Public Perception of the Judicial System and Jungle Justice in Nigeria: Assessment of Communication Strategies as Change agent in Cross River State, Nigeria

Jacob U Agba¹, Veronica E Bassey-Duke¹, Michael Ayang Nzam-Ayang¹, Uchino Amatey²

¹Department of Mass Communication, Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, Nigeria.
²Ministry of Information, Calabar, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study assesses the public perception of the menace of jungle justice in Nigeria, trial of the opinion of the Nigerian judicial system, and how the Social and Behavior Change Communication Strategies (SBCC) can be used to address the problem in Cross River State. The study was anchored on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Theory of Reasoned Action/Planned Behavior. In order to realize the objectives of the study, quantitative and qualitative methods of research were employed. The research findings revealed that there is presently, little or no media commitment to the creation of awareness on the issue of jungle justice. Consequently, there is a loss of faith by the citizenry in entrusting criminals to law enforcement agencies; because of their failure in the discharge of their functions. The study establishes that with the proper application of SBCC, strategies can serve as a change agent against jungle justice. The study, therefore, suggests among others, that the SBCC approach that is socio-ecologically driven, culturally based, and participatory driven, should be adopted. Ultimately, multi-dimensional media campaigns to initiate and sustain programs to educate and inform people, and reform law enforcement agencies regarding the dangers of jungle justice through the use of entertainment-education become imperative.

Keywords: Public Perception, Social and Behavior Change Communication, Jungle Justice, Judicial System, Change Agents.

Introduction

Jungle justice, sometimes called “mob justice” has become a rampant incident in different parts of Nigeria in which a group of people takes the law into their own hands, and enact violent justice on an alleged criminal. Mob justice perpetuates a cycle of violence, creates a
culture of fear, and rejects personal accountability for violent acts that are committed in the name of justice. Jungle justice is what lawyers refer to as self-help.

Although some may argue that the police may, or may not be entirely to blame, it is important to understand the social climate that allows jungle justice to happen. According to Levine (2011), mob justice is a result of a severe lack of faith in local police forces and judicial systems.

When people take laws into their own hands in a society, they basically express the idea that state institutions of law and order are dysfunctional and are not trusted. The constitution of Nigeria sets up within itself the procedure for the arrest, detention, and prosecution of any person suspected to have committed or is about to commit an offense (Orabueze et al., 2013).

Since at present, jungle justice is viewed as a just punishment for criminals by Nigerians who carry out this practice, one wonders why this punishment is mostly meted out to poor or low-class citizens alone while wealthy politicians cart away Nigeria’s resources to foreign lands without as much as a slap on their wrist.

However, there are a variety of techniques (ranging from simple tasks to elaborate system changes) that help promote alternative ways of dealing with criminals and this is where SBCC comes in.

SBCC is an interactive, researched, and planned process aimed at changing social conditions and individual behaviors. It employs various techniques and strategies to bring about change in attitudes, beliefs, norms, et cetera.

Research consistently shows that evidence-based communication programs can increase knowledge, shift attitudes, cultural norms, and produce changes in a wide variety of behaviors. However, no studies have been done to examine if the use of SBCC strategies can put an end to the problem of jungle justice in Nigeria. Consequently, this study is an attempt to explore that possibility.

**Statement of the Problem**

Jungle justice is a social problem that is fast becoming an ugly trend in Cross River State and it affects development at all levels. SBCC which is a branch of communication that brings about change in behaviors and attitudes could be useful in addressing this ugly trend.

The problem of this study, however, is that because our society has degenerated to a level where behavior and attitudes cannot be predicted, so one wonders if SBCC strategies which can be a veritable tool in curbing jungle justice are not usually incorporated in our media messages that the practice continues unabated!
In other words, one may ask, can social and behavior change communication which has worked so well in changing behaviors at individual, family, and community levels in different parts of the world be successfully applied in stemming the growing trends of jungle justice in Nigeria in general and individual states in Nigeria in particular? The aim of this study, therefore, is to attempt to answer this question.

**Objectives of the Study**

The study is set out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out the role of communication in the prevention of jungle justice in Cross River State, in particular, and Nigeria in general.
2. To determine why past communication strategies have failed to persuade the residents of Cross River State in particular, and Nigeria in general, to abandon jungle justice.
3. To ascertain the consequences of non-utilization of social and behavior change communication strategies in the prevention of jungle justice in Cross River State in particular, and Nigeria in general.
4. To ascertain the kinds of SBCC strategies which can be a veritable tool in curbing jungle justice in Cross River State in particular, and Nigeria in general.

