



POLAC MANAGEMENT REVIEW (PMR)
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCE
NIGERIA POLICE ACADEMY, WUDIL-KANO



**COMMUNITY POLICING AND CRIME CONTROL IN SELECTED COMMUNITIES OF NIGER STATE,
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study examined Community policing on crime control in selected communities of Niger State. The study adopted the Broken Window Theory as propounded by Wilson & Kelling for theoretical analysis. The study utilized the survey and documentary research methods and the study targets are local vigilantes, community leaders, police, military and government official. The researcher uses the sample size seventy-five (75). Simple percentages method of data analysis was used to analysed the data collected. Findings from the study shows that, community-policing through the activities of the vigilantes Group to some extent reduced the rate of crime in the selected communities in Niger State and that, cooperating with vigilantes group in the communities can secure environment against any criminal activities. The study therefore recommends that, The Federal Government should complement the effort of the State Government to reduce the growth nature of bandits and Boko Haram terrorist's activities in the selected communities in Niger State. The Federal Government and the State Government should sustain the already existing strategies put in place in order to eliminate all form of criminality in the State.

Keywords: Community Policing, Crime Control, Vigilantes, Selected Community, Niger State.

1. Introduction

Political, religious, security, and community leaders worldwide believe it is time to update their security policies and practices to reflect global security. These reasons are rooted in the last quarter-century of policing and police research, the changing nature of communities, and the shifting characteristics of crime and violence in these communities (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2017). Old policing strategies no longer always work (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2017). Our goal of safety, security, and well-being has not been met. Practitioners agree that many crises require innovation to be addressed (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2017).

The level and nature of crime in Nigeria, as well as the changing nature of its communities, are putting pressure on police to find better solutions. Many urban areas are plagued by drugs, gang violence, murders, muggings, and burglaries. Suburban and rural areas were both impacted. Crime and disorder are also on the rise. The social fabric of our country has also changed. Family stability has deteriorated. Churches and schools are unable to assist single working parents in spending enough time with their children. Immigrants, ethnic groups, and minorities contribute to Nigeria's diversity, but their interests and goals differ. Governments at all levels are struggling to balance their budgets, forcing police departments to devote scarce resources to growing problems. Community

policing is gaining traction in a rapidly changing environment where police are dealing with a drug epidemic, gang activity, and increased violence. This commonsense approach to crime and disorder has struck a responsive chord in national and local governments, as well as communities across Nigeria. Government and community leaders recognize the importance of keeping their neighborhoods safe. Communities must band together to fight crime, violence, and lawlessness, as well as increase crime prevention and intervention efforts. Police help to build stronger, self-sufficient communities where crime and disorder cannot thrive. In a democracy, local government, civic and business leaders, public and private agencies, residents, churches, schools, and hospitals must all participate in community policing. Everyone who cares about their neighborhood should work to keep it safe. All levels of government are promoting community policing as the "future of policing." Community policing may also play a significant role in policing all communities in the United States. Community policing necessitates changes in police structure and management. Community policing differs from traditional policing in how it views the community and its goals. To control and prevent crime, community policing employs a variety of techniques. The police and the community collaborate to address disorder and neglect (e.g., gang activity, abandoned cars, broken windows), which can lead to serious crime. As police and community ties strengthen, the resulting partnership can better pinpoint and mitigate the causes of crime. Police are discovering that crime-control tactics must be supplemented with crime-prevention, fear-reduction, and quality-of-life strategies. Fear of crime is a major issue. A visible police presence reduces community fear, which is more closely linked to disorder than crime. Fear of crime can limit activity, keep residents at home, and lead to empty streets, which can increase crime. By involving the community, police will have more resources for crime prevention rather than after-the-fact response.

Low-level civil unrest, large-scale violence, or an armed insurgency can all threaten peace. Internal security threats can range from petty crime to serious organized crime, political or industrial unrest, or domestic terrorism. Foreign

powers can also endanger internal security by engaging in or sponsoring terrorism or rebellion.

