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Community Policing and COVID-19 Safety Precautions: An Explanatory Study of Agbopa in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Community policing means synergy between members of the public and police institutions to fight crimes. This could be deployed to address coronavirus pandemic that is currently threatening global peace and security. There are a number of safety precautions that are put in place to stem the spread of the deadly virus. One of the challenges of these measures is poor compliance. This leads to contact with the disease thereby putting pressure on scanty health facilities, crisis at the family level due to loss of breadwinners and loved ones. Hence, this paper assesses the role of community policing in enforcing COVID-19 safety precautions in a bid to mitigate the health emergency. The study adopts mixed research methods; data were sourced secondarily through the content analysis of peer-reviewed journals, edited text-books and online resources. The primary data were gotten by administering questionnaires on 364 respondents. Taro Yamane formula was used in arriving the sample size from the total population of 4,000 people. Frequency counts and correlation were used in primary data analysis. The two hypotheses tested led to rejection of null hypotheses and acceptance of alternative hypothesis. The test statistics are ($P= 0.000$, $R= 0.144$, 5%), ($P=0.00$, $R= 0.098$, 5%). Findings revealed that community policing approach significantly enhanced wearing of face masks, social distance in the schools, worship centres and during transportation. The study recommends effective collaborations among people at the grassroots to end COVID-19 pandemic. The paper will be useful to individuals, Community Development Associations, National Centre for Disease Control and other stakeholders.

Keywords: Community, compliance, COVID-19, emergency, policing, security

Introduction

The world is passing through health emergencies which disrupts global peace and security. Precisely, the emergency is called corona virus pandemic. According to reports from the World Health Organisation (2021) and supported by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (2021) over four million people have died of the Pandemic at the global level. In Nigeria, more than 2,000 lives have been lost to the pandemic. In order to stem the ugly trends of the deadly disease, there are a number of measures that have put in place. The safety precautions are the first measures put in place to prevent corona virus disease (COVID-19) in Nigeria. The safety precautions are wearing of face masks in the public places, washing hands under alcoholic hand sanitizer and physical distancing. In a bid to criminalize non-compliance with these safety measures, laws were enacted of laws to punish the erring members of the public who violated the safety protocols. The enactment of laws is ye to have effects on the upward increase in the number of affected persons. Thereby worsening social and economic crises induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. These include job loss as a result of lockdown, increased in insecurity like armed-robbery, burglary, domestic violence, reduced government revenue, increased spending on health facilities for treatment of COVID-19 patients. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, one of the challenges of the contemporary policing was inadequate personnel to cover every nook and cranny of the nations. Therefore, deploying the existing police personnel to enforce the COVID-19 pandemic is an additional stress on the limited police personnel. This warrants the efficacy of community police as relief for the conventional police. According to Verma, Das and Mano (2019), a community policing is collation between the members of community and police institutions to ensure security of lives and properties. Based on the limited personnel and other operational challenges of police personnel, community policing boost operational partnership between police and the members of the public. As a result of community policing, COVID-19 safety protocols could be easily enforced to mitigate the mortality and mobility of the illness. There are a number of studies COVID-19 (Abdulrazaq, Hazairin, Zuhriyah, Al-Zubaidi, ABDUL Karim, Mustapha and Yusuf, 2020) investigated novel coronavirus (COVID-19): Detection and diagnosis system using IOT based smart glasses. From the point of view of authors` knowledge, no study has been conducted on community policing and COVID-19 safety protocols. Hence, this study is necessary to fill the knowledge gap.

Problem statement

There have been series of health challenges at the global and national level. The human and materials resources have been mobilised to address them. The outbreak of corona virus is a global instability. The crises created by COVID-19 led to loss of lives and properties, diversion of scarce resources to care victims of COVID-19. In the social sector, lockdown was imposed on the

citizens and the economy sector was brought to a halt. It compounded the unemployment problems and insecurity (Davies, Sara, Kamradt-Scott, Rushton, 2015). In a bid to address COVID-19 and its undesirable consequences, a number of precautionary actions such as compulsory use of face mask, social distancing, washing of hands were recommended. However, shortage of personnel impedes efforts to curtail the spread of the pandemic. Thus, community policing is another effort to arrest the spread of the pandemic. The community policing provides, additional efforts to address low compliance with COVID-19 safety precautions. Hence, this study investigates community policing and covid-19 safety precautions.

