

Effectiveness of Community Policing in the Control and Prevention of Crime in Ovia North East Local Government Area, of Edo State

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of community policing in the control and prevention of crime in rural communities in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. Four (4) research questions were raised to guide the study. The sample size 60 respondents were used for this study. While, Five (5) respondents were purposively selected from each of the Twelve (12) wards. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher and validated by experts. It produced a reliability index of 0.75. Data were analyzed using frequency counts, and percentages. Findings from the study revealed that socio-cultural factors are responsible for the emergence of community policing service groups in Ovia North East. It was further revealed that community police service group has been really effective in crime prevention and control among communities in Ovia North East. They collaborates with the Nigeria Police Force in raiding of 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 bringing criminal to justice. It was recommended that community policing structures be adequately equipped through provision of funds, equipment's and strong enabling laws that would guarantee their independent and unbiased discharge of their security functions. It was further recommended that constant training and retraining of community police service group members would enhance their efficiency on the job. There should be room for regular training to equip them with knowledge on modern ways of fighting crime especially at the community level.

Keywords: Effectiveness of Community Policing in the Control and Prevention of Crime in Rural Communities

Introduction

Many communities in Nigeria are faced with unprecedented increase in criminal activities such as robbery, arson, kidnapping for ransom, murder etc. This has 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 constitutional responsibility it is, to combat internal security challenges with supports from other law enforcement agents to contain these heinous act, appear not to be effective. With the continuous increase in internal crime, and lack of security presence in these rural communities, the task of protecting lives and properties cannot be accomplished. Therefore, the expectation of citizens from the government to ensure and guarantee their safety seems impossible (Ayobami, 2021).

Provision of adequate security is a social pre-requisite for the survival of any society. Every society takes appropriate measures to protect the lives and property of people living within its boundaries. Business and social activities may not go on freely without adequate security. This fundamental essence of security may be the reason why societies from time immemorial made efforts to police their neighborhoods in order to secure them from criminal victimization (Tope, 2016). Albert (2017), observed that all societies have crime and deviance; that sociologists generally agree that there is no such thing as a crime free society. However, even as every society has crime existing in it as a necessary component of its entire constitution, it is never a welcomed appeal to most of the members of the society, hence, the great effort being made in combating crime.

During the pre-colonial era, strategies employed at combating and preventing crime and deviance, fell within the ambience of certain indigenous social institutions and groups. For instance, in pre-colonial Igbo society, prevention of crime was primarily the social obligation of the entire citizenry at various capacities ranging from grown-up members of kindred to the members of various age grades who were

fit and agile. However, this system of crime control was distorted with the advent of colonialism. With the advent of colonialism came the distortion of the traditional institutions and values which had from time immemorial sustained harmonious relationship, peace, and security of lives and property in the pre-colonial African communities. Thus, the British Colonial Government in Nigeria established the formal, uniformed police for the purpose of ensuring security in the country. Reina (2013) asserted that, the Police existed primarily to promote harmony and security of lives and properties in the society and whether or not these functions were realized in the colonial era is strongly disputed. Many scholars believe that in the colonial era, the style and principles of policing were anti-people. It was rather meant to serve and protect the interests of the colonial masters (Chukwuma & Alemika cited in Osemwengie, Oviawe and Nehikhare, 2023). Oikhala (2021) also argued that the police in colonial era operated under the philosophy of strangers policing strangers.

In the post-colonial era, the style of policing was a carried over from the colonial epoch. This was evident in the style of law enforcement used by the post-colonial police, in the daily discharge of their duties. As maintained by Rotimi in Oikhala (2021), the post-colonial Nigerian Police also served the interests of their financiers who held the position of power and nothing better could be expected from them, since he who pays the piper dictates the tune. Hence, the operations of the police force have been plagued with inefficiency and loss of public confidence in the police force.

Alemika and Chukwuma cited in Osemwengie, Oviawe and Nehikhare (2023) noted that as a result of police inefficiency and ineffectiveness in crime prevention and control, detection and apprehension of criminals, poor rule of law records, the violation of human rights, lack of accountability, incivility and wide-scale corruption, the public holds the police in low esteem and is fearful of their brutality, extortion and ineffectiveness. The public loss of trust and confidence in the police and in the state, in the face of unrelenting upsurge in violent crimes in the

society, led to the advent and formation of informal policing strategies, otherwise known as vigilante or Neighbourhood Watch. The Amotekun of the Southwest and the Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) of the Yoruba descent; the Bakassi Boys of Ibo land; the Egbesu of Ijaw tribe; the Patari Soja in Tiv land; the Yan-Banga of the Hausa extraction and many others are some in Nigeria.

