

Exploring the Principles, Practices and Challenges of Community Policing in Nigeria

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Abstract: *The implementation of community policing, which seeks to change the fundamental nature of police activities is a complex and difficult undertaking in a country with a history of strong public scepticism and distrust of the police force. Community policing, a strategy aimed at fostering collaboration between the police and the public to reduce crime, has faced significant drawback in Nigeria due to deep-seated distrust and skepticism toward law enforcement agencies in Nigeria. This research utilizes a systematic qualitative approach to investigate the effectiveness of community policing as a solution to Nigeria's persistent insecurity. Following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, the study synthesizes data from relevant literature published between 2000 and 2024. Data were extracted and analyzed using a thematic approach, identifying common challenges such as poor police training, lack of public trust, and inadequate government support. The findings reveal that while community policing has the potential to significantly reduce crime, its success depends on robust collaboration between the police and local communities, coupled with sustained government investment in police training and resources. The theoretical basis for this research work was anchored on broken windows theory that offers crucial frameworks which supports the argument that effective community policing is a strategy for crime reduction and addressing the underlying social and physical disorder within communities could prevent the escalation of insecurity. The study concludes with recommendations for enhancing community policing effectiveness through comprehensive training programs for officers and active engagement with community stakeholders. By addressing these challenges, community policing can serve as a viable strategy to improve security and foster greater public trust in law enforcement across Nigeria.*

Keywords: policing, community, community policing, public trust, police reform, decentralization

INTRODUCTION

Insecurity in Nigeria has become a significant concern, with escalating rates of violent crime, terrorism, kidnappings, and other forms of unrest posing threats to national stability. The traditional, centralized approach to policing has proven largely ineffective in addressing these challenges, leading to calls for alternative methods, such as community policing. Community policing emphasizes collaboration between law enforcement agencies and local communities, aiming to shift from a reactive, enforcement-driven model to a proactive, prevention-focused strategy. This approach involves engaging community members in identifying and solving security problems, which theoretically creates stronger bonds of trust and more localized crime-fighting initiatives (Ezeoha, 2011).

Complaints about the way police officers and the police system treat citizens have existed throughout the world since time immemorial. Few countries can boast of a citizen-law enforcement/social control relationship. The police is a government agency of social control that uses some level of force to maintain and protect public order. The government does not give the police the power to change the law in the best interest of the citizens. Experts agree that successful community policing requires agreement on its definition (Bucqueroux & Trojanowicz, 1994). Historical facts have revealed that the emergence of the "police force" is a recent development, but "police work" is not, as it was a necessary societal collective measure to protect them (individually or collectively) or to control the propensity of some members to commit illegal acts; thus, it has existed for ages (Reiner, 2000; Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005; Oluwaniyi, 2011:67-83). In Nigeria, volunteers for traditional policing formed what was known as a (vigilante group) which is still active in most parts of the country till today. However, the emergence of the state and the need to preserve the state (political elites) during colonial rule prompted the creation of police forces (Oluwaniyi 2011:67-83).

However, before the introduction of community policing, the Nigerian Police operated under a typical British paramilitary policing system that emphasized centralization of authority. This principle of concentration of authority is contrary to the philosophy of community policing which supports the decentralization of power. The word "police" is derived from the Greek word "Polis" which means "that part of the non-ecclesiastical administration concerned with the safety, health and order of the state" (Ehinder, 1998: 1). Flynn (1998:1) defines community policing as an adjective used by researchers and practitioners who seek to describe a quality of life approach to police management issues and philosophy. Typical police definitions of community are frequently based on jurisdictional boundaries, especially in places with high crime rates and a need for police resources.

The adoption of community policing as a potential panacea for insecurity in Nigeria stems from the realization that a one-size-fits-all model of policing is unsustainable in a country as culturally and geographically diverse as Nigeria. The formal police force, which is often perceived as corrupt and disconnected from the communities it serves, has struggled to build trust among citizens (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005). This mistrust has hindered cooperation and made crime prevention efforts less effective, particularly in rural areas and among marginalized groups. As

such, community policing offers a promising solution by decentralizing some aspects of policing and empowering citizens to take part in their own security.