Methodology

As noted by Ogunbameru (2019), methodology is the systematic processes of carrying out research. In every scientific action, methodology are the established ways of executing carrying out research. The study location was Agbopa Community in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. It is situated in 5km from the Federal Medical Centre, Abeokuta. The place was chosen because of the effective of community policing structures. Examples of these structures are the well-organised Community Development Association (CDA), organisation of night security to watch over the community, and special volunteer groups for monitoring COVID-19 safety precaution in the community. The study adopts qualitative and quantitative research methods. Primary data were obtained through the administration of 364 questionnaires. The sample size was obtained from the total population of 4,000 people. Purposive and convenience sampling methods were adopted in administering the questionnaires. Taro Yamane formula for determining sample size was adopted. Data were sourced secondarily through the content of edited textbooks, peer-review journals and credible online sources. The meanings of community policing, COVID-19 safety measures were obtained from newspapers, peer-reviewed journals, credible online resources and newspaper publication. The thematic groups are classified to bring out relationships. The two methods were used simultaneously to complement one another. This implies that the shortfall in the quantitative method could be addressed by the qualitative method. The primary data were analyses with the Statistical Package for Social Scientists version 25.0. The secondary data were analyzed with descriptive statistics. The statistical tools are frequency tables and percentages. The consent of the community leaders was sook be embarking on field study.

Significance of the study

The COVID-19 is a serious global crisis, however, there is limited literature on the subject matter. This study will advance body of knowledge on community policing and COVID-19. It serves as point of references for researchers working on COVID-19 and related topics. It will be useful to individuals,

corporate bodies, policy-makers, non-governmental and researchers (Chamberlain, Singh, Ariza, Daitch, Philips and Dalziel, 2020).

Limitation of the study: This study is limited to Agbopa Community in Abeokuta, Ogun State. It applied qualitative research method, which was based on the content analysis of peer-reviewed journals, edited text books, and online resources.

Study location: The study was conducted at Agbopa Community in Abeokuta North in Ogun State Nigeria. It is a peaceful community situated along Abule Obalende Road.

Study population: According to 2006 national population estimate, the Agbopa Community was 2,300 people. Presently, the population estimate for the community is 4,000 people. Place was chosen own to effective community police efforts, high level of coordination and cooperation to fight COVID-19 Pandemic.

Sample size: The sample size was gotten by using Taro Yamane, $n = N/1 + N(e^2)$, $n = 400/ 1 + 400(0.05)^2 = 400/11 = 364$.

Limitation of the study: This study is limited by COVID-19 lockdown; however, the administration of questionnaires was possible after the lockdown was relaxed. The field assistants strictly adhered to COVID-19 safety protocols. The field research was conducted in connection with associations in three zones. One hundred questionnaires were distributed. It did not use quantitative research methods to collect data for triangulation. For the future research, quantitative method is recommended to strengthen the research findings.

Research hypothesis: From the literature review and statement of the problem, the following hypothesis will be formulated:

Hypothesis one

H₁: {There is a significant relationship between community policing and reduction in the spread of COVID-19}.

H₀: {There is no significant relationship between community policing and reduction in the spread of COVID-19}.

Hypothesis two

H₁: {There is a significant relationship between local security measures and control of COVID-19 pandemic}.

H₀: {There is no significant relationship between local security measures and the spread of COVID-19 infections}.

Literature review

Corona virus pandemic: This is a deadly disease that originated from China in the late 2019. It spreads to other parts of the world in the early 2020. The disease has claimed millions of lives across the globe. Aside loss of lives, the epidemic compelled governments to take drastic actions like lockdown of economies. This forced many private organizations such as schools, manufacturing companies, aviation companies, construction firms and other social service providers to downsize their staff (Abdulrazaq, Zuhriyah, Al-Zubaidi, ABDUL Karim, Ramli and Yusuf, 2020). This worsens the fragile economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has dangerous effects on politics and economy.