**Research Questions**

This research sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the role of social and behavior change communication in the prevention of jungle justice in Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. Why past communication strategies have failed to persuade residents of Cross River State in particular, and Nigeria in general to abandon Jungle justice?
3. What are the consequences of non-utilization of advocacy, social mobilization, and behavior change communication strategies in the prevention of jungle justice in Cross River State in particular, and Nigeria in general?
4. Which of the SBCC strategies can be utilized as a veritable tool in curbing jungle justice in Cross River State and other parts of Nigeria?

**Literature Review**

**The Concept of Jungle Justice and its Motivation**

According to Levine (2011), jungle justice sometimes called “Mob Justice”, refers to the act of a group of people taking the law into their own hands and enacting violent justice on an alleged criminal. Jungle justice or mob justice which perpetuates a cycle of violence creates a culture of fear, and rejects personal accountability for violent acts that are committed in the name of justice. One of the most popular cases of jungle justice in Nigeria is the killing of four friends known as the Aluu4 in 2012. Chiadika Biringa, Lloyd Toku Mike, Tekena
Elkanah, and Ugonna Obuzor were all friends, first sons of their parents. They were students of the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The four students were also occasional roommates. Ugonna sometimes spent the night withTekena who lived outside the campus. He moved in because his residence on campus was broken into multiple times. Ugonna and Tekena were coming back from outside the campus one night when they met their other friends, Chidaka and Lloyd. One of the four had a debtor living in the nearby village of Aluu so all four decided to meet the person together. In the cause of settling the debt, a misunderstanding ensued which turned sour and eventually turned into a fight.

The debtor started screaming, claiming that the men were there to steal laptops and mobile phones. The vigilante group was alerted with the impression that the students were criminals disturbing the community. The four men were chased through the streets by the stick and stone-wielding vigilantes, stripped naked, beaten, and tortured until they were almost unconscious. Afterward, in the presence of a crowd, they were dragged through mud, had concrete slabs dropped on their heads, and car tires filled with petrol wrapped around their necks in order to burn them.

A sister of Tekena was nearby and discovered that her brother was about to be killed by way of "jungle justice." She tried to intervene and rescue him with his friends by screaming at the top of her voice at the mob and reiterating their innocence but she was overpowered by the size of the mob. People from the mob told her to flee. In a last attempt to save her brother's life, she decided to contact other family members and the police, but the men had been killed by the time the required assistance was sought. The murders were filmed with a mobile phone and uploaded on the internet (Duthiers, 2012; Blake, 2012).

The crime further exposed the prevalence of "jungle justice" or "mob justice" in Nigeria, and exposed some loopholes in Nigeria's law enforcement system (Umoru et al., 2012; Duthiers, 2012; Blake, 2012).

It is safe to say that when institutions, which are supposed to be at the pinnacle of nationhood, are being slaughtered at the altar of corruption, weak governance, ethnicity, and religious bigotry, what you get is the lynching and burning to death of people suspected of crimes through jungle justice. For instance, on February 20, 2017, six alleged armed robbers in Calabar-South Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria were burnt to death. Earlier, in 2015, four alleged armed robbers lost their lives in Okuku-Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State. In a similar circumstance, on the 25th of December, 2016, a suspected car thief was killed in the same manner in Obudu in Cross River State of Nigeria; and a whole lot of similar occurrences continue to happen daily.

Many people tend to justify the practice by casting aspersions on the law enforcement agencies and pleading the increasing lack of confidence and trust in the system of administration of justice. It is generally believed that prosecutors, police authorities, and sometimes judicial officers, are easily compromised to an extent where even notorious
criminal suspects handed over to the authorities are most often released without being punished.

This ugly trend is becoming almost a norm in Cross River State, a state that once prided itself on its peaceful, clean, and green environment. Frequently alleged criminals are beaten up, and burnt to death in various parts of Cross River State.

According to Jonathan (2017), there was a case of a suspected car battery thief who was beaten severely by an angry mob at Akai Effa Community in Calabar, the Cross River State capital. In the incident on Tuesday, June 20, 2017, the angry mob took the law into their hands by attempting to lynch the alleged criminal.

A trend such as this is a pathetic retrogression to bestiality and a sad reminder of how the Cross River Society in Nigeria has undergone a series of moral degeneration over the years. It has moved from a society where sanctity was highly accorded to human life, to that in which taking human life in the most gruesome and barbaric manner is a pleasant spectacle to behold, reminiscent of the gladiator era of ancient Rome (Obambon, 2017). Similar incidences are re-enacted in several parts of Nigeria.