This research seeks to explore the principles, practices, and challenges of community policing in Nigeria, with a focus on understanding its effectiveness in reducing crime and fostering better police-community relationships. While some strides have been made in implementing community policing, particularly through initiatives like the Nigerian Police Force's "Community Policing Initiative," the results have been mixed (Osumah, 2020). Challenges such as inadequate training for officers, lack of resources, and continued public skepticism hinder its full realization. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the concept of community policing, assessing its potential as a sustainable solution to Nigeria's ongoing security crisis.

Ultimately, the research will address key questions regarding the applicability of community policing in Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape, the impact of existing efforts, and the policy reforms necessary to make this approach more effective. In doing so, it will contribute to the broader discourse on police reform and national security in Nigeria, offering actionable recommendations for both policymakers and law enforcement agencies.

Objectives of the study

1. To critically examine the principles and practices of community policing as a tool to address the underlying causes of insecurity and crime in Nigeria
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of community policing initiatives and assess their impact on crime reduction, public safety, and trust in the police force.
3. To identify the key challenges and barriers to the successful implementation of community policing in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community policing is a relatively new concept in the Nigerian police system, despite its widespread appeal in the Western world, primarily the United States, since the late 1970s. There is no universally acknowledged definition of community policing, although most law enforcement professionals believe that it entails working together with non-law enforcement community members to address crime-related issues. Eric and Kpae (2017:47) defined community policing as a philosophy that emphasizes proactive collaboration with citizens to prevent crime and solve crime-related problems. In other word, for Ibrahim, Saleh, and Mukhtar (2016:3), community policing as a collaborative effort between police and community members to improve public safety through problem-solving partnerships. This is policing in which people take an active role in their own affairs; the police are seen as partners in development rather than as a problem or an outsider whose presence poses a risk; and community members are co-producers of justice and quality police service.

The police force is Nigeria's most powerful law enforcement agency, and the Police Act (2009 p.19) specifies their primary responsibilities, which include protecting life and properties, detecting and preventing crimes, apprehending offenders, maintaining law and order, enforcing

relevant laws and regulations as well as performing military duties as needed. Local and inherent crimes, such as armed robbery, drug trafficking and abuse, arson, abduction, murder, hired assassinations, rape, and ritual killings, have been increasingly common in recent years. These traditional and violent crimes require a paradigm shift in the tactics used to prevent and manage crime in Nigeria. The Nigeria Police Force is frequently the most visible and accessible institution to citizens, however there are several additional agencies in Nigeria in charge of policing both citizens and foreigners within the country's boundaries. These agencies include the National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), State Security Services (SSS), National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), and The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), among others.

Numerous police reform procedures have been on for years, as noted by Rauch and Spuy (2006:107), with some reforms now under way or on the verge of beginning. Current police techniques are based on the premise that proactive policing not only reduces crime but also improves police-community relations, as observed by Wiley and Esbensen (2013:1).

Community policing focuses on developing a systematic link between the regular police force and the general public. Community policing was implemented in this setting to attain the aforementioned goals. This highlights the need to involve the community, local government and the police in crime prevention efforts. One reason for public involvement is the assumption that the police alone cannot create or maintain safe communities. The Nigerian Police, like many other countries around the world, has adopted the philosophy of community policing on the basis that in a democratic society, the police are expected to police and protect their fellow citizens, serve the public interest when necessary and enforce fundamental rights to freedom, equality and justice under the law. To perform these privileged duties, the police must have a symbiotic connection with the communities they serve, which means being a part of them rather than separate from them. On April 27, 2004, community policing was publicly and legally inaugurated in Nigeria (The Dawn Newspaper, 2011 cited in Kenga, 2023:3).