Despite the efforts of the Niger State government and security actors, crime against innocent citizens continues. Statistics from Niger state's security reports have been revealed. Between 2016 and 2019, over 50 people were killed, 12 were kidnapped, and 5 million was paid as a ransom by relatives; 2,600 cattle were stolen (Wole, 2021). In April, Niger State Governor Abubakar Sani Bello confirmed that Boko Haram had displaced over 3,000 people. He also confirms Boko Haram's presence in Niger and the raising of flags in Kaure. In the first half of 2021, Niger State had 458 reported killings (Ukpe, 2021).

To manage crime and respond to public needs, police must be proactive. Because crime occurs in communities, residents must assist in the capture and prosecution of criminals. The Vigilante group is in charge of carrying out Nigeria's community policing program. The Vigilante group has the support of the government, security agencies, and members of the community. This study looks at how community policing affects crime control in Niger State, Nigeria. The goal of community policing in Niger State is to supplement the manpower shortage in traditional security agencies. This was due to insecurity such as communal clashes, arm robbery, cultism, banditry, kidnapping, and violent activities of youth gangs in the state capital and its environs. The State Government seeks the support and collaboration of the State Vigilante Group to assist the Nigeria Police Force in combating insecurity in the areas of surveillance, information sharing, and quick response on behalf of the Police. As a result, the problem of investigation in this study is to investigate the effect of community policing on crime control in selected communities in Niger State.

The empirical justification for this study is to fill the research gap left by previous studies on community policing. A review of available studies in these current studies reveals that no empirical study was conducted on the effect of community policing on crime control in Niger State, Nigeria. Orcid, Pryton, and David (2018), for example, only looked at field experiments on community policing and police legitimacy. Kimberly & Vaughn (2018)

examined only the impact of community-oriented policing implementation on social disorganization and crime in America. Justin (2017) only looked at the effects of community policing on fear and crime reduction, police legitimacy, and job satisfaction: an empirical review of the evidence. Heeuk, David, and Bradford (2017) investigate the factors that influence citizen support for community-oriented policing, whereas John (2012) investigates the effectiveness of community policing in reducing urban violence. The state government formed vigilante groups in all 25 LGAs and funded them. The positive outcomes of this initiative have been significant, but they may not be as visible because averted attacks frequently go unreported. This study seeks to fill a research gap for the reasons stated above. The study will specifically investigate whether community policing has an effect on crime control in selected communities in Niger State, Nigeria.

The following research questions will guide the study:

- i. To what extent has community policing reduced the rate of crime in the selected communities of Niger State?
- ii. What are the strategies adopted by community policing in controlling crime in the selected communities of Niger State?

The general objective of this study is to examine the effect of community policing on crime control in selected communities of Niger State, while the specific objectives are to:

- i. Look at how much crime has gone down in the communities in Niger State because of community policing.
- ii. Find out what strategies community policing uses to keep crime down in a few communities in Niger State.

Research Hypotheses

H0₁: Community policing has no significant effect in reducing the rate of crime in the selected communities of Niger State.

H0₂: Strategies adopted by community policing have had no effect in controlling crime in the selected communities of Niger State.

2. Literature Review

Concept of Community Policing: Scholars in the field of policing have noted that when the concept of community policing was introduced some decades ago, the idea was not welcomed with open arms by many police organizations in many countries. This was partly due to a police work culture that dictated that such an idea had nothing in common with "real" police work (Meko, Tominc, & Sotlar, 2010).

According to Meko et al. (2013), defined as a form of social community policing which emphasizes cooperation between the police and the local community, It is a social self-protection system, which has been the current role of the community policing officer.

Concept of Crime: Osakwe (2009) defines Crime as a general state of insecurity caused by rising violence. To support this definition, crimes in Nigeria have taken on a new dimension that security agencies can't control. Not despite the efforts of security agencies, especially the police, to ensure life and property safety.