Recently, community policing has continued to gather momentum in the country. Tope (2016), sees community policing as a strategy that not only allows the police to proactively act beyond mere crime fighting/but also to partner with the community members in determining security priorities in society and fashioning ways of resolving identifiable problems in crime control in the community. It entails a systematic investment and inclusion of credible local guards, vigilante groups, able-bodied youths, and traditional leaders. It has been argued that the participation of local communities in crime prevention activities is justifiable since they know their crime problems and localities better than others from outside their communities. Community participation is grounded on this tenet of local communities' familiarity (Gbenemene & Adishi, 2017). 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. Community policing does not imply that the police are no longer in authority or that the primary duty of preserving law and order is subordinated, rather community policing involves community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all (Ikuteyijo & Rotimi, 2012).

The people will not partner with the police if they suspect that the police will reveal their identity to the criminal gangs. The police know that they must cooperate with the community if they must win community support when encouraging members to come forth with important information that will aid crime investigation, and prevention and, provide the needed opportunity for the police officers to create a working relationship with the community

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 properties. Therefore, the success of Security agencies in terms of community policing should not depend only on the development of their skills and capabilities, but also on the engagement of competent vigilante groups. The application of community policing initiatives in the rural communities would 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 menaces that constitute insecurity in Nigeria.

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

Rural areas in developing countries are usually characterized by poverty and food insecurity (Grote & Neubacher, 2016). The level of poverty is exacerbated by corruption and bad governance. Failure of the government to provide adequate security attracts criminals who exploit the poor infrastructure to terrorize innocent rural dwellers. Drawing from the various definitions given above, community policing involves the collaboration of efforts between the police and the residents in combating crime and fear of criminality. According to Olusegun (2016), community policing is a strategy being adopted as an alternative or supplementary effort from the

immediate community to buttress the efforts of the police force in combating crime and criminal activities. It is clear that the police in Nigeria cannot sustain or maintain crime-free communities without voluntary local efforts to complement theirs. It is also believed that the people residing in a particular community can easily identify those people perpetrating evils in their immediate milieu and will be easy for them in tracking them down; they have adequate knowledge of the geographical settings of their areas

As noted by Human Right Watch (HRW) and center for law enforcement and education (CLEEN), vigilantism and other self-defense groups currently operating in Nigeria have roots that reached deeply into the country's history. Their study identified southeast (Igbo) states as the main areas where vigilante groups were predominant in the pre-colonial era. On the contrary and as the report from HRW and CLEEN testifies to, what we know is that the modern employment of vigilante groups in contemporary Nigeria is widespread and ranges beyond Igbo territory legitimization of murder and torture. Nigeria police are ineffective and corrupt. This fact made the public skeptical about their ability to live up to expectations with respect to crime control. Harry Nwanas account of the emergence of

vigilantism in his home, part of Imo State was anchored on police collaboration and betrayal. According to him, "life was made unbearable by callous activities of armed bandits. Then, something intolerable happened warranting the community setting up local vigilante units. They were to stem the rise in crime, identify the criminals and involve at various crime in Minjibir, Gabasawa and Ringim. Before the members knew it, their anonymity was compromised and they were marked for elimination. It did not take a lot of investigation to learn that the culprits were local boys and that the police collaboration was part of their strength. All information placed at the disposal of the police about suspected dare devil, home based hoodlums were passed on to the men no any result. At this stage, a voice suggested and they employed the services of

Yan Banga, (Vigilante Group) whose success in other communities had become remarkable. They went to work and well know hoodlums took notice and either fled or stayed at their own peril. In a short time, he continued, locking and bolting gates became only a matter of habit, nobody needed to” (Eke cited in Akinyemi, 2021).