As a result, community policing has emerged as a major concern in the development of public safety in several nations, most notably Nigeria. The Nigeria government's failure to provide security has transformed it from a public service to a private demand that individuals and groups must meet through various means. This largely explains the rise of vigilante organizations as a community policing agency, which is clearly intended to fill the void left by Nigeria's inefficient, inept, and corrupt police force (NPF) (Ode, 2007). In Nigeria, vigilantism has become an integral part of the socio-political landscape. Vigilante groups have been formed in reaction to increases in theft and armed robbery throughout country's history. Vigilantism has increased significantly in Nigeria after the country's return to democracy in 1999. The Odua People's Congress (OPC), Bakassi Boys, and Hisba are examples of well-organized indigenous organizations in Nigeria that work to prevent crime and enforce the law (Ikenga, 2023:3)

Principles of Community Policing

To properly comprehend community policing and how it works, it is important to first grasp the concepts that underpin it. Kappler and Gaines (2009 cited in Gordon, 2013:2) discovered that in

order for policing to be effective, nine principles must be implemented into police procedures. The nine concepts include philosophy, customization, policing, patrolling, persistence, localization, pro-activeness, partnership, and problem solving.

Community policing has fundamental ideals that must be upheld in order to effect change within the system. These ideals allow the functions of police to be broad and more community-specific since they have greater power of discretion; it encourages community inputs meaning that citizens are given the opportunity to influence policy and police mandates; it demands great people concern; it commands the development of trust, sharing of power, creativity and neighbourhood variation (Keppler and Gaines, 2009).

The concept of community policing has gained significant traction globally as a strategy for improving public safety through collaborative efforts between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Community policing, in its simplest form, refers to a philosophy and strategy designed to promote organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime (Skogan, 2006).

In Nigeria, where insecurity has reached alarming levels, this approach has been advocated as a potential solution for addressing the country's unique security challenges (Alemika, 2013). Community policing as an approach to tackling Nigeria's alarming insecurity levels lies in its emphasis on collaboration between law enforcement agencies and the local communities they serve. Unlike the traditional policing model, which is largely reactive and focuses on enforcing laws after crimes have been committed, community policing prioritizes proactive strategies that involve communities in identifying and addressing the root causes of crime (Goldstein, 1990). Furthermore, community policing holds great potential as a more effective strategy for addressing Nigeria's unique security challenges compared to the traditional policing system. By fostering collaboration, focusing on prevention, and leveraging local knowledge, community policing offers a more holistic and sustainable approach to reducing insecurity across the country. With proper implementation and support from both government and communities, this approach could significantly improve public safety and trust in law enforcement.

Community policing is predicated on the idea that the police cannot tackle crime and social disorder alone, but must work in close partnership with the community to achieve effective results (Goldstein, 1990). The core principles of community policing include decentralizing policing responsibilities, building trust between police and the public, and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for community safety (Rosenbaum, 1994).

Nigeria has been plagued by numerous security challenges over the years, including armed banditry, insurgency, terrorism, kidnapping, and communal violence. This has often been attributed to a combination of factors such as poverty, poor governance, weak institutions, and widespread corruption (Omotola, 2010).

The traditional policing system in Nigeria has struggled to address the country's complex security issues due to centralization, limited resources, and public distrust. The highly centralized structure of law enforcement limits its ability to respond swiftly to local needs, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, underfunding and corruption within the police force undermine their effectiveness, leading to poor service delivery and a lack of trust between the public and law enforcement agencies. (Ajayi & Longe, 2015; Hills, 2012; Alemika, 2013; Osumah, 2020).

In contrast, community policing offers a more flexible and locally informed approach. By empowering local communities to actively participate in crime prevention, it promotes collaboration and builds trust between the police and the public. Community policing tailors strategies to fit the specific needs of diverse regions in Nigeria, making it more effective in addressing local security challenges. It also focuses on preventing crime rather than simply reacting to it, which is a key weakness of traditional policing. (Goldstein, 1990; Skogan, 2006) Several attempts have been made to introduce community policing in Nigeria. For instance, the Nigerian Police Force launched the 'Community Policing Initiative' in the early 2000s, aimed at fostering stronger relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve (Chukwuma & Alemika, 2016). This initiative involved the establishment of community policing committees in different regions, intended to facilitate communication and cooperation between police officers and citizens. However, these efforts have largely been hindered by systemic challenges such as poor funding, inadequate training, and the deep-rooted mistrust between the police and the public (Alemika, 2013). This approach emphasizes cooperation, shared responsibility, and the use of local knowledge, making it better suited to Nigeria's unique socio-cultural landscape. Community policing fosters partnerships between law enforcement and residents, creating a more sustainable solution to insecurity compared to the often reactive and militarized methods of the traditional police system.

