neubacher (2016). The level of poverty is exacerbated by corruption and bad governance. Failure of government to provide adequate security attracts criminals who exploit the poor infrastructure to terrorize innocent rural dwellers. However, according to Ceccato (2016), crime generally tends to be low in rural areas than urban areas of developed countries like United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), and Sweden than urban areas.

The neglect inherent in the rural areas has made it a safe haven for all kinds of crime and criminality developing countries like Nigeria. Crime in rural areas prevents social cohesion and affects sustainable development negatively (Grote and Neubacher, 2016). Hoodlums now use rural areas as their operational base from which they carry out their heinous activities. There is a profound lack of police presence in the rural areas than the urban centers (Lindström, 2015). Youth unemployment, poverty, hunger, poor health and living conditions and ethno-religious challenges are responsible for violence and disenchantment within the rural areas (Arisukwu, 2017; Arisukwu et al., 2019, 2020; Asaju et al., 2014). According to National Bureau of Statistics, (2017a, b), “the labour statistics report of Nigeria in 4th quarter 2017 has shown that there is 7.9 million Nigerian youths aged 15–34 that are currently unemployed”. These youths are vulnerable and lack the capacity and skills to sustainably engage in or finance any entrepreneurial venture (Asaleye et al., 2018). Also, poverty and lack of education is equally implicated in high rate of unintended pregnancies among teenage girls in rural Nigeria (Arisukwu et al., 2019). This unplanned population in the hands of families that cannot provide their basic needs will exacerbate the crime situation in the community. It is important to note that trans-border trading and poorly regulated borders by security agents constitute a security challenge among border communities (Williams & Baláz, 2002; Williams et al., 2001; Ryzhova and Ioffe, 2009; Strutt et al., 2008).

Despite all these negligence by the government, the rural areas in Nigeria are made up of people with relative homogeneity in general way of life. This abundant human resource could be utilized by the police in the general policing of the communities. According to Bowden (2017), the local people have a vital role to play in governing or managing security beyond the criminal justice system. The members of the community need to show interest in what goes on in their environment. Suspicious and out of the ordinary activities must be noted and reported promptly to law enforcement agents. In addition members of the community as stake holders in crime prevention can form neighborhood watch, vigilante and community policing operations to proactively prevent crime in their community (Joski, 2017; Arisukwu & Okunola, 2013; Bairagi and Kakaty, 2016; Bullock, 2017).

Community participation in crime prevention and control has become necessary as the police lack the manpower and resources to effectively police the rural areas of Nigeria alone. It is therefore imperative to involve the community members who own and understand their environment better in the overall policing of rural communities in Nigeria (Arisukwu & Okunola, 2013). According to Grace et al. (2019), Western states now favour collaborative policing for better crime management.

Globally, it is people that drive development initiatives, and popular participation has become the order of the day. Community participation in crime prevention in rural Nigeria will ensure that security issues become everybody's business.

2. Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to examine community participation in crime prevention and control in rural Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

To examine the crime challenges common in rural Nigeria.

To identify crime prevention efforts and strategies by community members and police in rural Nigeria.

To explore ways of enhancing community participation and engagement in crime prevention and control in rural Nigeria through community policing style.

3. Brief literature review

3.1. Emergence of community policing

Community policing emerged out of public distrust and reactions to the inability of the police to protect them and the disconnection between the public and the police in the community. According to Takagi et al. (2016), the participation of community members (tied with common values and social bonds or friendship ties) has positive effect on crime prevention and control. The over reliance on the traditional (professional) policing style neglected the contributions of members of the community in crime prevention and problem solving. It made policing to be reactionary without effective engagement of the public to proactively prevent crime and solve problems. The main focus of community policing is problem-solving and community engagement through partnership in crime prevention (Cordner, 1998). According to Kelling and Moore (1988), and Lee et al. (2019); for policing style to be recognized as community policing, there has to be included some type of consultation or collaboration between the police and local citizens for the purpose of defining, prioritizing, and/or solving problems. According to Diarmaid (2018), Police partnership with the public is the cornerstone of the contemporary policing. The people present a viable human resource if effectively mobilized for crime prevention and control. The challenge in Nigeria is that the police is a colonial creation, created mainly to enforce colonial laws and not necessarily to serve the security needs of the people. So right from inception, the police in Nigeria were not recruited and trained to serve the people. This deprivation of service to the people has been sustained through police maltreatment of the public in the stations or in the streets as suspects. The public are therefore apprehensive of partnering with the police in crime prevention and control. This growing mutual suspicion between the public and the police is the major challenge affecting community participation in crime prevention in rural Nigeria.

