The Role of Nigeria Police Force in Community Policing in Kaltungo Local Government Area of Gombe State

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Abstract: *This study examines the role of the Nigeria Police Force in Community Policing in Kaltungo Local Government Area of Gombe State. The concept of Community policing is fast gaining ground in Nigeria especially among the people of Kaltungo. In the locality, they perceived the model as proactive rather than reactive policing, occasioned with the principled on partnership and decentralization of powers of the Nigeria police for effective crime fighting in Kaltungo. Why this study sees community policing as an essential element towards addressing security problems, the study find out the key role the Nigeria Police Force are playing to ensure its effectively accommodated and utilized in Kaltungo and also the challenges confronting the police for their inability to implement community policing. To achieve these objectives, the study reviewed several conceptual and empirical literatures and adopted the functionalist theoretical framework as propounded by Emile Durkheim. The cross-sectional research design was adopted to conduct the study which uses the survey method to elicit responses from 396 respondents from Kaltungo local government area. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques of frequency and percentage. Findings from the study reveal, among others, that community policing strategies has help to improve the effectiveness of the Nigeria Police in Kaltungo and the police still have the problem of mistrust among the people. The study recommends that Nigeria police should adopt the practice of community policing to up-stand the image in order to address the problem of insecurity in Kaltungo.*

Key Words: Police, Policing, Community, Community Policing.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Since its independence, Nigeria has had to contend with a slew of socioeconomic difficulties. The Nigeria Police Force and other sister security organizations have done all they can to tackle the problem, but their efforts seem to have been ineffectual. When government security groups' other tactics failed, most communities opted for another option to protect their own lives and property. Despite the many obstacles that security services confront in reducing crime to a bare minimum in the nation, the Nigeria Police Force's importance cannot be overstated since it is the principal institution responsible for safeguarding all people's lives and property. The Nigeria Police Force is noted for having a classic British semi-military police structure that places a strong emphasis on authority centralization. The Nigerian Police Force is accustomed to the traditional policing model, in which authorities are centralized and police only respond to calls for service, and they do not believe that policing the neighborhood should be shared between the police and the community, but rather should come from the top down.

Due to the country's low number of police employees, the Nigerian Police Force has recruited police constabulary force members who are indigenes to help in policing their region since the commencement of community policing in Nigeria. This idea of power concentration is diametrically opposed to the ideology of community policing, which pushes for power decentralization. Community policing is a relatively new concept in Nigeria, although it has been popular in the Western world since the late 1970s, mainly in the United States. The method emphasizes collaboration, proactive policing, and power devolution.

The notion of community policing is quickly gaining traction in Nigeria, particularly among the police. The notion didn't acquire hold in Nigeria until the early 2000s (Gbenemene & Adishi 2017). Traditional police, in which officers are given instructions from above and must make judgments when they reach the community, is replaced with neighborhood policing (Wrobleski & Hess, 2003). The emergence of community policing in Nigeria has been hampered by the police's past, which is based on a semi-military command structure and in which officers are used to using force and violence (Gbenemene & Adishi 2017).

Community policing is a concept that stresses proactive involvement with residents in order to prevent crime and address crime-related issues. Because the police and the public must work together to effectively combat crime, partnership is a key component of Community Policing. This will include the police handing up part of their authority to the community in exchange for them acting as the cops' eyes and ears in the communities. Only if the police acquire the public's confidence will this be achievable (Gbenemene & Adishi 2017).