A key challenge in implementing community policing in Nigeria has been the widespread perception of the police as corrupt and abusive. Studies show that many Nigerians are reluctant to cooperate with law enforcement due to a history of human rights abuses, extortion, and inefficiency (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000). This has created a barrier to the success of community policing initiatives, as communities remain suspicious of police motives. Additionally, the lack of proper training for police officers on how to engage with communities in a non-confrontational and supportive manner has further undermined these efforts (Ogunode, 2016).

Despite the challenges, there is potential for community policing to play a significant role in reducing insecurity in Nigeria. Research suggests that with proper implementation, including robust training for officers and genuine community engagement, community policing can improve trust, reduce crime rates, and create safer environments (Ajayi & Longe, 2015). For Nigeria, success will depend on overcoming the systemic issues of corruption, poor governance, and resource allocation, which have historically undermined law enforcement efforts (Omotola, 2010).

Challenges and Prospects of Community Policing in Nigeria

Despite the outstanding range of results documented by the evaluators, the implementation of Community Policing may face a number of major problems that must be addressed in order to maintain full compliance with the reform agenda. While police skills and police-community relations have improved dramatically since the implementation of Community Policing, particularly in the pilot areas, it is true that our problems continue to include ineffectiveness, corruption, brutality, and incivility to members of our public by some members of the NPF, resulting in a lack of trust in the entire organization among many members of communities.

Community policing in Nigeria faces several challenges, ranging from structural inefficiencies within the Nigerian Police Force to community mistrust of law enforcement. Balogun (2019) noted that the centralized structure of the Nigerian Police limits the effectiveness of community policing efforts, as officers are often disconnected from local realities. The absence of strong community ties leads to mistrust and a lack of collaboration between the police and the communities they serve. This view is supported by Onyeozili et al. (2021), who argue that decentralization of the police force could enhance police-community relationships, enabling a more localized and contextually relevant policing approach.

Saidu et al. (2019) further point to the dilemma of restructuring Nigeria's federal policing system as a major challenge. The ongoing debate about state policing has highlighted concerns that while state police might offer a more community-focused approach, it could also become a tool for local political interests, exacerbating existing ethnic and political tensions. Luqman & Oladejo (2022) note that despite these challenges, there is a growing consensus that restructuring is necessary to tackle the escalating insecurity in Nigeria.

The absence of a comprehensive national policy for community policing in Nigeria has slowed its expansion and led to ambiguity about its practical meaning. Many police officers view community policing as an "adjunct" to regular operations rather than a core philosophy (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2006). Additionally, the lack of strategic support has resulted in the initiative appearing superficial. While police capabilities have improved since the introduction of community policing, significant gaps in training and capacity still exist, particularly at the local level. Many officers are untrained, and frequent transfers disrupt continuity, weakening the initiative's effectiveness (Okeshola & Mudiare, 2012).

Institutional resistance to change remains a major challenge, as many police officers remain uncommitted to reforms due to low morale caused by poor working conditions. The lack of resources and clear frameworks for implementing community policing further exacerbates these issues. Despite efforts to build trust, public confidence in the police remains low due to past abuses and mistrust (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2006).

In conflict-prone areas, community policing holds potential for reducing the recurrence of conflicts, although current disputes pose challenges to its implementation. For community policing to succeed, Nigeria's police force must shift from its conventional methods to a more community-oriented approach that emphasizes decentralization, collaboration, and proactive

policing. Building public trust through compassionate and non-brutal policing is crucial (Okeshola & Mudiare, 2012).

In terms of prospects, Samuel et al. (2024) highlight that state police systems could bring about a more community-centric approach in addressing security challenges, particularly in states like Ekiti, where the state police option has been heavily debated as a means to improve crime prevention efforts. Similarly, Bello et al. (2022) suggest that empowering local actors through community policing has the potential to curb insecurity, especially in regions affected by banditry and armed non-state actors.