Community policing

The partnership between the members of the public and the police is strengthened through community police. In some states, community policing differs from one country to another (Walker, Carol and Ashbod, 2019; George and Herberfed, 2018). This type of cooperation is structured to address acute shortage of human resources in the conventional policing. In crime control, information dissemination is crucial to aid the arrest of criminals in a society. Another barrier which community policing address is language barrier. Sound and professional communication is necessary for success of policing. Since members of community policing are drawn from a community, language dynamics will not be an issue (Nan, 2012; Nylons, 2021). The members of community, are in better position to communicate effectively to aid criminal investigations and other aspects of law enforcement. The knowledge of community is another strength of community policing. The members of community are more advanced in the topography of areas to fish out suspects (National Institute for Justice, 2020).

COVID-19 safety protocols: To control the spread of COVID-19 and its disastrous consequences, the following actions are put in place. These actions as noted Abdulrazaq, Hazairin Zuhriyah, Al-Zubaidi ABDUL Karim, Mustapha and Yusuf (2020) include the followings:

Wearing of face mask: This prevents contact of droplets from the nose of an infected person. In most countries where COVID-19 is endemic, non-using face mask is considered as a serious offence. However, some unscrupulous elements embarked on production of fake face masks. Some went to the extent of production of poisoned face masks.

Physical distancing: The space between one person and another in a social interaction is called physical distancing. The World Health Organisation

(WHO), the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control recommended distance of six metres. This is calculated to prevent the spread of corona virus.

Washing of hands: To strengthen efforts towards the eradication of COVID-19, the concerned authorities recommended washing of hands as means of killing virus that cause COVID-19. This informed placing of washing hand structures at strategic places.

Ensuring social gathering: Social gathering is another factor that is responsible for the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. In Nigeria and other parts of the world, social gatherings are organised to mark important occasions like burial, wedding, naming, graduation and vital ceremonies.

Theoretical framework

As noted by Hirschi (2002), theory are the related concepts, ideas, concepts and propositions used in explaining social phenomenon. To give insights into the relationship between community policing and COVID-19, the following theories will be adopted. These are the routine activity theory by Felson Marcus and social action theory by Travis Hirsch. To start with the routine activity by Marcus Felson (Agnew, 2004). According to Felson Marcus, three factors are necessary for deviance or otherwise, these factors are the motivated offenders, targeted person or property and reliable guidance. The motivated offenders are the people of Agbopa Community who are not used to using face masks and other nonpharmaceutical precautionary measures, the guidance are the community policing structures who controls ensures compliance with COVID-19 safety models (Nylons, 2021). When these structures are put in place the level compliance with COVID-19 safety precaution will improve and the possibility of contacting COVID-19 will improve significantly. In addition to routine activity theory by Marcus Felson, another theory to shed more light on community policing and COVID-19 safety compliance is social control theory by Travis Hirsch. In the words of Travis, criminal activities or deviance, are caused by the availability or lack of factors.

As noted by Travis Hirsch, these values are attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. Commitment is believing in norms and values of society and working hard to sustain them. One of the factors is attachment, in a situation where there is a strong attachment to values and norms of a society, deviant behaviour is discouraged. However, weak attachment to norms and values of a society leads to deviance (Imobighe, 2003). A person who is weakly attached to norms and values of a society will not consider the consequences of non-compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols like on his or her fellow citizens. The wearing of face masks will be considered as a necessary step for personal protection against COVID-19 pandemics and also to protect others. In this regard, using nose covers is not the only way of preventing COVID-19, other measures include regular washing of hands, physical distancing are viable means of preventing COVID-19. Another factor propounded by Travis Hirsch is commitment, having national values is one

thing, commitment to the national values promotes decent behaviour in the social scheme. In a bid to strengthen attachment, commitment to national values and norms promotes normal behaviour in social structures (Chambliss, 2020; Agnew, 2006). If people are attached and committed to societal norms and values, the level at which they involve in deviance will be minimal.

