



Impact of Community Participation in Community Policing for Crime Reduction in Bida Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria

¹Saudia Elsauud Suleiman, ²Abdullahi Danjuma Wushishi, ³Salamatu Kasim Abdulkadir, Josephine Nchedo Oguine

¹ Department of Public Administration, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State

² & ³ Department of Public Administration, Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru,

⁴ Department of Political Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi

¹<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0514-7377>

²<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-6626-6065>

³<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3334-5578>

⁴<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6268-9854>

Corresponding author: elsaleem59@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: Efforts by the government to curb increasing crime rates in Bida community have yielded unsatisfactory outcomes due to rising unemployment, poor community participation, and uncoordinated collaboration necessitating the need for community collaboration with community policing for a more effective crime control.

Objective: To investigate the impact of community participation in policing for crime reduction in Bida community.

Method: A survey design was adopted to collect primary and secondary data from a population of 502 and a sample of 398 determined using Taro Yamane (1976) formula. The population comprised personnel of the Nigerian Police Force, Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corp, Department of State Security, Vigilante Corp, Bida Emirate Disciplinary Committee, Bida Youth Development Association and Heads of the 14 Wards in Bida Local government Area. Data were presented and analyzed using simple percentage, Statistical Packages for Social Sciences and chi-square.

Results: Revealed various forms of criminal activities in Bida community due to low level of residents' participation in policing Bida community.

Conclusion: More effectiveness in community policing in Bida community could be achieved through collaborative participation.

Unique Contribution: This study contributes to the existing knowledge by highlighting the significant impact of community participation in policing.

Key Recommendation: More sensitization and participation for better crime reduction.

Key words: Community, Participation, Community policing, and Crime Reduction



INTRODUCTION

The increasing crime rate in Niger State in general and Bida Local Government Area in particular both in dimension and complexity has necessitated the need for more concerted effort towards tackling the menace. In recent years, crimes such as street fights, banditry, kidnapping, burglary, phone snatching to mention but a few have dominated public discourse. Between January to October 2024, security reports, indicates that, assault cases were 25, death cases from mobile phone snatching attacks recorded were 13, cases of car snatching were 7, house burgling was 57, motorcycle theft was 25, kidnapping was 15, bandits attacks were 14, ATM swapping were 5, cybercrime “yahoo-yahoo” were 57 while street fights were put at 30 incidences (Nigeria Police Force, Niger Command, 2024; Department of State Service, 2024; Niger State Vigilante Corp, 2024; & Nigerian security and Civil Defense Corp, 2024; Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, 2024; & <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/may>, 21st, 2024).

Dang (2019) ascertains how the government employs community involvement to oppose and prevent violent extremism in the context of Tanzania. Due to its proximity to Kenya and Somalia, where the al-Shabaab and other gangs have dominated criminal activity, community policing was used as the strategy to combat and prevent violent extremism. In order to empower residents to alert law enforcement of any suspicious activity occurring in their neighbourhoods, security agencies involved communities while establishing security agenda. However, due to a lack of mutual trust and cooperation, police personnel have a number of difficulties in mobilizing the people to fight crime. It is challenging to combat violence since local populations are worried about police involvement in extra-judicial disappearances and the killing of criminal suspects while in police custody (Dang, 2019).

Impliedly, “dealing with community problems requires the involvement of local residents, local authority, business and various agencies, so that on the basis of collaborative engagement and multiagency cooperation, all are actively mobilized in the pursuit of a safer, secured and saner communities” (Tierney, 2016). Community participation in policing is thus, one out of numerous strategies of entrenching safer communities.

Statement of the Problem

Considering modern complexities in crime and criminality, community participation in policing has remained a viable option as it emphasizes proactive and cooperative problem solving to prevent and reduce crime. The goals of community policing are to reduce crime, ensure safer communities and foster enabling environment for socio-economic development. But, despite the introduction of community policing in Nigeria, crime cases are fast becoming a more serious problem to governments and the communities, hence, debates on effective mobilization of the community for effective crime prevention and reduction. The increasing rate of crime in Niger State in general, and Bida LGA in particular is of great concern to all and sundry. The attestation to this is the creation of the Bida Emirate Disciplinary Committee as well as the establishment and arming of the vigilante Corp. Security Report by the Niger State Police Command highlighted profiles on major crime trends and magnitudes experienced by Niger State residents in the current year to include kidnapping, banditry, cattle rustling, assaults, violence against women, and



children, cybercrime, ritual killings to mention but a few. Coupled with this is the dearth of studies documented on the effectiveness of community participation in policing for crime prevention with regards to Bida LGA, hence, this study, to examine the impact of community participation in community policing for crime reduction and prevention in Bida LGA of Niger State.

