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Role of Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps in Safeguarding Critical National Infrastructure: Evidence from Isoko North

Mercy Etakpobunor AGBAMU
Department of Sociology
Delta State University, Abraka

Research Article

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of the National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in safeguarding critical national infrastructure in Isoko North Local Government Area (LGA) of Delta State, Nigeria. The research aimed to identify NSCDC's impact on security, analyze encountered challenges, and evaluate its overall effectiveness in protecting critical economic infrastructure. Using a mixed research design that included a single item cross-sectional survey, focused group discussions, and interviews, data were gathered from a diverse population of 100 respondents residing in Isoko North LGA. Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine the sample size, and a quarter of the calculated size was taken. Data collected underwent descriptive statistical analysis for the survey and thematic analysis for qualitative data. The findings revealed NSCDC's positive impact on community engagement, intelligence gathering, and localized crime prevention, alongside operational challenges such as resource constraints and political interference. The study concluded that addressing these challenges including strategic resource allocation, political autonomy, interagency collaboration, continuous training, and technological integration is crucial for optimizing NSCDC's effectiveness in safeguarding critical infrastructure and responding to evolving security threats.

Keywords: Civil defence corps, collaboration, critical infrastructure, national security.

Corresponding author: Dr. Mercy Etakpobunor Agbamu: mercy.agbamu@delsu.edu.ng

INTRODUCTION

Security is paramount in societal progress, and it is intertwined with political, social, and economic advancements (Egberedu, 2020). It ensures a stable environment for individuals and groups to pursue their goals without disruption or harm. Critical infrastructure protection is vital for national security, public health, and economic stability (Adedayo, 2014). Government agencies like the Nigerian Armed Forces, Nigerian Police Force, and intelligence bodies are entrusted with safeguarding critical assets. Other agencies, including indigenous crime control mechanism-vigilantes, also play key roles in this effort (Dickson & Ezirim, 2023; Irogbo & Agbamu, 2023). The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) is central to safeguarding government infrastructure. Originating as the Lagos Civil Defense Committee in 1967, it evolved into the NSCDC in 1970 and gained significant legal authority in 2003 (Falode, 2016). The NSCDC Act empowers the Corps to arrest and investigate offenses related to public utility vandalism (Ibrahim & Bala, 2018). The Corps conducts continuous surveillance of government infrastructures, recommends Private Guard Companies for registration, and provides intelligence on criminal activities. Its autonomy since 2003 allows independent decision-making (Ibrahim & Bala, 2018). In Delta State, the NSCDC plays a crucial role in protecting government infrastructures, given the region's historical significance. This research aims to assess the NSCDC's impact in safeguarding critical government assets in Delta State.

Previous evaluations of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) have highlighted challenges in protecting critical infrastructure against insurgency and theft. However, they lack analysis of the NSCDC's effectiveness in fulfilling its responsibilities. Collaboration between the government and NSCDC

regarding infrastructure security is inadequately explored (Emmanuel, 2019). Citizen involvement in asset protection is underexplored. Evaluations acknowledge issues like slow promotions and salary delays but overlook their impact on NSCDC personnel. Information gathering gaps persist, affecting operational efficiency and public cooperation (Ibrahim & Bala, 2018). These gaps underscore the need for more thorough assessments of NSCDC strategies, collaborations, citizen participation, personnel welfare, and information gathering to address Nigeria's security challenges.

The main objective of this research is to assess the role of Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corp in the protection of critical government infrastructure. Other objectives are to: evaluate the impact of NSCDC on infrastructure protection in Isoko North LGA in Delta State; assess the effectiveness of NSCDC in the discharge of their duties in Isoko North LGA in Delta State; and highlight the challenges facing NSCDC in ensuring security of infrastructure Isoko North LGA in Delta State.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Infrastructure encompasses a wide range of public works supporting natural resource utilization and service provision through physical structures or systems (Out & Apeh, 2022). It plays a vital role in economic dynamics, affecting production, consumption, and expenditures (Olayinka et al., 2022). This includes facilities, equipment, and services crucial for organizational functioning (Okenyodo, 2016), categorized as ordinary, special, or critical, with critical infrastructure supporting vital societal functions like health, safety, security, and economic prosperity (Osinowo, 2015).