3.2. The focus of community policing

Community policing focuses on making the police and the public efficient partners in crime prevention and control in a community. It pays more attention to service to the people rather than mere law enforcement. It relies on decentralization of police organization, community engagement/collaboration, and problem solving to achieve its goals and focus on the community. Another challenge is satisfying the security priorities of members of the community as victims, suspected offenders, residents, visitors, indigenes, settlers and business owners (Kelling & Moore, 1988). According to Moore and Recker (2016), informal means of social control prevents property crime more than violent crimes in a society. This is because violent crimes like rape occur in remote and isolated areas. Harmonizing the complex security concerns of members of the community with that of the police and government of the day is a huge challenge in Nigeria. For instance while Walklate (2018) argues that violence against women is on the increase globally, women are often not represented adequately in any community platforms for crime prevention and control. In fact in Nigeria women are considered properties to be protected by men and are therefore not giving opportunity to participate in community policing operations. This exclusion of women who are major victims of rape and other domestic violence is a dis-service to the society. Also, it is important to note that the quality of contacts the police have with the public in the community will affect their perception and willingness to engage with police in crime prevention and

control in the community (Brunson & Weitzer, 2009; Kelling & Moore, 1988; Arisukwu & Okunola, 2013).

3.3. Deployment and use of technology in community policing operations

The benefits of deployment of technology in every aspect of human endeavors cannot be over emphasized (Fruchterman, 2004). The combined efforts of man and machine will no doubt enhance policing in the society. The deployment of GPS, CCTV, and drones will facilitate fast and efficient monitoring and enforcement by the police. It will equally lead to effective mapping and geographical profiling of communities with the view to effectively policing them (Castells, 1998).

However, it is imperative to note that technology cannot take away the advantage of social capital presented by members of the community in partnering with the police in crime prevention and control. Study has shown that when using social media, public sector agencies generally and police departments in particular primarily disseminate information about their organizations and their activities, but rarely offer opportunities for engagement or what is also known as dialogic communication (Williams et al., 2018). Overdependence on technology will tilt towards the traditional or professional policing style that is reactionary and excludes input from community members. According to Valdovinos et al. (2016), the use of drones can facilitate data collection, but may lead to more public distrust and negative perception of the police feeling that their privacy had been invaded by the police.

In Nigeria, CCTV and drones are mainly deployed in some urban centres by the government. The rural areas still lack some basic infrastructure like good roads and power that is required to sustain deployment of technology in crime prevention efforts. There is still a huge gap between the urban and rural areas in terms of ICT deployment and use (Buré, 2006). At the moment in Nigeria, no rural area has the luxury of technology deployment in crime prevention. Even some urban centers are yet to have street lights and CCTV cameras. Therefore, general infrastructural development including but not limited to roads, hospitals, schools, CCTV cameras and drones are recommended to the government and private organizations to develop and enhance safety and security in rural areas in Nigeria without excluding community members who constitute the social capital in the prevention and control of crime.

4. Methodology

This study adopted survey research design in studying community participation in crime prevention and control in rural Nigeria. Ethical approval was obtained from Landmark University's Ethical Committee before commencement of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The study purposively selected two rural communities (Omu Aran and Ilofa) from Irepodun and Oke Ero local governments in Kwara state Nigeria. These communities share a number of things in common, they are both local council headquarters, they are neighboring communities sharing common boundary, with various quarters headed by the leaders of those quarters and above all being presided over by their kings who are the paramount rulers of the communities. They are agrarian communities with predominant subsistence agricultural practices. Their markets are the major pull factors that attract people from far and near to trade in mainly food items and other domestic consumables at home. The language spoken is Yoruba and English with a mixture of other ethnic languages in Nigeria such as Hausa, Nupe, Tiv and Igbo.