A critical look at social and behavior change communication (SBCC) strategies may provide the panacea against jungle justice in Nigeria in general, and Cross River State in particular.

**Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Strategies in Stemming Jungle Justice**

SBCC, an off-shoot of behavior change communication (BCC) is an approach that promotes and facilitates changes in knowledge, attitudes, norms, beliefs, and behaviors.

Over the years, behavior change communication (BCC) efforts have focused on individual behavior change because the most widely used theories emphasize the individual level (Story & Figueroa, 2012). However, with a growing understanding that behaviors are grounded in a particular socio-ecological context, and change usually requires support from multiple levels of influence, an expansion of the approach to adopt social and behavior change communication (SBCC) strategies has become essential.

To achieve social and behavior change, SBCC is driven by epidemiological evidence, and client perspectives and needs. SBCC is guided by a comprehensive ecological theory that incorporates both individual level change and change at broader environmental and structural levels. Thus, it works at one or more levels: the behavior or action of an individual, collective action taken by groups, social and cultural structures, and the enabling environment. Putting SBCC into perspective, the addition of an ‘S’ to BCC aims to bring the field closer to the recognition of the need for systematic, socio-ecological thinking within communication initiatives (Leclerc-Madlala, 2011).
SBCC is the systematic application of interactive, theory-based, and research-driven communication processes and strategies to address “tipping points” for change at the individual, community, and social levels (C-Change, 2012). This communication process utilizes such approaches as advocacy and social and community mobilization strategies. SBCC views social and behavioral change as a product of multiple overlapping levels of influence, including individual, interpersonal, community, and organizational as well as political and environmental factors. The approach aims to define tipping points for change, which-in complex societies are not always found at the individual level. A tipping point is an event or determinant that provides the energy to “tip over” a situation to change (C-Change, 2012).

Simply put, SBCC is a research-based, consultative process that uses certain communication strategies to promote and facilitate behavior change and support the requisite social change to improve the society at large.

The efforts to bring about change in behavior have always been targeted at the individual level (person or persons affected) without recognizing the link between an individual and his social environment, and how various factors come in to play to bring about the much needed change. This is why SBCC is very important.

The three SBCC strategies are advocacy, social mobilization, and behavior change communication (BCC).

**Advocacy**

Advocacy operates at the political, social, and individual levels and works to mobilize resources, political, and social commitment for social change and/or policy change (Health Communication Capacity Collaborative, HC3, n.d).

Resources can include political will and leadership as well as money to fund the implementation of policies or programs. It aims at influencing decisions within political, economic, social systems, and institutions. Advocacy can be achieved by carrying out several activities, including, media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning, and publishing research.

Lewis et al. (1998) suggested that advocacy “serves two primary purposes: (1) increasing clients’ sense of personal power, and (2) fostering environmental changes that reflect greater responsiveness to their personal needs” (p.172).

Advocacy requires the mobilization of resources and groups in support of certain issues and policies to change public opinion. Media advocacy is the strategic use of mass media to advance the agenda on social or public policy initiatives. Media advocacy centers on shaping the public debate (UNFPA, 2002). Media advocacy is a part of a strategy to exert pressure on those whose decisions influence an environment. It uses the mass media appropriately,
aggressively, and effectively to support the development of public policies (Wallack et al., 1993).

Advocacy results could include policy change enacted, implementation bottlenecks removed, finances increased, and resources.

**Social Mobilization**

Social mobilization is defined as a process that engages and motivates a wide range of partners and allies at national and local levels to raise awareness, empower individuals and groups for action, and work towards creating an enabling environment and effecting positive behavior and/or social change through face-to-face dialogue. Members of institutions, community networks, civic and religious groups, and others, work in a coordinated way to reach specific groups of people for dialogue with planned messages. In other words, social mobilization seeks to facilitate change through a range of players engaged in interrelated and complementary efforts (UNICEF, n.d).

Some of the communication activities or approaches used in social mobilization include town hall meetings, rallies, seminars, workshops, etc.

**Behavior Change Communication**

Behavior change communication (BCC) is an interactive process of any intervention with individuals, communities, and/or societies (as integrated with an overall program) to develop communication strategies to promote positive behaviors that are appropriate to their settings. This in turn provides a supportive environment that will enable people to initiate, sustain, and maintain positive and desirable behavior outcomes.