For prevention of crime to occur, these factors have to be worked upon to reduce them to the best minimum or of possible, eradicate them completely. An idle mind it is said is the criminal tendencies are gainfully employed and engaged the desire to present its self because they now have something to lose when crime occurs, they will not want to act upon it. Also, persons with criminal skills can be used to tackle crime. For example a rehabilitated drug addict can be used, instead of been allowed to go back to his or her old neighborhood to mingle with old partners. Even on a temporary basis to teach and enlighten others against drug abuse or even as a spy during investigation to bust drug rings. Also, the use of community policing is one very novel and effective way of crime control and prevention. The police force is not numerically capable of being everywhere at all-time have the need then, members of the community also participate in policing their environment prompt reporting of suspicious activities and characters in the neighbourhoods is one just because you own house is not affected by the nefarious activities going on does not mean you keep silent about it for tomorrow, it might be your turn.

Knowing your neighbour or a new addition to the community is another way of preventing crime in the neighbourhood. There is a need to know who the person is, where they are coming from, what they do for a living e.t.c. These details we terms as minor but do go a long way in letting us know who we are allowing into the neighbourhood to be with our families and friends. According to Arase (2016) Increasing the risk of crime and reducing it rewards are also ways of preventing crime for example, in a locality where uncompleted building abound, no vigilantes, no

security light, and persons of questionable characters reside, there are risks is a high risk of crime because the environment is already a criminal zone.

Surveillance is one the oldest ways of detecting criminal activity. This method is used by vigilante groups when it has information that a crime will take place at a specific location or when certain people are suspected of criminal activity. When a vigilante group make surveillance suspected that a crime is committed or about to take place they quickly reported to closest and relevant security formation for necessary action. The first situation is usually handled by fixed police observation known as a stakeout: The second circumstance may require mobile observation as well, perhaps on foot or by automobile. Some situation may call for aerial observation (using aircraft) or electronic procedure (using surveillance equipment that monitors electronic communication. The observation method must be legal.

Surveillance techniques, for example may include placing personnel in strategic locations and equipping them with optical aids, such as binoculars or scopes with the capacity to detect an object illuminated only by moonlight or with electronic devices, sensitive to a conversation taking place at a considerable distance (Alumona, 2019).

Therefore, the Nigerian police and other law enforcement officers will not be able to keep or keep crime-free neighbourhoods unless the local community, especially young people and traditional institutions, help them. As a result, the goal of this study is to find out how well community policing works in Ovia North East local government area of Edo State, whilst determining the level of effectiveness of community policing, perception of the public about community policing in the area and the willingness of the people to support community policing.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, many communities in Nigeria have witnessed crimes of various descriptions. Ovia North East local government area of Edo State is not an exception. Communities such as Iguadolor, Ugbineh and a host of others are currently

living in fear. For instance, there have been series of killings and thugs related activities in Ugbinah community due to tussle for the position of Community Youth Leader (The Nigerian Observer, 2024) Thus, crime is becoming a serious problem in contemporary Nigeria. The police who are the primary agent in the fight against crime are ineffective. Their ineffectiveness may be as a result of the fact that they are under-staffed, under-equipped, and corrupt and lacked public cooperation. These have created problem of under policing in Edo State including Ovia North East local government area. Thus, violent crimes are committed on daily basis without detection, arrest and prosecution. Many people are being dispossessed of their valuable properties and others are killed or maimed for life by armed criminals. Many people hardly sleep in their houses at night for fear of criminal victimization. Those who sleep in their houses at Night do so at their own peril. Consequently, Ovia North East local government area of Edo State has of recent been gripped by insecurity and lawlessness as armed robbery and other violent crimes reached unprecedented levels. Thus community policing seems to be gaining more prominence as agent of crime control in the area. Many of them now operate in both rural and urban areas in Local Government Area. Residents see community police as an outfit they can always rely on in terms of security. Put differently, the public is skeptical about the ability of Nigeria Police to provide adequate security services alone without the involvement of the public. This study therefore investigates the effectiveness of community policing in the control and prevention of crime in rural communities in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State

Objective of the Study

Specifically, this study ought to:

1. ascertain the socio-cultural factors responsible for the emergence of community police service groups in Ovia North East local government area of Edo State
2. determine the level of effectiveness of community police service groups in Ovia North East local government area of Edo State
3. examine the perception of the public about the community police service groups in Ovia North East local government area of Edo State
4. identify ways by which the services of the community in Ovia North East can be enhanced in the area.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What socio-cultural factors are responsible for the emergence of community police service groups in Ovia North East local government area of Edo State?
2. What is the level of effectiveness of community policing in crime prevention and control in in Ovia North East local government area of Edo State?
3. What is the perception of the public about community policing in the area?
4. 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 used for the study. The study population consists of the inhabitants of Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State. The population for the study was drawn from Twelve (12) wards. The population of the area was given to be One Hundred and Fifty Five Thousand Three Hundred and Fifty forty Four (155,344) (National Population Commission, 2016). The total sample size for the study was sixty (60) respondents, selected from

members of the community and vigilante group through purposive sampling technique. In this wise, Five (5) respondents was selected from each of the twelve (12) wards to constitute a reasonable sample size for the study. The questionnaire titled: Effectiveness of Community Policing in the Control and Prevention of Crime in Rural Communities Questionnaire (ECPCPCRCQ) was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire comprises of Section “A” and “B”. the section ‘A’ of the instrument focuses on gathering personal information of the respondents such as age, sex, occupation, educational qualification among others and section B was designed towards seeking information on the issues raised in the research questions. The questionnaire was a Twenty (20) items instrument designed along the line of the 4-point Modified Likert Scale of Strongly agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed. The levels were weighted or assigned 4 points 3points, 2 points and 1 point respectively. In validating the instruments, experts opinion was adopted. Three experts in the area of psychometrics from the Department of Adult and Non-formal Education Faculty of Education, University of Benin helped to determine the face and content validity of the instrument. To determine the reliability level of the instrument in generating the required data, copies were pilot-tested through single test giving at a single sitting to thirty (30) respondents selected from the target population. The scores obtained for odd and even number items were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. A correlation index of 0.75 was obtained. Data were analyzed using frequency counts, and percentages.

Results

The result emanating from the data collected and analyzed were presented as follows:

Research Question One: What socio-cultural factors are responsible for the emergence of community police service groups in Ovia North East local government area of Edo State?

Table 1: Data on the socio-cultural factors are responsible for the emergence of community police service in Ovia North East

S/N	Variables	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	Drastic Increase in the rate of crime in the area	20 (33%)	40 (77%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
2	Lack of presence of police in the crime scene	30 (50%)	30 (50%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
3	The Nigeria Police Force ineffectiveness	15 (25%)	45 (75%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
4	The police collaboration and betrayal with criminals	30 (50%)	30 (50%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
5	The community police groups are more accessible than other security groups	10 (07%)	50 (93%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

A critical view of Table 1 above showed that 20 (33%) and 40 (77%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively that drastic Increase in the rate of crime in the area. Accordingly, none of the respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed on this variable. In ascertaining whether the lack of presence of police in the crime scene, it was observed that 30(50%) and 30(50%) of the respondents

Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively on the variable while none of them had a different position. In the same vein, the researcher was also interested in finding out the Nigeria Police Force ineffectiveness and from the responses gathered, 15 (25%) and 45 (75%) Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively while none responded otherwise. Similarly, it was also found that 30 (44%) and 30(56%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively that the police collaboration and betrayal no respondent that Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed on this variable. In determining whether the community police service groups are more accessible than other security groups, it was observed that 10 (7%) and 50 (93%)of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively on the variable while none of them had a different position.

From the analyses of the responses made on this question by all the participants, it was concluded that socio-economic factors such as drastic Increase in the rate of crime in the area, lack of presence of police in the crime scene, the Nigeria Police Force ineffectiveness,

the police collaboration and betrayal and the community police service groups are more accessible than other security groups as the reasons for the establishment of community of community policing groups n the study area.

Research Question Two: What is the level of effectiveness of community police service groups in crime prevention and control in Ovia North East local government area of Edo State?