The Nigeria Police Force's involvement in community policing in the Kaltungo Local Government Area has been observed throughout the years, as innovative methods to community policing have increased police efforts to combat crime and criminality. Internal and external forces have hampered the Nigeria Police Force's operations, making them ineffective despite increased efforts. The public's mistrust of the police stymies not just the flow of security information, but also the structure of police-community interactions. Civilians find it difficult to exchange information with officers due to the concentration of police power, which transmits authority from the top to the bottom. Public opinions of police officers have hampered good police-community ties. The goal of community policing was to bring the police and the general people closer together. A challenge to the efficacy of police duties has been identified as a paucity of police officers to cover the whole Kaltungo L.G.A., which community policing hopes to remedy. The high rate of illiteracy among police officers in Nigeria is a serious problem. All that is required to join the Nigeria Police Force is a First School Leaving Certificate, which is appalling for an organization tasked with defending lives and property, as well as other security concerns in Nigeria. Intelligence gathering and other police activities are likely to be hampered by illiteracy. In Kaltungo, the police must rely on community policing tactics to provide public safety and protection. Similarly, many groups have faced a variety of difficulties throughout the years, including communal violence, which wrecked devastation on communities only a few years ago. Despite the Nigeria Police Force's new policy, rates of abduction, armed robbery, and other violent crimes, as well as community division, continue to climb. The researcher re-examined the function of the police in the study region after learning of their inability to tackle such crime. The involvement of the Nigerian police is still insufficient. It seems wasteful to react to service calls and arrive to crime and disturbance scenes regularly without addressing the issues or having any long-term impact on the community's members' lives. The researcher chose to investigate the Nigeria Police Force's involvement in community policing in Gombe State's Kaltungo Local Government Region due to an upsurge in crime in the subject area. The researcher looks at the Nigerian Police Force's involvement in community policing, as well as the efficacy and obstacles the Nigerian police force has faced in this area, as well as the theoretical explanation for Nigerian community policing.

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Because residents in the study area have lost faith in government security services, collaboration between the community and the Nigeria Police Force in combating criminal activity has deteriorated significantly at times. The informal security agencies tasked with assisting the Nigeria Police Force in protecting lives and property in communities lack the essential capabilities, and their job seems to be less successful than it should be. Many people in the Kaltungo Local Government Area are dissatisfied with the performance of the Nigerian police, which is why many communities in the study area have formed a Local Security Outfit, known as the Vigilante Group, to help address the issues of crime, civil unrest, and general security challenges that the police are empowered to address in their area. This is because the cops in the study area seem to have no idea what they're doing when it comes to dealing with the situation. Because of the police attitude and procedures that the service members apply in dealing with security concerns in the Kaltungo L.G.A of Gombe State, the activities of the Local Security Outfit have been dubbed community policing. In order to combat instability in the study region, the Nigerian Police Force has no choice but to assist these local security groups. The purpose of this research is to see whether the police are entirely supportive of local security organizations, as well as to raise crucial concerns about the police's role in community policing. How successful has this approach been in alleviating Kaltungo's insecurity? What are the most urgent difficulties that the police confront in their area when it comes to assisting community policing operations? What are the most probable causes of the Nigerian Police Force's successful community policing efforts? In light of the above, the goal of this study is to look at the Nigeria Police Force's involvement in community policing.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Community policing, sometimes known as neighborhood policing or proximity policing, has a variety of names, all of which refer to the same idea. Community policing, for example, is defined as "community engagement in building a safe and secure environment for everyone in which individuals take an active role in their own affairs," according to Ikuteyijo and Rotimi (2012). Community policing, according to Stipak (1994), is a management strategy

that encourages citizens and police officers to take responsibility for community safety via collaborative efforts and interpersonal engagement.

"An organization-wide concept and management style that fosters community, government, and police collaborations; proactive problem resolution; and community participation to address the source of crime, fear of crime, and other community concerns," Wrobleski and Hess (2003) defined community policing. The essence of community policing is to return to a time when safety and security are participatory in nature, and everyone takes responsibility for the overall health of their community, not just a select few, not just the local government administration, not just the police, but everyone who lives in the community (Brown, 2001).

According to Miller and Hess (2002), community policing is the concept that when the police and the community work together, they can achieve what neither can do alone. Community policing is a joint effort by the police and the community to identify and resolve crime and disturbance issues, with all members of the community contributing to the solution search. It aims to actively include the community in crime prevention by fostering a productive working relationship between the police and the community. Residents and police are expected to share responsibility for developing and sustaining peaceful communities under the community policing paradigm.