BCC is the strategic use of communication to promote positive outcomes, based on proven theories and models of behavior change such as diffusion of innovation theory, social cognitive theory, etc. BCC employs a systematic process beginning with formative research and behavior analysis, followed by communication planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Audiences are carefully segmented, messages and materials are pre-tested, and both mass media and interpersonal channels are used to achieve defined behavioral objectives.

It is important to stress that providing people with information and teaching them how they should behave does not lead to a desirable change in their response/behavior. However, when there is a supportive environment with information and communication (teaching), then there is a desirable change in the behavior of the target group. Thus, BCC is proved to be an instructional intervention that has a close interface with education and communication. It is a strategic and group-oriented form of communication to perceive a desired change in the behavior of a target group.
BCC uses entertainment-education (EE) as one of its approaches to bring about positive change. Entertainment-education is an approach in which social messages are incorporated into entertainment programs (UNFPA, 2002). Entertainment-education is the process of purposively designing and implementing a media message both to entertain and educate, in order to increase audience member’s knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior (Rogers & Singhal, 1999).

Entertainment-education comes in many forms including serial dramas broadcast on TV and radio, cartoons, interactive “talk” shows, and folk media. Framing messages in a popular, entertaining format helps create an environment where people of all ages can carry on conversations about topics discussed in the television or radio drama series or show. In some cases, EE is used to legitimize sensitive topics for public discussion, giving people the positive reinforcement they need to talk about the issues with family and friends (UNFPA, 2002).

The above strategies are effective tools for dealing with many communities and group related problems such as the menace of jungle justice in Cross River State of Nigeria.

**Theoretical Framework**

Two theories relevant to this study are Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), otherwise modified and known as Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

**Social Cognitive Theory**

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is a theory that can back up the strong assertions of this study. According to LaMorte (2016), SCT started as the Social Learning Theory (SLT) in the 1960s by Albert Bandura before it developed into the SCT in 1986. It posits that learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behavior. He added that the unique feature of SCT is the emphasis on social influence and its emphasis on external and internal social reinforcement. SCT considers the unique way in which individuals acquire and maintain behavior, while also considering the social environment in which individuals perform the behavior. The theory takes into account a person's past experiences, which factor into whether behavioral action will occur. These past experiences influence reinforcements, expectations, and expectancies, all of which shape whether a person will engage in a specific behavior and the reasons why a person engages in that behavior.

According to Rimer and Glanz (2005), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) describes a dynamic, ongoing process in which personal factors, environmental factors, and human behavior exert influence upon each other. SCT evolved from research on Social Learning Theory (SLT),
which asserts that people learn not only from their own experiences, but also by observing the actions of others and the benefits of those actions.

Babatunde et al. (2010) added that social learning theory posits that individuals learn to engage in crime, primarily through their association with others. They are reinforced for crime, they learn beliefs that are favorable to crime, and they are exposed to criminal models. This follows the popular saying ‘show me your friend and I will tell you who you are’.

This, therefore, means that, in the case of jungle justice in Cross River State, if positive behaviors are modeled, people will adopt such behaviors. If people are taught or shown how to value lives and the consequences of their negative actions through jungle justice, they will form new beliefs and adopt new attitudes.

Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior

The Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior also deals with attitudes and behavior change. According to Glanz & Rimer (2005), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the associated Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) explore the relationship between behavior and beliefs, attitudes, and interventions. According to these models, behavioral intention is the most important determinant of behavior, and this behavioral intention is influenced by a person’s attitude towards performing a behavior, and by beliefs about whether individuals who are important to the person approve or disapprove of the behavior (subjective norm).

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was developed in 1967. During the early 1970s, the theory was revised and expanded by Ajzen and Fishbein, and in 1988, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was added to the existing model of reasoned action to address the inadequacies that Ajzen and Fishbein had identified through their research using the TRA. It can be postulated that this theory grew during the 19th century when the field of psychology began to look at the term "attitude". Those theories suggested that "attitudes could explain human actions" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, p. 13).

The TPB differs from the TRA in that it includes one additional construct, perceived behavioral control. This factor has to do with people’s beliefs that they can control a particular behavior. Ajzen and Driver (as cited by Glanz & Rimer, 2005) added this construct to account for situations in which people’s behavior or behavioral intention is influenced by factors beyond their control. They argue that people might try harder to behave in a particular way if they feel like they have a high degree of control over it.

As in the original Theory of Reasoned Action, a central factor in the theory of planned behavior is the individual’s intention to perform a given behavior. Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, and of how much of an effort they are planning to exert in order to perform the behavior. The stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely
should be its performance. However, TPB/TRA states that a behavioral intention can find expression in behavior only if the behavior in question is under volitional control, i.e., if the person can decide at will to perform or not perform the behavior.