Ocholi (2009) defined crime as a rising trend of insecurity seen in armed robberies, kidnappings, human trafficking, assassinations, terrorism, militancy, etc. in various parts of the country. Ocholi (2009) said crime is an internal security situation that leads to increasing losses of lives and property. The government must perform its basic security and developmental functions to secure lives and property.

Concept of Vigilantism: One form of non-state policing that is often cast aside, although it plays a significant part in the security context, is vigilantism. While there is no precise scholarly definition or understanding of what vigilantism exactly is, generally it is understood as a form of protection by organizations or movements that seek to provide security for their local communities. Abrahams'

comprehensive definition of vigilantism describes it as "an organized attempt by a group of 'ordinary citizens' to enforce norms and maintain law and order on behalf of their communities, often by resorting to violence, in the perceived absence of effective official state action through the police and courts" (Abrahams, 2013). Modern empirical evidence suggests that vigilante outcomes are frequently violent and, in some cases, lethal (Adinkrah, 2015). Various studies also point to the effectiveness of these groups, and there are well-documented cases where vigilante success led to a dramatic decrease in crime (Buur, 2013).

Analysis of Community Policing in Nigeria

Negative public image, corruption, low morale, lack of equipment/facilities, and rapidly changing social values encourage an increase in crime rates in Nigeria (Aremu, 2019). These factors show that Nigeria's police work in a harsh and hostile environment that hinders the security of lives and property (Guardian, 2009). Many Nigerians' ignorance of basic security issues exacerbates this trend, Akintunde says (2009). With community-policing, citizens will receive security training and ensure effective community participation in security; it is argued (Sunday Nation, 2009). Community policing is essential for democracy's security and political participation. This is evident in the USA, Britain, and South Africa, where community-policing promoted police force awareness, especially in public relations. Indeed, police-public relations in Nigeria are poor, and this study suggests that community policing can help.

As Akintunde (2009) notes, the police have a bad public image due to extrajudicial killings of innocent and defenseless citizens, corrupt practices, and connivance with criminals against citizens they are expected to protect. The force's colonial origins made it paramilitary and repressive. It's become an oppressive state tool to promote selfish interests (Imobighe, 2013).

Police manpower needs may have also necessitated policing. Quantity and quality are lacking. Due to rapid population growth and slow recruitment, Nigeria is grossly underpoliced. This situation is exacerbated by the police

being used for duties other than "fighting crime, enforcing the law, and maintaining public order" (Imobigbe, 2015).

Nigeria's crime statistics indicate widespread insecurity (Clean 2012, Nigerian police force 2007). Kaduna, Kano, Bornu, Anambra, Abia, and Imo have seen an increase in crime due to the Boko Haram insurgency (Obasi, 2018; Abimboye and Adzegeh, 2019). Crime is rising due to ineffective policing and general insecurity. Some states have responded by forming "vigilante" groups to perform police duties. Odua's people's congress (OPC) of the Yoruba, Hisha of the Hausa/Fulani, and Bakassi' Boys of the Igbo states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo are known for their indigenous social control systems. Kidnapping, armed robbery, and assassinations are rampant in these states (Zumve, 2012). These groups were known for executing suspects without police or courts (Mbagwu, 2020). In order to strengthen these outfits, the Federal government approved community policing, which encourages strategic partnerships between police and community members to deal with crime and other related activities.

2.1 Empirical Review

Orcid, Pryton, and David (2018) analyzed field experiments on community policing and police legitimacy. The study utilizes both primary and secondary data. Findings from the study indicate that a single instance of positive contact with a uniformed police officer can substantially improve public attitudes toward police, including legitimacy and willingness to cooperate. These effects persisted for up to 21 days and were not limited to individuals inclined to trust and cooperate with the police prior to the intervention. This study shows that positive non-enforcement contact between police and the public can make people feel better about the police. It also suggests that police departments would do well to pay more attention to strategies that encourage positive interactions between police and the public.

