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STUDENTS-POLICE SYNERGY AND POLICING IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: AN IMPERATIVE FOR NIGERIA'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper is an exposition on students-police synergy and policing in tertiary institutions: an imperative for Nigeria's national development. The paper gives background information on the issues of insecurity in tertiary institutions and proceeds to unravel the concept of policing, security, concept of tertiary institutions, student-police relationship, and students-police synergy for Nigeria's national development. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for synergy between tertiary institution students and police in effective policing for Nigeria national development. Finally, it was suggested among others that there should be a weekly symposium between student leaders, police and school authorities for current security issues in the school and its environs. Also, the Nigerian Police Force, operating in the campuses should establish cordial relationship with student unions for effective security networking, and they should handle matters bothering students with high level sensitivity to avoid loss of trust in them. Government should pay more attention to the educational needs of the country as a yardstick to curb the menace of insecurity in Nigeria.

Keywords: Policing, Students-Police Synergy, Security and National Development

Introduction:

The need for security education for Nigeria's national development and integration cannot be overemphasised being that for any well meaning development, education is always at the pivot for sustainable development. The issues of policing and security synergy in our universities or any tertiary institution have become paramount due to the spate of insecurity bedevilling Nigeria. The tertiary institution is a learning organization and as such attracts

students, staff and other stakeholders who have one thing or the other to carry out in the school environment. Hence, the issue of security comes to play.

The tertiary institution exists as a complex organization with heterogeneous identity comprising people from different backgrounds with distinct views and divergent goals that make it susceptible to varied security threats. The word 'policing' is etymologically related to 'politics', the governance of the city or state, and was used in broad terms to signify social regulation in the widest sense. Police is related to the Greek words *politeuein*, which means to be a citizen or engage in political activity, and *polis*, which means a city or state (Roberg, et al, 2000). Police in this sense carry out the functions of law enforcement, order maintenance, service and gather information. Schools provide a good example of the broader process of social regulation as they play a central role in the socialization of young people by preparing them for adult life. This is not the primary function of the education system, of course, but recent debates about the development of the study of citizenship within schools indicates that preparing young people for their post-school lives is increasingly recognized as an important secondary role. For these reasons it is readily apparent that the education system plays a central role in the policing of society, if that is conceived in terms of the broad process of social regulation. Many other agencies also contribute to this process in ways that are less obvious: religious groups, health providers, and the business sector – to take three examples – contribute in various ways to the organization of social life and so could be regarded as part of the process of policing.

Globally, there is a rising wave of insecurity and the tertiary institutions are not spared from this problem. The rising wave of insecurity in universities has been a source of great concern recently. In the 60s, 70s and up to the 80s, educational environments were relatively peaceful for the teaching-learning process to go on without hindrance. However, the situation has changed since the 90s. Recent happenings have shown that school environments are not so safe for the students and for the school personnel any more due to some threatening security challenges. In line with this Mensah, et al. (2019) observes that university campuses are no longer safe havens. Similarly, Enang (2019) notes that university communities in recent times have been infested with all manner of criminalities which, quite sadly, paint an opaque and rather disheartening picture. Abdullahi and Orukpe (2016) and Enang (2019) observe that theft, cultism, kidnapping, rape, room break-in, office break-in, cell-phone snatching, stealing, violent demonstration by students, vandalism and other forms of assaults are major security challenges on campuses. Caleb (2013) also notes that cultism has proved to be a major concern for even existing security agencies on campuses. In the same vein. Oladipo, et al. (2018) observes that the existence of cultist groups on

campus have made life unsafe and scary to both staff and students. It is asserted that the cultist possesses in many cases, more deadly and functioning weapons than campus security agencies and often uses supernatural and mystical powers in their activities.

Besides, many cult members are users of hard drugs, and can act in unthinkable ways when they are under their influence. Cultists are implicated in robbery, killing of innocent students, as well as academic and non-academic staff, arson, rape, extortion, kidnapping, blackmail and all kinds of inhumane practices. Oladipo et al. (2018) further enumerates the activities of cultists to include, harassing any non-member who snatches a member's girlfriend or sugar daddy (as in the case of a female cultist), harassing female students who refused their advances, as well as, harassing any lecturer who insists on merit for passing examination. They also engage in factional struggles for supremacy that often results in bloody clashes among cult groups, during which period lives are sometimes lost. This has made Ibrahim (2013) to posit that, higher institutions of learning which ought to be ideal places for training of the minds have become war zones where cult groups unleash their terror in the community. Oladipo, et al. (2018) defines security as the degree of protection against danger, damage, loss, and criminal activity. In the same vein, Oni (2016) considers security in the university as the protection of tangible and intangible assets of the institution from all forms of danger.