The population for this study was all drawn from the two rural communities of Omu-Aran and Ilofa, the study population comprises of persons who have stayed at least six months in the study areas. There are between eighteen and twenty-three compounds in Omu-Aran and five major areas in Ilofa. Data were collected from participants with the use of questionnaire in the two communities selected for the study, which are Omu-Aran, and Ilofa. This was selected using purposive sampling method to cut across and represent divers qualities of the demographics of the two communities. One hundred and ninety six questionnaires were

gotten back from both study area out of two hundred that was randomly distributed in selected areas.

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency count and percentage were used to analyze the demographic data and personal information of the respondents. Likert scale was developed and used to scale responses from respondents on the objectives of the study. All the analyses were done using SPSS 25 version.

The consent of religious, community leaders were sought before carrying out the exercise and so respondents were not coerced, they accepted to respond to the questionnaire, prior to the administration of the questionnaire the respondents were made to understand that they are free to discontinue with the study at will.

The outcome of the study will be made available to the communities, government at state and federal level to facilitate crime prevention and control. The respondents were not coerced, and they were free to discontinue with the study at will. The views of the respondents were treated with confidentiality.

5. Data presentation/results

Table 1 show that there is high rate of crime in the study area as indicated by 34.2% of the respondents, while 29.6% said that crime rate was very high, only 8% accepted that crime rate was low. This implies that there is high rate of crime in the rural areas, hence the need for adequate government and community security intervention measures. The high crime rate in the study area are committed more by youths as observed in Police stations within the area. This result supports the argument that youths in rural Nigeria constituted the highest number of unemployed youths (Iwayemi, 2013).

The above Table 2 indicates that theft (76%) is the most common crime within the study area. This is followed by drug abuse. The list among the crimes committed in Kwara state is rape and adultery/fornication. These thefts are usually driven by hunger, poverty and want. Agricultural products are the common items stolen in rural areas as attested to by (California Casualty, 2017). This result is in line with the crime statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics (2017a, b) which stated that property crime was the highest reported crime in Nigeria.

Table 3 shows that slightly above half of the respondents (51%) have experienced crime attack recently, while 49% posited that they have not experienced any crime recently. This implies high rate of crime in the communities studied. This shows that crime incidence is high in rural communities, just that the pattern varies from crime committed in urban areas. The policing style in rural areas should be different from that of

Table 1. Showing responses on the rate of crime in their community.

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Very high | 58 | 29.6 |
| High | 67 | 34.2 |
| Average | 49 | 25.0 |
| Low | 16 | 8.2 |
| Very low | 6 | 3.1 |
| Total | 196 | 100 |

Table 2. Showing responses on the most common crime in their locality.

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------|-----------|---------|
| Theft | 149 | 76.0 |
| Drug | 22 | 11.2 |
| Fight/Violence | 13 | 6.6 |
| Adultery/Fornication | 6 | 3.1 |
| Rape | 6 | 3.1 |
| Total | 196 | 100 |

Table 3. Showing responses on whether they have experienced any crime recently.

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Yes | 100 | 51 |
| No | 96 | 49 |
| Total | 196 | 100 |

city centers. The adoption of community policing strategy will assist in addressing the challenges of crime and restore order in rural settings as argued by (Arisukwu & Okunola, 2013).

Although 40.8% of the respondents stated that they have not experienced any crime before, a good number of them 37.8% have experienced crime between 1 to 5 times, while 15.8% have experienced indecencies of crime above ten times. Once again this is an indication of high crime rate in rural communities. The police alone cannot reduce both the fear of crime and its occurrence in rural areas alone, the community members need to be mobilized to effectively support in crime prevention and control in their area (Arisukwu & Okunola, 2013). The police often lack back up while working alone in rural areas as attested to by (California Casualty, 2017) (see Table 4).

Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents posited that theft was the crime that had much negative impact on the rural dwellers. This is followed by drug abuse. This implies that theft and its fear is being experienced more and has more negative impacts too. When a criminal dispossesses a rural dweller his/her properties or harvested or stored agricultural products, the family risk going hungry and seeds for next season planting are equally jeopardized.

To guard against this some farmers tie some charms on their farms when due for harvesting as an informal means of preventing theft in their farms.

Table 6 shows that the majority of those who participated in these crimes in the rural communities were within the age group of 18–27

Table 4. Showing responses on the number of times they have experienced such crime.

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|
| 1-5 times | 74 | 37.8 |
| 6-10 times | 11 | 5.6 |
| Above 10 times | 31 | 15.8 |
| None | 80 | 40.8 |

Table 5. Showing responses on crime with more negative effect.

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------|-----------|---------|
| Theft | 132 | 67.3 |
| Drug | 34 | 17.3 |
| Fight/Violence | 16 | 8.2 |
| Adultery/Fornication | 6 | 3.1 |
| Rape | 3 | 1.5 |
| Total | 196 | 100 |

Table 6. Showing age group involved in crime.

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------|-----------|---------|
| Below 18 | 21 | 10.7 |
| 18–27 | 127 | 64.8 |
| 28–37 | 42 | 21.4 |
| 38 and above | 5 | 2.6 |
| All of the above | 1 | .5 |
| Total | 196 | 100 |

(64.8%). This is followed by 21.4% for those within ages 28–37. This is a clear indication of the high involvement of youths in crime. This could be attributed to high unemployment and poverty rate in Nigeria. Majority of these youths who are involved in crime do so because they are not gainfully employed, thus they resort to crime in order to provide their needs. A respondent also said...“most of the youths in our area are not employed, so they stay idle at home when old people have gone to farm or market”

Table 7 clearly shows that an overwhelming majority of those who are involved in crime in rural communities are males. This implies that men are more prone to commit crime than woman in rural communities. This is consistent with the findings of..... There is need to provide more jobs for rural (male) youths as this will go a long way to reduce the rate of participation in rural crime.

The above table shows that crimes are more rampant during Harvest seasons that Planting season. However, a closer look at the table indicates that 67.9% of the respondents posited that crime in rural communities is prevalent irrespective of the seasons. This implies that it occurs during both planting and harvest seasons. The youths who were major culprits steal at all times and most of them do not engage in active farming within the community (see Table 8).

Majority of the respondents (68.4%) as shown by Table 9 above are of the opinion that poverty and unemployment are the major causes of crime in rural communities. This is followed by lack of parental control. This indicates that the family as one of the first and major socialization unit in child upbringing has a major role in shaping the life and future of its members. The blame should not only be put of government for high unemployment rate, family members should assist in training and guiding their young members to trade the part of honor and hard work and not to waste their time and future waiting for elusive white collar jobs that are limited.

Table 10 shows that crime rate is on the increase compared to what was obtainable in the past five years, with 31.1% and 35.7% for very high and high respectively. This shows the negative consequences of population growth unemployment and poverty. The youths are idle and unwilling to take to agriculture to earn a living. The government must drive youth interest and support them with soft loans to take agriculture as a

Table 7. Showing responses on the gender more involved in crime in the community.

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Male | 181 | 92.3 |
| Female | 15 | 7.7 |
| Total | 196 | 100 |

Table 8. Showing responses on the season they experience such crime.

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Planting | 16 | 8.2 |
| Harvest | 47 | 32.1 |
| Both | 133 | 67.9 |
| Total | 196 | 100 |

Table 9. Showing responses on the causes of crime in the community.