According to Rooyen (2001), community policing is a concept and practice that focuses on community and police cooperation in order to identify innovative solutions to current community issues, crime, and other related concerns. Community policing is a principle that governs police community collaboration and a problem-solving strategy that is sensitive to community needs, according to SAPS Police (Reyneke, 1997). Community policing, according to Masrofski, Worden, and Snipes (1995), entails making the police more cooperative with individuals who aren't cops. While community policing refers to a shift from a military-inspired approach to fighting crime to one that relies on forming partnerships with constituents for Adams, it also refers to a shift from a military-inspired approach to fighting crime to one that relies on forming partnerships with constituents (1994).

As a result, community policing has replaced terms like foot patrol, crime prevention, problem-oriented policing, community-oriented policing, police-community interactions, and more among professionals and academics. As a result, community policing is a policing strategy or philosophy based on the idea that community involvement and support may help identify suspects, arrest criminals, and report of concerns to the police (Friedmann, 1996).

To put it another way, community policing is an organizational concept that promotes the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to address the immediate causes that lead to public safety problems including crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. These descriptors indicate that, in contrast to the authoritarian and dictatorial character of conventional police and their top-down approach, community policing is democratic, participatory, consultative, and bottom-up in nature, which is why it is referred to as democracy in action (Aniche, 2018)

Furthermore, according to Greene, community policing has broadened the scope of police work to encompass public safety, crime prevention, crime fear, and community quality of life (2000). As a result, community members are included in the planning and assessment of police objectives and actions. The development of community-police cooperation capabilities, or community policing, focuses on crime prevention and victim support. Citizens' ability and resolve to combat and recover from crime are enhanced by the police. As a result, pleasant interactions between patrol officers and people of the community are vital to successful community policing.

To bring officers closer to the community, police agencies may complement automotive patrols with foot, bicycle, scooter, and horse patrols, as well as the creation of "mini-stations." Officers and members of the public meet on a regular basis to discuss challenges and develop solutions. Officers who are assigned to the same shift and beat for a long time get familiar with the community's everyday activities. More police pressure is needed to minimize neighborhood members' fear of crime and establish a feeling of local security. People will not help if they believe their activities will jeopardize their safety, therefore fear must be eliminated if community members are to engage actively in policing.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

In this study, a cross-sectional research technique was used. A cross-sectional research method gathers data through a survey in order to form conclusions about a target population (universe) at a certain moment in time while attempting to gauge their attitudes on a topic (Creswell, 2009). This study approach also allows for some flexibility in the framework of the results presentation and analysis, allowing for a series of adjustments that show the findings' robustness. The purpose of this research is to learn more about the Kaltungo local government area's police engagement in community policing. The study's emphasis is on the Kaltungo local government region, which also happens to be where the study is being conducted. This research, like any other survey, is meant to collect data from a representative sample of the studied population.

In the experiment, a multi-stage sampling method was used. For this study, the researcher first identified a percentage of adult male and female residents of the Kaltungo local government region. Furthermore, the researcher visited each of the ten (10) wards in the local government under investigation to ascertain and randomly select forty (40) participants from each ward to express their views on the role of police in community policing in the local government area, totaling 400 participants in the study.

4. DISCUSSION:

The results of the research are divided into five sections: the first deals with the characteristics of the respondents, while the second looks at Nigerian police involvement in community policing in the region.

Because male teens represent the majority of those who can read and write and are willing to engage in the survey, particularly in rural regions, they make up the bulk of the respondents for this study. The area was discovered to have a high unemployment rate, with local government junior staff and elementary school teachers accounting for the majority of the few working individuals. The bulk of these workers were paid less than N10,000 per month, much below the government's N18,000 minimum wage. Small-scale farmers, retailers, barbers, laborers, and commercial motorbike operators were among the region's few self-employed population. Given the above, the region's quality of life may be considered poor. The research region was determined to have a multi-religious and multi-ethnic culture; data also revealed that, despite religious differences, local tribes maintained a strong familial link. Up to half of the children in the area acquired at least a basic primary or secondary education, indicating a poor educational level.

According to Table 4.7, the majority of respondents are displeased with the nature of police activities in the region, with 50.7 percent responding that they are highly uncomfortable with police operations and 41.1 percent indicating that they are not comfortable. Only 8% of those asked said they were both comfortable and very comfortable. According to an In-depth Interview (IDI) done in the neighborhood, some people prefer to address issues at home rather than reporting them to the police because they are uncomfortable with the nature of police activity.