Table 2: Data on the level of effectiveness of community police service groups in crime prevention and control in Ovia North East local government area

S/N	Variables	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
6	Deploy methods are strategies employed by the police to destabilize the set plans of the criminals.	25 (17%)	35 (83%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
7	Raiding of criminal hideouts to apprehend criminals and recover arms and ammunition.	30 (50%)	30 (50%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
8	Arrest and interrogation of suspected criminals.	40 (27%)	20 (73%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
9	Conduct surveillance on building and suspected criminal individuals.	30 (50%)	30 (50%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
10	Collaborate with the police force in bringing criminal to justice	10 (17%)	50 (83%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

A cursory look at Table 2 above showed that 25 (17%) and 35 (83%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively that deploy methods are strategies employed by the police to destabilize the set plans of the criminals. Accordingly, none of the respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed on this variable. In ascertaining whether increasing social relations makes women participate in the programmes, it was observed that 30 (50%) and 30(50%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively on the variable while none of them had a different position. In the same vein, the researcher was also interested in finding out if Arrest and interrogation of suspected criminals and from the responses gathered, 40(73%) and 20 (27%) Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively while none responded otherwise. Similarly, it was also found that 30 (50%) and 30(50%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively that the conduct surveillance on building and suspected criminal individuals. There was however no

respondent that Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed on this variable. The final variable in the study was meant to find out if collaboration with the police force in bringing criminal to justice. And from the responses gathered and analysed, it was found that 10 (17%) and 50 (83%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively on the variable while none of them had a different position. From the analyses of the responses made on this question by all the participants, it is therefore concluded that the level of effectiveness of community police service groups in crime prevention and control in Ovia North East are; deploy methods are strategies employed by the police to destabilize the set plans of the criminals, Raiding of 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 Collaboration with the police force in bringing criminal to justice

Research Question Three: What is the perception of the public about the community policing in the area?

Table 3: Data on the perception of the public about the community policing in the area

S/N	Variables	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
11	Very good	Nil (0)	Nil (0)	20 (33%)	40 (77%)
12	Good	30 (50%)	30 (50%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
13	Worthwhile	15 (25%)	45 (75%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
14	Commendable	30 (50%)	30 (50%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
15	Fairly Beneficial	Nil (0)	Nil (0)	10 (07%)	50 (93%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

A critical view of Table 3 above showed that 20 (33%) and 40 (77%) of the respondents Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed respectively perceive that community policing in the area is Very good. Accordingly, none of the respondents Strongly Agreed or Agreed on this variable. In ascertaining whether the activities of community policing is very good, it was observed that 30(50%) and 30(50%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively on the variable while none of them had a different position. In the same vein, the researcher was also interested in finding out if the activities of community policing is worthwhile and from the responses gathered, 15 (25%) and 45 (75%) Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively while none responded otherwise. Similarly, it was also found that 30 (44%) and 30(56%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively that the activities of community policing is commendable that Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed on this variable. In determining whether the activities of the community policing group is fairly beneficial, it was observed that 10 (7%) and 50 (93%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively on the variable while none of them had a different position. From the analyses of the responses made on this question by all the participants, it is therefore concluded that the activities as regard to the perception of the people is that it is good, worthwhile, commendable

Research Question Four

What are the ways by which the services of the community policing can be enhanced in the area?

Table 4: Data on the ways by which the services of the community police groups can be enhanced in the area

S/N	Variables	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
16	provision for funding, training and welfare of the members of the community policing group	25 (17%)	35 (83%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
17	Community policing groups should also be trained on how to handle complex weapons	30 (50%)	30 (50%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
18	There should also be checks in the mental capacity of those recruited members of the community policing service.	40 (27%)	20 (73%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
19	Creation of more awareness about the activities of community policing Groups	30 (50%)	30 (50%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
20	Provision of equipment's like the motor and van by the government	10 (17%)	50 (83%)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

A cursory look at Table 4 above showed that 25 (17%) and 35 (83%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively that the provision for funding, training and welfare of the members of the community policing group will aid their activities. Accordingly, none of the respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed on this variable. In ascertaining whether community policing groups should also be trained on how to handle complex weapons as the, it was observed that 30 (50%) and 30(50%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively on the variable while none of them had a different position. In the same vein, the researcher was also interested in finding out if there should also be checks in the mental capacity of those

recruited members of the community policing service and from the responses gathered, 40(73%) and 20 (27%) Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively while none responded otherwise. Similarly, it was also found that 30 (50%) and 30(50%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively that the creation of more awareness about the activities of community policing groups. There was however no respondent that Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed on this variable. The final variable in the study was meant to find out if the provision of equipment's like the motor and van by the government And from the responses gathered and analysed, it was found that 10 (17%) and 50 (83%) of the respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively on the variable while none of them had a different position. From the analyses of the responses made on this question by all the participants, it is therefore concluded that ways by which the services of the community policing can be enhanced are; the provision for funding, training and welfare of the members of the community policing, v community policing groups should also be trained on how to handle complex weapons, checks in the mental capacity of those recruited members of the community policing service