"Insecurity: We're not safe again in our institutions, varsity workers cry out" was a headline in Nigeria Vanguard Newspaper reported on May 30, 2021. The news reads in parts as the security situation in the country continues to deteriorate on daily basis, the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities, SSANU, has lamented that none of its members was safe any longer. The union has called on the Federal Government to license the use of guns for local security on various campuses to protect the institutions (Caleb2013). Best (2006) sees insecurity as a degenerated stage of conflict, threats to human security, intense violence characterized by fighting, death, injury, etcetera, occurs. According to Olamosu (2000), insecurity is a state or condition in the life of a social unit, system, organization or society in which the existence of a problem assumes critical dimension to the extent that the survival or existence of the social system or structure is threatened.

Concept of Policing

Policing has always been necessary in all societies for the preservation of order, safety and social relations. The necessity of policing becomes even more evident in modern societies characterized by diversities and contradictions arising from population heterogeneity, urbanization, industrialization, conflicting ideologies on appropriate socio-political and economic forms of organization.

However, the emergence of the police, a body of men recruited and paid by the state to enforce law and maintain order, is a welcome development in human history (Reiner, 2000). Traditionally, policing was the responsibility of all adults in the community. In medieval society, all adult males were obliged to contribute towards the prevention and control of crime and disorder under the systems of 'hue, cry and pursuit' and the 'watch and ward' that preceded the emergence of specialized police forces as organs of the state, but the emergence of the state, with its vast bureaucracies anchored on centralization, hierarchical authority/power structure, and professional staff changed the traditional policing philosophy rooted in the idea of policing as everybody's business (Weber 1968). The emergence of the state as an entity with claim to the monopoly over the means of legitimate violence in society resulted into the creation of specialized agencies such as the police and the armed forces for controlling the use of violence by other groups (Weber 1968). According to Martin (1990), Police work involves a variety of tasks and responsibilities. Officers are expected to prevent crime, protect life and property, enforce the laws, maintain peace and public order, and provide a wide range of services to citizens. A common trend unifying these diverse activities, however, is that potential for violence and the need and right to use coercive means in order to establish social control (Bitner, 1970).

Sir Robert Peel is said to be the father of modern democratic policing. In 1829 he created the Metropolitan Police in London, England, and along with it proposed the principles under which they would become efficient in maintaining safety and security within the community under the law (Ottawa Police Service, 2021). He propounded nine principles of law enforcement to guard successful policing in institutions. These are:

1. The basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder.
2. The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions.
3. Police must secure the willing cooperation of the public in voluntary observance of the law to be able to secure and maintain the respect of the public.
4. The degree of cooperation of the public that can be secured diminishes proportionately to the necessity of the use of physical force.
5. Police seek and preserve public favour not by catering to the public opinion but by constantly demonstrating absolute impartial service to the law.
6. Police use physical force to the extent necessary to secure observance of the law or to restore order only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient.

7. Police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.
8. Police should always direct their action strictly towards their functions and never appear to usurp the powers of the judiciary.
9. The test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it (Ottawa Police Service, 2021).

Concept of Security

Security is a fragile and significant issue which conveys different meanings to scholars, analysts, policy makers and organizations across the globe. Fundamentally, security has to do with the presence of peace, safety, gladness and the protection of human and physical resources or absence of crisis or threats to human dignity, all of which facilitate development and progress of any human society. The concept of security has become a preoccupation for the decades following the end of the Cold War which could also be referred to as a landmark for diverse school of thought with security studies. Security, as a concept, has diverse dimensions. It is aptly used in psychology, finance, information access, public safety, defence and military matters. The meaning of security is ambiguous as its scope continues to expand every day. The elastic nature of the concept of security attracts different meanings and different views. Security is an important concept that every human person desires and it has one or two meanings though it defies precise definition. This account for the position of Buzan (1991) who describes security as an ambiguous and multidimensional concept in which military factors have attracted inappropriate attention. This study therefore examines the concept of security taking into cognizance diverse views of different scholars. It equally covers the notion of national security, international security and the concept of human security, which is the basis of all other forms of security.

Security has to do with the process connected with assuaging any kind of threat to people and their precious values. This is why Buzan (1991) asserts that security is about freedom from threat and ability of states to maintain independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change which they see as hostile while its bottom line is survival. From the foregoing, security is generally agreed to be about a feeling of being safe from harm, fear, anxiety, oppression, danger, poverty, defence, protection and preservation of core values and threat to those values. William (2008) equally submits that security is most commonly associated with the alleviation of threats to cherish values, especially those threats which threaten the survival of a particular reference object. **In line with the above,**

Imobighe as cited in Oche (2001:76-77) states that Security has to do with freedom from danger or threats to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the well-being of its people. Thus internal security could be seen as the freedom from or the absence of those tendencies, which could undermine internal cohesion, and the corporate existence of a country and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people (Ogaba, 2010). It could therefore be inferred that security, be it classical, state-centric and traditionalist or non-traditionalist, is all about protection of assets including living and non-living resources against loss or damage.

