

## COMMUNITY POLICING AS A PANACEA FOR CRIME CONTROL IN RURAL COMMUNITIES OF EDO SOUTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT, EDO STATE

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates community policing as a panacea for crime control in rural communities of Edo State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. A total of 375 participants were purposively sampled for the study. The sample comprised persons who have stayed at least six months in the study areas. Data for the study were collected with a questionnaire titled "Community Policing as a Panacea for Crime Control Questionnaire" (CPPCCO). Data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that there is high rate of crime in the rural communities in Edo State; that kidnapping ranked first among the common crime in the area, followed by theft, rape and fighting. It was further revealed that the roles of community policing in the rural areas helped in the raiding and apprehending criminals' in their hideouts in collaboration with the police. The paper recommended that members of the community should be educated through the mass media, workshops and seminars to understand the importance of collaborating with the police in combating crime in the community. It also recommended that there should be plans by government and the people to provide and maintain rural infrastructures like good roads, electricity, CCTV, drone and communication facilities to facilitate crime detection and control in rural areas.*

**Keywords:** *Community Policing, Panacea for Crime Control and Rural Development*

### Introduction

Many communities in Nigeria are faced with unprecedented increase in criminal activities such as robbery, arson, kidnapping for ransom and murder. These

have become a source of a major concern to the government, stakeholders and the populace. Nigeria currently experiences increase in violent internal security challenges which, attempts by the Nigeria Police whose responsibility is to combat internal security challenges based on the Constitution, with support from other law enforcement agents established by law to carry out similar duties in different capacities to contain the heinous act, appear not to be effective. But with the continuous increase in internal crime, and lack of security in the rural communities, the task of protecting lives and property cannot be handled with levity. Therefore, the expectation of citizens from the government is to ensure and guarantee their safety at all times (Amuka, 2008).

From the last World Population Review in July 1, 2020, the United Nations estimated Nigeria's population to be about 206 million, based on projections of the latest United Nations Data. Sequel to this, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mohammed Adamu through DIG Operations, Abdulmajid Ali at the National Assembly decried that the Force cannot cope with the current security challenges, because its strength is about 302,000 personnel (Arisukwu&Okunola, 2013). So a simple calculation has a police-to-citizen ratio of 1:682 which exceeds the UN's recommended figure of 1:350/400. This presupposes that the number of police is grossly inadequate to cope with the security challenges due to the population increase in the country.

The clamour for community policing as proactive measure towards fighting crime in these communities in Nigeria has gained currency. Community

policing is a strategy that focuses on the police building ties with community members. Ties will enable the police to work closely with community members in the fight against crime. Community policing approach to crime detection, fighting and prevention became active in Nigeria in 2004, during President Umaru Yar'adua's administration. According to Olaolu (2015), community policing is a policy that requires the police to adopt a proactive approach to address public safety concerns. Tope (2016) saw community policing as a strategy which does not only allow the police to proactively act beyond mere crime fighting, but also to partner with the community members in setting the security priorities in the society and fashioning ways of resolving identifiable problems in the community. It entails a systematic investment and inclusion of credible local guards, vigilante groups, able-bodied youths and traditional leaders. It is argued that the participation of local communities in crime prevention activities is justifiable since they know their crime problems and localities better than outsiders from their communities. In fact, community participation is grounded on this tenet of local communities' familiarity (Liebermann & Coulson, 2004). It is only in this way that police could become productive if they collaborate with local communities. It is only in this way that police could become productive if they collaborate with local communities. Without this collaboration, police officers are clueless strangers about major criminal activities taking place in specific communities.

Their membership is made up of able-bodied youths from the very community where they live and operate, some of their members are even ex-personnel of police and military officers and are experienced based on the training they acquired while in service, and their community knowledge makes them capable of perfecting the job of protecting lives and property. Therefore, the success of security agencies in terms of community policing should not depend only on the development of their own skills and capabilities, but also on the engagement of competent vigilante groups. The application of community policing initiative in Nigerian communities would obviously allow vigilante groups and relevant security agencies to work in partnership to reduce crimes or violence such as kidnapping, armed banditry, herders and farmers conflicts, terrorism and other menace that constitute insecurity in Nigeria.

Furthermore, for Nigeria to successfully deal with the current internal security challenges, it must be community driven. Since, community policing recognises the roles of traditional rulers, community associations, town unions, religious leaders and other stakeholders in dealing with crime and insecurity in the rural communities. Therefore, in recruiting members of vigilante group of various communities, the aforementioned stakeholders must partake, vouch and serve as guarantors so that people of questionable character are not recruited. And if those recruited do otherwise, these categories of leaders should be held responsible.