The gaps from the study conducted by Orcid, Pryton, and David (2018) are that: the study was conducted on community policing and police legitimacy in New Haven. One of the variables in their study differs significantly with

this current study. The dependent variable in their study is police legitimacy, while the dependent variable of this current study is crime control. Since the dependent variable is different, the result of the study may not reflect the reality of Nigeria's situation in Nigeria and Niger State in particular. Their study also failed to indicate the target population, sampling technique, as well as an appropriate sample size. The study was conducted in 2018, which is not updated; the study only relied on field experiment research design, which is not appropriate for this kind of study. The nature of this kind of study required opinion from the target group through survey design. The study also failed to adopt appropriate data collection methods like the primary and secondary methods. The study also failed to adopt appropriate statistical tools to analyze the data that could lead to a valid conclusion.

This current study population is the vigilante group, which usually provides information and assists police in fighting crime. The area of coverage for this study is the selected communities in Niger State, Nigeria. This current study will use both primary and secondary data to fill in the views of the communities on the effect of community policing in their area. A questionnaire was used in doing so. This current study will adopt an appropriate statistical technique such as weighted mean score to analyze the quantitative data. This study will draw its conclusion from the analysis. This current study will cover the current issues of crime in the area, i.e., from 2016 to 2022.

Justin (2017) examined the effects of community policing on fear and crime reduction, police legitimacy, and job satisfaction: an empirical review of the evidence. The study relied on a secondary method of data collection. It was revealed that, since the 1970s, community policing strategies or the language thereof has been purportedly initiated by a number of police departments nationwide to address notable issues such as crime, neighborhood disorder, and fear of crime. This policing philosophy has received considerable attention and support among scholars, police administrators, and criminal justice practitioners. Community police have addressed notable issues such as crime, neighborhood disorder, and fear of crime.

The gap from the study conducted by Justin (2017) is that the study was conducted on the effect of community policing on fear and crime reduction, police legitimacy, and job satisfaction: an empirical review of the evidence, which has two dependent variables when compared with this current study, which has only one dependent variable. Since the study has more than two dependent variables, the result may not reflect the reality of Niger State. His study has no area of coverage. The study was conducted in 2017, which is not an update.

This current study population is the vigilante group, which usually provides information and assists police in fighting crime. The area of coverage for this study is the selected communities in Niger State, Nigeria. This current study will cover the current issues of crime in the area, i.e., from 2016 to 2022.

Another study on the Determinants of Citizen Support for Community-Oriented Policing was conducted by Heeuk, David, and Bradford (2017). The study investigates the factors that influence community policing support in a small rural city. The study collected data using both primary and secondary sources. The majority of respondents supported community policing, according to the findings. This study examined the importance of demographic factors, community characteristics, and public perceptions and experiences with police in predicting citizens' support for community policing using community survey data collected from over 400 citizens in a small metropolitan area in the intermountain West. The study concludes that citizen support for community-oriented policing varies slightly depending on demographic factors (e.g., gender, education) and community characteristics (i.e., disorder, social cohesion).

The study conducted by Heeuk, David, and Bradford (2017) had gaps in that it was on Determinants of citizen support for community-oriented policing, which had no clearly cut dependent variables when compared to this current study, which has one dependent variable (Crime Control). Because the study has no clearly dependent variables and was conducted in the intermountain West, the findings may not reflect the reality of Nigeria and, in

particular, Niger State. The study was conducted in 2017, so it is out of date. This current study will cover current crime issues in the area from 2016 to 2022.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The Broken Window Theory

