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Abstract

The idea of including community members in the fight against crime and criminology cannot be quantified. This claim had been demonstrated in the study area with the advent of the Boko-Haram terrorism. All human societies thrive on the desire to exist and work in peace and security. This however, has recently eluded many communities particularly in Borno state, it has also resulted in serious outcry from both the leaders and followers to indulge community policing as a component of the security strategy in combating crime and maintaining peace and security. The study will use a descriptive/interpretative research approach in examining community policing in Biu emirate council of Borno State. A research of this nature may combine both the qualitative and quantitative method in analyzing Data. The random sampling strategy will be adopted in order to effectively cover the case study area. Both traditional, political, and other community leaders constituted most of the respondents to be interviewed, because of their rich experience in community policing. A total number of 80 persons will be interviewed. The Data obtained will be analyzed using simple percentages. The study will aim to establish the relevance of community policing as a very popular strategy for maintaining peace and security, however, the challenges remained that the strategy must be understood by the general public.

Keyword: Community Policing, Peace, Security, Biu Emirate.

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Introduction

The need for community policing in the 21st century cannot be over-emphasized particularly with the increase in crime and criminology at all levels of government. Community policing is significant particularly in the areas of peaceful negotiations, promotion of peaceful co-existence and or the development of policies and initiatives to prevent or combat localized instability. (Aminu 2016). Infact, the police as a law enforcement agency have recently lost their credibility in maintaining peace and security particularly in the local communities and so cannot achieve positive outcome on their own. Hence, the idea of community policing component is encouraged based on its previous successes in crime prevention and maintenance of peace in the study area.

The idea of community policing according to (Erhuru 2017). Simplify that communities can serve as police officers in their own rights. While, community policing as described by the American society of police, is a way of thinking that place a high value on co-operation with other citizens to prevent crime and resolves dispute. Community policing relies on partnership and collaboration for it to be effective, as both the law enforcement agencies and the community members must work together to combat crime and criminal behavior. According to Olusengun (2016), resident of a particular community are more likely to be able to easily identify and tract down those who commits evil in the community because they have a thorough knowledge and understanding of their geographical surrounding. Community policing initiative that is popular among the people included intelligence gathering and sharing with the security agencies, and group of physically fit men working in shifts to protect the citizen from being attacked especially at night. In addition, vigilante service groups, youth organizations and civilian joint tasks force teams are also active in community policing. According to Adeniyi (2021), “local law enforcement is becoming more popular in the 21st century, with an increasing number of nationalities implementing number of it in their jurisdictions.” For example, in Igbo culture, history had it that there was no distinction between law enforcement and crime fighting. In fact, the role of the police become the role that can be allocated to any member of the community and as a result, among the Igbo there was no specific agency that has a primary role of crime prevention until very recently (Kabiru and Sale 2020). In essence, every adult male in the community is a member of an age-grade which by implication mean they are responsible for policing because they play significant roles in these efforts.

Thus, because of the devastations of Boko-Haram in the area, coupled with the kidnapping for ransom as well as the persistent volume of displacement of person from their ancestral homes, the concept of community policing has become not only popular but a necessity. According to Mustapha et-al (2014), community policing assist law enforcement agencies in their fight against crime through the provision of information and resources. In the same light, Olusegun (2016), claimed that community policing is a tactics for combating crime that involves enlisting the help of members of the community as a compliment to the work of the police. Similarly, he continued, it is a security method that is used in addition to the efforts made by the people in the community to combat crime and criminology. Hence, the inability of the police and other law enforcement agencies to be able to maintain a crime free society necessitate the involvement of local community members especially the youth and traditional institutions. The purpose of this research is therefore, among others to establishes how effective community policing works, and also to determine the level of people’s awareness of it and their willingness to support the initiatives.

Statement of the Problems/Justifications:

As a result of the increase in crime rate in the 21st century, we cannot continue to remain static in law enforcement as well as in all facets of human endeavors. Although many challenges abound in relation to community policing, such as the issues of majority of the communities placing. Less focus on support for joint security, this may be as a result of loose of trust and confidence especially in the Nigerian police force, hence making it difficult to adopt the community-based policing approach. According to Monsuru and Rafiu, (2016). There are no effective collaborative efforts between the communities and the police, and there exist several barriers including attitudes, facilities, lack of training, inadequate infrastructure, logistics, God-fatherism.” etc. As a result, this study aims at establishing how community policing will facilitate the maintaining of peace and security in Biu Emirate, by increasing the level of peoples awareness of it, and also determining the willingness of the people to support it, particularly in Biu Emirate council of Borno State as a Case Study.