Critical infrastructure includes electric power distribution, telecommunications, transportation, water supply, and government services, vital for system stability and security (National

Security Civil Defence Corps, 2021; Okoli, 2012). It faces ongoing threats, necessitating continuous efforts to identify, optimize, and secure against risks, especially in the context of post-9/11 terrorist concerns (National Security Civil Defence Corps, 2021; Olayinka et al., 2022; Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019; Osinowo, 2015).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two theoretical frameworks provided here are: social system theory, and frustration-aggression theory. They are presented in the subsequent sub-headings.

Social System Theory by Talcott Parsons (1951)

This study is also explained using the great American Sociologist, Talcott Parsons theory of social system. Parsons' social system theory (1951) is deeply rooted in structural functionalist perspective in Sociology. Functionalism likened society to a system that consists of interconnected and interrelated parts which work together to form the whole. The functionalists posit that society is like an organism such as the human body and just as the human body is made up of organs like liver, lung, and heart, so is society with different sub-systems like the political, educational, economic, family and religious structures. They argued that an understanding of any of the sub-system requires an understanding of its relationship to other sub-systems and contribution to the maintenance of society. They further argued that society like the biological organism has needs known as functional prerequisites that must be satisfied by the various parts, if the society must survive (Haralambos & Holborn, 2007). These basic assumptions are the underlying principles of Parsons Social system theory.

Parsons' concern was on how to maintain order in society. He viewed society as a system with four functional

prerequisites namely: adaption, goal attainment, integration and lastly pattern maintenance which must be solved if the society is to continue to exist.

- i. **Adaptation:** This refers to the relationship of the system and its environment. In order to survive, the social system needs to have some level of control over the environment.
- ii. **Goal Attainment:** It means the need for all societies to diligently set goals that will direct social activity. Methods of establishing goals and prioritizing between goals are internalized in the terms of political system. Government not only set goals but also allocates resources to achieve them. Even in the recognized free enterprise type of system, the economy is also governed by rules and directed by laws instituted by governments.
- iii. **Integration:** This primarily refers to the adjustment of conflicts. It is concerned with the organization and mutual adjustment of all the segments of the social system. The law is the main institution that meets this need. Legal norms stipulate and standardize relations among individuals and between social institutions, and so, reduce the potential conflict. Where conflict does arise, the judicial system settles it so that it does not therefore leads to the breakdown of the social system.
- iv. **Pattern Maintenance:** It refers to how the basic values of society are maintained and institutionalized. The institutions that are charged with this responsibility are the family, education and religion. The individual in the society must be continuously furnished, maintained and motivated, and cultural patterns been established also to sustain that motivation. (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2014). Parsons asserted

that all social system can be explained in terms of the basic functional requirements he enumerated. Thus, all segments of the society can be analyzed with reference to the function they perform in the adaption, goal achievement, integration and maintenance of the system pattern.

In the context of infrastructure development, this theory underscores the crucial role of institutions like the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in ensuring societal stability and progress. Functionalism emphasizes the positive contributions of institutions while also recognizing potential dysfunctions (Fuchs, 2020). In the case of the NSCDC, its primary function is to safeguard critical infrastructures, aligning with the functionalist perspective on the role of institutions in maintaining social order.

Talcott Parsons' AGIL SCHEME further elucidates the importance of adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency in the functioning of social systems (Fuchs, 2020). Applied to the NSCDC, this framework highlights the need for the agency to adapt to evolving security challenges, set clear goals for infrastructure protection, integrate effectively with other institutions, and maintain high standards of motivation and ethical conduct among its staff.

However, the NSCDC cannot ensure infrastructure protection alone. Collaboration with other institutions, including government bodies responsible for resource allocation and policy-making, is essential. This collaborative approach aligns with functionalist views on the interconnectedness of institutions in achieving societal goals. The NSCDC's role in infrastructure development is not just about physical protection but also about contributing to societal stability and progress (Fuchs, 2020). This requires not only external resources but also innovative strategies and fresh perspectives from

within the system to address complex infrastructure safety challenges effectively. This current study therefore, will evaluate the role and efficacy of NSCDC in line with the tenants of structural-functionalism.

Frustration-Aggression Theory

The frustration-aggression theory, developed by Dollard and colleagues, posits that frustration can lead to aggressive behavior, particularly when the source of frustration cannot be directly addressed, leading to displacement onto innocent targets. This theory also suggests that frustration can breed prejudice and heightened aggression toward certain groups (Wrangham, 2018).