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------|
| poverty unemployment | 134 | 68.4 |
| Illiteracy | 6 | 3.1 |
| Greed | 14 | 7.1 |
| Laziness | 10 | 5.1 |
| Lack of parental control | 32 | 16.3 |
| Total | 196 | 100 |

Table 10. Showing responses of the present rate of crime as compared to five years from now in the community.

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Very High | 61 | 31.1 |
| High | 70 | 35.7 |
| Average | 39 | 19.9 |
| Low | 18 | 9.2 |
| Very low | 8 | 4.1 |
| Total | 196 | 100 |

means of earning money. This youth empowerment and support programs by government will promote active youth participation in economic activities and reflect on the feeding habits and health of the rural population (Arisukwu et al., 2019; Asaleye et al., 2018).

Table 11 shows that majority of the crime committed in these rural communities were carried out in the evening. This implies that security arrangements and community vigilante groups should focus more attention to security checks during evening periods. This is in line with the findings of (Zaper, 2017).

To measure crime rates, community efforts and participation in crime control and prevention, 13-item scale was used. All items were in the same line of enquiry and none of the items was reverse coded. The first, second, third, ... and tenth item were labeled Q1, Q2, Q3, ... and Q10 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of each item was generated in order to examine respondents' view on each of the items. Respondents most agreed that 'criminal activities have increased in [their] community compare to five years ago' (Q3) based on the highest (3.04) mean value of the item. Furthermore, the second and third items that the respondents most agreed to were 'my community seeks the intervention of security agency toward crime prevention' (Q7) and 'there are always incidences of crime in my community' (Q1) as these items had the second and third highest mean values of 2.99 and 2.84 respectively. However, the only two items that the respondents disagreed with were Q4 (There are strategies in place to prevent crime occurrences in my community)

Table 11. Showing responses of the time (in the day) crime takes place in the community.

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Morning | 27 | 13.8 |
| Afternoon | 39 | 19.9 |
| Evening | 125 | 63.8 |
| Always | 5 | 2.6 |
| Total | 196 | 100 |

Table 12. Crime rates, community preventive efforts and participation.

| | Statements | SD | D | A | SA | Mean | Std.Dev. |
|-----|--|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|------|----------|
| Q1 | There are always incidences of crime in my community | 13 (6.6) | 33 (16.8) | 123 (62.8) | 27 (13.8) | 2.84 | 0.74 |
| Q2 | Criminal activities were recently recorded in my community | 39 (19.9) | 58 (29.6) | 59 (30.1) | 40 (20.4) | 2.51 | 1.03 |
| Q3 | Criminal activities have increased in my community compare to five years ago | 8 (4.1) | 37 (18.9) | 91 (46.4) | 60 (30.6) | 3.04 | 0.81 |
| Q4 | There are strategies in place to prevent crime occurrences in my community | 32 (16.3) | 75 (38.3) | 73 (37.2) | 16 (8.2) | 2.37 | 0.85 |
| Q5 | Community members are cooperating with community efforts to prevent crime | 52 (26.5) | 44 (22.4) | 49 (25.0) | 51 (26.0) | 2.51 | 1.14 |
| Q6 | Community efforts in crime prevention is appropriate | 27 (13.8) | 33 (16.8) | 114 (58.2) | 22 (11.2) | 2.67 | 0.85 |
| Q7 | My community seeks the intervention of Security agency toward crime prevention | 11 (5.6) | 24 (12.2) | 117 (59.7) | 44 (22.4) | 2.99 | 0.76 |
| Q8 | Security agency intervenes promptly whenever they are called upon | 25 (12.8) | 68 (34.7) | 72 (36.7) | 31 (15.8) | 2.56 | 0.91 |
| Q9 | My community cooperates with security agency to control and prevent crime | 11 (5.6) | 52 (26.5) | 92 (46.9) | 41 (20.9) | 2.83 | 0.82 |
| Q10 | There are policy control measures to prevent crime in my community | 44 (22.4) | 52 (26.5) | 67 (34.2) | 33 (16.8) | 2.45 | 1.02 |
| Q11 | My community punish criminals satisfactory | 13 (6.6) | 38 (19.4) | 128 (65.3) | 17 (8.7) | 2.76 | 0.70 |
| Q12 | The way my community punish criminals is highly efficient | 19 (9.7) | 48 (24.5) | 91 (46.4) | 38 (19.4) | 2.76 | 0.88 |
| Q13 | Community efforts toward crime control and reduction have helped in reducing crime | 20 (10.2) | 64 (32.7) | 73 (37.2) | 39 (19.9) | 2.67 | 0.91 |