Discussion of Findings

The result of this study has been quite informative and revealing. The first research question revealed that socio-cultural factors are responsible for the emergence of community policing in Ovia North East are drastic Increase in the rate of crime in the area, lack of presence of police in the crime scene, the Nigeria Police Force ineffectiveness, the police collaboration and betrayal and the vigilante groups are more accessible than other security groups. This finding corroborates Eke in Akinyemi (2021) that Nigeria police are ineffective and corrupt. This fact made the public skeptical about their ability to live up to expectations with respect to crime control and All information placed at the disposal of the police about suspected dare devil, home based hoodlums were leaked. Corroborating this view, Onyeije, Anyaoha and Osita-Njoku (2019) revealed that the community members do not partner with

police to reduce and control crime because the community members feel unsafe with the police who may expose the identities of community members that give vital information on criminals thereby endangering their lives

Findings from research question two revealed that the level of effectiveness of community police service groups in crime prevention and control in Ovia North East are; community police service groups deploy methods and strategies employed by the police to destabilize the set plans of the criminals, Raiding of 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 collaboration with the police force in bringing criminal to justice the community policing deploy methods are strategies employed by the police to destabilize the set plans of the criminals, Raiding of 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 Collaboration with the police force in bringing criminal to justice. This findings is in agreement with that of Aniche (2018) who posited that community policing groups 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 Adeniyi (2021), who found that community policing groups are always available whenever they are needed since they maintain constant presence in the community/streets to prevent criminals from operating.

Findings from research question three showed that the activities as regard to the perception of the people is that it is good, worthwhile, commendable. This finding is in agreement with that of. This finding is line with that of Jean (2016), who revealed that Khayelisha residents patrol streets during the night under a neighbourhood watch project, and by reporting committed crimes to the police with information on potential crimes, this same community patrol helps to decrease potential criminal activities

Findings from research question four revealed that ways by which the services of the community policing can be enhanced are; the provision for funding, training and welfare of the members of the community policing, community policing groups should also be trained on how to handle complex weapons, checks in the mental capacity of those recruited members of the community policing. This finding is in line with Adebisi in Aniche and Okafor, (2018) who posited that community policing activities can perform better if they are assisted by the government in the provision of facilities.

Conclusion

Many communities in Ovia North East local government area of Edo State are faced with unprecedented increase in criminal activities such as robbery, arson, kidnapping for ransom, herdsmen attack, cult killings and murder etc. This has become a source of a major concern to the government, stakeholders and the community members. The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of community policing in the control and prevention of crime in rural communities in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. It is therefore concluded that since their introduction, community police service groups in Ovia North East has brought drastic reduction in crime rates. This they do by conducting regular surveillance on buildings and suspected criminal individuals, collaborating with the police force in bringing criminal to justice and raiding of criminal hideouts to apprehend criminals and recover arms and ammunition.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion drawn from the findings, the following recommendations hereby proffered:

1. The informal policing structures be adequately equipped through provision of funds, equipment's and strong enabling laws that would guarantee their independence and unbiased discharge of their security functions. The old order of compelling the

community police service groups to report their operations to the police should be done away with. This is because it constitutes a clog in the wheel of proper discharge of their duties.

2. Concerted efforts towards having a synergistic relationship between the conventional community policing outfits in the study area is a necessity. This is particularly important due to the fact that the presence of this would ensure a complementary working relationship that would further improve on the efforts and progress made so far in terms of policing.
3. The government should ensure constant training and retraining of community police service group members would enhance their efficiency on the job. There should be room for regular training to equip them with knowledge on modern ways of fighting crime especially at the community level
4. Motivation of community police members is crucial and as such should be taken seriously as it will enable them get dedicated to service. Outstanding members should therefore be recognized to boost the morale of other officers. An excellence award unit should therefore be set up in the office of the governor of the state to kick start this all important project.

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