If a person perceives that the outcome from performing a behavior is positive, he/she will have a positive attitude toward performing that behavior. The opposite can also be stated if the behavior is thought to be negative. If relevant others see performing the behavior as positive and the individual is motivated to meet the exceptions of relevant others, then a positive subjective norm is expected. If relevant others see the behavior as negative, and the individual wants to meet the expectations of these "others", then the experience is likely to be a negative subjective norm for the individual.

Review of Studies

This section focuses on some empirical studies carried out in related areas.

The Right to Life: A Case Study of the Mob Justice “System” in Uganda

A study carried out by Nalukenge in 2001 on “The right to life: A case study of the mob justice “system” in Uganda” adopted in-depth interview with participants who had engaged in mob justice, as well as general supporters of the phenomenon, and questionnaires aimed towards public actors within the legal system of the Ugandan society.

The researcher examines the relationship between mob justice (or mob violence) and weaknesses in the judicial system alongside the police. The study concluded that the causes of mob justice are rooted in an insufficient legal structure where weak laws (and following punishment) do not match the impact of the crimes committed; consequently, people take the law into their own hands. She also stated that the mentality of punishing a person responsible for someone else’s death by taking his/her life (an eye for an eye), is ingrained in the Ugandan culture and is connected to widely spread public illiteracy as well as inertia and delays in the judicial system.

A Critical Assessment of Public Administration and Civil Disobedience in Developing African Democracies: An Institutional Analysis of Mob Justice in Ghana

In 2014, Emmanuel Yeboah-Assiamah and Thomas Kyeremeh carried out a study on “A Critical Assessment of Public Administration and Civil Disobedience in Developing African Democracies: An Institutional Analysis of Mob Justice in Ghana” a case study of the Nima Community in the Greater Accra Region. The study sampled 140 respondents involving 40 police officials and 100 community members using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. A semi-structured questionnaire was the main research instrument.
Findings of the study revealed that mob justice is prevalent in the Nima community, not that the people are lawless per se but it is an action to deter potential criminals in the community. More importantly, mob action is perpetrated to ensure that justice is given to individuals for their actions. The study revealed that whilst respondents view the action as barbaric and affront to human rights and the law, they are compelled to do so because the alternative is probabilistic. The study found out that, the absence or insufficient law enforcement agents, and the perceived unsatisfactory performance of the security agents as well as the legal system greatly influence mob violence.

The study concluded that people perceive the police system and law courts to be too slow in reacting to issues of stealing, crime, robbery, and murder, for which the people demand quick interventions; this suggests that the ability of the law enforcement officials and agencies to work conscientiously to the satisfaction of the populace does have a greater implication on how people obey the law and trust the legal regime.

All the studies reviewed in this work focused either on causes, impact, or effects of jungle justice, but the focus of this study was on public perception in Cross River State of Nigeria’s judicial system and jungle justice and how to use social and behavior change communication as a change agent against jungle justice.

**Methodology**

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods as research designs to generate data interpreted to draw a conclusion. In the quantitative aspect, the survey method of research was employed utilizing the questionnaire as the instrument.

For the qualitative method, the focus group discussion guide was adopted to help the researcher gather information directly from the affected groups.

The total population of six communities in Cross River State studied was one million, five hundred and thirty-eight thousand, two hundred and ninety-one (1,538,291). The breakdown is as follows:

Given the projected population estimates in 2019:

Calabar municipal = 253,356

Calabar south = 264, 088

Obubra = 237,979

Yakurr = 270, 693

Obudu = 222,705
Yala = 289, 470

**Total -1,538,291**

Since the total population could not be studied, a sample of 450 was selected to represent this population.

The sample size was determined by Taro Yamane 1973 formula. According to him, for any finite population N, sample “n” should be determined by

\[
N = \text{the available population}
\]

\[1 = \text{statistics constant}\]

\[e = \text{level of significance}\]

\[2 = \text{power of the exponent}\]

The sample was, therefore, 450 (0.0293%) of the study population.

A total of three Focus Group Discussion (FGD) discussants, comprising four males and two females were formed, one for each local government area in each of the senatorial zones for the study; implying that a total of eighteen (18) discussants were recruited for the three FGDs determined by the purposive sampling procedure, comprising residents in communities where there have been incidences of jungle justice.

