Government Policy on Community Policing and Its Impact on Crime Reduction in Edo State: An Evaluation of Edo State Security Network/Vigilante

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Abstract

Community policing and crime reduction are crucial factors that contribute to maintaining law and order in any society. This study explores the effectiveness of community policing in reducing crime in Edo State. It delves into the strategies and tactics employed by the State Security Network/ Vigilante to combat crime, such as community policing and intelligence gathering. The study also examines the impact of these measures on crime rates and public safety in the state. Furthermore, the abstract highlights the importance of collaboration between the State Security Network/Vigilante and the Nigeria Police, as well as other relevant stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. It discusses the importance of joint efforts in combating crime and ensuring a safe environment for residents. Relying on the survey research design as a method and the theoretical framework of Broken Window Theory, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of crime reduction, specifically in the context of Edo State. The study concludes that the Edo State security

network needs more collaboration with other security agencies to carry out some activities such as awareness-raising and training; thus, it has been able to reduce crime to an extent, but there is still room for improvement. The study recommends sufficient funding, more community engagement, intense training and capacity building, technological adoption, and improved collaboration towards crime fighting in the state.

Key words: Community, Policing, Security, Crime control, Kidnapping

Introduction

Undoubtedly, crime is a major obstacle that Nigeria is currently facing. Every day, the national newspapers consistently report various forms of criminal activities, including but not limited to kidnapping, rape, assault, murder (Aigbe & Akenzua, 2020), child sexual abuse, assassination, armed robbery, burglary, vehicle theft, oil pipeline vandalism, incidents of bombings by Boko Haram, cybercrimes, and human trafficking (Ibidapo, 2019). These criminal acts are frequently committed by thugs employing advanced weaponry against defenceless citizens who are occasionally abducted with the intention of demanding ransom. In a similar vein, the killings perpetrated by criminal herdsmen, which were first confined to a few northern states, have now proliferated across the entire nation (Aihie & Aigbe, 2024). Edo State has also had a significant amount of criminal activity, including kidnapping, armed robbery, cult fights, and conflicts between herders and farmers. These incidents have resulted in numerous murders, destruction of property, and arson attacks on buildings in recent times. In order to address the security issues in the state, several communities, neighbourhoods, and governments have implemented both formal and informal security networks, such as the State Security Network (neighbourhood watch/vigilante groups).

The Edo State Governor recently implemented a new security system called the "Edo State Security Network/Vigilante" to enhance the safety and security of the state and its residents. According to Arisukwu (2017), more than half of Nigerians utilise the services of community-based security operatives to safeguard themselves against criminal attacks. In several states of Nigeria, notably Edo State, the government has openly sanctioned the use of armed vigilante groups as a means to significantly diminish crime rates. Recently, stakeholders from different

senatorial districts in the state have collaborated with the government to establish a state security network (Vigilante). This initiative aims to address the frequent incursions of kidnappers and armed robbers into their communities, as well as mitigate the damage caused by herdsmen who destroy crops and disturb the peace of farmers and other residents in the various communities (Unufe & Obarisiagbon, 2023). Despite efforts to curb crime by implementing this alternative security system, crime persists across the state, causing significant harm to affected individuals and communities.

It is against this background that this paper intends to evaluate the Edo state's policy on community policing and its impacts on crime reduction in the state. It also aimed to ascertain whether the Edo state security network's collaboration with other related agencies has strengthened their efforts to track down criminals in the state.