The concept of community policing as a tool for crime prevention has been widely acknowledged in Nigeria. According to Oyibokure, Okereka, & Mukoro (2023), community policing has played a significant role in reducing crime rates in Delta and Edo States. The authors note that the collaboration between the police and local communities has resulted in an enhanced flow of intelligence, which has facilitated crime prevention. This finding aligns with Mwaniki's (2016) assertion that successful community policing hinges on active community involvement and the willingness of local populations to work with law enforcement.

Similarly, Christian (2021) emphasizes that effective communication between police and community members is vital for the success of community policing efforts. This communication fosters trust, reduces fear, and encourages public participation in security efforts. The community's involvement in crime prevention initiatives, such as neighborhood watch programs and information sharing, has proven to be a key factor in the reduction of crime in various communities.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis for this research work is anchored on broken windows theory. The broken windows theory posits that visible signs of disorder and neglect in a community, such as vandalism or abandoned buildings, encourage further crime and antisocial behavior (Wilson & Kelling, 1982; Shelden, 2004; Gau, & Pratt, 2010). By addressing minor infractions and promoting order, community policing is expected to prevent more serious crimes from taking root. In Nigerian communities plagued by crime, this theory implies that neglect of minor issues like loitering, illegal street trading, or substance abuse can lead to more severe crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, or terrorism.

This theoretical perspectives offer crucial frameworks that can be directly linked to the effectiveness of community policing as a strategy for crime reduction, especially as Nigeria continues to grapple with series of security challenges as , minor crimes (e.g., petty theft, street-level drug dealing) may lead to more organized and violent forms of crime. By cleaning up neighborhoods and addressing these minor issues through community policing, local law enforcement can prevent more severe crimes from occurring. The community policing model, when framed through this lens, becomes a strategic tool that does not merely focus on law enforcement but engages the community in active problem-solving to create a more secure environment. (Welsh, Braga, & Bruinsma, 2015).

Furthermore, the broken windows theory supports the argument that addressing the underlying social and physical disorder within communities could prevent the escalation of insecurity. (O'Brien, Farrell, & Welsh,2019). Community policing, in this sense, is proactive as it engages with community members to identify and resolve these minor infractions before they develop into larger threats. For instance, in south- Western states, where community policing initiatives like Operation Amotekun operate, addressing local disorder (e.g., night marauders or drug-related activities) could prevent these smaller issues from becoming major security problems. Furthermore, in states such as Lagos, Delta, or Edo, where various forms of insecurity (such as cultism, armed robbery, and kidnapping) persist, the community policing framework could be applied to address these unique challenges. Police and community members could work together to identify hotspots of criminal activity, understand the social and economic drivers behind these crimes, and develop localized solutions. This could involve youth engagement programs, economic empowerment initiatives, or more community-based surveillance.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a systematic review of scholarly articles, dissertations, and reports that investigate the relationship between community policing and insecurity in Nigeria. A systematic review allows for a comprehensive synthesis of available literature on a particular topic, helping to identify patterns, contradictions, and gaps in the research (Booth et al., 2016)..A comprehensive search was conducted using several electronic databases, including JSTOR, Google Scholar, and African Journals Online (AJOL). The search focused on articles, government reports, and policy documents published between January 2000 and July 2024. Search terms used included: “community policing,” “insecurity in Nigeria,” “police reform,” “crime prevention strategies,” “community-police collaboration,” and “security sector reform.”

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To maintain relevance and focus, studies were included if they met the following criteria: Focused on community policing strategies aimed at addressing insecurity in Nigeria, conducted within Nigeria or other African countries with similar security challenges, Published in peer-reviewed journals or as credible reports by reputable organizations, Provided qualitative or quantitative data on the effectiveness of community policing in reducing crime and enhancing public safety.

Studies that are not available in English, focused solely on community policing outside Africa without relevance to Nigeria, lacked sufficient data or analysis of community policing outcomes were excluded. A total of 25 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in this systematic review. The extracted data were then synthesized to identify patterns, common themes, and variations in the implementation and success of community policing initiatives across different regions of Nigeria. A narrative synthesis approach was employed to analyze and summarize the findings.