Objective of the Study:

The main objectives of this study is to examine the role of community policing in maintaining peace and security in Biu Emirate, Borno State Nigeria, the specific objectives include:

1. To determine the level of people’s awareness of community policing in Biu Emirate council.
2. To determine the willingness of the people in supporting community policing in Biu Emirate.

Literature Review:

Community policing is not a new phenomenon, Infact, it is as old as humanity itself. For instance, schemes such on age-grades vigilantes hunter groups, night guards and a variety of others offers community policing services in different communities. Although the Nigerian police force was established in 1889 by the British Colonial Authorities, community policing groups continue to serve as aid to the police. In this perspective, Tamuno (1970), claimed that “the idea of having local guards and police working together in protecting the community had existed long before now.

However, there were distinction as established police.” This position was countered by Moses (2023), who disagreed with the above claim, he said, “the police established during the colonial era was done with a view to safeguarding the interest of the British. He believed they were established with the aim of quelling riots, suppressing the opposition populace and stopping rebellion.” In other words, the colonial police were not necessarily established to provide community security, promote human rights, the rule of law or provide social services, rather they were used in expeditions, of promoting colonial territorial ambitions, quell protests, and resistance to colonial exploitations.

Similarly, Sule (2021), summarized colonial-era policing as anti-grassroots. That police were primarily serving and protecting the interest of the British officials rather than to serve and protect the common man. From conception, the police in Nigeria take it as a duty to protect government officials rather than other citizens, besides they have been portrayed as harsh and frightening, hence alienating the majority of the citizens from law enforcement. Ikutejijo and Rotimi (2012), said the philosophy of community interaction with the police was design to encourage enmity rather than friendship and over time, the public perception of the police in Nigeria is considered the most corrupt government agency locally and internationally, thereby weakening the bond between the communities and the law enforcements. Thus, they cannot effectively fight crime, let alone stop it. Due to police corruption, it has become a common practice to see suspected criminals resurfacing on the streets to continue terrorizing innocent citizens, and in some cases taking vengeance on those who handed them over to the police. Besides, the police are known for taking money from motorists on our roads, using excessive force against citizens, committing extrajudicial killings, participating in criminal robberies or in providing arm to thieves and robbers for hire services. Besides, politicians and wealthy people from the society are known to hire police officers as thugs and private body guards, hence making the police to be involved in criminal activities such as election violence and above all making peoples opinion of the police more of enemies than of friends. This scenario consequently makes many communities to look elsewhere for protection against criminals and other sources of danger than rely on the police. Infact, many communities like ours presently turned to various groups such as civil defense, vigilante groups, civilian joint task force (JTF) or even traditional political institutions, in resolving conflicts than relying on the police.

Community policing approach is so significant because it guarantees the full support of the community members in maintaining peace and security of each and every member at no cost whatever and with little or no fear of repercussion. For Ozden, and Mercy (2019), recognized that barriers and corruption, human right violations, public mistrust, excessive use of force etc. poses barriers to effective police-community relationships to warrant cooperation between them. For the Nigerian police to make any contribution to community policing, they needed the cooperation of the community members. These position is reiterated by Olusegun (2016) when he said “the police and the community continue to believe that the police force, despite their obvious shortcomings, cannot combat crime without cooperation of the community members. This he believes require collaboration between the police and the public.”

In another perspectives, Ikuteyijo (2012) identify the challenges facing police community relationship and concluded that powerful members of the society interfere in the administration of justice and above all, police are handicap by financial constraints. The fact of the Mather still remain that lack of adequate fund to carryout the operations of the Nigerian Police force was and will continues to remain the major reason why the institution was reduced to the present precarious position it occupy as one of the most corrupt government agencies ever. This scenario has created distrust and apathy between them and the general public, such that today members of the public in the study area prefer to report their worries to the Nigerian security and civil defense corps or any of the community security outfits like civilian Joint Task Force, Vigilantee groups, community Hunters association or local traditional institutions, such as the village heads, ward heads or even the Emir for adjudication than reporting to the Nigeria police force. Besides, the politicians and wealthy individuals in the society can easily hire them to do their bidding even when doing so is tantamount to breaking the law.