Research Hypothesis

1. Ho: There is no significant relationship between crime reduction and community policing in Edo State
   Hi: There is a significant relationship between crime reduction and community policing in Edo State
2. Ho: Edo state security network collaboration with other related agencies has not significantly strengthened their efforts to tract down crime in the state
   Hi: Edo state security network collaboration with other related agencies has significantly strengthened their efforts to tract down crime in the state

Defining Community Policing

Multitudes of literature (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2005; Adewale, 2007; and Austin, 2010) have all attempted to define, explain, and theorise community policing, but the major challenge facing community policing today is conceptualization. Even though there are different pieces of literature and various definitions, the most important thing is where and how to differentiate between community policing and community-oriented policing. Are these two concepts the same or different? In some instances, the two concepts seem to be used

interchangeably, having the same characteristics. Some scholars (Beyhan & Küçükuysal, 2011; Brogden, 2005; and Brown, 2001) view the two concepts differently. They viewed community policing as a police-oriented affair, having to deal with how officers will adopt new strategies by collaborating with the community in crime prevention and promoting a sense of security, while community-oriented policing, to them, means a community-based approach and initiative by the people towards controlling and preventing crime in an attempt to complement the effort of the police and for the betterment of their community. Others view both concepts as one. However, since the advent of community policing, there is actually no universally accepted definition (Hills, 2011). Meanwhile, law enforcement has been quietly revolutionised, assuming a great source of debate as to the exact nature and scope it possesses (Okeshola & Mudiare, 2013).

However, there is a consensus among academia, police institutions, and governments as to the viability of moving towards community-oriented policing in an attempt to reduce citizen fear and overall achievement of the quality of life, or a safe city in other instances. To avoid the risk of generalisation, these definitions were conceptualised in different dimensions. According to the Office of Community Oriented Policing Service (2007), crime and social disorder are the focus of community policing. This is achieved through service delivery, which includes aspects of regular law enforcement, prevention, problem solving, and community engagement and partnership. The community policing approach tries to strike a balance between reactive responses and proactive problem solving, specifically the causes of crime and disorder. Community policing is essentially about a partnership between the police and the citizens. Philosophically, community policing is an initiative that aspires to establish partnerships between the people and the police in addressing contemporary challenges to security such as social and physical disorder, crime, and fear towards achieving an overall quality of life (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1998). This scholar's definition means that community policing attempts to bridge the gap between the police and the citizen. They fill that vacuum that lack of trust has created over the years.

Theoretical framework

Many scholars have propounded quite a number of theories in both local and international publications, informing the populace on the importance and relevance of community policing and community support in trying to combat crime and some the theories is been discussed below:

Broken Windows Theory (BWT)

The broken window theory is a criminological concept that suggests that visible signs of disorder and neglect, such as broken windows, graffiti, litter, and abandoned buildings, create an environment that encourages more serious crimes. The theory was first proposed by social scientists James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in 1982 and has since influenced various policies and practices of community policing. According to the theory, leaving a broken window unrepaired in a building sends a signal that no one cares about the building. This signal can cause more broken windows and other forms of disorder, ultimately leading to more serious crimes. Secondly, this theory has also been used to support the idea that police should focus more on minor crimes such as vandalism, loitering, public drinking, jaywalking, and fare evasion in order to create an atmosphere of order and lawfulness (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). This approach is believed to help prevent more serious crimes by decreasing the likelihood of disorderly behavior.

Therefore, community policing and the Broken Windows Theory are two independent concepts, yet they are not incompatible with one another under any circumstances. As a matter of fact, numerous community policing initiatives utilise aspects of the Broken Windows Theory by focusing on addressing tiny signals of disorder as a component of their attempts to enhance public safety and the quality of life in communities. Moreover, community policing techniques frequently coincide with the concept of addressing the fundamental social and environmental issues that contribute to criminal activity. This is an essential component of the Broken Windows Theory, which is a significant part of the theory. According to the Broken Window Theory, a neighbourhood that is deteriorated and whose residents live in fear, pessimism, and despondency breeds crime; in contrast, a neighbourhood where disorderliness is not tolerated and the residents are civil to one another discourages criminal havior. In explicit terms,

broken window theory simply means that the environment determines what happens around it.

