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Shehu Mustapha Liberty & Muhammad Abdullahi

University of Maiduguri

ABSTRACT

Being security conscious is paramount in this century that communities across the world are battling with different forms of criminal activities, which distort peace and security and hinders physical, political, and socio-economic growth and development. Being security conscious therefore empowers individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to protect their lives and communities, as well as being aware of the dangers, threats, and risks in one's surrounding. Against this backdrop, therefore, this paper examines security challenges and strategies for effective security consciousness in insecure communities. The article is based on Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and utilized conceptual analyses to conclude that criminal activities keep growing across communities in this 21st century due to poverty, illiteracy, religious extremism, ethnic and sectional intolerance, natural disasters, unmet interests, and economic imbalance among people, especially in less developed countries.

Keywords: security, insecurity, security consciousness, crime.

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Security Consciousness in Insecure Communities

Shehu Mustapha Liberty^a, PhD & Muhammad Abdullahi^o

ABSTRACT

Being security conscious is paramount in this century that communities across the world are battling with different forms of criminal activities, which distort peace and security and hinders physical, political, and socio - economic growth and development. Being security conscious therefore empowers individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to protect their lives and communities, as well as being aware of the dangers, threats, and risks in one's surrounding. Against this backdrop, therefore, this paper examines security challenges and strategies for effective security consciousness in insecure communities. The article is based on Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and utilized conceptual analyses to conclude that criminal activities keep growing across communities in this 21st century due to poverty, illiteracy, religious extremism, ethnic and sectional intolerance, natural disasters, unmet interests, and economic imbalance among people, especially in less developed countries. It therefore, concludes that despite the existence of physical security forces provided by governments or local groups, individuals must take up the role of protecting themselves by being conscious of the security, as well as continuous improvement in community protection skills.

Keywords: security, insecurity, security consciousness, crime.

Author a o: Department of Public Administration, University of Maiduguri - Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

The challenge of insecurity is a key discourse of many communities in this century due to the world's affliction with protection-related concerns. Security challenges such as theft, fraud, cultism, kidnapping, banditry, insurgency, terrorism, or rituals are global pandemics that continues to distort world peace and affect the

progress made in the physical, political, and socio-economic lives of the people and their communities.

In communities where people are increasingly becoming victims of crime and criminal activities, it is significant to be security conscious. It is not enough to have guards all the time. Still, one must be security conscious themselves because it helps in avoiding and responding to dangerous situations (Abundant Life Evangelical Mission [ALEM], 2020), which everyone is supposed to know, digest, and adopt.

Security is a universal entitlement that is a core part of human life. When insecurity bedevils a particular community, instability and confusion sets. The absence of peace and security sabotages all forms of development in communities and creates social disorder, which subsequently leads to the underdevelopment of communities. Insecure communities are characterized by the prevalence of conflict, violence, poverty, illiteracy, fraud, infrastructural decay, and many other social problems.

II. COMMUNITY SECURITY

Community security includes both group security and personal security, which focuses on ensuring communities and their members are safe and free from threat, fear, or anxiety. It promotes a multi-stakeholder approach that is driven by analysis of community needs and taking cognizance of cultures and contexts whether individual-oriented (including many in Latin America) or group-oriented (including many in South Asia and Africa). The core feature of the community security approach is a bottom-up method of security creation (both short and long term), not a top-bottom method, where decisions such as peace agreements are made at central or national levels (UNDP, 2009).

Communities must be conscious of conflict-driven issues around them through ensuring community safety and security, which ensures that communities are protected against the breakdown of communities which provide members with a reassuring sense of identity and shared value system, which includes protection of ethnic minorities and indigenous groups as a central focus, including being liberated from (UNDP, 1995):

1. threats from the state (physical torture);
2. threats from other states (war);
3. threats from another group of people (ethnic tension);
4. threats from individuals or gangs against other individuals or gangs (crime, street violence);
5. threats directed against women (rape, domestic violence);
6. threats directed at children based on their vulnerability and dependence (child abuse);
7. threats to self (suicide)

According to Bennet (2014), community security provides an important avenue for peace, security, and development progress because it permits communities to define and execute interventions in line with their actual needs and priorities, thereby helping communities discover creative, collaborative, and preventive solutions to security challenges, including:

1. Weak and poor state relations;
2. Overly state-centric models and views of security;
3. Lack of institutional resource and capacity;
4. Challenges of fostering genuine accountability and political incentives for security and justice reform;
5. Tensions within and between communities, particularly involving marginalized groups;
6. Lack of effective models for providing security, including poor rule of law and access to justice at the local level;
7. Lack of decent opportunities for income generation and better livelihoods;
8. Gender inequality and its potential to feed into gender-based violence and gender-related conflict dynamics;
9. The need to reintegrate former combatants into communities;

10. The need to decentralize, or extend the reach of, security and justice provision while maintaining values and accountability; and
11. The need to anticipate tensions and security challenges and work on them preventatively and constructively.

III. SECURITY AND SECURITY CONSCIOUSNESS

Security is described as the stability and continuity of livelihood, predictability of daily life, protection from crime, freedom from psychological harm, and protection from emotional stress, which results from the certainty of knowing that one is accepted, wanted, or loved and protected in one's community and by people around a particular surrounding (Oni, 2016). While this description has different dimensions, it can be summarized in a composite definition as the protection against all forms of psychological, physical, and economic harm (Adeyemi & Olotu, 2020). Contrarily, being open to danger, threat, or lack of protection represents insecurity. It also includes the anxiety involved when people feel insecure or lack confidence.

Being conscious is practically not a one-off feeling. It is constant for a living being. Relating this with our daily security concern means the need to be aware of threats and dangers one is exposed to on a daily basis. Being unaware of this, one innocently becomes a victim of insecurity in communities (ALEM, 2020). Being security conscious connotes knowing the happenings around us, what to do about them, or how to react to them. The term 'consciousness' here represents knowledge because it is impossible to react if one does not know or have an idea of the impact of a situation (ALEM, 2020).

Security consciousness is about being in the state of noticing discrepancies in situations of our surroundings. It also means noticing people who behave strangely or any other thing that is different from usual in the surrounding. Put differently, being security conscious can be the difference between being in safety and being in danger (Professional Alert Security Limited [PASL], 2019). Security consciousness is the knowledge

and attitude that citizens possess about the protection of their lives, information, networks, or organizations through taking sensible precautions and reasonable measures, as well as being aware of risks, threats, vulnerabilities and available safeguards.

A secured community is the community that is attributed with peace and the presence of all sorts of non-violence acts, and such acts could even become unthinkable and unlikely. Community members have a responsibility to protect their communities. These communities serve as one's home, and such home is their largest investment and identity. When crime bedevils a community, the members of that community often respond by taking some local measures, sometimes with elements of external support depending on the gravity of the criminal activities.

IV. SECURITY CHALLENGES IN COMMUNITIES

The world is experiencing a dramatic increase in criminal activities, lawlessness, and terrorism-related atrocities with series of killings, shootings, kidnappings, bombing, arson, or threat caused by series of factors such as poor human capital development, high level of poverty and illiteracy, religious extremism, political violence, unmet interests, natural disasters, ethnic and sectional intolerance, and economic imbalance.

Udoh (2015) emphasized that porous borders nowadays contribute significantly to promoting insecurity, which leads to the free flow of migrants from one country to another through unguarded borders. Several arms and ammunitions come through these borders in large quantities that end up in the hands of criminals, which aid their nefarious activities in communities of abode (Udoh, 2015). Furthermore, illegal armed groups sometimes import such arms to launch robbery attacks, bunker petroleum pipelines, kidnap for ransom, resist government decisions and engage in many other violent activities.

Community insecurity halts community development. No meaningful development can take place in conflict-prone communities because develop-

ment can only thrive in safe, secure, and peaceful societies. In insecure communities, all energy and resources are wasted in restoring peace and security. It is in this light that Denney (2013), as cited in Adekola and Enyiche (2017) concluded that, "the relationship between insecurity and underdevelopment is much stronger than the relationship between peace and development (p. 35). In communities where conflict exists, underdevelopment often exists. Lack of security of lives and property is a major obstruction to meaningful and sustainable development. Fear and anxiety that insecurity breeds discourage investors from established firms that can foster progress by boosting employment, infrastructure and socio-economic development.