Research Questions

The questions to which this study seek answers include:

- i. What is the level of community participation in community policing in Bida LGA of Niger State?
- ii. How has community participation affected crime reduction in Bida LGA of Niger State?
- iii. What could be done to enhance community participation in community policing so as to reduce crime in Bida LGA of Niger State?

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the objectives of this study include:

- i. To find out the level of community participation in community policing in Bida LGA of Niger State;
- ii. To find out how community participation has affected crime reduction in Bida LGA of Niger State; and
- iii. To recommend ways to enhance community participation in community policing so as to reduce crime in Bida LGA of Niger State.

Hypotheses

- i. Ho1: There is low level of community participation in community policing in Bida LGA of Niger State;
- ii. Ho2: Community participation in community policing has no impact on crime reduction in Bida LGA of Niger State
- iii. Ho3: Effective community policing in Bida LGA of Niger State is not dependent on the efficiency of community participation.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Community Participation

Mukandala (2016), conceptualized community participation to entails maximization of people's involvement in community development process. Involvement has to go beyond implementation of programmes, project and policies and extends to policy decisions conceptualization, initiation and formulation. Impliedly, community participation entails community initiatives towards sustainable solutions to community challenges.

World Bank (2018) described community participation from citizens' perspective as a process through which beneficiaries influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources that affect their lives. Community participation in policing involves police – communities' partnership to prevent and reduce crime through joint efforts and initiatives. It is a proactive approach that emphasizes cooperation, collaboration, problem-solving, and information



sharing between the police and the public (Schlosser, 2020). It seeks to shift the authority, responsibility and ownership in public safety from the police and the government to the community members (Onwe, Nwafor, & Orji-Egwu, 2017).

Community policing emphasizes the role of the general public in ensuring individual and community safety embedded in three core concepts thus:

Community: a social group dwelling in a distinct geographical area with similar interests, cultural values, historical background, economic activities and basic social institutions (Akinyemi, 2021).

Police: a group of government employees who maintain order and enforce laws (Akinyemi, 2021).

Policing: it is the process of law enforcement and maintenance of order by government officials and private individuals or organization (Akinyemi, 2021).

Onuoha, Oli & Ikezue (2020) maintain that community policing is a proactive method of law enforcement involving police - community collaboration based on effective community support and cooperation. Ogunsanya (2021) affirms that community policing could potentially improve the decline in crime rates, improve public safety, and enhances community-police relations. The accomplishment of any community policing initiative in Nigeria depends on the willingness of the public to participate actively and sustainably. The police need to leverage available resources such as social media, community organizations, and community self-help groups to reach out to the public, creating awareness of the significance of community engagement in policing and educating them on crime prevention practices (Ogunsanya, 2021).

Community policing initiatives have successfully reduced crime rates in many parts of the world, and it has the potential to do same in Nigeria in general and Bida LGA in particular. However, for community policing to be effective, it requires active participation and support of the community, ensuring identity protection and confidentiality, as well as the assurance of the police to work with the public towards a common goal (Adegbile, 2017).

Gains of Community Participation

Community participation in policing has several gains. These include; changing the police-public relationship and perception, promoting transparency and accountability and enhancing trust. By integrating the public into the policing process, the police become more accountable to the community. It also reduces negative attitudes towards the police, which often fuels resistance from the community and promote “jungle justice” (Malone & Dammert, 2021; Odoemelam, et al., 2013). Community participation in policing is also cost-effective with regards to maintenance of law and order which requires high finances. With the voluntary participation of community members in the policing process, the cost can be reduced, as it is cheaper to recruit and train local persons that are familiar with the community terrain, culture, and tradition thereby, entrenching mutual understanding (Akinyemi, 2021).

The Nigerian Police Force has established Police Community Public Relations Committee (PCRC) in different communities, working intimately with community leaders and members to identify and address local security challenges. In addition, community policing has facilitated the



establishment of neighbourhood watch groups, which serve as an extra layer of security for residents (Akinlabi, 2022). When the community is involved in policing activities, and the link between the police and the community is strengthened, it can help to combat corruption within the police force (Akinyetun & Adedini, 2022).