The COVID-19 safety precautions are integral aspects of national laws. Breaking the laws is a symbol of poor commitment and attachment to national values and norms. Involvement is another factor propounded by Travis, when people are involved in positive and creative aspects of human endeavours, the possibility of involvement in criminal activities is low. For instance, someone who is fully engaged and his or her earnings is substantial for her upkeep. The work will occupy his productive time and less time for unproductive activities. Belief norms and values plays vital role peace and stability in the social structure (Agnew, 2012). When people have attachment, commitment and involve in positive activities of the society and also believe in collective efforts to move the society forward, there will be little or no consideration for deviant acts. As far as COVID-19 safety compliance is concerned, when these attitudes are present in the social structure. The rate of compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols will be high and society will progress in terms of COVID-19 fatalities reduction.

Results and discussion**Table 1:** Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

S/N		Socio-demographic characteristics	N	%
1	Sex	Male	207	56.87
		Female	144	39.56
		No Response	13	3.57
		Total	364	100.0
2	Age (Years)	07—17	16	4.40
		18—28	113	31.04
		29—39	119	32.69
		40—50	78	21.42
		51—61	27	7.42
		No Response	11	3.02
		Total	364	100
3	Educational Status	Non-Formal Education	78	21.43
		First School Leaving Certificate	54	14.84
		WASCE/ SSCE	102	28.02
		First Degree	89	24.45
		Postgraduate	29	7.97
		No Response	12	3.30
		Total	364	100
4	Employment Status	Self-employed	98	26.92
		Government Job/ Company	188	51.65
		Unemployed	68	17.58
		No response	10	2.75
		Total	364	100
		5	Monthly Income from all sources (#)	Below #30,000
#30,001--- #50,000	70			19.23
#50,001-- #70,000	44			12.09
#70,001--#90,000	32			8.79
#90,001--- #110, 000	28			7.69
#110,001---#130,0000	34			9.34
#130,001--#150,000	23			6.32
Above #150,000	21			5.77
Total	364			100
6.	Married Status			Single
		Married	153	42.03
		Divorced	76	20.88
		Separated	43	11.81
		Co-habited	18	4.95
		No Response	8	2.20
		Total	364	100

Source: Filed Survey, 2020

From the table, 207(56.8%) of the respondents were males, while 144(39.56%) were females and 13(3.5%) of the respondents did not respond. This shows that more males participated in the study. In the same vein, 16(4.40%) of the respondents were between 07—17 years, the majority of the respondents were of the age bracket (18 –28 years and (29- 39) years had the greatest proportion of the respondents. This shows high level of youthfulness to join hands in the crusade for the enforcement of COVID-19 safety protocols. As far as educational attainment of the respondents, the majority of respondents 102(28.02%), attained Secondary School Leaving Certificates and 89(24.45%) were First Degree Holders. This shows that the Secondary School Certificates Holders have propensity to further their education to university level. With this level of educational achievement, the respondents would comply with the COVID-19 Safety Precautions. And also cooperate with the low community policing strategies to advance compliance with COVID-19 safety precaution processes. In the area of employment status, 98(26.92%) of the respondents were self-employed while 188(51.65%) of the respondents engaged in private or public job. With this, they might have been accustomed to COVID-19 safety protocols because of strict compliance with COVID-19 safety measures in both private and public organisations in Nigeria. Also, employment provides sense of belonging in social system. Unemployed people are carefree and bother less of their security. In connection with income, 252(69.22%) of the respondents earned above the National Minimum Wage of #30,000=00. This facilitates their commitment to work in tandem with local security outfits in their quest to mitigate corona virus 2019.

