

A SURVEY ON THE CHALLENGES OF PRIVATE SECURITY COMPANIES IN CRIME PREVENTION IN 21ST CENTURY NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to examine critical challenges facing private security companies (PSCs) in their daily aspiration towards meeting yearnings and aspirations of the company owners, the subscribers and general Society. The paper X- ray the origin of PSCs prior colonialism to present day Nigeria, it advances theoretical literature and conceptualization through Routine Activity Theory and Rational Choice Theory. The study employed questionnaires and in-depth interview to collect data for the studies. The data revealed high level of illiteracy among guards, poor equipments for fighting crime, poor salary/wages, sending of guards on errand while on duty, poor/lack of training and retraining on security tips, long working hours among some company's guards and lack of motivation among guards in all the companies. The paper advanced solutions to the problems so highlighted.

Keywords: Survey, Challenges, Private Security Companies, Crime Prevention, 21st Century.

Introduction

Law, order and security were maintained in the pre-colonial societies through thorough socialization of members of the society using peer group, age grade and religious institutions (Ogunbameru and Rotimi, 2006). Thus, violators of societal norms, customs, and traditions of various communal groups faced serious sanctions which ranged from ostracizing, payment of reparation and purification and consequently the performing of cleansing rituals (Ugwuoke, 2015). For instance, in Niger state, criminals pay for their crimes through serving various punishment such as digging of dungeons, working in the Emir's farm, quarrying, and in cases which involve witchcraft and murder, banishment or ninety (90) days cleansing fast was observed as reparation (Idrees and Ochefu, 2002). The occurrence of these crimes was often at a lower rate because these sanctions

also helped in inducing fear into the people on the negative consequences of committing crime in the society.

These roles changed during the colonial era following the introduction of formal social control. The Native Authority (NA) police assumed the role of maintaining law, order and security, while the citizens simply became on-lookers because community security was seen as the responsibility of the government. At this point, insecurity also started growing due to the nature of native administration. This is because Nationalist activities were seen and conceived of as an attack on the colonialists (Kuna, 1999). Therefore, the brutality of the NA police became instrumental to the growth of the nationalist movement at this time in the society.

During the post-colonial era, especially after the civil war in Nigeria, the activities of criminals grew almost out of hand as a result of the proliferation of firearms which were found in all nooks and crannies of the country. This hastened the growth of crime on the one hand, and also brought about the need to further secure the urban communities where robbery and the nefarious acts of criminals were frequent. Therefore, urban areas like Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu, and Kano started having neighborhood guards due to the inefficiency of the police (Dambazau, 2007; Igbo, 2007, Ugwuoke 2015).

As the world increasingly becomes a global village, changes crept into Nigerian societies taken her away from traditional set up as a result of 'westernisation' or 'modernisation'. These changes occasioned the encroachment of western institutions on moral standards of the society which has implications for general life and security particularly on Nigerians. Other factors include urbanization, formal education and capitalist economic system. As a result, a range of crimes emanated quite different from what was known in the traditional society, which may require more sophisticated security approach. Some of these crimes include murder, theft, assault, and suicide, pick pocketing, drug abuse, counterfeiting, fraud, forgery, smuggling, unlawful possession of dangerous weapons, prostitution, white-collar crime, advanced fee fraud (419) corruption, rape, and of more recent, Kidnapping, Banditry and a host of others which are all prevalent in modern Nigeria (Ebbe, 1981 cited in Igbo, 2007, Ugwuoke 2015).

Also, according to Igbo (2007), the end of the civil war witnessed not only the return of old criminals to the street; but also, the 'graduation' of new and more sophisticated

ones'. This singular assertion indicates that the current state of security network in the country may be under serious threat as crime waves continue to rise unabated.

The most recent of the threats to security in Nigeria is the emergence of kidnapping and terrorism and Banditry which have been enhanced by the widespread use of firearms by criminals. This indeed facilitated the modus operandi of these criminals, thereby enhancing complete change in criminal activities as cases of aircraft hijacking and assassinations of prominent Nigerians and bomb explosions in various corners of the country became rampant.