Hindrances to Community Participation in Policing

Inadequate funding. Community policing requires a significant amount of funding to be effective. The lack of adequate funding has made it difficult for the police to establish community policing programmes that could encourage and strengthen voluntary community participation (Ogunsanya, 2021). Also is the issue of lack of trust. According to Arisukwu & Okunola (2013), a significant issue with community policing in Nigeria is lack of trust between the police and the citizens and the consequences of this is “jungle justice”. Ilufoye & Utibe (2022), contend that inter-agency rivalry has eroded the possible cooperation needed by the police and other agencies. Effective community policing requires close cooperation between the police and other agencies, such as social and mental health services that will promote conducive milieu for participation (Nwafor, & Orji-Egwu, 2015).

Chukwuemeka, Eyina, and Jacob (2021) note that poor human capital development is one of the problems confronting community participation in policing in Nigeria. Effective community policing requires police officers and volunteer community members to possess specific communication skills, problem-solving, and conflict-resolution skills. Other challenges include; low level of scientific and technological adoption, lack of political will, slow judicial processes, poor administrative capacity and poor availability of information to the citizen and the law enforcement agencies. These problems have also made it difficult for the police to communicate with the community effectively (Ilufoye & Utibe, 2022, Chukwuemeka, Eyina & Jacob, 2021).

Empirical Review

Iton *et al.*, (2024) examined traditional criminality and crime control strategies in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria using 400 participants from 12 Local Government Areas and found that indigenous people had traditional crime control measures in place. However, they also discovered that the increase in crime was due to disregards for these traditional measures and lack of a strong relationship between traditional institutions and the Nigerian police. Findings therein showed a correlation between age-grade association and crime prevention in Yakurr LGA of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study recommended that, there is need to re-evaluate the role of such groups in community safety, and community leaders and policy makers should recognize the importance of age-grade associations in crime prevention and control efforts.

Also, Rachael. (2023) examined community policing and crime prevention in Nigeria with reference to Jenkwe Development Area. The study examined the duration of combating crimes and identify the problems with community policing and crime prevention. The study adopted survey design and took census of the entire target population of 1296 from three communities. Questionnaire was administered. Tables, frequency and percentages were used to describe the responses from respondents, which shows that 3.56% was targeted sample from the population, 46



respondents representing 29.5% described community policing as very effective mechanism of crime prevention in the study area. Also, 28 of the respondents representing 62.22% agreed that quality information determined police response on crime prevention, this implies that community policing is an appropriate tool for crime prevention. While chi-square was used to examine the relationship between and among the variables and test of hypotheses. The study revealed that, community policing and crime prevention has strengthened relationships of the community and the police amongst others. The study concluded and recommended that community policing and crime prevention should be adequately funded to acquire state of the arts equipment's to enhance effective community policing and crime prevention, also the police should create awareness for everyone to provide useful and needful information voluntarily.

Similarly, Maidawa (2023) conducted a study in Bauchi State to investigate the impact of community participation in policing the community. The study involved 384 participants and found that majority of respondents believed that community policing improved by including every head of household, providing sufficient equipment, and enhancing cooperation with the police. It recommended that, more encouragement in community participation for more positive outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted by this study is Public Relations Theory. As stated by Broom, Casey & Ritchey (2000), public relations deals with the relationships that organizations build and maintain with publics. Public relations theoretical frameworks aid in comprehending and organizing these relationships, which are influenced by society's ongoing political, social, economic, and technical developments. According to Broom et al. (2000), public relations is viewed from a systems approach. Organization-public connection is fundamentally based on loyalty, satisfaction, and expectations. An organization must first engage with and support its main audiences. These efforts promote a sense of loyalty among the community in which the organization operates (Nwokeocha & Onyejelem, 2024). The organization-public relationship should be taken into account when a company sets customer satisfaction strategies.

Moreso, whether or not a relationship is maintained depends on an organization's capacity to match public expectations. According to Broom, Casey and Ritchey (2000), relationship harm "tends to be a result of either (1) incongruence between the public and private definitions of a relationship, or (2) the people involved in the relationship have different expectations of each other". The relevance of this theory to this study is that police-community relationship is fundamentally based on loyalty, honesty, satisfaction, and expectations. The police must make efforts to first engage with and support the community through ethical practices and pro-activeness. These efforts will promote a sense of loyalty among the community in which the police operates.

METHOD

Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study and the instrument is a structured questionnaire used for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. Primary data were collected from the staff of Nigerian Police Force, Nigerian Vigilante Corp, Bida Emirate Disciplinary Committee, Bida Youth Development Association and 14 Head of the 14 Wards in Bida LGA in order to know the impact of community participation in community policing for



crime reduction. The secondary data were obtained from crime reports of all the security agencies covered by the study. The population of the study comprises all the staff of Division A and B Police stations, members of Vigilante Corp, Staff of Bida Emirate Disciplinary Committee as well as the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corp, Department of State Security, and Bida Youth Development Association. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample size which was determined using, Taro Yamane (1967) formula:

$$\frac{n}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{502}{1+502(0.005)^2} = \frac{502}{503 (0.0025)} = \frac{502}{1.26} = 398$$

The sample size is therefore: **398**

Table 1: Specific Sample distribution.