Material and Methods

The study will be based on qualitative/descriptive/interpretative methodology. This method will guarantee an in-depth study and it will provide valuable information because it is consistent with exploring the characteristics of a group or individuals in trying to understand an existing social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). The method allows the researcher to study the event within its context. Besides, issues will be studied in their natural foam or explaining things in terms of understanding the actors including their behaviors and world outlook.

Biu Emirate, the area under study comprises of four local government areas in respect of Bayo, Biu, Hawul and Kwaya Kusar local government areas of Borno state in Nigeria. The Emirate whose roots can rightly be traced back to 1535 is currently made up of more than 50 communities across the four local government area's and has an estimated population of over 800,000.00 peoples (Bukar, Usman, 2025).

The population of the study comprises of a total of Eighty (80) person's to be interviewed, 20 persons from each local government area. These will include traditional rulers, politicians, religious and community leaders as well as the vigilante groups, Hunters, Civilian Joint Task Force members and all other relevant stake holders. The respondents were randomly selected from among those indicated above for interview in the category indicated below.

The study relied on the quantitative method (interview) in obtaining its data. The data so obtained were collaborated with secondary source materials and were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively in order to arrive at accurate results. Statistical tool using simple percentage was adopted in comparing the responses of those selected. The responses with the highest score were adopted as significant while those with lower score were rejected.

Results and Discussion

The study is based the assumption that majority of the people in the study area did not actually understand the scope of community policing and so need to be enlightened about what it entails. Hence, it is expected that at the end of the research, the level of people's awareness of community policing in the study area will increase and also their willingness to support the initiative will multiply.

The advent of Boko-Haram in 2009 had created security problems in the study area particularly the absence of sustainable peace and security. Crime and criminality has increased most especially kidnapping for ransom, robbery, terrorism and blackmail. This has resulted in loose of lives and properties, many had been displaced from their ancestral homes which has denied them access to their farmlands as a consequence, as majority of them were farmers. This scenario brings to the forefront a need for greater security for both lives and properties in the study area.

Community policing although understood different by most stakeholders, is seen by the researcher as a way of thinking about placing high value on co-operation with other citizens to prevent crime and resolve disputes. Community policing rely on partnership and collaboration in order for it to be effective because both law enforcement agencies and the community members must work together to combat crime and criminal behavior. It function in such a manner that whenever a crime is reported or is about to happen, members of the community quickly inform the police and together they act to stop it or arrest the perpetrators when such a crime has already taken place. Similarly community and religious leaders are very instrumental in this shared responsibility, because they provided positive contribution of educating the populace whenever the need arises in the Mosques and Churches or any gathering of the community peoples.

The Level of Awareness of Community Policing in Biu Emirate

In analyzing the responses of the people, it was clear that majority of the citizens misconceive the idea of community policing. Most of them consider the idea as a new government Agency that will provide employment to their words and dependents. Thus they were very happy and accommodating in their response on the questions being asked during the interview session. In fact, local politicians in both Bayo and Kwaya Kusar local government areas were on the verge of hijacking the interview session on two occasions on the ground that they were stake-holders in the present administration and so they need to be carried along in these programme. In his words, Mallam Mu'azu Maigari a ward executive of the ruling party in Birhyel said

"We are stake holders and strong party members, whenever progaramme of this nature is coming, we need to be informed beforehand so we can ensure that our interest is protected"

Similarly, in Kwaya one of the party caucus mobilized his follower's and confronted the researcher and his assistants demanding to know why we were conducting interviews without officially seeking permission from the party. According to him, he said.

"Any government programme of this nature must consider us and give us our slots before anyone else or it is not going to be accepted. (Mallam Garba M.)"

This scenario demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of the populace are unaware of the idea of community policing as indicated above by the researcher. Thus additional time was spared in attempting to sensitize the people and especially the respondents on this noble idea of community policing and its benefits.

The police public relation officer in Biu who equals as the district police officer (DPO) in a one on one discussion revel a preference for community policing as a technique for ensuring community engagement, although some critiques view this choice as a way to reduce the stress of police operations. While some few enlightened community members agreed with community policing alternative but that it should be handled in accordance with the provision of the peoples traditional practices and laws. This position is contrary to the rule of law and the provision of the countries constitution and so is unacceptable. According to one member of the kingmakers in Biu Barrister Ibrahim Birma, said.