The questionnaire was aimed at soliciting information on the subject matter. While section ‘A’ was designed with questions that had options “yes” and “No”, section ‘B’ was designed in a four-point Likert scale with a scoring key as follows: Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Both sections were designed to aid the researcher to solicit specific responses possible with only closed-ended questions.

The questionnaire and focus group guide were subjected to validation. This was done to ensure that all necessary angles of this study were covered.

This study employed tabulation and simple percentage statistical method in analyzing data from the quantitative survey.

Data from the focus group discussion was transcribed and responses were grouped into themes and analyzed using explanation building technique.

**Results and Discussions**

Discussions are based on data gathered from both the questionnaire and the focus group discussion in line with the objectives and research questions of this study.
Research Question 1: What is the Role of Communication as Change Agent against Jungle Justice in Cross River State?

Results of the survey indicated that out of 450 respondents, 227 (50.4%) strongly agreed and 206 (45.8%) agreed that communication can serve as a change agent against jungle justice. Another result indicated that more than half of the respondents, 228 (50.7%) strongly agreed that the government can use various communication channels such as radio, television, social media et cetera, to serve as a change agent against jungle justice by creating awareness. The survey clearly indicated that 230 (51.1%) respondents agreed, and 190 (42.2%) strongly agreed that dramatization of the dangers of jungle justice should be aired on radio and television to change attitudes and behaviors against it.

Similarly, in the focus group discussion, Ohiana in the Northern zone said, “The media have some role to play, they can carry out radio and tv jingles against jungle justice. They can create programs showcasing the dangers of jungle justice. The media definitely have a role to play, the role of sensitization, and creating awareness” (Ikponya, Northern zone).

Discussants were of the opinion that communication can be used to shape public opinions as well as change public perception.

Mercy in the Central Senatorial Zone said, “The media have a major role to play, first of all, awareness is very important because you can’t go into campaign without creating an awareness. Let people know what jungle justice is all about, when that awareness has been created, then you now begin to shape their opinions, like this shouldn’t be done, this should be done instead”.

Although discussants opined that the media have a vital role to play in curbing jungle justice, they were also of the opinion that the media have not lived up to this responsibility.

Sergeant Eteng (Southern zone) said, “The media as agent of change and socialization have a very strong role to play in this issue of jungle justice and the media have not done much to this regard”.

Research Question 2: Why have the Past Communication Strategies Failed to Persuade Residents of Cross River State to Abandon Jungle Justice?

In answering this research question, respondents were asked whether suspected criminals should rather be handed over to the police instead of being punished in jungle justice. Majority of the respondents, 298 (65.2%), disagreed. This shows that the majority of respondents do not trust the police in handling criminals, so jungle justice occurs as a result of public perception of law enforcement agencies.

It was also clear from the opinions of respondents that jungle justice also occurs when people feel that the judicial system is weak. This was revealed in another survey where majority of
the respondents, (280 (52.2%)), were of the opinion that laws should be taken into the public’s hands due to a weak judicial system.

This was corroborated during the focus group discussions in which many opined that the law enforcement agencies are failing in their responsibilities to combat crime and protect lives and properties, hence people resort to jungle justice. One discussant in the Northern Senatorial Zone, Ikponya, said “The police are not trust worthy, they don’t even arrest criminals, sometimes when they do; they just collect money and set the person free. So the law enforcement agencies have contributed to jungle justice”.

Ohiaama in the North also said, “To be honest ehn! For me, I think people have lost faith in the police because of their dubious ways. The police are not really your friends as they claim to be”.

Others were of the opinion that jungle justice is due to the failure of the government to enact laws and policies against its perpetrators.

Data from the questionnaire and the focus group discussion linked jungle justice to the public perception of law enforcement agencies, governments' failure to enact laws, and lack of sensitization and awareness. This is also in line with the findings of Glad et al. (2010) which linked mob justice to several factors-the judicial system, weak law enforcement, lack of education et cetera.

This means that the communication strategies employed in the past to tell people that “the police are your friend”, or “do not take laws into your hands” has not been effective. If people have the perception that the police are not good, or the law enforcement agency is weak, it is because they have not been convinced beyond reasonable doubt that the police are truly their friend and will live up to their responsibility. This may be a result of misinformation, miscommunication, or a lack of proper application of the right communication strategies.

Discussants also said the media have not done enough to create awareness on the dangers of jungle justice, one discussant even said the media has contributed to the rise in jungle justice by staying silent on the issue. A discussant in the Southern zone, Ezekiel, said, “I blame the media for jungle justice because if they were doing what they are supposed to do by educating the people on how to go about acquiring justice the right way, we wouldn’t really have much of the jungle justice. So far the media has been quiet about it, I have never really seen much of the talk shows, jingles, adverts that border on jungle justice.”