Hypothesis testing

Table 2: The correlation between community policing and reduction in the spread of COVID-19 pandemic

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size	R		P	Remark
community policing and reduction in the spread of COVID-19}	13.95 0 15.79 0	2.45 0 2.31	364	0.144		0.00	SIG.
Significant at 5%							

Source: Field Survey, 2020

From Table 2, in testing the hypothesis that states that there is a significant relationship between community policing and reduction in COVID-19 pandemic. The table value, $R = 0.144$, is more than the Pvalue, 0.00 at 5% level of significance. The decision rule states that reject the null hypothesis if

the table value exceeds the Pvalue, Hence, in this regard, the Table value, $R=0.144$ is more than Pvalue, 0.00. The null hypothesis is hereby rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between community policing and COVID-19 control.

Hypothesis two

Table 3: There is correlation between local security measures and control of COVID-19 pandemic

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size	R	P	Remark
There is a significant relationship between local security measures and control of COVID-19 pandemic	13.950	2.450	364	0.098	0.00	SIG.
Significant at 5%						

Source: Field Survey, 2020

From Table 3, in testing the hypothesis that states that there is a significant relationship between local security outfits and control of COVID-19 pandemic. The table value, $R = 0.098$, is more than the Pvalue, 0.00, at 5% level of significance. The decision rule states that reject the null hypothesis if the table value exceeds the Pvalue, Hence, in this regard, the Table value, $R= 0.098$ is more than Pvalue, 0.00. The null hypothesis is hereby rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between local security outfits and COVID-19 control. From findings, community policing assists in enforcing COVID-19 safety protocols. It represents the normal policing in carrying safety protocols for COVID-19. The community policing ensures proper manner of behaviour is attainable. The people involved in community policing are those who have intimate relationship with people at the grassroots; who have intimate knowledge about the nook and cranny of a particular community. This group of people, has the nitty-gritty of the community and necessary information. This enhances position of community police to convince the members of community on the necessity to abide by COVID-19 safety protocols. The community as part of its selfless service may provide water for washing hands in strategic places. The community policing could enhance conformity with rules for social distancing. At the community level, social distancing could be enforced through community policing to bring about peace and harmony.

Table 4: COVID-19 global cases

Name	Global Cases	Death	Percentage of Global Cases	Active Cases	Percentage of Global Cases
	116,380,645	2,584,135		92,006,214	

Source: World Health Organisation (2021)

From Table 4, the global cases as at March 5, 2021 was 116,380,645 and 2,584,135 deaths were recorded. This justifies the need to involve community policing in the control of the pandemic. The involvement of community policing will mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

Table 5: Nigeria COVID-19 cases in March 5, 2020

Table 2: COVID-19 Nigeria cases

Name	National Cases	Percentage of Global Cases	Death	Percentage of Global Cases	Active Cases	Percentage of Global Cases
	157,671	0.14	1,951	0.07	19,385	0.02 S

Source: Nigeria Centre Disease Control official website. www.ncdc.org.ng

From Table 5, Nigeria has 0.14% of the global cases and deaths recorded so far was 1,951. This shows the gravity of the pandemic and the necessity to enforce non-pharmaceutical measures like hand washing, usage of nose covers and others. However, the paucity of conventional law enforcement agents stresses the importance of community policing.

Table 6: Cases by State the ten most affected states

S/N	States	Confirmed Lab Cases	Percentage of National Cases	Number of COVID-19 on Admission	Number of Cases Discharged	COVID-19 Deaths	Percentage of National Cases
1	Lagos	56,273	35.69	1,552	54,307	414	21.23
2	FCT	19,313	12.25	7,244	11,919	150	7.69
3	Plateau	8,939	5.67	99	8,783	57	2.92
4	Kaduna	8,610	5.46	173	8,374	63	3.22
5	Oyo	6,757	4.29	862	5,781	114	5.84
6	Rivers	6,597	4.18	247	6,253	97	4.97
7	Edo	4,641	2.94	315	4,151	175	10.09
8	Ogun	4,416	2.80	552	3,817	47	2.41
9	Kano	3,810	2.42	190	3,516	104	5.33
10	Ondo	3,066	1.94	928	2,080	58	2.97

Source: www.ncdc.org.ng culled on 13 February 2021

From table 6, states have substantial roles to play in COVID-19 control measures. The warranted the state governors to take decisive measures to flatten the spread of the disease. Lagos has the highest number of cases. It has 35.69% of the national cases, Ondo State has the least of the national cases. The state had 1.94% of the national confirmed figures. The true federal

structure gives power to local government to operate as an autonomous level of government.