S/N	Name of Organization	Population	Sample Size/Dept.
1	“A” Division Police Station	66	$\frac{398 \times 66}{502} = 53$
2	“B” Division Police Station	45	$\frac{398 \times 45}{502} = 36$
3	Bida Youth Development Association	120	$\frac{398 \times 120}{502} = 95$
4	Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corp	95	$\frac{398 \times 95}{502} = 75$
5	Members of Vigilante Corp	60	$\frac{398 \times 60}{502} = 48$
6	Staff of Bida Emirate Disciplinary Committee	75	$\frac{398 \times 75}{502} = 59$
7	Department of State Security	27	$\frac{398 \times 27}{502} = 21$
8	14 Heads of 14 Wards in Bida LGA	14	$\frac{398 \times 14}{502} = 11$
		Tt 502	398

Source: Field Survey; 2024

Data Presentation and Analyses

A survey, through a semi structured questionnaire was used to collect information from a population of 502 with a sample size of 398 respondents comprising staff of “A” Division Police Station (53), “B” Division Police Station (36), Bida Youth Development Association (95), Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corp (75), Members of Vigilante Corp (48), Staff of Bida Emirate Disciplinary Committee (59), Department of State Security (21) and 14 Heads of the 14 Wards in Bida LGA (11). Three point Likert scale of Agree, Disagree and Indifferent was used. SPSS, simple percentages, tables and Chi-square were also used for data analyses.



Table 2: Respondents' Profile

Gender	Males		Females		Total
Frequency	321		81		398
Percentage	77		19		100
Marital Status	Married		Single		Total
Frequency	273		125		398
Percentages	69		31		100
Age	18-27	28-37	38-47	40 and Above	Total
Frequency	119	135	77	67	398
Percentage	30	34	19	17	100

Educational Qualification	First Sch. Leaving Certificate	Senior School Certificate	Diploma/NCE	B.Sc/HND	M.Sc	PhD	Total
Frequency	40	88	143	84	40	3	398
Percentage	10	22	36	21	10	1	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 above shows the respondents' profile and analyses from it shows that there are 71% males and 29% females. The marital status of the respondents reveals that 65% are married while 35% are single. The respondents' age grades shows 30% of between 18-27 years, 34% of between 28-37 years, 19% of between 38-47 years and 17% of 40 years and above.

The educational qualification of the respondent's indicates 10% of First School Leaving Certificate, 22% of Senior School Certificate, 36% of Diploma/NCE, 21% of B.Sc/HND, 10% of M.Sc and 1% of Ph.D.

Table 3: Research Questions

Questions	Agreed	Disagree	Indiff.	Total
Awareness on community participation and community policing in Bida LGA.	251(63%)	121(30%)	26(7%)	398
Respondents' participation in community policing	99(25%)	291(73%)	8(2%)	398
Level of participation and adopted strategy.	221(56%)	149(37%)	28(7%)	398
Opinion on the impact of community participation in community policing.	288(72%)	92(23%)	18(5%)	398
Adequacy of government effort at promoting community involvement in policing.	182(46%)	203(51%)	13(3%)	398
Community support to security agencies.	142(36%)	218(55%)	38(10%)	398
Challenges of community's participation in community policing.	158(40%)	208(52%)	32(8%)	398
Efficiency of adopted strategies in crime reduction.	93(23%)	291(73%)	14(4%)	398

Source: Filed Survey, 2024



Table 3 above shows that 63% of respondents agreed that they are aware of community participation and community policing in Bida LGA. 30% disagree while 7% were indifferent. Also, respondents' participation in community policing indicated that 25% agreed, 73% disagreed while 2% were indifferent. Furthermore, the Level of participation and adopted strategy revealed that 56% agreed, 37% disagreed while 7% were indifferent. More so, opinion on the impact of community participation in community policing, 72% agreed, 23% disagreed while 5% were indifferent. Additionally, the adequacy of government effort at promoting community involvement in policing indicated that 36% agreed, 55% disagreed while 10% were indifferent. Challenges of community's participation in community policing, 40% agreed, 52% disagree, while 8% were indifferent. Finally, efficiency of adopted strategies in crime reduction, 23% agreed, 73% disagreed while 4% were indifferent.