and Q10 (There are policy control measures to prevent crime in my community) because they had mean values (2.37 and 2.45 respectively) that were lower than the average weighted value of 2.5. In addition, the smallest standard deviations of 0.70 and 0.74 in Q11 (My community punish criminals satisfactory) and Q1 (There are always incidences of crime in my community) indicated that respondents' responses to these statements were concentrated around the mean value, on average, that is, respondents shared almost the same opinion on the each of the statements (see Table 12).

6. Discussion of findings

The results of the Markov chain analysis on crime challenges show that on the long run, if the pattern of retention and losses continues in this manner, on the long run, burglary, homicide, kidnapping, armed robbery and rape cases will contribute 27%, 17.8%, 20.6%, 18.7% and 15.9% respectively to crime challenges in the communities studied. To this end, stakeholders should focus more attention on burglary and kidnapping.

The results of the Markov chain analysis on crime prevention efforts show that on the long run, if the pattern of retention and switching continues in this manner, neighborhood watch, surveillance, policing, vigilante and others will contribute 19.8%, 20.2%, 19.7%, 20% and 20.4% respectively to crime prevention. The implication is that all the crime prevention efforts will contribute approximately the same percentage of efforts to crime prevention on the long run. This indicates that the efforts are complementary towards effective crime prevention in the communities.

Crime management in rural areas in Nigeria is negatively affected by poverty, youth unemployment, lack of sufficient police presence and lack of socio-economic infrastructures (Iwayemi, 2013). The absence of good governance and accountability make government at the rural level incapable of solving these problems and harnessing the potentials in youth population to drive sustainable development plans in rural Nigeria. Corruption among government officials has become a major obstacle to security and welfare of the people which is the primary purpose of government. The local government is usually the closest government authority to the people, yet it has no meaningful positive impact in the life of the people in Nigeria. Lack of social amenities like electricity, good roads, hospitals and ICT will have negative implications on job creation, self-reliant efforts and a conducive environment for creativity and innovations which drives job creation and effective productivity.

The number of police officials in rural Nigeria is grossly inadequate to cater for the security challenges and crime management at the local level (Muhammad, 2002). Security is everybody's business as all members of the community including the police are major stake holders in crime prevention (Remington, 1965). The people need to partner with the police in crime prevention and control to promote a safer and healthy community. Informal security agents like vigilante and neighborhood

watch need to synergize with the police and other security agencies to enhance safety and protect human rights of the people (Joski, 2017; Arisukwu & Okunola, 2013). This partnership will explore the benefits of the abundant social capital (human resources) available in the rural community. The gap in police low staff strength and low budgetary provisions by government cannot be covered by technology alone. Human beings constitute stake holders that will drive and manage deployed technology to achieve results of a safe and peaceful society. The capacity of this human resource can be busted through regular trainings, interactions and enlightenment. When human beings are the drivers of security and safety measures in a community, it leads to sustainable peace and harmony within the community. Criminal elements within the community become uncomfortable as the light is focused on them by other community members. Engagement of the human social capital will make the people to own the crime prevention approaches adopted and bond better among themselves. Each one will then become his or her neighbor's keeper. The benefit of a safe and secured rural community in driving peace and development in rural Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. The atmosphere for insecurity makes the entire society a victim and frustrates human dignity. Therefore all the agents of socialization in the society must uphold and sustain the cultural norms and values that promote safety and team work in preventing crime and control.