There are two major Schools of Thought to the concept of security - Traditional and Non - Traditional. Traditional School of Thought favours the **maintenance of the Cold War conception of security**. This school of thought **defines security in this sense to mean safety from danger and from external attack or infiltration**. Traditional security paradigm is a realist construct of security in which the referent object is the state (Abolurin, 2010). It equates security with **peace and prevention of conflict through military means that is deterrence policies, non-offensive defence and the like**. This is why Walt (1991) defines security as a study of threat, use, and control of military force. It explores the situations that make use of force more likely, the ways the use of force affects individuals, states, societies and the specific policies that states employ in order to prevent or engage in war. This school of thought is strongly tied to the military and that is why Buzan (1991) regards security as underdeveloped and needed to be rehabilitated. Nwolise (2008) opines that the Cold War period gave the high level domination to the conventional security doctrine to the extent that security rests on the belief that only a military system can efficiently deter attack and threat of force. Environmental Security is one of the seven dimensions of human security whose primary goal is to protect people from the short and long-term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the natural environment. In third world countries, lack of access to clean water resources is one of the **greatest environmental threats** while the major threats in industrial countries are **air pollution and global warming which are caused by the emission of green house gases**.

Concept of Tertiary Education

Tertiary education is the third stage or level of education following the completion of secondary education. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998) defines Tertiary Education to include the **Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education in Higher Education**. Tertiary education generally culminates in the receipt of **certificates, diplomas, or academic degrees emanating from rigorous training and**

imparting of knowledge in respective disciplines. Some of the goals of education as specified in National Policy on Education by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013, 1:13) include:

- (1). Instrument for national development and social change.
- (2). Education as vital tools for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria
- (3). Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfilment and general development of the society
- (4). A right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges; and
- (5). to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society.

No doubt, these lofty objectives cannot be realized in the face of incessant insecurity activities in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. A quick glance at these objectives vis-a-vis corruption and poverty, cult activities, sexual harassment, examination malpractice in tertiary institutions clearly indicates that insecurity is inimical to the realization of the objectives of tertiary education.

Tertiary Students-Police Relationship

Students' police relationship has not been cordial due to some perceptions by students and some of the breaches created by police and students within and outside the school environment. Like in the case of George Floyd in the United State of America, Student activists demanded that universities should re-examine their relationships with campus and non-campus police after George Floyd, a black man living in Minneapolis, was killed by a white police officer on Memorial Day. "Student organizations, workers' unions and individual activists at dozens of universities are calling on administrations to cut ties with local police or disband campus police departments, saying that policing institutions enact violence upon black people and uphold white supremacy. College administrations for the most part have resisted calls to end relationships with local municipal police forces, instead making promises to reform training practices and decrease the need for police presence on campus (Whitford & Burke, 2020).

Similarly in Nigeria, a case of young Nigerian students who died in police custody due to torturing was reported in Premium Times Newspaper of September 6, 2021. The culled news stated that "preliminary report from an autopsy conducted revealed that a university student who died in police custody in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria's South-south, was tortured." The report continued "a fresh graduate of architecture, University of Uyo, was arrested by the police on August 29, 2021, while he was sitting out with some friends at a popular store in Uyo. He was reported dead some hours later, tortured by some police officers, his lawyer said". The autopsy report invalidates the claim by the police that the student died of illness. "The suspect said he was sick. He was taken to the police

clinic for treatment but gave up the ghost in the process,” the police spokesperson in Akwa Ibom State said in the statement. The police spokesperson said the late student was being investigated for robbery and cultism, a claim the lawyer said was false. A pathologist with the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital, who performed the autopsy, said there were visible bruises on the body which indicated torture. A Premium Times reporter witnessed the autopsy.”

Also, Premium Times news reported in August 17, 2021 with the heading “How police allegedly harassed, extorted students returning to school” showed the disjointed relationship between police and students in Nigeria. The news had it that “Two University students heading to the airport in Lagos to board a flight back to school were harassed and extorted by police officers, the parent of one of them said. The mother narrated that the vehicle conveying her 20-year-old son and his colleague to the airport was stopped by a team of police officers at about 11 a.m. on Saturday. Both men are students of a certain University in Ebonyi State. “They stopped them for no reason, searched, and could not find anything on them. I told my son to wait that I want to meet them at the location, before I could get to the place, he called again that the officers had allowed them to go after collecting N40,000 from the two of them” (Adediran, 2021)..