Methodology

This study employed the use of survey or cross-sectional research design. It is a quantitative data gathering and analytic procedure where by people are systematically ask questions about their feelings, opinion, ideal or behavior on something.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises the total population in Edo South senatorial district, 2.7million people which is about 57.6% of the total population of Edo state citizen (National Population Census, 2006).

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

This study utilizes a sample of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents, distributed throughout the Edo South senatorial district. The sample techniques adopted for this study are the purposive sampling technique and the stratified sampling method, which desegregate the study population into homogenous subsets or strata, that is, into local government areas, constituencies, wards, males and females, etc. The rationale behind the adoption of this technique was to ensure proper representation of the sample as well as equal distribution of the respondents from the senatorial district.

Sources of Data Collection

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through questionnaire. Also, Secondary data were obtained from published reports, books, internet, journals, newspapers and magazines. For analytical comparison of facts and proper compilation of facts and figures, survey of existing documents was deemed necessary.

Method of Data Analysis

Tables, simple percentage and SPSS were used as techniques of analysing the research questions. The simple percentage which a descriptive tool for statistics was used for initial analyses, while the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation

Coefficient which is an inferential tool was employed in testing the hypotheses generated from the survey. The statistics package for the social science (SPSS) was used, to analyze the data.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Frequency Distribution and percentage of Respondents on Crime Reduction and Community Policing in Edo South.

	STATEMENTS	**SA**	**%**	**A**	**%**	**D**	**%**	**SD**	**%**
1	The introduction of state security/ vigilante in Edo south has reduced the level of crime in the region	53	38.1	59	42.4	19	13.7	8	5.8
2	Vigilante member are indigenes of their communities and they understand their terrain better than police.	65	46.8	40	28.8	22	15.8	12	8.6
3	State policing/ vigilante watch can be an option that can enhance the effectiveness of the police force in Edo state	52	37.4	45	32.4	27	19.4	15	10.8
4	Community members have more confidence on the state security/ vigilante than on the formal police	36	25.9	42	30.2	34	24.5	27	19.4

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The table above shows the frequency distribution and percentage of respondents on crime reduction and community policing in Edo state. On the question of the introduction of state security/ vigilante in Edo south has reduced the level of crime in the region, 53 respondents (38.1%) agreed strongly that the introduction the state security network has reduced crime in the state. Also, 59 (42.4 %) of the respondents agreed without a degree of conviction that the introduction of the vigilante group has helped to reduce crime. Furthermore, 19 (13.7%) of the respondents disagreed while 8, representing 5.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the notion expressed. While 36 (25.9%) respondents strongly agreed that community members have more confidence in the security network than the formal police force in crime fighting, 42 respondents, marking 30.2 % only expressed agreement without a degree of conviction. While 34 (24.5%) respondents strongly disagreed, 27 (19.4%) conveniently disagreed to this notion. The implication is that more respondents have the belief that the introduction of

Edo state's security network has helped to reduce crime while also building strong confidence on the people.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution and percentage of Respondents on Edo State Security Network/Vigilant Collaboration with other related Agencies

	STATEMENTS	**SA**	**%**	**A**	**%**	**D**	**%**	**SD**	**%**
1	Edo state security network collaboration with other security agencies such as the Nigeria police, Immigration and custom services have strengthened their effort in tracking down criminals in the state.	54	38.8	50	36	21	15.1	14	10.1
2	Edo states security network collaboration with other institutions for partnership to carry out some activities such as awareness raising and training	42	30.2	48	34.5	29	20.9	20	14.4
3	Edo state security network collaboration with other agencies sometimes generates conflict	58	41.7	43	30.9	27	19.4	11	8
4	Edo state security network find it difficult to collaborate with other states and non-governmental agencies to track down criminal in the state	51	36.7	40	28.8	31	22.3	17	12.2