Rural areas in developing countries are usually characterised by poverty and food insecurity (Grote and Neubacher, 2016). The level of poverty is exacerbated by corruption and bad governance. Failure of government to provide adequate security attracts criminals who exploit the poor infrastructure to terrorise innocent rural dwellers. However, according to Ceccato (2016), crime generally tends to be low in rural areas than urban areas of developed countries like United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), and Sweden than urban areas. Consequently, many communities in Edo South Senatorial District have of recent, been gripped by insecurity and lawlessness as armed robbery, herders attack and other violent crimes have reached unprecedented levels. Community members, almost on daily basis, are dispossessed of their valuable property while others are killed or maimed for life by armed bandits. Some of their women are raped in their farms while some wealthy ones are kidnapped and huge amount of money collected from them as ransom. This paper intends to see how community policing has served as a panacea for crime control in rural communities of Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent years, many communities in Nigeria have witnessed crimes such as kidnapping for ransom, herders attack, and murder etc. In the past, crime rate in the rural areas was assumed to be low mainly due to informal socio-cultural means of social control available in the rural areas. The family and religious values shape the norms and values in a

rural community than the urban centres where such values have lost impact on people who live individualistic lives rather than community life styles like rural areas. However, in recent time the neglect inherent in the rural areas has made it a safe haven for all kinds of crime and criminality in developing countries like Nigeria. Crime in rural areas prevents social cohesion and affects sustainable development negatively. Hoodlums now use rural areas as their operational base from which they carry out their heinous activities.

In most rural communities in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State, many people are being dispossessed of their valuable property and others are killed or maimed for life by armed bandits. Many people hardly sleep in their houses at night for fear of criminal victimisation. Those who sleep in their houses at night do so at their own peril.

The police force who is the primary agent in the fight against crime is perceived to be ineffective. The perceived ineffectiveness may be as a result of the fact that the police are under-staffed, under-equipped, and may be corrupt and suffer poor public cooperation. These factors created problems of under policing in Nigeria including Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State. Thus, violent and property crimes are committed on daily basis without detection and prosecution. Thus community policing seems to be gaining more prominence as agent of crime control in most rural areas of Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State. Residents see community policing as an outfit they can always rely on in terms of security. The aim of this study is

to investigate how community policing has served as a panacea for crime control in rural communities of Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate community policing as a panacea for crime control in rural communities in Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State. However, the study seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. determine the rates of crime in rural communities of Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State;
2. find out the most common crime in rural communities of Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State;
3. ascertain the roles of community policing in crime control in rural communities of Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State;
4. determine the perception of the community members towards community policing in the area; and
5. find out the ways by which the services of the community policing can be enhanced in the area.

### **Research Questions**

To guide the study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What are the rates of crime in rural communities of Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State?
2. What is the most common crime in rural communities of Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State?
3. What are the roles of community policing in crime control in rural communities of Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State?

4. What are the perceptions of the community members towards community policing in the area?
5. What are the ways by which the services of the community policing can be enhanced in the area?

### **Methodology**

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This was considered most appropriate, especially, for seeking individuals' opinions, make generalisation concerning this population's attitudes and perceptions in their natural setting. It would enable the researcher to find out from the community members the role of community policing in crime control in rural communities of Edo State. The population of the study consist all the adult citizens resident in rural communities across Edo South Senatorial District. According to Uwagboe (2017), there are five hundred and forty-three (543) communities across Edo South Senatorial District. These include: Oredo (33 communities), Egor (13 communities), Ikpoba-Okha (59 communities), Ovia North-East (122 communities), Ovia South West (134 communities), Orhiomwon (67 communities) and Uhunmwonde (115 communities). However, the target population will only include rural communities where there are functional community policing.

The study purposively selected two rural communities (Iguobazuwa and Okada) from Ovia South West and Ovia North local governments of Edo State, Nigeria. These communities share a number of things in common. They are both local council headquarters; they are neighboring communities sharing common boundary with various quarters headed by

the leaders of those quarters and above all being presided over by their kings who are the paramount rulers of the communities. They are agrarian communities with predominant subsistence agricultural practices. Their markets are the major pull factors that attract people from far and near to trade in mainly food items and other domestic consumables at home. The language spoken is Edo and English with a mixture of other ethnic languages in Nigeria such as Yoruba and Urhobo.