A report by Nigeria Punch Newspaper highlighted that “a 27-year-old 500-level Law student of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, was murdered by an officer of the Nigeria Police Force at Nsukka. The deceased was said to have gone to a pub at Odobido with his friend from where he was arrested by a local security outfit and handed over to the officer in charge of the Anti-cult squad in Nsukka.” These may only be a few of the more publicized issues between students and police officers in Nigeria. These have caused protests like in the era of end SARS, activism, and a call for change. Due to the aforementioned, it is valid to draw the conclusion that there is a serious dent in students-police relationship which has created barriers in outright policing in tertiary institutions and Nigeria’s national development.

Students-Police Synergy for Nigeria’s National Development

The current insecurity challenges in Nigeria calls for togetherness in fighting the menace dragging Nigeria’s national development to the backward. Before, the learning environment was seen as a safe haven but it has become a thoroughfare ground for hoodlums, cultism, killing, kidnapping and several vices. Students of tertiary institutions are well informed than those in elementary and secondary level of learning, and such should be able to form a cordial synergy with the Nigerian Police force to confront this ugly masquerade masquerading in our academic environment. According to an headline in Voice of Nigeria (VON) reported by Isa in Niger State on September 2, 2021 which states that “Nigerian Police Calls for Synergy across Security Outfits” the news reads as culled that

“Nigeria police has urged for encouragement and promotion of proper synergy with other security agencies and local vigilante groups across the country in efforts to curtail spread the ongoing insecurity in the country (Isa, 2021). The Assistant Inspector General of Police in charge of Zone 7 of the Nigerian police stated this during a visit to Niger state command on Wednesday. AIG stated that proper synergy across security agencies are of paramount importance in achieving a desired aim. “We’ve found ourselves in such a time that synergy must be of paramount importance no agency can do it alone, so we must all put our hands together and put our various specialization on board to ensure that we free communities from criminal activities” (Isa, 2021). For the aforementioned to record all-round success, tertiary institutions should be brought in and form a synergy for policing and Nigeria’s national development.

In similar development, a news recorded by Guardian Newspaper of December 2017 highlighted the headline that “Police to Partner Nigerian Students on Security” the news read as culled that the Inspector-General of Police, said that the Nigeria Police Force would partner with Nigerian students to fight crimes in the country. Inspector General (IG) stated this when officials of the National Association of Polytechnic Students (NAPS) honoured him with the Chief Peace Builder award in Abuja. He also assured the students of the readiness of the police to partner with them in ensuring security of lives and property on campuses (News Agency of Nigeria, 2017). The police boss, however, appealed to them to always volunteer useful information on suspicious people within their domain. The IG said he was encouraged by the award and promised to step up the fight against crimes in the society. He appealed to the people to develop cordial relationship with the police stressing that “the police is your friend, especially you, the law-abiding citizens” (News Agency of Nigeria, 2017).

However, Strange and Banning (2001) opine that universities may need to adjust their tactics to reach their goals of: Learning, growth, and development. To reach these goals universities need to fulfil three hierarchical purposes which are: safety and inclusion, community, and involvement. Utilizing a partnership between campus police and student affairs can assist a university in fulfilling these purposes to reach these goals.

Conclusion

Security has been a global concern that nation’s resources are sunk into combating insecurity especially in the public domain. Insecurity is that cankerworm that would not allow anything to grow and if this cankerworm is not arrested, the labourers would labour in vain because there is no meaningful progress can be recorded in the face of insecurity. In Nigeria, billions of naira is spent to steady the ship of the nation due to the shaking of insecurity, yet, it has yielded little or no result. Education has been one of the safest and economical

mechanisms that have been proven to combat insecurity and crime without any ammunition. Until now, educational environment used to be a safe haven for moral conduct with high level of discipline, it was a place void of 'noise and storm' except the known internal challenges of student riot and cultism which has now reduced to the bare. Now, it has gradually become a 'money making venture' for miscreant who without fear carried out their nefarious activities of killing, stealing and kidnapping of lecturers and students for selfish interest. This paper is aimed to proffer solution to this negative trend by highlighting police-students' synergy in policing tertiary institutions in Nigeria. As observed in the paper, there is a wide gap between police and students in tertiary institutions, if the gap is closed, it will boost effective policing in Nigeria for meaningful development.

Recommendations

1. Government should create a forum where student leaders of tertiary institutions and security agencies in Nigeria to meet and brainstorm on security matters. This would create a sense of belonging amongst students and enhance positive relationship.
2. Tertiary institution should create security unit amongst students who will work with already established security outfits in the campuses relating to security issues.
3. The Nigerian Police Force, operating in the campuses should establish cordial relationship with student unions for effective security networking, and they should handle matters bothering students with high level sensitivity to avoid loss of trust in them.
4. There should be regular symposium between student leaders, police and school authorities for current security issue in the school and its environs.
5. Government should pay more attention to educational needs of the country as a yardstick to curb the menace of insecurity in Nigeria

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