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 above interrogates the notion the notion that Edo state security network collaboration with other security agencies such as the Nigeria police, Immigration and custom services have strengthened their effort in tracking down criminals in the state. On this note, 54 respondents, marking about 38.8% of the total respondents strongly agreed while 50 respondents, which marks 36% of the total respondents agreed without a degree of further conviction. Also, 21 respondents, marking about 15.1% disagreed with the question while 14 respondents, marking 10.1% of the respondents expressed strong disagreement about the question. The implication i9s that, the introduction of Edo state security network has helped to strengthen the efficacy of other security forces in terms of meeting up with their demands on crime fighting.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One

Ho: There is no significant relationship between crime reduction and community policing in Edo State

Hi: There is a significant relationship between crime reduction and community policing in Edo State

Table 3: Correlation between crime reduction and state policing in Edo State.

Correlations

		Community Policing	Crime Reduction
Community Policing	Pearson Correlation	1	.912**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	139	139
Crime Reduction	Pearson Correlation	.912**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	139	139

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 reveals that, there exist a significant relationship between crime reduction and state policing in Edo State with a correlation coefficient *R* value of 0.912, indicating that, the concept of community policing has a strong influence on crime reduction in Edo State. Furthermore, with the *p*-value (Sig = 0.000) less than (<) 0.01, the study thus reject the null hypothesis (there is no significant relationship between crime reduction and state policing in Edo State) and accept the research hypothesis (there is a significant relationship between crime reduction and state policing in Edo State).

Hypothesis Two

Ho: Edo state security network collaboration with other related agencies has not significantly strengthened their efforts to tract down crime in the state

Hi: Edo state security network collaboration with other related agencies has significantly strengthened their efforts to tract down crime in the state

Table 4: Edo state security network collaboration with other related agencies has not significantly strengthened their efforts to tract down crime in the state.

Correlations

		Edo State Security Network	Agencies Collaboration
Edo State Security Network	Pearson Correlation	1	.931**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	139	139
Agencies Collaboration	Pearson Correlation	.931**	1
	Sig. (2-t ailed)	.000	
	N	139	139

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 11 analysis reveals a positive relationship between Edo state security network collaboration with other related agencies and their efforts to tract down crime in the state, due to the high rate of *R* coefficient which is 0.931, hence signifying a strong relationship between Edo state security network collaboration with other related agencies and their efforts to tract down crime in the state. The data from table 23 also reveals a *p*-value (sig = 0.000) which is < 0.01, indicating that the researcher rejects the null hypothesis which state that Edo state security network collaboration with other related agencies has not significantly strengthened their efforts to tract down crime in the state, and accepts the research hypothesis which states that Edo state security network collaboration with other related agencies has significantly strengthened their efforts to tract down crime in the state.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study emphasised that community policing acts as an instrument to serve communities through the prevention of insecurity. In another study, Ibidapo (2019) investigated the influence of citizen awareness on community policing and the detection of security challenges in Nigeria. This was aimed at exploring the influence of community policing on security challenges and detention. A questionnaire was distributed to 314 respondents in Nigeria. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the quantitative data, including correlations and reliabilities. The findings of the empirical test show that community policing helps in the detection of security challenges in Nigeria. The study reveals a positive relationship between community policing and security challenge detection in Nigeria. Buttressing the above findings further, Okeshola & Mediara (2013) argued that community policing advocates that police should be highly visible in communities through foot patrols and should integrate themselves into communities to ensure confidence and trust from communities. Supporting the aforementioned finding, Olaolu (2015) conducted research into the perceptions of citizens on the impact of community policing. Olaolu argued that local citizens see community policing as a policy that requires the police to adopt a proactive approach to address public safety concerns.