Only 6.5 percent and 5.3 percent of total respondents, respectively, reported seeing police patrolling the neighborhood on a regular and very frequent basis, as seen in Table 4.9. According to Table 4.10, 65.4 percent of respondents are afraid of officers, whereas 31.8 percent are quite comfortable in their presence. Citizens in the neighborhood were dissatisfied with the police response to an emergency call, as seen in Table 4.11. Police response to an emergency call is typically delayed, according to 95.9% of those questioned in this respect. In this regard, the In-depth Interview revealed that police officers sometimes arrived at a crime scene after the criminals had fled. Police often declined to attend to an emergency call, claiming that "we don't have gasoline," "we have a flat tire," "or our weaponry are inferior," and so on.

According to Table 4.11, 96.9% of respondents reported vigilante groups exist in the region, while 3% answered they are ignorant of their existence. The table depicts respondents' satisfaction with the Vigilante group's methods of operation. The vigilante group's operational approach was judged excellent by 52 percent of all respondents. According to Table 4.13, 30.5 percent of respondents are content with their present working style, while 17.4 percent are not. As seen in Table 4.14, the majority of security issues are linked to poverty. According to the graph, 41.4 percent of respondents agreed and 54.3 percent strongly agreed that poverty was linked to security issues. The Police Department's shortcomings, according to the findings, led to their low performance. Excessive police corruption, political meddling, a shortage of manpower, and poor service conditions are only a few of the challenges; others include insufficient police facilities and training. According to the survey, many unqualified people were recruited into the police force since your qualification was judged by the amount you paid.

According to the report, poverty is also the leading driver of crime and other public-order issues. "We will see more bokoharams unless something is done swiftly to fix the country's socioeconomic problems," Magaji (2009) said. As a result, reducing crime will need the creation of jobs and the provision of essential services to the general people. Similarly, improving the quality of police service and providing required equipment, as well as appropriate recruitment of additional police officers, would go a long way toward addressing crime and other public order problems in the region and throughout the nation. Marshall and Daniel (1973) said, "Urgently essential developmental resources be dedicated to crime control." "Additional staff, transportation, special equipment, and facilities for police and prisons should be provided to curb the increase in crime committed in rising countries," says the report.

Furthermore, imposing the death penalty on some categories of criminals and offering social assistance to the jobless will aid the security service system in dealing with the public order crisis. Finally, the study found that limiting corruption within the police force alone would not be sufficient to solve the issue of insecurity unless corruption among public workers and politicians was also addressed.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the observed potential and challenges of community policing in Nigeria, the paper would burden government, police, media, community members, and non-governmental organizations with one or more types of duties in order to make the program a success in Nigeria.

As a consequence, the following suggestions will be made in the report:

- The Nigerian government must enhance the image of criminal justice in the eyes of Nigerians, particularly the Nigeria Police Force, by fostering an atmosphere in which they may carry out their jobs without fear or favor.
- The government should also review police pay and improve their benefits so that they are more motivated and willing to aid the country by identifying and preventing crime via effective community policing.
- In the same way that it combats political corruption, the government must combat police corruption and abuse of authority.
- Police officers must not only enforce but also adhere to the law.
- Police must be eager to help the effort and must not engage in any unethical action, such as corruption.
- The media should be used to educate Nigerians about the advantages of community policing.
- Community leaders should encourage their supporters to collaborate with law enforcement agencies like the police.
- Residents must accept this model with open arms and be ready to collaborate with police in the detection and prevention of crime.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are working hard on many levels of societal development, peace, and unity; they will also assist Nigerians in understanding and accepting community policing, which is similar to police in a democratic society today.

6. CONCLUSION:

Neighborhood watch, also known as community policing, is a philosophical and practical approach to crime prevention and control that involves the whole community. It is a policing art that supports the police in improving their performance in crime detection, prevention, and control, and excluding local inhabitants from the art would have harmed the quality of police work and public relations (policing). Community policing and problem-oriented policing are comparable in many ways. Both systems, for example, strive to detect and cure crime from the outset (before it occurs), while preserving societal balance and control through public collaboration.

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