Discussion of findings

From the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents the majority of the respondents were male which was 207(56.87%), the females were 144 or 39.56% of the respondents. This will enhance the number of manpower that will be needed for the community policing. This affirms the position of Zilchah (2019) on community policing and crime prevention. Since men are energetic than women and they could face rough situations. As per age distribution of the respondents, 113(31.04 %) of the respondents felt within age bracket (18—28) years and 119(32.69%) of the respondents were between 29 to 39 years. Community policing requires young and active people to facilitate periodic patrol of the community, engaging youths on community security and facing any unforeseen security challenges in their vicinity. The routine activity theory by Marcus Felson on available guardianship supports this view.

Education covers every aspect of human endeavour; community policing is not an exception. The level of literacy of the respondents is high because only 54(14.84%) of the respondents felt under the category of those without formal education. While 102(28.02%) were those with the Secondary School Certificate. There is a propensity for holders of Secondary School Certificates to attain tertiary education. Sound education is a prerequisite for the successful community policing policy formulation, implementation and assessment. This consolidates a research conducted by Amadi (2019) and supported by Peyton, Siera-Arevalo and Rand (2019), effective communication between the locales and police officers rebuilds mutual confidence and partnership for crime prevention and control. From the results only 10(2.75%) of the respondents were unemployed. The rest were gainfully employed either as self-employers or working for private or public enterprises. Also, education stimulates commitment to social values and norms as opined by Travis Hirsh in his social control theory.

During COVID-19, lockdown was imposed on the people with attendant harsh economic consequences. The palliatives were either not distributed or distributed to selected people. The workers under government or private organisations were receiving salaries to cushion the hardship. The unemployed may not favourably to either COVID-19 safety precautions or enforcement of COVID-19 safety precautions. This affirms the study conducted by Felix and Hilger (2020). The community policing and COVID-19 safety precautions requires sustained sacrifice from the people. The people level of wherewithal in the area of logistics, one of the challenges of formal security organisation is inadequate financial resources for security consumables and non-consumables. From the findings, 69.23% of the respondents' income is above the National Minimum wage of #30,000 per month. This gives them leverage to inject financial resources to community policing to facilitate COVID-19 safety protocol enforcement. Marriage is a social institution that command respects

and responsibilities. There is strong commitment to social calls by married people than the single. From the study 153(42.03%) of the respondents were married this constrains them to be more involved in the community policing and COVID-19 safety precaution. From the hypothesis tested with regression analysis, there is a relationship between policing and reduction in the spread of COVID-19. This supports the findings of Peyton, Siera-Arevalo, and Rand, (2019). The second hypothesis tested showed a significant relationship between local security measures and COVID-19 mitigation. The position of routine activity theory by Marcus Felson on the importance of reliable guardian prevents situational crime like failure to adhere to COVID-19 safety precautions (Peyton, Siera-Arevalo and Rand, 2019).

Conclusion

This study looks into the relationship between community policing and COVID-19 safety protocols. There is need to enforce COVID-19 safety protocols, and due to increase in the national population. The commitment of other security alternatives to complement the efforts of conventional security structures could not be jettisoned. The challenges of the conventional policing warrants community policy as a strategy to mitigate COVID-19 pandemic. All hands must be on deck for safer and prosperous society. This paper will be useful to individuals, community leaders, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, African Centre for Disease Control, World Health Organisations, law enforcement agencies, non-governmental agencies and other researchers in the field of social sciences.

Recommendations

Community should be encouraged to involve in COVID-19 safety protocols, through community inclusion and participation. There should be selfless services in the form of provision of wash-hand basins at strategic places. These basins should be refilled with clean water from the communities. The health officials from the local government should complement the efforts of traditional leaders, community development associations in improving the health status of community members.

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