Nigeria is an insecure environment for commercial operations. Security risk arises at three levels. The first comes from rising violent crime (from) simple armed robbery (to) carjacking and violent attacks.... Second, companies can be subjected to direct attack or blackmail...facilities can be vandalized and staff kidnapped. Third, incidences of inter-communal violence have risen... Nigeria's ill equipped police force ... has been ineffective in stemming the crime wave. (Dambazau, 2007: 53).

Therefore, the ineffectiveness of the Nigeria police and the concern of Nigerians for security led to the emergence of guards and private security companies in the country to augment the activities of the security agencies and work in line with the laid down rules and regulations. Just like the vigilante, private security companies are also an

informal arrangement to keep with the pace of rising crime rate in Nigeria.

However, as is the case in all countries, the citizens of Nigeria are highly concerned about their security and this concern has been expressed through the growth of Private Security Companies (PSCs). The last decade has seen a proliferation of PSCs in a country of about 140 million people (Census, 2006). The presence of these companies is conspicuous in the premises of both private and public sector organizations. This is in spite of the fact that in both urban and rural areas, security matters are largely in the hands of private actors than in those of the state.

In Niger state for instance, no literature recorded when the first PSC become operational in the state. The activities of the ‘Mai-guards’ and ‘vigilantes’ were pronounced initially. But today, the rate at which these companies are widely spread and is still growing around the state will confirm what one would describe as the presence of both the latent and manifest functions of companies to the proprietors’, subscribers and the guards (Hassan 2011).

Ten (10) companies sampled for studies out of twenty-one (21) in operation identified their operational years, category and population in the following table.

Table 1:

Name of Company	Year of Establishment/ Life Span	Population of Guard
Achile Security Service	2002 (19years)	2,016
Bolay Security Service	2003 (18years)	2,212
Bolobolo Security Service	2003 (18years)	1,100
C O.E Security Service	1980 (41years)	310
Gaskiya Security Service	2003 (18years)	1,725
Kalabo Security System	2006 (15years)	650
Kings Guards	2009 (12years)	1,071
Kuta Guards	2000 (21years)	3,512
Mayfare Agencies	2004 (17years)	578
Profile Security	1995 (26years)	2,425

Source Questionnaire data 2021 & NSCDC. Population: 15,599

Theoretical Literature Reviewed

Behaviour becomes a crime when the state enacts a sanction against it. Crime prevention involves the disruption of mechanisms which cause criminal events. Maguire, Morgan and Reiner (1997) opined that criminologist that have devised several ways of preventing crime in the society rest on three principles. Thus:

- i. Since crime consists of diverse behavior, we should not look for universality in techniques of prevention.
- ii. Because an action is a crime, this does not mean that the best way to control it is through the police and the courts. The behavior itself must be understood, to determine where change could best be brought about.
- iii. The scope of the criminal law is morally problematic. A society in which more crime is prevented is not necessarily a more pleasant society. The burdens and restrictions imposed on people to prevent crime must be balanced against the harm caused by the crime prevented.

It is pertinent to note that theories of crime causation are also theories of crime prevention. (Maguire et al., 1997). Therefore, two broad perspectives on crime prevention can be distinguished; (a) concentrate on structure, and (b) psyche or circumstance.

- ❖ **The structural approach:** Here, crime prevention takes the debate straight into politics (Maguire et al, 1997). Crime prevention is defensible as a free-standing discipline only when minimum standards of social justice are perceived to apply. That is, the enabling environment for citizens must be feasible, because, for example, it does not make sense for one to move to stop shop theft when the alternative for the thief is to

starve or be undernourished. But again, to insist on a totally fair society before crime prevention is deployed is to leave people unnecessarily vulnerable to harm and loss.

- ❖ **The Psyche or Circumstance Approach:** Maguire et al, (1997) stated that this approach has been classified by Brantingham and Faust (1976 cited in Maguire et al 1997) into primary prevention, secondary prevention and tertiary prevention.

Primary prevention reduces crime opportunities without reference to criminals or potential criminals. *Secondary prevention* seeks to change people, typically those at high risk of embarking upon a criminal career, before they do so while *tertiary prevention* is focused upon the truncation of the criminal career in length, seriousness of frequency of offending. It deals with the "treatment" of known offenders.