This further confirms that communication strategies (if any) used to persuade people to trust law enforcement agencies and refrain from jungle justice are not effective enough, which is why the use of SBCC to bring about change in attitude and beliefs is advocated here.
Research Question 3: What are the Consequences of Non-utilization of Social and Behavior Change Communication Strategies as Change Agent against Jungle Justice in Cross River State?

To answer this research question, the survey result that indicated that 302 respondents, representing 68.1%, have engaged themselves in activities of jungle justice, helps to provide an answer to the question. Data from the survey also indicated that 241 (53.6%) out of 450 respondents agreed that jungle justice is a form of justice.

The consequence of the non-utilization of SBCC strategies in the curbing of jungle justice will lead to more such cases. Another consequence will be lawlessness; people will continue to think that it is acceptable to take laws into their hands.

Data from the survey also indicated that 309 (68.7%) respondents did not see jungle justice as a violation of human rights. When asked if jungle justice does more harm than good, 295 (65.6%) respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

If the above number of people are not properly informed about the dangers of jungle justice, if their faith in our law enforcement agencies is not restored by strengthening our institutions, if they are not punished when they engage in acts of jungle justice, if the government is not doing enough to protect lives and properties of citizens, et cetera, then jungle justice and other forms of criminalities will continue to prevail unabated.

This is why SBCC which takes a holistic approach in bringing about positive change, incorporating both individual level change and change at broader environmental and structural levels, is the right tool to combat jungle justice.

Research Question 4: Which of the SBCC Strategies can be utilized as a Veritable Tool in Curbing Jungle Justice in Cross River State?

Views of scholars in SBCC have revealed that the three SBCC strategies (advocacy, social mobilization, and behavior change communication) are veritable tools in curbing jungle justice in the state.

This was supported by the results of the survey. One of the results of the survey indicated that most of the respondents, (199 (44.2%)), strongly agreed that the government should enact laws against the perpetrators of jungle justice, and 153 (34%) respondents agreed to that. When asked if perpetrators should be arrested to curb jungle justice, more than half of the respondents (50.2%) agreed, and 141 (31.3%) strongly agreed to the statement.

The implication of the above data is that as per the respondents’ opinion, political will is needed to curb jungle justice. The government has to formulate policies and laws and improve institutions of the state. In other to arrive at this, the SBCC strategy needed is advocacy, which according to UNFPA (2002), requires the mobilization of resources and
groups in support of certain issues and policies to change public opinion; one of the ways to do this is through media advocacy.

Data derived from respondents revealed that sensitizing people on the dangers of jungle justice without strengthening institutions and setting up the right policies and laws is not enough to put an end to it. This opinion was also supported in the focus group discussion. When asked if the media has a role to play in the prevention of jungle justice, a discussant in the Southern Senatorial Zone, Ezekiel said, “Yes, sensitization, and advocacy, you know, talk to people and create awareness on this issue. But you cannot talk to people when there is no alternative, for instance, you go and tell people, when you catch a thief don’t beat or kill him, bring the person to the police station, whereas if you bring him to the police station the next day they will see the thief on the street”.

In the Central Senatorial Zone, another discussant, Emmanuel supported this opinion by saying, “1. The law enforcement agencies should be more effective. 2. There should be kind of enlightenment campaigns to that effect. I think those are the major things, because once the law enforcement agencies are not very effective, even if you carry out campaigns, at the end of the day, some persons will still want to engage in jungle justice; but when they are very effective, when you and I feel secured and protected, we will not want to take laws into our hands”.

Another discussant, Sergeant Eteng, said, “Another way to reduce or prevent jungle justice is for the government to strengthen our institutions, the police should be strengthened, and the judiciary should be strengthened. We heard that judges are corrupt, are you not seeing that they are sacking judges, are they not taking judges to the court, because the judicial system is corrupt. Are you not seeing that many policemen are dismissed because the system is very corrupt? So the government must strengthen judicial system to curb all this menace”.

Although data derived from respondents and discussants revealed that applying SBCC strategies of social mobilization and behavior change communication by sensitizing and creating awareness through town hall meetings, interpersonal communication, radio/ television jingles, talk shows, etc can prevent jungle justice, the dominant opinion was that creating awareness especially through dramatization will be more effective in ensuring that people abandon the practice of jungle justice. For example, 210 (46.7%) respondents strongly agree that dramatization of the dangers of jungle justice will curb it, and 186 (41.3%) agreed.