"Community policing is as old as human civilization itself. In the past our fore fathers govern their communities based on community policing, every crime has its own penalties and so it should be re-introduced."

In addition, the commander general of the Hunters group and vigilante in Biu, Alhaji Ali Lema said.

"My organization is a local security outfit, we work independently from the police, though we are a voluntary organization, the government supports us with funds and other logistics. We

handle cases, solve disputes, have our detention centres but refer sensitive cases to the police”

There is a lack of general agreement on the level of peoples awareness of community policing in Biu Emirate. However, the table below indicated that majority of the respondents misconceived the ideas as postulated by the researcher above.

Table 2 above shows that 25 representing 31.25% are the only respondents who are aware of what community policing entails, while 60 respondents representing 75% are those that are not aware of the idea as indicated above. When the people were adequately sensitized on the idea of community policing some of them provided valuable advices on the subject matter. Maina Lawan Mohammed, (The District head of Mandaragirau) in Biu said

“These sensitization campaign of community policing should be extended in media advertisement such as television broadcast, radio, and local newspaper and magazines.”

In a similar contribution, the District head of Wuyo in Bayo local government said

“we the community leaders will carry on these campaign to our people whenever we are required to do so. We have adequate structure in place for such type of activities besides we can boast public involvement in any types of investigation.” (Mallam Abdulrahman Abubakar.)

The sensitization exercise has proved very effective because the vast majority of the public now chooses to collaborate with the police in crime control and prevention rather than the traditional idea of distancing themselves from the police. At the moment, the people have reported a decrease in the number of criminal activities that occur courtesy of these noble objectives of community policing. The police officer themselves confessed that community policing campaign has reduced the crime rate in the study area to a very minimal level. The general public are of the view that, having halted most of Boko-Haram activities, they wished to be at peace forever and so they will continue to support community policing effort in the study area.

The Willingness of the people in supporting community policing in Biu Emirate

The respondents generally were of the opinion that supporting the idea of community policing depend largely on trust and believe that it is going to serve the interest of the public and not a selected few. Equally they also believe that doing so will establish a more democratic law enforcement principle, and the development of trust and encouragement of the general public to cooperate with the police in enforcing the fight against crime and criminality. Besides, trust they emphasize will promote the sharing of vital information between them and the police leading to effective result oriented outcomes. According to a prominent religious leader in Shaffa, said

“This idea is a welcome development, as you can see we have a large congregation of adherents, we will support these programme overwhelmingly. Our Church was bunt down by Boko-Haram in 2013 and we suffered other losses, so if our hand of friendship will be required to foster peace in our community, we are ever ready to grant it”.

Similarly another community leader in Mandaragirau, Biu Local government area in responding to the same question, said

“We the people of Mandaragirau are willing and will support their initiative with both our money and our physical efforts. Our community have been ransacked severally and we have been rendered as refugees on such occasions. So bringing any idea that will foster a peaceful co-existence on our community is welcome (Mai Anguwa Ali).”

Answering the same question, a trader and a resident of Tashan Alade in Hawul local government Mr. John Hyellapa said,

“Everyone in the community will not only be willing to support this initiative but will contribute even financially in order to ensure that peace as it existed in the past is once more restored. In 2013 during the height of the crisis of Boko-Haram, my shop was looted and my house completely bunt down. It is only God who saw me through those trying times, so who will not cooperate if lasting peace will be achieved. I believe that supporting community policing is to our benefit, besides it will foster unity among members of the community he concluded”

In essence, a considerable number of respondents emphasized that willingness and supporting community policing initiative also requires active participation by all with the hope that doing so will result in a reduction in crime and other problems in the community. Also they further reiterated that recognizing the contribution of individuals within the

communities will go a long way in boasting active participation by all persons in the community. Mallam Mamuda, a resident of Shaffa town in Hawul local government in his response, said,

“More people are becoming aware of the reality that community policing participation is critical to the success of the entire initiative. So he agreed that official recognition of the contribution of active members will encourage passive participant to double their effort and participate actively”

The table 3 showed that 57(71.25%) of the respondents indicated their willingness to support community development initiative in all its ramifications. While 23(28.75%) of the respondents desired to remain passive supporters. This showed there is a widespread support and willingness on the part of the people for community policing. This cannot be unconnected with their experiences of the Havoc and devastation of the Boko-Haram activities on life and properties.