A total of 375 participants were selected as sample of the study. The sample comprised persons who have stayed at least six months in the study areas. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data for the study were collected with a questionnaire titled "Community Policing as a Panacea for Crime Control Questionnaire" (CPPCCO). The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics comprising simple percentage and mean score. The questionnaire was a Twentyitem instrument designed along the line of the modified Likert scale of four (4) levels of assessment namely Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly disagree. The levels were weighted or assigned 4 points 3points, 2 points and 1point respectively. In validating the instrument, experts' opinion was adopted. Two experts in the area of psychometrics from the University of Benin helped to determine the face validity of the instrument. Split half method was used to determine the reliability of the study. The scores obtained for odd and even number items were correlated, using Person Product Moment correlation Statistics. The reliability index of 0.65 which represents

only half of the instrument was subjected to Spearman Brown formula to ascertain the correlation index for the whole instrument. A correlation index of 0.78 was obtained.

The consent of religious and community leaders was sought before carrying out the exercise.

### Results

**Research question 1:** What are the rates of crimes in rural communities of Edo State?

**Table 1: Response distribution on the rates of crimes in rural communities of Edo State N=375**

Response	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Very High	100	27
High	150	40
Average	60	16
Low	45	12
Very Low	20	5
Total	375	100

*Source: Field Study, 2021*

Table 1 show that there is high rate of crime in the study area as indicated by 40% of the respondents, while 27% said that crime rate was very high, 16 indicated that it is average, 12% affirmed that it is low, only 8% accepted that crime rate was low. This implies that there is high rate of crime in the rural areas, hence the need for adequate government and community police intervention measures.

**Research question 2:** What is the most common crime in rural communities of Edo State?

**Table 2: Response distribution on the most common crime in rural communities of Edo State N=375**

Response	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Theft	80	21
Burglary	50	13
Rape	70	19
Fighting	45	12
Kidnapping	130	35
Total	375	100

*Source: Field Study, 2021*

Table 2 shows that 80 of the respondents, representing 21% of the total respondents sampled agreed that the common crime in the area is theft, 50 of the respondents representing 13% affirm that it is burglary, 70 of the respondents agreed that it is rape, 45 of the respondents affirm that it is fighting while, 130 of the respondents representing 35% agreed that it is kidnapping. From the analysis, it can be deduced that kidnapping ranks first among the common crime in the area, followed by theft, then rape, burglary and fighting

**Research question 3:** What are the roles of community policing in crime prevention and control in rural communities of Edo State?

**Table 3: Mean rating of roles of community policing in crime prevention and control in rural communities of Edo State N=375**

S/N	Lack of trained instructors	Mean $\bar{X}$	Mean Score	Decision
11.	Raiding of criminal hideouts to apprehend criminals and recover arms and ammunition.	3.33	70	Agree
12.	Arrest and interrogation of suspected criminals.	3.56	67	Agree
13.	Conduct surveillance on buildings to arrest suspects	3.41	82	Agree
14.	Collaborate with the police force in bringing criminal to justice	3.46	0.71	Agree

*Source: Field Study, 2021.*

The results in Table 3 above shows that all the items met the criterion mean of 2.50 and so were accepted. This connotes that community helps in the raiding criminal hideouts to apprehend criminals and recover arms and ammunition, arrest and interrogation of suspected criminals, conduct surveillance on building and suspected criminal individuals and collaborate with the police force in bringing criminals to justice.

**Research question 4:** What are the perceptions of the community members towards community policing in the area?

**Table 4: Mean rating of perceptions of the community members towards community policing in the area N=375**

S/N	Attitude toward use	Mean $\bar{X}$	Mean Score	Decision
12.	Fairly Beneficial	2.10	0.82	Disagree
13.	Very Good	3.19	0.82	Agree
14.	Worthwhile	3.11	0.90	Agree
15.	Commendable	3.29	0.75	Agree

*Source: Field Study, 2021.*

The result in Table 4 revealed that items 13 to 15 met the mean score standard. Only item 12 did not meet the criterion mean score. This means that the community members' perception towards community policing is very good, worthwhile and commendable

**Research question 5:** What are the ways by which the services of the community policing can be enhanced in the area?

**Table 5: Mean rating on ways by which the services of the community policing can be enhanced in the area N=375**

S/N	Ways of resolving challenges	Mean $\bar{X}$	Mean Score	Decision
16.	provision for fund, training and welfare of the members of the community policing	3.56	0.56	Agree
17.	Community policing participants should be trained on how to handle complex weapons	3.41	0.82	Agree
18.	There should be checks in the mental capacity of those recruited members of the Community policing.	3.46	0.71	Agree
19.	Creation of awareness becomes necessary for community members on	3.30	0.85	Agree
20.	community policing activities  Provision of equipment like motor van by stakeholders and government is important.	3.29	0.75	Agree