V. BEING SECURITY CONSCIOUS AND ENSURING SECURITY IN COMMUNITIES

Keeping safe in insecure communities requires conducting regular surveillance because most criminals are opportunists who look for opportunities to carry out criminal activities. They study potential victims, learn their habits and look for the best opportunity to strike. To counter this, one should avoid doing the same thing every day. Be random to confuse the potential criminals (IGS Security, 2017). When smart criminals want to commit a crime, they often study their targets by observing the routine of people in the community and find out where there is a lapse in security (PASL, 2019). Conducting regular community surveillance will discourage criminals from criminalizing a community. It will further allow communities to respond to crises by either setting up appropriate response strategies or liaising with appropriate authorities to provide the needed solutions.

Individuals who keep late hours at night are prone to danger, threat, kidnapping or robbery because criminals like to operate late hours at night, especially in narrow, dark, or quiet paths. When individuals walk alone in such a state, the risk is even higher compared to when in groups. These criminals use arms, which makes it easy to threaten, attack, snatch or even kill. Due to the darkness involved at night hours, criminals are hardly identified or detected. They find it very

easy to hide their identities and run away, even when security forces are involved.

Criminals are known for the habit of studying people's consistent patterns of life, such as the route they follow, programmes they attend, cars and devices they use, schools they take their kids to, their interests and hobbies, among others. Doing the same thing regularly eases criminal activities. Being unpredictable is therefore necessary for keeping safe. The more predictable individuals become, the easier it is for criminals to strike. Now that criminal activities are regular, individuals are urged to be unpredictable and random. Allow some randomness in your life and try to change some static patterns that can be used as clues by enemies (ALEM, 2020).

Being secretive is an important aspect of being security conscious. Sharing information with unnecessary people or strangers makes people vulnerable or prone to attacks, as ALEM (2020) notes that the more criminals know, the accurate they attack, and vice versa. Individuals are urged not to share private information in public spaces such as markets, buses, trains, clubs, schools, or any public gathering. More so, when speaking on the phone, be cautious how you talk about money, properties, gold, diamonds, and other valuables until one is sure who is around them. Often lower your voice, and be mindful of who is around you. Any information unguardedly whispered can get to the enemy, whose source may be from someone eavesdropping from the conversation.

The utilization of physical security as guards is significant in the protection of lives and properties. Communities must make an effort to have adequate security (personnel) presence with enough arms and ammunition, and should be complemented with the traditional safety measure like the use of locks, burglaries, gates, etc. Aside from these, communities should adopt state-of-the-art technology such as installing functional CCTV cameras, password protected locks, high-capacity memory, and alarms. According to PASL (2019), make regular security checks despite the existence of the latest technology. In addition, doors and windows remain locked unless necessary, and residents should have their keys with them all the time.

Adequate planning in respect of the community's security is paramount. It can take the form of knowing escape routes, having emergency phone numbers, being aware of the safest and quickest escape routes, and knowing good hiding spots in communities (GPS Security, 2014). Furthermore, individuals or groups in communities may keep approved weapons in case the need for self-protection for criminals may arise. Community members are encouraged to be on good terms with their neighbours, monitor strange faces and other movements continuously. Review security plans regularly. Individuals should act based on the plan such as changing movement routes and gate/door locks. Animals such as monkeys, parrots and dogs can also be used for surveillance. Planning is key in everything. With good plan, unforeseen dangers can be prevented or countered.

Improving community security can be achieved through establishing community watch systems, improving lighting of dark places, community clean up initiatives, surveillance of homes and neighbours, addressing empty buildings, hiring and consulting security service, informing neighbours about security issues, and consider renting out parking spaces in one's driveway (Weisberg Cummings, 2015).

The entire community should be involved in this by setting up a neighborhood watch committee system. This committee should observe and report suspicious behavior, work with police, put up signs to let would-be criminals know the community's pro-activeness, and inform other people of the community about criminal activities. Poor lighting spaces can be a good hideout for criminals. Community members, through local or state authority strategies, must therefore provide adequate lighting that will discourage criminals from hiding.