The Broken Windows Theory is a criminological theory that explains the signaling effect of urban disorder and vandalism as contributors to crime and anti-social behaviour. The theory states that maintaining and monitoring urban environments in a well-ordered condition may stop further vandalism and escalation into more serious crime. The broken window theory was first articulated by Wilson & Kelling (1982) and developed further by Kelling & Coles (1998). The Broken Windows theory assumes that minor disorder, if not taken seriously and attacked, will decrease fear of crime, informal social control, and increase crime. Social incivilities (public urination and drunkenness, drug use, prostitution, loitering teens, and panhandling), and physical incivilities (vacant buildings, empty lots, junk and trash, graffiti, and abandoned cars) contribute to the deterioration of communities. Police departments have adopted this theory based on the proposition that by controlling minor disorders, serious crimes can be reduced. The broken windows theory has received support from several empirical studies. Available evidence shows that although there are variants of disorder or incivilities, the broken windows theory has influenced policies in community policing (Taylor, 1999). This theory has been selected to guide this study due to its explanatory quality of the evolution of crime within the community, which a community policing program seeks to address.

In this rapidly changing environment, where police deal with an epidemic, crime, drugs, gangs, and violence, community policing is gaining ground. Community and police leaders use intergroup relations to address this societal problem. This approach to crime and disorder may improve performance and maximize resources, and it has resonated with national and local governments and communities across the country. Government and community leaders realize they must keep their

neighborhoods safe. Communities must unite against crime, violence, and lawlessness and increase crime-prevention and intervention efforts. Police must build stronger, self-sufficient communities where crime and disorder can't thrive. Community policing exemplifies democracy. Local government, civic and business leaders, public and private agencies, residents, churches, schools, and hospitals must participate. All who care about the neighborhood should protect it.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a survey and a documentary research design. The researchers utilized this method because it generates primary data that is relevant to the issue or problem under consideration. This design targets the people of the local communities in Niger State.

Two local government areas (Shiroro and Rafi) and seven communities (Pandogeri, Allawa, Madaka, Kaure, Kukoki, Ajata, and Kwaki). The Local Government Areas were selected because, out of the 18 local government areas affected by insecurity in Niger State, Pandogeri, Allawa, Madaka, Kaure, Kukoki, Ajata, and Kwaki were the most affected.

The populations of this study are: members of the Vigilante group, community leaders in selected rural communities of the two Local Government Areas (Shiroro and Rafi), members of the Nigeria Police Force, government officials in the state and local government of Niger State. The justification of the Vigilante group is that they are involved in the operation of community policing. The choice of the communities' leaders is to ascertain whether they have felt the impact of community policing in their communities. Purposive sampling was selected and adopted because of the large number of communities in Niger State. A simple random sampling technique was used to distribute the questionnaire to the representative population. The researcher used random sampling to select 75 representatives from the selected communities.

Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) using inferential statistics was used to analyse the data collected

from the respondents. Weighted Mean and standard deviation technique of data analysis was used to analyse the data collected. Weighted average means score was used to test the hypothesis. The study used the following decision rule to accept or reject the Hypothesis:

- a. When the weighted average means score is equal to 2.50 and above, null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis Accepted.

- b. But when the weighted average means score is less than 2.50 and below null hypothesis is accepted and alternative rejected.

The weighted average means score model is stated as:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\sum \text{Total Weighed}}{\text{Total Number of Responses}}$$

4. Presentation and Discussion of Results

Table 1: Activities of community-policing in the selected community has reduce the rate of crime

Responses	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Agreed	50	66.7
Disagreed	19	25.3
Undecided	6	8
Total	75	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The table above shows that 50, representing (66.7%) of the respondents agreed that activities of community policing in the selected community have reduced the rate of crime. 19 representing (25.3%) of the respondents disagreed, while 7 representing (8%) of the respondents, were undecided. This finding reveals that "counter-insurgency efforts by the military are working on the situation even as the group spreads." In all the 25 LGAs of the state, the state government has instituted vigilante groups, funded by the government. The positive results of this initiative have

been considerably high but may not be as glaring because averted attacks often go unreported. Only a few weeks ago, in fact, the army and the police, together with other local vigilantes, were successful in their operations led by General Ali Keffi and DCP Yusuf Kolo, supported by the state government, which led to over 30 communities in Shiroro, Rafi, and Mariga LGs returning to their communities after fleeing for months from banditry and other related attacks".