Community policing as it is applied in Biu Emirate is accomplished through different organizations using varying techniques. Roles and responsibilities are decentralized and assigned to the different law-enforcement agencies available in the study area. For instance, the civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) are noted for the arrest of run-away criminals in all over the country. Though they are a voluntary body from among the community peoples, government supports them financially and logistically to carry out their roles which they have been accomplishing over the years. Similarly, the vigilante and hunters organization are noted for their abilities in leading patrols into the “Bushes” with the military in the rear because of their mastery of the terrain which the Nigerian army find difficult to explore and or penetrate in the conflict with Boko-Haram and other Criminals. Also the NSCDC perform task such as dispute resolution, and other minor civil cases in the communities as they are seen to be more transparent in their conduct than the Nigerian Police force.

The research questions one examine the people level of awareness of the concept of community policing. The findings of the study indicated that majority of the people didn’t clearly understand what community policing entails. However with the sensitization effort of the researcher and his assistants who were local indigenes of the various areas visited for the study, majority of the respondents were optimistic that the idea can promote community cohesion and social organization that is going to result in a reduction in crime and criminality in the study area. Similarly, a general consensus indicated that information gathering and sharing between the public and the law enforcement agencies will go a long way in decreasing crime rates in our communities. In essence, when community policing is conducted effectively, it can facilitate increased crime reporting and community cooperation, as was observed in parts of Borno State during the Boko Haram insurgency (Mamman, 2020; UNDP, 2023; UNODC, 2023).

The second research question examine the willingness of the community peoples to cooperate and participate actively in community policing. Although, the consensus opinion of majority of respondents after fully understanding what community policing implied, showed their willingness to cooperate with the police in ensuring the success of the initiative. However, there were still many others who were skeptical about their relationship with the police. A respondent who requested for anonymity revealed that the police love for money can hardly allow them to work in harmony with the community peoples, besides they cannot be trusted to hide the identities of informants particularly when prominent personalities are involved in a crime. Despite all these anticipated challenges, the result of the study clearly showed that the community people are willing and ready to co-operate not only with the police but all other law enforcement agencies in combating crime and criminality.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that community policing initiative is becoming very popular especially in Nigeria in our contemporary times. In all our communities today, the peaceful co-existence we enjoyed in the past hast speedily given way to unrest and criminal activities. Majority of the people nowadays live in fear in the communities, in the workplace, in the villages, in towns and in the cities. No one is spared, the old the young, the rich and the poor, and yet government alone cannot be able to provide for the people the peace, security and conducive atmosphere needed for businesses to thrive and for the preservation of life and properties. Taking all these challenges into consideration, the people themselves have recognize the importance of community policing in crime prevention and control as well as its advantages in dispute and conflict management in our communities. However, there is still need for more pro-active measurer’s in order to make the initiative to achieve the desired goal. Efforts should be made to keep up the momentum and at the same time continue to perfect the shortcoming identified in the course of executing the initiative, because community policing has proven to the way to go in maintaining peaceful co-existence in our communities.

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Tables

Table 1: Those Interviewed According To Their Localities

S/N	Community	Local Gov’t	Number Interviewed	Sample Obtained
1.	Birhyel	Bayo L.G.A	13	13
2.	Wuyo	Bayo L.G.A	07	07
3.	Biu	Biu L.G.A	15	15
4.	Miringa	Biu L.G.A	5	5
5.	Azare	Hawul L.G.A	8	8
6.	Shaffa	Hawul L.G.A	12	12
7.	Kwaya	Kwaya Kusar L.G.A	15	15
8.	Wandali	Kwaya Kusar L.G.A	5	5

Sources: Fieldwork 2025.

Table 2: Level of Awareness of Community Policing

Items	Frequency	Percentage %
Those who are aware	25	31.25%
Those who are not aware	60	75%
Total number of respondents	80	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025.

Table 3: Willingness of the People to Support Community Policing

S/N	Name of L.G.A	Frequency	Those Willing to Support	Those Not Willing to Support	Percentage %
1.	Bayo L.G.A	20	12	8	60%
2.	Biu L.G.A	20	18	2	90%
3.	Hawul L.G.A	20	17	3	85%
4.	Kwaya Kusar L.G.A	20	10	10	50%
	Total	80	71.25%	28.75%	100%

Sources: Fieldwork 2025.