Discussants believed that entertainment-education which is an approach adopted in behavior change communication strategy, will have the most effect on them. In the Southern Senatorial Zone, Sergeant Eteng said, “We know Nigerians are good in acting films and 80 percent of Nigerians watch Nollywood. The Nigerian film industry should act films that will portray the dangers of jungle justice. To be frank, each time I see somebody burnt to death, even though it is in videos, it touches my own conscience, because this is a human being burnt beyond recognition”.
When asked how they will like to get informed about the dangers of jungle justice, a discussant in the Northern Senatorial Zone, Ikponya, said, “For me, what will have more impact is what they can see. So, television dramas or movies will be better”.

This is in tandem with the view of Rogers & Singhal, (1999) who stated that UNFPA also pointed out that EE allows the audience to make decisions on their own without being preached to. Framing messages in a popular, entertaining format helps create an environment where people of all ages can carry on conversations about topics discussed in the TV or Radio drama series or show. In some cases, EE is used to legitimize sensitive topics for public discussion, giving people the positive reinforcement they need to talk about the issues with family and friends.

Findings also revealed that sensitization and awareness on the dangers of jungle justice, while it may go a long way, is not enough to curb jungle justice. Faith and trust in security and law enforcement agencies should be restored by strengthening these institutions, policies, and laws to protect lives and properties. This is where advocacy and social mobilization come in.

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Summary

This study was concerned with the public perception of jungle justice and the judicial system and how the social and behavior change communication strategies can be employed as change agent against jungle justice in Cross River State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Ascertain the role of SBCC as a change agent against jungle justice in Cross River State
2. Determine the consequences of non-utilization of SBCC strategies in preventing jungle justice in Cross River State
3. Determine how Cross Riverians can be persuaded using appropriate communication techniques to abandon jungle justice, and
4. Ascertain SBCC strategies which can serve as change agent against jungle justice in Cross River State.

To achieve the objectives of this study, quantitative and qualitative methods of research utilizing questionnaire schedule and FGDs were used on the sampled population in the state. The social learning theory and theory of reasoned action also known as planned behavior were adopted as theoretical framework.

The study found that there is a significant relationship between communication and the public perception of jungle justice and the judicial system in Nigeria in general and Cross River State in particular. Thus the SBCC plays a role as a change agent against jungle justice.
The study also found that little or nothing has been done to raise awareness regarding the dangers of jungle justice through various communication channels. This means that past communication strategies that have been used to showcase the police as friendly and approachable to gain the trust of the public have failed.

All three SBCC strategies-advocacy, social mobilization, and behavior change communication were found to be a necessity to curb jungle justice. The study has shown that the use of entertainment-education (EE) which is an approach adopted in behavior change communication strategy will have the most effect on people, and hence, can be used to target the community level. This approach will help inform, educate, raise awareness, and sensitize members of the community on jungle justice. Advocacy and social mobilization through radio/ television jingles, television dramatization, talk shows, social media hashtags, town hall meetings, workshops et cetera, can be used to influence decisions and policies within the police and judiciary.

**Conclusion**

Based on the results and findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn. Unless sensitization effort is stepped up in Cross River State, there will be little or no awareness on the dangers of jungle justice and the ugly trend would continue.

It can also be concluded that while there is a need for conscious creation of more awareness through various communication channels and strategies, other factors such as deliberate government policies and strengthening of the relevant laws need to be considered in order to prevent jungle justice.

Hence, applying SBCC strategies (advocacy, social mobilization, and behavior change communication) in any campaign against jungle justice will go a long way to curb it.

It can further be concluded based on the findings that it is not the responsibility of the government alone to bring an end to jungle justice. All hands of the stakeholders must be on deck.

**Recommendations**

In view of the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. To create awareness and sensitize people on the dangers of jungle justice at the family and community levels, it is recommended that government and other stakeholders through the media should initiate and sustain programs to educate and inform members of the community on the dangers of jungle justice and how to get justice the right way.
2. The government and non-governmental agencies combating jungle justice should adopt entertainment-education approach such as serial dramas broadcast on TV and radio, cartoons, etc.

3. Campaign to improve the public’s perception of the Nigerian police should be stepped up.

4. The government should reposition the judicial system to become more conscious of the image of the system by promoting communication that promotes consciousness towards the sensibility and sensitivity of the Nigerian public as well as purges the system of corrupt judicial officers.

References