In the context of Delta State, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) faces challenges in protecting key infrastructure. Frustration over resource deprivation on the part of locals has led to armed conflict among youth, prompting concerns that NSCDC may resort to violence as a strategy to safeguard infrastructure (Wrangham, 2018). However, such tactics can sabotage community collaboration and dialogue, worsening public perception of NSCDC and potentially fueling further violence and attacks on infrastructure. The current study argues that NSCDC cannot effectively protect infrastructure given the violence resulting from local's feeling of deprivation.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The roots of Civil Defence can be traced back to the reign of Emperor Nero in the Roman Empire, where citizens were mobilized to secure military and foreign establishments (Morisco, 2023; Iwu, 2015). This concept evolved through various names like Home Guards and Body for Air Raid and Disaster Protection during the World Wars, ultimately adopting the name, Civil Defence at post-World War II (Morisco, 2023). Globally

recognized, Civil Defence aims to mitigate civilian losses during warfare (Morisco, 2023). International organizations like the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement played pivotal roles in promoting civil defence awareness and protection (Adedayo, 2014).

The 1949 Geneva Conventions marked a significant step in recognizing and protecting Civil Defence Organizations, ensuring their continuity even during occupation (Johnson et al., 2022). These conventions delineate the roles, protections, and limitations of civil defence organizations, emphasizing their non-military character (National Security Civil Defence Corps, 2012). They are tasked with shielding civilians from hostilities, providing immediate assistance, and ensuring survival conditions (National Security Civil Defence Corps, 2021). The protocol also addresses the identification, protection, and treatment of civil defence personnel and facilities during conflicts and occupation (National Security Civil Defence Corps, 2007).

In Nigeria, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) traces its origins to the Civil War period in 1967, initially as the Lagos Civil Defence Committee (National Security Civil Defence Corps, 2012). It was officially gazetted in 1986 and later received formal recognition and expanded responsibilities in 1988 (National Security Civil Defence Corps, 2021). The NSCDC was formally established as a paramilitary organization by legislative approval in 2003, with a mandate encompassing security, disaster prevention, and public education (National Security Civil Defence Corps, 2007).

Operating under the Ministry of Interior, the NSCDC focuses on intelligence gathering, monitoring trade activities, national orientation, and disaster operations (National Security Civil Defence Corps, 2012). Its multifaceted role includes conflict resolution, public safety education, and disaster management, aligning with global civil

defence principles (National Security Civil Defence Corps, 2021). The legislative journey culminating in the NSCDC's establishment reflects Nigeria's commitment to bolstering national security and crisis response capabilities (National Security Civil Defence Corps, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

The research method applied here is a mixed design combining a single-item cross-sectional survey, Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), and Interview Schedules (IS). The population of interest is diverse, encompassing Security Experts, Politicians, Analysts, and other citizens from Isoko North Local Government Area (LGA) in Delta State. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, whose outcome was re-adjusted for one-fourth of the calculated outcome.

Then the systematic random sampling method was adopted in the selection of respondents. First, the total population size (N), estimated at 111,919, was divided by the desired sample size plus one (n+1) to determine the sampling interval. This resulted in a sampling interval of approximately 1,119. Using a random starting point, every 1,119th individual was selected until the sample size of 100 respondents was reached.

The primary data collection instrument was the single-item survey, graded on a scale of "0-100" to assess respondents' views on NSCDC effectiveness. FGDs and IS were used for in-depth qualitative data. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics for the survey and thematic analysis for qualitative data, with results synthesized in the discussion. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, allowing participant withdrawal, and respecting cultural sensitivities related to conflict and violence in the area.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data gathered from the field were analyzed and presented in tables while qualitative data gathered from interview and focused group discussions (FGD) are presented in themes. It should be noted that of the 100 respondents scheduled to participate in this study, only 79 could participate.