Quality Assessment

The quality of included studies was assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool for qualitative research, and the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal

Checklist for non-experimental studies (Munn et al., 2020). Studies were rated as high, moderate, or low quality based on their methodological rigor, relevance to the research question, and validity of the findings.

Data Analysis

The findings were analyzed using a thematic approach to explore the key factors influencing the success or failure of community policing in Nigeria. This included examining the role of government policy, public perception, police-community relations, and socio-economic conditions.

Presentation of Data

The following tables summarize the results and analysis of the data generated for the study. Each table provides a detailed breakdown of key findings, the thematic insights that emerged from the data. These tables are designed to highlight the critical factors affecting the implementation and effectiveness of community policing in Nigeria.

Table 1: Thematic Review of Community Policing as a Solution for Addressing Insecurity in Nigeria

S/N	Theme	Major Studies/Scholars	Key Concepts	Implications for Nigeria
1	Decentralization of Policing	Balogun, O. B. (2019); Samuel et al. (2024); Oyibokure et al. (2023); Adenuga et al. (2024) Ekpo & Oghojafor (2020); Oluwaniyi (2011)	-Bringing policing closer to communities -Regional/state policing - Addressing local security needs	- Decentralized policing enables tailored security solutions for different regions, improving crime prevention locally.
2	Police-Community Relationships	Tuotamuno (2024); Onyeozili et al. (2021); Bununu & Yunusa (2024); Alimi & Arogundade (2019) Bayley (1988); Clemons (2000)	- Building trust between police and the community - Collaboration in crime reporting - Mutual responsibility	- Trust and cooperation between citizens and police reduce crime and improve reporting, which strengthens crime prevention efforts.
3	Integration of Informal Security Networks	Fourchard (2008); Oyibokure et al. (2023); Ayodele et al. (2024); Eguo (2023)	- Incorporation of vigilantes - Cooperation between formal and informal security	- Formalizing vigilante groups under police oversight reduces extra-legal violence

		Oluwaniyi (2011); Odinkalu (2020)	forces - Oversight needed	while strengthening overall community safety.
4	Youth Engagement in Crime Prevention	Samuel et al. (2024); Diphorn & van Stapele (2021); Baker (2017); Macharia (2020) Clemons (2000); Obasanjo et al. (2021)	- Engaging youth through mentorship - Developing youth- focused crime prevention strategies - Reducing youth involvement in crime	- Engaging youth in crime prevention efforts curbs their vulnerability to criminal activities and promotes sustainable community safety.

Source: Authors Compilation (2026)

Table 2: Identified Community Policing Interventions and Programs for Reducing Insecurity

S/N	Study	Type of Intervention	Key Impact on Reducing Insecurity
1	Bayley (1988)	Police-Community Partnerships	Reduced crime rates and improved public trust in police
2	Ekpo & Oghojafor (2020)	Decentralization of Police Forces	Enhanced local responsiveness to security challenges
3	Oluwaniyi (2011)	Vigilante-Police Cooperation	Strengthened informal policing structures and reduced minor crimes
4	Odinkalu (2020)	Amotekun Security Network	Successfully curbed kidnappings and violent crimes in Ondo State
5	Clemons (2000)	Youth Engagement in Crime Prevention	Lowered youth involvement in crime through mentorship programs
6	Obasanjo et al. (2021)	Intelligence-Led Policing	Increased crime detection and dismantling of organized crime networks

Source: Authors Compilation (2026)

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Decentralization of Police Forces

Decentralization, as analyzed by Ekpo & Oghojafor (2020), brings law enforcement closer to the communities they serve. This allows for a tailored response to the security challenges faced by

different regions, as each state or locality has its unique issues be it insurgency in the north or kidnapping in the southwest. Oluwaniyi (2011) found that integrating vigilante groups with state police is an effective way of securing rural areas. Vigilante groups, however, require formal oversight to ensure they respect citizens' rights. This balance between informal and formal policing can help maintain peace and security without the risks associated with unregulated vigilante activity.