Community members should organize a clean-up campaign from time to time to get rid of overgrown trees, litter, and other wastes capable of promoting crime and suspicious activities. The system will not only help in cleaning the community but will also encourage community spirit among members, which is key to achieving collec-

tive security. In addition, one's home will be less of a target when doors, windows, and gates are in good working conditions, with complimentary alarms and other deterrence. Where empty buildings in the community exist, owners should be contacted to either use or rent them out. Leaving it empty can attract criminal activities.

In ensuring community security, local security strategies play a significant role. Civil society organizations (CSOs), traditional institutions, religious centers, market associations, motorist unions, youth groups, women groups, elders' forums, and people living with disabilities (PLW- Ds) in their formal and informal camps are critical in community security. The roles these groups could play take the form of intelligence gathering, logical consideration, early warning signals, physical confrontation, or social security measures, depending on each group's capability, relevance, and expertise, as well as the context in which it is needed.

VI. SOCIAL COHESION IN COMMUNITIES

Communities that lack social cohesion are known for social tensions, violent conflicts, targeting minorities and human rights violations. With social cohesion, there would be tolerance and respect for diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion, politics, gender, economy, or age, both individually or institutionally (UNDP,2009). According to Berger Schmidt (2000), there are two principal dimensions to social cohesion in communities:

- i. The reduction of disparities, inequalities, and social exclusion.
- ii. The strengthening of social relations, interactions, and ties.

The first dimension is about developing techniques for engaging excluded groups. Such exclusion takes different forms (economic, political, social, or cultural). Promoting social inclusion involves tackling power relations and confronting social groups or institutions in charge of the exclusion. The objective is to ensure that people of diverse backgrounds have similar life opportunities. People become more insecure if they are victimized due to their ethnicity, religion, culture, or gender. Such can become societal crises if a marginalized or affected group decides to use vio-

lent means in claiming rights or redress inequalities (Colleta & Cullen, 2000; Stewart, 2006).

The second dimension of social cohesion in communities entail developing social capital in all its forms, which serves as invisible glue that keeps society together even in stressful and difficult times (Colleta & Cullen, 2000; Stewart, 2006). Social capital can be strengthened through the following ways:

- i. Building trust—people trusting one another.
- ii. Fostering respect—developing an understanding of others.
- iii. Supporting social networks that connect groups together.
- iv. Increasing the responsiveness of state to its citizenry.
- v. Encouraging participation and active engagement by people from different backgrounds developing a common sense of belonging, a shared future vision, and a focus on what different social groups have in common.

VII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shapes people's behavioral intentions. The theory further posits that people make logical and reasoned decisions to engage in specific behaviors through evaluating the available information. People's behavior is determined by people's intention to engage in it and the perception that behavior is within one's control (Ryan & Carr, 2010).

TPB is one of the most used models in analyzing security compliance and behaviors. It is one of the reasons why it is highly established in behavioral sciences. The theory insists that behavior is influenced by intentions that are related to the behavior, and by actual behavior control, which moderates the effect of intentions on behavior. Attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control are the results of the individuals in the community and the strength of these beliefs. The theory describes how the assessments of the underlying beliefs are aggregated into attitudes and behaviors (Somestad & Hallberg, 2013).

beliefs are aggregated into attitudes and behaviors (Sommestad & Hallberg, 2013).

Applying TPB to security consciousness in communities can be seen from the angle where community members' attitudes and intentions are mediated by goals and needs. For example, those who want a secure community can devise local defense strategies and liaise with existing security forces. Put differently, the goals and needs must relate with the attitude and intentions. TPB aids in understanding how people's behavior changes, as it assumes that behavior is planned. Hence, it predicts deliberate behavior.

People's behavior significantly influences security. Practices intended to lower security risks can be promoted in communities and be made local security policies that individuals and groups are expected to abide by. With TPB in this context, suitable and unsuitable behaviors can be identified. What determined its suitability will be its ability to proffer solutions such as promoting security consciousness. It will be unsuitable when considered as behavior that will not promote security-related awareness among communities.

IX. CONCLUSION

Many strategies exist to become security conscious. While adopting them will increase security measures, citizens are urged to continue devising more sophisticated means of protecting their communities and consult experts when unsure or need clarification and improvement. Security is a sine qua non for equitable and sustainable growth and development. Communities must therefore be adequately knowledgeable about security situations and continue devising means of restoring peace.

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