Thus, in reassessing these models, private security companies could be located in primary prevention which is considered as everybody's business. Olaniyi (2005) observed that appalling social and security facilities compounded this situation (insecurity). Therefore, through communal efforts, especially landlords and the tenants Association, alternative arrangements were made to provide security through other sources such as vigilantes, ethnic militias, and private security guards, companies, etc.

Dambazau (2007) posited that crime prevention methods have developed out of different traditions across the world and at different era. For instance, the Virginia Crime Prevention Association

advanced the idea that, the punitive prevention attempts by law enforcement to forestall crime through the threat of apprehension and punishment is manifested by the enactment of tougher laws, longer sentence, and preventive patrol. The fear of getting caught has a deterrent effect, especially among the population that has the tendency to be law abiding.

The corrective type is buttressed by the structural approach to crime prevention too. According to Dambazau (2007) a basic premise of corrective crime prevention is that criminal behaviour is caused by various social conditions such as poor housing, poverty, lack of education, family problems and drug or alcohol addiction. Those who subscribe to this approach believe that crime can be avoided if the conditions under which crime is thought to flourish in alleviated.

On the other hand, the organized type involves the need for law enforcement agencies, other government agencies and the community to initiate an organized process for reducing or removing the opportunity for crime through data collection and analysis, the accurate identification of problems by a number of factors, development of crime control objectives and strategies, and implementation of the strategies.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories were adopted as the theoretical framework. These theories, despite their deficiencies explain the role of PSCs in crime prevention more than other theories. Therefore, routine activity theory basically establishes that for a crime to take place three elements must be present. These elements are; a motivated offender, a suitable victim and the absence of a capable

guardian. Felson (1993) established that routine activity and economic changes increase suitable targets especially for property crime. The use of routine activity theory is considered useful on the account that a motivated offender may be constrained by the fact that suitable targets are not available at all or available but guarded by a capable security guard or security apparatus (such as heavy padlocks, police dogs etc).

The second theory is the rational choice theory which began with an assumption that criminals are intelligent people hence; they subject their victims to a rational/logical thinking process in order to maximize profits. Location and relevant information about the victim are also thought of in order to brandish their nefarious ambition.

The use of rational choice theory in this study is considered useful in the sense that, the presence of a capable guard will cost the criminal more than when a capable guard is not part of his calculations and may find it even more difficult if such context is close to either military or police barracks.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Private Security Companies

It is now obvious that private security guards are everywhere both in public and private sectors. The big challenge however, is to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of these PSCs in discharging their primary duties to their clients. According to Singer (2003) private security companies have played important roles in detecting crime at different levels. He argued that the effectiveness of the PSCs could be seen in the roles they played as undercover agents outside the formal authorities especially among industrialized countries. The PSCs have assisted in reporting and suppressing cult activities in some of the tertiary

institutions across the country's universities. The involvements of these PSCs have in no small measures helped in curbing the menace of cultism in Nigerian campuses. Dambazau (2006) argues that the presence of a security man is effective to the extent that it is capable of retarding criminal activities. Therefore, a secure or guarded target may not always be a victim of crime (Igbo, 2007).

Furthermore, PSCs have also contributed their quota in repelling student unrest by reporting to appropriate authorities before such riots get out of hand. Macucci (1998) argues that hints about suspects and illegal gatherings of people and wanderers are reported before nefarious activities are hatched. He stressed that PSCs services are available in urban cities and major town for the protection of lives and properties. They also serve as witness when criminals are arrested and arraigned before the court of law for prosecution.

In Niger state for instance, the impact of PSCs ranges from gradual acceptance of these companies by citizens through subscription and gradual reduction of Petty crimes, burglary snatching and general

improved security of lives and property (Musah 2002).

Hypothesis One

There is a positive relationship between the presence of PSCs and reduction of crime in Niger state.