Community-policing strategy offers a veritable vehicle of driving a sustainable crime prevention and control efforts and problem solving in rural Nigeria. The public especially the youths constitute a major resource needed to achieve peace and secured community in partnership with the police. These youths are already aware of the culture and the people, and are therefore able to proactively nip crime from the bud and solve problems together with the police in a community. Community-policing give the people the voice and choice in security matters within their community (Ige, 2008; Arisukwu & Okunola, 2013). This confers a sense of belonging to the people and facilitates easy flow of information and ideas between the people and the police. This synergy will make the people the police and the police the people (Kelling & Moore, 1988). The deployment of modern technology in crime profiling and data collection will bust the effectiveness of community policing (Fruchterman, 2004). Drones, CCTV and ICT technologies are therefore recommended to be part of crime prevention and control efforts in rural Nigeria.

7. Conclusion

Crime occurs in both urban and rural areas of a society. The pattern and rate of crime in rural areas differ from that of the urban areas. Most often studies focus on socio-economic characteristics that lead to low or high rate of crime, neglecting the effect crime has on the social bonds of rural people (Lee and Cho, 2018). The rural populace suffers from the adverse effects of unemployment and poverty among the youths as a major cause of crime in rural areas in Nigeria. There is usually low police presence in terms of police size and patrol in rural areas. This makes it possible for some criminal elements to hide in rural areas while committing crime. The community members therefore must be part of the security operations in their community to proactively prevent and control crime through collaborations with the police in community policing, vigilante and other informal means of crime control such as oath taking, age groups, masquerade etc. The family and religious institutions will help in sensitizing and mobilizing community members to partner with the police in crime prevention efforts in rural areas. To achieve this, the police need to build and sustain the trust of the public through better and humane services and contacts with the public. Members of the public must be perceived by the police as a major resource necessary for crime prevention and control in rural Nigeria. To achieve a safe community, the rural populace and the police must partner through community-policing in crime prevention and control within the rural communities in Nigeria.

If this is done effectively, rural areas will no longer be a haven for criminals to hide and perpetuate their havocs undetected or reported to

police. The deployment of ICT, drones and CCTV in crime prevention and control will add value to the crime management strategy in rural Nigeria. The novel contribution to knowledge is adding to existing literature on challenges of rural crime prevention and management approaches in rural Nigeria. A more people-oriented and community participatory policing style is recommended. It also unveils common crime challenges in rural Nigeria and helps the police and the people to focus on their prevention and control.

8. Future studies

Crime management in a poor, unemployed and less educated rural population is difficult. Apart from human efforts in crime prevention and control which formed the main focus of this study, other studies in future should focus on the effectiveness of deployment of technology in curbing crime in rural communities in Nigeria. Also an evaluation of the impact of good governance on crime occurrence and control in a rural community should be carried out.

9. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to enhance a more secured rural environment and promote community partnership in crime prevention and control:

Youths in the rural areas should be gainfully employed and trained on entrepreneurial skills and granted soft loans to start up small scale businesses by governments and other social organizations and community based Associations. This will ameliorate the hardship and temptations to steal by unemployed youths in rural areas. There should be adequate police patrol in rural areas to ward off would be criminals both day and night time. Rural community members must form vigilante groups, neighborhood watch and partner with police through community policing in preventing crime in their area. Government should provide infrastructure especially electricity in rural areas in Nigeria to promote sustainable economic life and diversification of economic activities by youths in rural areas. Security is every body's business and to this end the family, schools, and religious bodies should be used to socialize members of the community on their roles and expected security awareness and actions in the community. Crime reporting to local leaders, family heads and the police should be made to become a way of life by all. There should be plans by government and the people to provide and maintain rural infrastructures like good roads, electricity, CCTV, drone and communication facilities to facilitate crime detection and control in rural areas.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

O. Arisukwu: Conceived and designed the experiments; Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Wrote the paper.

F. Asamu: Performed the experiments; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data.

C. Igbolekwu: Conceived and designed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Wrote the paper.

E. Oyeyipo, J. Oye: Performed the experiments; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.

B. Rasak: Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.

I. Oyekola: Analyzed and interpreted the data.

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Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

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