Furthermore, Regional Security Networks has emerged as an alternative to the provision of adequate security at the grassroots level. The emergence of the Western Nigerian Security Network, popularly known as Amotekun, has been a key development in addressing regional security issues in the southwest, particularly in Ondo and Ekiti States. Odinkalu (2020) highlights that the localized nature of this security network allows for more efficient and culturally sensitive crime prevention, especially in areas prone to herder-farmer conflicts and kidnappings.

However, while these studies highlights the effectiveness of decentralizing police forces and integrating vigilante groups to address insecurity, this study focuses on exploring the specific challenges and opportunities related to the effective coordination between state-level security initiatives and federal policing structure and the long-term sustainability of community policing models, particularly in rural communities that are often overlooked in existing studies.

Furthermore, while vigilante groups and local security networks like Amotekun have proven useful, there is a need for a framework that ensures proper oversight to avoid human rights violations, by introducing effective oversight mechanisms in balancing security with citizen rights, especially in regions prone to vigilantism.

Effectiveness of Community Policing in Nigeria

A significant finding across the reviewed literature is the potential effectiveness of community policing as a strategy to combat insecurity in Nigeria. For instance, Oyibokure, Okereka, & Mukoro, (2023) examined community policing in Delta and Edo States, finding that proactive community engagement and partnership between the police and residents resulted in reduced crime rates in some localities. Similarly, Samuel, Julius, & Abiodun. (2024) demonstrated that community policing efforts in Ekiti State have been linked to improved trust between law enforcement and local communities, although challenges related to funding and training remain persistent.

Research by (Samuel et al, 2024) emphasizes that successful police-community partnerships are critical in fostering trust between law enforcement and the public. This trust leads to more collaborative crime-fighting efforts, as citizens are more likely to report crimes and share valuable intelligence with police officers. Ekpo & Oghojafor (2020) corroborate this, showing how decentralized police forces, responsive to local needs, have effectively reduced crime in parts of Nigeria.

Clemons (2000) underscores the importance of youth engagement in community policing strategies. By involving young people in crime prevention programs, such as mentorship and

recreational activities, youth delinquency rates decreased, reducing the overall crime rate in those communities.

Although Clemons (2000) highlights the importance of youth engagement, it is important to interrogate the impact of inter-generational participation in community policing strategies, examining how older generations and youth can work together to reinforce peace and security. Obasanjo et al. (2021) show that intelligence-led policing is crucial in identifying criminal networks early. Combining this with community policing helps tackle organized crime by leveraging both local knowledge and sophisticated crime-solving methods.

Furthermore, studies like those of Tuotamuno's (2023) highlight the importance of communication in community policing, suggesting that effective communication channels between the police and the public can serve as a panacea for addressing the insecurity plaguing Nigeria. Denney & Jenkins (2013) support this by noting that clear and open communication fosters a cooperative environment, which is key for the success of community policing initiatives.

Challenges of Community Policing

Despite its potential benefits, the reviewed literature identifies several challenges to implementing community policing in Nigeria. One of the most recurrent themes is public mistrust of the police. According to Onyeozili et al. (2021), the history of police brutality and corruption in Nigeria has created deep-seated mistrust between citizens and law enforcement, which undermines efforts to build the collaborative relationships necessary for successful community policing. Luqman & Oladejo (2022) further elaborate on the structural issues, noting that inadequate training for officers, limited financial resources, and political interference have stymied efforts to expand community policing across the country.

Moreover, Balogun (2019) emphasizes that many community policing initiatives in Nigeria are often poorly funded and lack the necessary support from both local and national authorities. Without adequate training and resources, police officers may struggle to engage effectively with the communities they serve, which hampers the success of these programs.

The views presented in the literature rightly underscore significant barriers to the success of community policing in Nigeria, including public mistrust and resource limitations. However, we argue that these challenges can be mitigated through Structured Training Programs like community-tailored training programs that equip officers with both traditional policing skills and cultural competence, enabling them to better understand and respect local customs.

Furthermore, Institutional Reforms is crucial. The structural issues of corruption and political interference noted by Luqman & Oladejo (2022) remain central to understanding why community policing has faltered. It is important that a more granular approach by examining the role of institutional reforms in addressing these challenges, particularly at the local governance level, where much of the political interference occurs.