Table 4: Test of Hypotheses

Questions	Mean	Std. Dev.	Critical Value	Chi-Square
Ho1: There is low level of community participation in community policing in Bida LGA of Niger State;	2.87	0.76	1.943	2.132
Ho2: Community participation in community policing has no impact on crime reduction in Bida LGA of Niger State	2.65	1.07	1.943	2.132
Ho3: Effective community policing in Bida LGA of Niger State is not dependent on the efficiency of community participation	2.54	0.06	1.943	2.132

Source: Filed Survey, 2024

RESULTS

In hypothesis one: Ho1: There is low level of community participation in community policing in Bida LGA of Niger State. Hi1: There is high level of community participation in community policing in Bida LGA of Niger State, the alternate hypothesis was upheld. The respondents are of the view that there is high level of community participation in community policing in Bida LGA. Majority of the responded are optimistic that if more awareness is created and the police continues to relate and keep boosting the confidence of the community, they will continuously get the assistance of the community in crime prevention. Corroborating this finding is the study by Dokubo and Elemuwa (2021) on impact of citizenship participation on community development projects in Ikwerre and Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State where they found out that citizens' participation has positive and significant influence on community development projects.

From the second hypothesis, Ho2: Community participation in community policing has no impact on crime reduction in Bida LGA of Niger State. Hi2: Community participation in community policing has impact on crime reduction in Bida LGA of Niger State. The alternate hypothesis was also upheld. Walklate (2021) asserts that for community policing to have an impact, there must be a complete paradigm shift from its traditional model of policing to a more community oriented policing that stresses community partnership, decentralization of powers, and proactive policing. Also supported is the findings by Joseph *et-al* (2024) on impact of rural communities' participation



in crime prevention and control in Yakurr local government area, Cross River State, Nigeria which showed there is a statistically considerable relationship between age-grade neighbourhood watch and crime control in Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State,

From the third hypothesis Ho3: effective community policing in Bida LGA of Niger State is not dependent on the efficiency of community participation, Hi3: effective community policing in Bida LGA of Niger State is dependent on the efficiency of community participation. The alternate hypothesis was also affirmed.

Agreeing with the proposition above, Malone and Dammert, (2019) argues that, firstly, the attitude of the Nigeria Police force and the opinion of the people about the police are major threats to effectiveness and efficiency in community policing in Bida LGA, this has caused lacuna between the stake holders involved in community policing.

CONCLUSION

The study sets out to investigate community participation in community policing and its implication on crime reduction in Bida Local Government Area of Niger State. The Nigeria police are granted enormous powers by law and the constitution to take preventive measures against the perpetuation of all crimes in Nigeria. Impliedly, the law allows them to apply such reasonable force as may be necessary for the prevention of crimes. In the exercise of this authority, they have in various ways unjustifiably violated the rights of members of the public with impunity. This practice has earned the Nigeria police different derogatory names, hatred and constant collision with the members of the public to whom they sworn an oath to protect. The police are more accountable to the government rather than to the members of the public whose interest and safety they were statutorily established to protect. In Bida LGA, the public perception of the police is warped based on the misuse of powers vested in them. This abuse of powers which creates negative police image and police-public relations has hindered effective and efficient community participation in policing.

From the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

- There is need for government's creation of more residents' awareness on the need to take participation in community policing in Bida Local Government Area community seriously since security is everybody's business. This is possible through campaigns, workshops, enlightenment and house to house sensitization.
- There is need for more community contribution towards policing the community. There is already a big gap between public expectation and police actual performance in crime prevention and control. The public view shows nothing but a loss of confidence in police ability to prevent crime in the country.
- To improve impact of community policing through community participation, the government should commit more resources in procuring adequate security equipment for the police and the residents, conduct residents' trainings on crime prevention and defensive strategies.
- The Police Community Public Relations unit should also be strengthened. Strengthening administrative capacity by ensuring that government is more committed to crime



prevention activities through appropriate funding. The underfunding of the Nigeria Police and other security agencies has reduced their capacity to prevent crime.

- The police and other security agencies should be adequately equipped to enable them to be combat ready to prevent and control crime.

Ethical Clearance

Ethical clearance was obtained from the management of the various organizations listed and the participants used in the study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest

Authors' Contributions

Dr. Sulaiman Saudia Elsaud conceived the study, design, analyzed and interpreted the data, Abdullahi Danjuma Wushishi and Mrs. Salamatu Kasin Abdulkadir joined him in collating the data, and Dr. Josephine Oguine Nchedo wrote the initial manuscript and made the recommendations. All authors read and approved the final manuscript for publication in its current form.

Availability of Data and Materials

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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