Methodology

The study adopted survey research design with the population comprising of Directors/Supervisors, Beneficiaries, Guards and other members of the befitting communities. This study was conducted through Ten (10) PSCs (see table 1). Using Salant and Dilman (1994), 50/50 split at 3% sampling error, a total of 660 respondents was drawn and sampled. With 20 Directors/Supervisors, 330 security guards, and 350 Beneficiaries and members of the community.

The Data

In collecting data for this study, ten (10) PSCs were sampled and the following among others factors are threatening the efficiency of PSCs in Minna metropolis and elsewhere as encapsulated in the field study. Thus,

Table 2: Educational Qualification of Guards.

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage %
1 st school leaving Cert.	157	52.3
SSCE	128	42.7
Dip/NCE/HND	15	5
B.Sc/BED	-	-
Total	300	100%

Source: Questionnaire's data 2021

The educational qualifications of guards in the ten (10) private security companies sampled shows that 52.3% and 42.7% respectively have only primary school and secondary school education or even drop outs, while those with ND/NCE/ HND were

just 15 representing 5% respectively. There were no graduates serving as guards in all the duty posts visited. The challenge this poised to PSCs is that more than 50% of the guards can't communicate in effective English language and when foreigners or

persons outside his/her ethnic group visits the place of primary assignment of such guards they may require the services of an interpreter. This finding corroborates earlier studies by Musah (2002 cited in Dambazau 1997) is illiteracy. He stressed that illiterate guards may lack the ability to express themselves in the general language of instruction of such community. For instance, in Nigeria, guards should communicate effectively in English so that they will be able to carry out their work effectively.

This exercise also showed that 78% of these companies do not have patrol vans and 100% of guards have no batons for attacking or for self-defense respectively. This is indeed a serious hindrance to achieving effective crime control. Musah (2002; *ibid*)

also stressed further that lack of mobility could also hinder effective performance of the PSCs. In most cases in Nigeria, PSCs lack vehicles and motorcycles to be used for combating crime and batons for guards' protection.

The section 17 of the Private Guard companies Act which prohibits guards from possessing firearms and ammunition is a serious hindrance to effective performance of the guards. This is because they may not be able to repel serious criminal acts where exchange of fire is involved. In most crime situations, criminals are always fully armed with sophisticated weapons; therefore, the police/guards in such situations become prey and have to run for their lives (Dambazau, 1997).

Table 3: Problems of Guards

Types of problems	Frequency	Percentage%
Poor salary	-	-
Lack of training	-	-
Lack of promotion	-	-
Long working duration	-	-
Lack of equipment	-	-
All of the above	300	100
Total	300	100%

Source: Questionnaire data 2021

The study further revealed that all the guards (100%) indicated that they were faced by the following problems: poor salary/wages, lack of training, lack of promotion, long working duration, lack of working equipments and motivation. Salary/Wages are seen as motivating factor in a working situation; therefore, for

effective and efficient delivery of service the wages must be encouraging. The guards are paid stipend by their employers and therefore, they are not motivated to carry out their work efficiently. Similarly, most of the PSCs do not promote their personnel accordingly. This is in line with the view of Maccuci (1998) that the flat rate promotion

and poor working conditions of guards are capable of affecting their productivity. He further enunciated that some of the factors restricting such promotion include: the flat status hierarchy, lack of unionization, and a

policy that has favoured hiring into the security administration retired Police officers from outside the occupational structure

Table 4: Types of Errand guards undertake

Types	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sanitation	22	21.6
Go to market	34	33.3
Go to vendor	46	45.1
Total	102	100%

Source: Questionnaire data 2021

The exercise also shows 34% of the respondents go on errand for their bosses or other members of the household, while, 66% of the guards are not sent on errands. The security implication for the subscribers is that criminals may attack when guards have gone on errand. According to Musah

(2002; *ibid*), some of the guards perform other functions like watering of flowers, going on errands to the market, to purchase daily tabloid etc which actually distract them from the primary assignment of guarding.