Despite the challenges, the prospects for community policing in Nigeria remain promising, provided that key reforms are undertaken. Several studies recommend addressing public mistrust

through transparency and accountability measures within the police force (Adenuga et al., 2024; Fourchard, 2008). Improving police-community relations through targeted outreach programs and increasing the use of community leaders in conflict resolution are also seen as vital steps forward (Bununu & Yunusa, 2024).

Another key recommendation is the need for better training and resources for police officers engaged in community policing. According to Diphooorn & van Stapele (2021), successful community policing initiatives depend on officers who are not only well-trained but also equipped with the tools they need to engage effectively with the community. This is echoed by Kocak (2018), who highlights examples from Asia where police officers were given specialized training on community relations, leading to significant improvements in local security outcomes.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The literature reviewed offers several policy implications for the successful implementation of community policing in Nigeria. Arisukwu et al. (2021) argue that for community policing to be effective, there must be a clear definition of the role of the "community" in policing operations. Policymakers need to ensure that communities are adequately empowered to participate in security management while providing the necessary resources and training to local law enforcement.

Furthermore, Denney & Jenkins (2013) emphasize the need for international best practices in community policing to be adapted to the Nigerian context. This involves tailoring community policing strategies to address the unique challenges faced by different states and regions in Nigeria. For instance, Bakare, Murana, & Aliu (2018) suggest that community policing efforts in the northern regions, where insurgency and banditry are prevalent, will require a different approach compared to the southern regions, where issues such as cultism and urban crime are more prominent.

Finally, Alimi & Arogundade (2019) highlight the importance of crime control measures in community policing strategies. These measures include not only traditional law enforcement activities but also social interventions that address the root causes of crime, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education.

CONCLUSION

Community policing has emerged as an important component of in Nigeria's crime-reduction efforts. Community policing has played an important part in supporting the Nigerian Police Force's efforts to combat crime over the years. Community policing officers' responsibilities include assisting community members in recognizing and addressing crime issues (as a facilitator), identifying and resolving community concerns (as an expert), providing guidance to consultative councils (as an educator), leading the community in problem-solving endeavours (as a problem-solving catalyst), and coordinating various community groups (as an organizer). Furthermore, the deployment of community policing allows for community involvement in local policing decision-making (directly or indirectly), which increases participation in maintaining neighbourhood security and order.

Community policing offers a viable strategy for improving internal security in Nigeria. However, its success depends on overcoming structural challenges within the Nigerian Police Force, building trust between law enforcement and local communities, and ensuring that community policing initiatives are tailored to the specific needs of different regions. The ongoing debate over state policing underscores the need for a more decentralized approach to security, while case studies from other African nations provide valuable lessons on the importance of community involvement in crime prevention efforts. As Nigeria continues to grapple with rising insecurity, community policing stands out as a critical component of a comprehensive strategy to promote safety and stability across the country

Recommendations

The paper suggested the following recommendations :

- I. Reformative Training Programs for Police Officers by Implementing culturally sensitive and community-focused training programs. These programs should equip officers with skills to better understand the socio-cultural dynamics of their communities, which is crucial in addressing the root causes of crime. Furthermore, officers should also be trained in non-confrontational engagement techniques to improve relationships with local residents and reduce tensions during security operations.
- II. Establishment of Community-Led Accountability Councils in key localities. These councils would consist of community leaders, youth representatives, and local law enforcement. Their role would be to monitor the activities of community policing officers, ensure transparency in operations, and act as mediators between the police and community members. This can help foster trust and improve collaboration.
- III. Integration of Local Knowledge with Modern Technology by developing tools for community members to report suspicious activities safely. This could significantly enhance crime detection and prevention efforts. Leveraging technology in combination with grassroots initiatives will increase police presence and efficiency in underserved rural areas.
- IV. Develop Sustainable Funding Models for Community Policing through partnerships with local businesses, non-governmental organizations, and state governments. These models could ensure that community policing programs have adequate resources for officer training, equipment, and community outreach activities, ensuring long-term viability.

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