Presentation of Themes

The interview and focused group discussion were guided by two basic questions: (i) How do you perceive the impact of NSCDC on protection of critical infrastructure in Isoko North LGA of Delta State? (ii) What challenges do you believe NSCDC faces in ensuring the protection of critical infrastructure in Isoko North LGA of Delta State? From the responses gathered via voice recording and hand-taken notes, analysis of the responses resulted in extraction of multiple themes and sub-themes which were then re-synthesized and presented in three broad themes: Impact on Security; Challenges and; Assessment of Effectiveness. Each of the broad themes identified several critical issues and is presented below:

Impact on Security

Participants (n=40) are optimistic about NSCDC's positive impact on security in Isoko North LGA, noting improvements in community engagement, intelligence gathering, and localized crime prevention. However, a minority (n=18) highlighted concerns about operational consistency and effectiveness against organized crime like oil bunkering and militant groups. They cited insufficient training and inadequate modern equipment hindering swift responses to emerging threats. A key concern was the lack of sophisticated arms compared to the ones in possession of criminals.

Furthermore, participants (n=34) stressed the need for clearer legal frameworks and human rights oversight for NSCDC operations. They noted NSCDC's increased legitimacy after being ratified to carry heavy and light weapons. However, some expressed worries about excessive force use and legal ramifications.

Despite these issues, participants (n=49) acknowledged reduced tension due to NSCDC's patrols in critical areas like forest reserves, highways, and oil pipelines, indicating a positive impact on infrastructure protection and community collaboration. NSCDC personnel (n=16) highlighted joint efforts with the police and communities to combat illegal activities like oil theft and pipeline vandalism in these areas.

Challenges

The discussion focused on NSCDC's challenges in securing critical economic infrastructures in Isoko North LGA, Delta State. Participants highlighted key themes: "Resource Mobilization and Allocation" emphasized the need for funding to enhance operational effectiveness; "Political Neutrality and Autonomy" stressed maintaining impartiality and autonomy to avoid political interference; "Inter-agency Collaboration and Coordination" to address issues with coordination among security agencies; "Training and Capacity Building" emphasized continuous training for personnel; and "Technological Integration and Innovation" highlighted the need for advanced technology. Some noted the NSCDC's outdated technology and the potential loss of relevance due to shifts in energy focus. Overall, there is a call for improved funding, autonomy, inter-agency coordination, modernized training, technological upgrades, and strategic vision to address evolving security threats effectively.

Assessment of Effectiveness

Based on the single item survey designed, participants were asked to give an honest assessment of their judgment on the effectiveness of NSCDC safeguarding national critical infrastructure in Isoko North LGA by assigning a score between ranges of “0-100” with 0 being “lowest effectiveness range possible” and “100 being highest effectiveness range possible”. The allocation of score is presented below:

Table 1:
Effectiveness score range allocation

Grouped Range	NSCDC Officials (A)	Community Leaders (CL)	Security Experts (SE)	Ordinary Residents (OR)	Total
0-40 (Poor)	3	6	6	9	24
41-59 (Fair)	5	10	4	6	25
60-69 (Good)	7	4	3	7	21
70-100 (Excellent)	4	1	1	3	9
Total					79

Source: Author (2024)

Based on the score allocated, the general sentiment about the effectiveness of NSCDC Corps was ranked just “fair” effectiveness by majority of participants (n=25) allocating score between “41-59”, followed closely by “0-40” (n=24) score range indicating “Poor” effectiveness, then, 60-69 score (n=21), indicating “Good” effectiveness. However, following the positive trend (PT), a cumulative (C) of the “fair”, “Good” and “Excellent” scores indicate C’s PT= 55, hence, there is a strong agreement between participants about perception of the Effectiveness of NSCDC. This statistical approach is supported by Tsekpo, Wahua, Ngwenya, Akpomeyoma, and Brobbey (2024), and Tsekpo, Wahua, Akinsete, Mkombo, and Anderson (2024).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of the National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) operations in Isoko North LGA,

Delta State, reveals critical insights into its impact on security, the challenges faced, and its overall effectiveness.

The findings indicate that the NSCDC has a notable positive impact on security in Isoko North LGA. Participants reported improvements in community engagement, intelligence gathering, and localized crime prevention, particularly concerning the protection of critical infrastructure such as oil pipelines and highways. This aligns with the assertions of Ibrahim & Bala (2018), who emphasize the importance of community collaboration and intelligence in enhancing security efforts. The increased legitimacy of the NSCDC, as noted by Emmanuel (2019), has facilitated better community trust and cooperation, essential for effective crime prevention and infrastructure protection.