Table 5: Training and Retraining of Guards

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Yes	210	70
No	90	30
Total	300	100%

Source: Questionnaire data 2021

Furthermore, the study outlined the ratio of guards that have undergone training and retraining on security tips since they were employed. 70% were of the opinion that they had been once trained either at point of entry into the security job or shortly after then. Some of them were of the view that they received their training at Lagos before being reposted to Niger State. While 30%

responded NO to the question which indicates that they have not undergone any form of training. The 70% respondents above held the view that they were trained in physical fitness, methods of pursuing a criminal, Taekwondo skills, use of electronic Baton, surveillance. Etc. Lack of refresher courses, workshop, and seminars, trainings to update the knowledge of the guards on

security tips could also affect their performance. In a typology of private policing operational styles, Macucci (1998) opined that guards were very unhappy with the lack of crime control in-service training. As a result, the most influential

To carry out this test, item 11 on the questionnaire for guards and 11 on questionnaire for beneficiaries are used where responses on 'whether the presence of PSCs has reduced crime in the community' is cross tabulated with the category of respondents (i.e guards and subscribers) reveals;

Hypothesis One

There is a positive relationship between the presence of PSCs and reduction of crime in Niger state.

Table 6.

Presence of PSCs has reduced crime in the society	Respondents		Percentage%
	Guards	Subscribers	
Yes	246 (82%)	213 (60.9%)	459 (71%)
No	54 (18%)	137 (39.1%)	191 (29%)
Total	300 (100%)	350 (100%)	650(100%)

$X^2=34.800$; $df=1$; $P < 0.0001$; Asymp.sig. (2 sided) = 0.002

Source : Questionnaire data 2011

$X^2_{calculated} = 34.800$

P-value < 0.001

Conclusion:

It can be observed that in table 6 above, out of the 650 respondents administered questionnaires, 300 and 350 were guards and subscribers respectively. Out of the 300guards,246(82%) agreed that the presence of PSCs has reduced crime in the society, while an equally high percentage of subscribers 60.1% which is 213 out of 350 agreed with the statement. A total of 459 (71%) out of 650 agreed with this statement. The table shows that a greater percentage of both the guards and the subscribers share the opinion that the presence of PSCs has reduced crime in Niger state. The chi-square value of 34.800 also confirms the fact that the hypothesis of a significant relationship between the presence/growth of PSCs and the current crime wave in the state. The result on table

49 corroborate the earlier finding on table 11 and 37 which shows statistical significance on the relationship between the presence of guards and reduction in crime. The findings on table 49 are in line with the view of Dambazau (2006) who said that the presence of a security man is effective to the extent that it is capable of retarding criminal activities. Therefore, a secured or guarded target may not always be a victim of crime (Igbo; 2007).

Conclusions

The above discussed challenges have become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into a profession that supposed to be a professional career like a leach. Once these challenges are overcome and maintained through professionalism, acquisition of skills related to security tips, employing able

bodied men, well-educated and motivated then the PSCs will be poised towards sustainable development in 21st century, Nigeria.

Recommendations

From the findings (from questionnaires and interviews with guards, beneficiaries and other members of the community and directors/supervisors of PSCs). It is recommended therefore that;

- Working during among guards' companies be unified and standardized as required by PGC ACT section 17 which stipulates minimum of 6 hours and maximum of 12 hours.
- The need for Federal Government to recruit and equip Nigerian Police Force in order to improve the security of lives and property or to permit guards to use arms and ammunitions in combating crimes in the society
- There is also the need for Directors/Supervisor to enlighten their clients not to send guards to perform other activities other than the security job assigned to them.
- Perhaps, because of competing priorities both the guards and other members of the community have misunderstood reasons for establishing the PSCs. Therefore, the need to spell clearly reasons for establishing the PSCs by emphasizing on its objectives has become very essential
- Improve wages/salary was also suggested as one of the panaceas to the problems of both the guards and PSCs
- The PSCs are beneficial to society in many ways. Therefore, government should support these companies to strive by creating an enabling

environment for their smooth operation.

- PSCs must establish training schools if they must remain in competition in global world of security because more and more companies are coming up and are seeking relevance in the security world.
- There is the need to abolish the flat hierarchy of promotion in the PSCs and allowed guards to reach the climax of their career either as Supervisors/Directors.

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