*Source: Field Study, 2021*

The result in Table 5 above shows that all the items met the criterion mean of 2.50 and so were accepted. This connotes that the services of the community policing can be enhanced in the area through the provision of fund, training, welfare, awareness about community policing activities and equipment for the members of the community policing.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings from the study have been quite instructive, informative and revealing. In research question one, finding revealed that there is high rate of crime in the rural areas. This finding agrees with the study of Arisukwu, Igbolekwu, Oye, Oyeyipo, Asamu, Rasak and Oyekola (2020) where they asserted that there is high crime rate in Omu-Aran and Ilofafrom Irepodun and Oke-Ero Local Governments Area in Kwara State Nigeria. Hence the need for adequate government and community police intervention measures.

In research question two, finding revealed that kidnapping rank first among the common crime in the area, followed by theft, then rape, burglary and fighting. This finding disagreed with the study conducted by crime statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics (2017) which stated that property crime was the highest reported crime in Nigeria. However, this finding corroborates the study conducted by California Casualty (2017), where they affirmed that kidnapping and thefts are the most common crime in rural areas and these crimes are usually driven by hunger, poverty and want. Agricultural products are the common items stolen in rural areas.

In research question three, finding revealed that the roles of community

policing in the rural areas help in the raiding criminal hideouts, apprehending criminals and recovering arms and ammunition, arresting and interrogating suspected criminals and collaborating with the police force in bringing criminals to justice. This finding is in agreement with that of Adegbusi (2009) who posited that community police partner with the police in every community they operate in and this partnership have gone ahead to see to reduction in crime rate. This is also in line with the finding of Chukwuma and Alemika (2004) who stated that community police members are always available whenever they are needed since they maintain constant presence in the community/streets to prevent criminals from operating.

Finding from research question four revealed that the community members perceive community policing as very good, worthwhile and commendable. This finding is in line with that of Adegbusi (2009) who posited that community members see community policing as good and worthwhile initiative to combat crime in their localities.

Finding from research question five revealed that the services of the community policing can be enhanced in the area through the provision of funds, training, welfare, awareness about community policing activities and equipment for the members of the community policing. This finding supports the study by Nnam, Agboti and Otu (2013) who maintained that the government should provide modern crime detecting facilities for community policing to enhance their operation.

## Conclusion

Study investigated community policing as a panacea for crime control in rural communities of Edo State. There is high crime rate in the rural communities such theft, rape, bulglary and kidnaping etc. The rural populace suffers from the adverse effect of unemployment, poverty as well as herdsmen attack. These constitute the major causes of crime in rural areas in Nigeria, in general and in Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State in particular. There is usually low police presence in terms of police size and patrol in rural areas. This makes it possible for some criminal elements and herdsmen to hide in rural areas while committing crime. The community members, therefore, must be part of the security operations in their community to proactively control crime through collaborations with the police in community policing, vigilante and other informal means of crime control such as oath taking, age groups, masquerade etc. The family and religious institutions will help in sensitising and mobilizing community members to partner with the police in crime control efforts in rural areas. To achieve this, the police need to build and sustain the trust of the public through better and humane services and contacts with the public. Members of the public must be perceived by the police as a major resource necessary for crime control in rural area of Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State. To achieve a safe community, the rural populace and the police must partner through community-policing in crime control within the rural communities.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Crime reporting to local leaders, family heads and the police should be made to become a way of life by all.
2. There should be plans by government and the people to provide and maintain rural infrastructures like good roads, electricity, CCTV, drone and communication facilities to facilitate crime detection and control in rural areas.
3. The members of the community should be educated through the mass media, workshops and seminars to understand the importance of collaborating with the police in combating crime in the community. This will help to increase the cooperation between the police and community members in combating crime.
4. The police should make the community members build trust on them through sensitization and effective discharge their duties as this will endear them to the community to provide information on criminals.
5. A forum should be established in the community in which the community members freely meet with the police to discuss crime related issues that affect the communities.
6. The government should vigorously embark on comprehensive training aimed at attitudinal change and professional efficiency among the rank and file and other officers' cadre of the police. This will improve the police public relationship with the communities.

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