Despite these positive impacts, the study highlights several operational challenges. Resource constraints, including inadequate funding and outdated technology, were frequently mentioned by participants as significant hindrances to the NSCDC's operations. This finding is consistent with the literature, where Olayinka et al. (2022) and Osinowo (2015) underscore the necessity of modern resources and technology for effective infrastructure security. Additionally, political interference and the lack of political neutrality were identified as obstacles, echoing the concerns raised by Fuchs (2020) about the impact of external influences on security agencies' effectiveness.

The need for continuous training and capacity building for NSCDC personnel was also emphasized, aligning with Umar and Othman (2017) who argue that specialized training is crucial for addressing evolving security threats. Participants noted that NSCDC personnel often lack the sophisticated training required to respond swiftly to organized crime and emerging threats, a point supported by the theoretical framework of

structural-functionalism, which emphasizes the role of institutions in maintaining social order (Fuchs, 2020).

The effectiveness of the NSCDC was generally rated as "fair" by the majority of participants, indicating room for improvement. The mixed perceptions of effectiveness reflect the complex nature of the challenges faced by the NSCDC. While there is acknowledgment of its contributions to security, the operational inconsistencies and resource limitations hinder its ability to achieve optimal performance (Okoli, 2015).

Participants stressed the importance of clearer legal frameworks and human rights oversight for NSCDC operations, reflecting the views of Dickson and Ezirim (2023) on the need for robust legal structures to guide security agencies. The frustration-aggression theory also provides a lens to understand the potential negative impact of resource deprivation and political interference on the NSCDC's effectiveness (Wrangham, 2018).

A significant finding of the study is the positive trend in community collaboration. Despite the challenges, the NSCDC has managed to build a level of trust and cooperation with local communities, which is crucial for its operations. This is in line with Morisco (2023) and Adedayo (2014), who highlight the importance of community engagement in civil defence activities. The study's findings suggest that the NSCDC's efforts in community engagement have been fruitful, leading to enhanced intelligence gathering and crime prevention.

It is also observed that the findings of this study are well-grounded in the theoretical frameworks of structural-functionalism and frustration-aggression. Structural-functionalism, as discussed by Fuchs (2020), views the NSCDC as a crucial institution within the societal system, contributing to the stability and functionality of society by safeguarding critical infrastructure. The challenges identified, such as resource constraints and

political interference, represent dysfunctions within this system that need addressing to ensure optimal performance. The frustration-aggression theory, posited by Wrangham (2018), helps explain the potential adverse effects of these dysfunctions, such as community unrest and decreased operational effectiveness due to perceived inadequacies and political pressures. The positive impact of community engagement and collaboration observed in the study underscores the importance of institutional integration and adaptability, key components of the structural-functionalism framework, in maintaining social order and enhancing security.

The finding also observes a positive preference for multifaceted solutions. Improved resource allocation and technological upgrades are recognized as necessary to enhance operational capabilities (National Security Civil Defence Corps, 2021). Political autonomy and impartiality are also identified as crucial for the NSCDC to function effectively, as suggested by Fuchs (2020). Furthermore, continuous training and capacity building for NSCDC personnel are viewed as essential to equip them with the skills needed to address evolving security threats (Olayinka et al., 2022; Umar & Othman, 2017).

Conclusion

The assessment of NSCDC's impact in Isoko North LGA, Delta State, reveals multifaceted positive effects like improved community engagement and crime prevention, primarily through collaboration with local communities. However, challenges such as resource limitations and operational inconsistencies affect its effectiveness. Key challenges include resource allocation, political interference, and technology integration. Addressing these is crucial for NSCDC to enhance its operational capabilities and ensure comprehensive security coverage. NSCDC's role in infrastructure protection

is vital, but improvements are needed for optimal performance.

Recommendations

In line with the findings established in this study, the following recommendations are therefore suggested:

- i. NSCDC needs better teamwork with other security agencies to solve problems and share information. This could mean training together, sharing information, and meeting regularly.
- ii. NSCDC workers need modern security techniques training to handle new security issues. They should get special training in things like fighting terrorism and working closely with communities.
- iii. NSCDC personnel should be abreast with human right laws so that they can respects people's rights for equity and fairness.
- iv. NSCDC should stay neutral and independent from politics in the discharge of their duties. They should make decisions based on what's best for security, not politics, to keep the region safe.

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