Also, Tope (2016) stated that community policing is seen as a strategy that does not only allow the police to proactively act beyond mere crime fighting but also to partner with the community members in setting security priorities in society and fashioning ways of resolving identifiable problems in the community. With the data gathered from the field, the study also examined the co-relationship between the Edo State Security Network's collaboration with other related agencies and their efforts to combat crime in the state. The study reveals a significant relationship between Edo State Security Network collaboration with other related agencies and their efforts to combat crime in the state. With regards to the findings of Hypothesis 3, Arisukwu (2017), the community policing model is characterised by police-citizen partnership, which involves problem solving. This is a fundamental element of community policing philosophy that has been neglected in Nigeria. In this regard, it emphasises partnership between communities and the police force through the proactive integration of citizens in a creative way in order to solve community security problems. This includes crime and criminality control

in the neighbourhood to prevent security challenges through fundamental changes geared towards achieving peaceful communities in Nigeria. These areas not only affect the way police respond to security challenges but also the way they try to prevent crime in society.

Further, Hills (2012) opined that the experiment with community policing in Nigeria is to bring out the major features of community policing through cooperation and collaboration between police and citizens to prevent and control security challenges in rural areas. In the study of Onyeije, Anyaoha, & Osita-Njoku (2019), they discovered that community policing implies recognising that police can rarely solve public safety problems resulting from crimes and other related problems alone; it has to do with encouraging interactive partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

Examining the linkage between crime reduction and state policing in Edo State. The study demonstrates empirical evidence of a strong relationship between crime reduction and state policing in Edo State. The result concurs with the study by Chinwokwu (2016), who examined the management of police personnel for effective crime control and prevention in Nigeria. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative designs to attempt to identify the criteria used in posting police officers. Data were obtained through questionnaires from 360 randomly selected respondents, complemented by 15 in-depth interviews (IDI) undertaken in three geopolitical regions in Nigeria, namely: the southeast, southwest, and north central. The three geo-political regions were purposefully chosen based on the incidences of armed robbery recorded in each. The study also used secondary data from the National Bureau of Statistics and the Nigeria Police Force as reference materials. Simple percentages and chi-squared tests were employed to analyse the collected data. The qualitative data were content-analysed. The findings revealed that factors such as crime rate, population size, industrial development, land mass, and political interference were not clearly defined criteria used in the posting of personnel.

The number of police in a region does not equate to more or less crime; effective crime control and prevention depend on proper and effective utilisation, as well as the management of police personnel. Police authorities are culpable for

mismanagement of police personnel for personal gain to the detriment of citizens; most states are under-policed and understaffed.

Conclusion

In terms of conclusion, the study thus concludes, amongst others, that community policing improves citizen perceptions about the police. The study further concludes that state policing has been fully accepted in Edo South. It was also concluded that state policing and vigilante watch can be an option that can enhance the effectiveness of the police force in Edo State. The study asserted that the Edo State security network needs more collaboration with other security agencies to carry out some activities such as awareness-raising and training. The study also concludes that the Edo State Security Network finds it difficult to collaborate with other states and non-governmental agencies to track down criminals in the state. Thus, the implementation of state policing requires careful planning, coordination, and collaboration with relevant stakeholders to ensure its success.

Recommendations

State policing is a complex and sensitive issue that requires careful consideration. However,

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations becomes apt;

1. Edo State government should ensure sufficient funding for the State Security Service/ Vigilante to improve their capacity and effectiveness. This includes budget allocations for training, equipment, infrastructure, and recruitment as well as incentive for the members
2. Officers of the security network should be more actively engage in their community, build trust, and work collaboratively to address local security concerns through community policing initiatives and regular town hall.
3. Training and capacity-building: training and development programs for members of the Security Network in Edo State. This should include specialized training on human rights, conflict resolution, community policing, and modern law enforcement techniques.
4. Technological advancements such as CCTV cameras, digital databases, Communication gadget and crime mapping systems to enhance intelligence gathering and crime prevention efforts should be embraced

5. There should be collaboration between the state security/ vigilante and the federal police force, as well as other law enforcement agencies, and relevant stakeholders. Sharing information, joint operations, and coordinated efforts can help to tackle organized crime, terrorism, and other security challenges.

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