Table 2: Activities of the community policing has the support of the security agencies in Niger state

Responses	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Agreed	43	57.3
Disagreed	25	33.3
Undecided	7	9.3
Total	75	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The table above shows that 43, representing (57.3%) of the respondents agreed that the activities of community policing have the support of the security agencies in Niger state; 25 representing (33.3%) of the respondents

disagreed; and 7 representing (9.3%) of the respondents were undecided on whether the activities of community policing have the support of the security agencies in Niger state.

Table 3: There are strategies adopted by community policing in controlling crime in the selected communities of Niger State?

Responses	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Agreed	61	81.3
Disagreed	11	14.7

Undecided	3	4
Total	75	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Responses on whether there are strategies adopted by community policing in controlling crime in the selected communities in Niger state revealed 61, representing (81.3%) of the respondents agreed, while 11 representing (14.7%) of the respondents disagreed, and 3 representing (4%) of the respondents were undecided on whether there are strategies adopted by community policing in

controlling crime in the selected communities in Niger state.

H0₁: Community policing has no significant effect in reducing the rate of crime in the selected communities of Niger State.

Table 4: Calculation of Critical Value of Weighted Means Score

Variable	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Total Number of Respondents/Score	Weighted Mean
Responses	50	19	6	75	¹⁹⁴ / ₇₅
Grading	3	2	1	-	-
Total Value	150	38	6	¹⁹⁴ / ₇₅	2.58
Decision	-	-	-	-	Accepted

Source: Research Data, 2022

Table above show the result of the calculated value of weighted means score at 2.58. This means that, the calculated value is scientifically significant because, it is more than 2.50. We will therefore reject the research hypothesis which stated that, Community policing has no significant effect in reducing the rate of crime in the selected communities of Niger State and accept the alternative hypothesis which shows that, Community policing has significant effect in reducing the rate of crime

in the selected communities of Niger State. This means that, Community policing has effect in reducing the rate of crime in the selected communities of Niger State due to unknown variables.

Hypothesis Two

H0₂: Strategies adopted by community policing have had no effect in controlling crime in the selected communities of Niger State.

Table 5: Calculation of Critical Value of Weighted Means Score

Variable	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Total Number of Respondents/Score	Weighted Mean
Responses	61	11	3	75	²⁰⁸ / ₇₅
Grading	3	2	1	-	-
Total Value	183	22	3	²⁰⁸ / ₇₅	2.77
Decision	-	-	-	-	Accepted

Source: Research Data, 2022

Table above show the result of the calculated value of weighted means score at 2.77. This means that, the calculated value is scientifically significant because, it is more than to 2.50. We will therefore reject the research hypothesis which stated that, Strategies adopted by community policing have had no effect in controlling crime in the selected communities of Niger State and

accept alternative hypothesis which shows that, Strategies adopted by community policing have had effect in controlling crime in the selected communities of Niger State. This means that, Strategies adopted by community policing have had positive effect in controlling crime in the selected communities of Niger State.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that community policing has reduced crime in some Niger State communities, the study found. Community policing in Niger State faces a few challenges despite the vigilantes' and military's counterinsurgency efforts. Over 30 communities in Shiroro, Rafi, and Mariga LGs have returned after fleeing banditry and other attacks.

The strategies of implementing government policy of banning certain motorcycles; training and welfare of security personnel, as well as combining security and vigilante methods, local communities' help in providing security agencies with relevant information.

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- Based on the findings, the research recommends the following:
- i. The Federal Government should support the efforts of the State Government in strengthening community policing because it has helped in reducing crime in the selected communities in Niger State.
 - ii. The Federal Government and the State Government should sustain the already existing strategies put in place in order to eliminate all forms of criminality in the State. This will curtail its escalation to the other communities in the state.\
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