

**IMPACTS OF COMMUNITY SECURITY OUTFIT AND
SECURITY EDUCATION ON COMBATING CRIME IN
AKOKO AREA OF ONDO STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The persistent rise in criminal activities in Akoko Area of Ondo State, Nigeria, has created an urgent need to explore alternative strategies for enhancing community safety. The research therefore, aims to assess public perceptions of community policing and security education, the relationship between community security outfits and the local populace, and the effectiveness of these measures in crime prevention. The study employed a descriptive survey design, it used a sample of 250 participants from Akoko Area, selected through simple random sampling. Data collection was carried out through structured questionnaire. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentages. Findings indicated that the people's perception on the impacts of community policing was high ($XG = 3.63$), people's perception on the impacts of security education was high ($XG = 3.78$), meeting among various community security outfits and the people in the implementation of community policing was moderate ($XG = 3.01$). Based on the findings, it was therefore recommended among others that community-led security initiatives should be established to empower communities to develop and manage their own security outfits, fostering ownership and accountability. Security education should be integrated into school curriculum; teach security awareness,

safety protocols, and crime prevention strategies to students, equipping them with essential life skills.

Keywords: Community policing, Crime prevention, Security education.

Introduction

Community policing is a concept that advocates for organisational solutions that facilitate the systematic implementation of partnerships and problem-solving methods to proactively tackle the underlying factors contributing to public safety concerns, including crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. Community policing depends on cooperative alliances between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve to devise solutions to issues and enhance trust in the police; it is essential to align organisational management, structure, personnel, and information systems to facilitate community partnerships and proactive problem-solving initiatives. The agency's organisational structure must empower local patrol officers with decision-making ability and hold them responsible for their actions. This can be achieved through long-term assignments, the development of officers who are generalists and using special units appropriately (Mahmoud & Usman, 2014)

The objective of community policing is for law enforcement, community hunters, vigilantes, and local youngsters to foster relationships within the communities via local authorities, aiming to diminish antisocial behaviour and criminal activity. Community policing is associated with problem-oriented policing and intelligence-led policing, in contrast to the reactive police techniques that were prevalent in the late 20th century. Numerous police departments include units dedicated exclusively to community policing. Community policing is a strategy for preventing and controlling neighbourhood crime that involves a partnership between the police and the communities such as Community Hunters, Vigilante, Community Youths, Amotekun and the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) (Monsuru & Rafiu 2016). The success of this approach can vary depending on how it is implemented in a specific community. These partnerships are critical as the police are just one of the agencies responsible for addressing community issues and it requires the cooperation and collaboration of the people other

agencies to effectively prevent crime and solve problems.

Community policing is based on a systematic relationship between the police and the public. It involves the community working together with the law enforcement agencies to create a safe and secure environment (Ikuteyijo, 2009). The role of the law enforcement agencies is not limited to enforcing laws but also includes addressing a wide range of community issues (Okeshola & Mudiare, 2013). The transition from traditional policing to community policing is a global trend, and the Nigeria Police is no exception. Community policing is seen as a key aspect of police reform efforts (Okiro, 2007). In Ondo state, the concept of community policing is not new, but the way it been applied varied. The existence groups such as the Community Hunters, Vigilante, Community Youths, Amotekun, Agbekoya and the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC) to protect lives and property and prevent crimes aids the police with strategies in curbing criminal activities such as kidnapping, burglary, fraud, rape, child abuse, hostage taking, ransom collection and kidnapping of children. (Mahmoud & Usman 2014)

The escalating levels of criminal activities in the Akoko area of Ondo State, Nigeria, pose significant challenges to the safety and stability of the local communities. This situation is further complicated by a complex interaction of socio-economic factors, resources agencies, and a strained relationship between the police and the local populace. The conventional approach to combating crime, primarily centred on reactive law enforcement measures, has proven insufficient to address the awareness of community-based crimes effectively. This inadequacy necessitates exploring alternative strategies, such as the integration of the impact of community security outfits and security education initiatives, to foster a more harmonious and proactive approach to crime prevention and community safety. Despite the presence of community security outfits like Amotekun Corps, vigilante groups, community youths, community hunters in the Akoko area, concentration is on conventional policing instead of community policing.

Patrick (2022) examined that a definitive approach to addressing the insecurity issue in Nigeria is to prioritize the discipline of psychology in policy design and execution to foster national cohesion and integration. It is evident that Nigeria has experienced

heightened insecurity, particularly during and after the April 2011 presidential elections, enduring unprecedented ethno-religious-political crises characterised by bombings orchestrated by the Boko Haram sect. The unprecedented surge of terrorism, abductions, and other violent offenses is, at the very least, concerning. Religious leaders, churches, mosques, and similar institutions are not exempt from this assault. It is indisputable that Nigeria is at a crossroads and is progressively veering into a failing state if the current trend of insecurity persists (Olabanji & Ese, 2014). Consequently, insecurity has manifested in many ways throughout various regions of the nation. In the South-West, armed robbers dominate, whilst in the North, cross-border bandits operate with impunity. Nevertheless, the South-South region has widespread incidents of abduction. The persistent surge in crime and armed robbery indicates that insecurity is rapidly becoming normalized in Nigeria, and has, rather abruptly, attracted some people who prefer to handle matters that may typically be addressed by due process. The end-products result in the annihilation of innocent lives, interruption of economic activity, and devastation of properties, among other consequences. Mohammed (2018).

The deficiency in existing research is evident in the limited focus on the combined potential of community security outfits and security education as a holistic approach to crime prevention. Most studies tend to address these elements in isolation rather than exploring their cooperative effects. Consequently, there is a critical need for comprehensive research that not only evaluates the current effectiveness of community security outfits in the Akoko area but also investigates how integrating security education could augment their efforts in combating criminal activities. This study therefore examined the impact of community security outfits and security education on combating criminal activities in Akoko Area of Ondo State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the people's perception on the impact of community policing in Akoko Area of Ondo State; and
2. examine the people's perception on the impact of security education in Akoko Area of Ondo State.

Research Questions

1. What are the people's perceptions on the impact of community policing in Akoko Area of Ondo State?

2. What are the people's perceptions on the impact of security education in Akoko Area of Ondo State?

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population comprised all community leaders, head of vigilantes, Amotekun corps, hunters and community youths in Akoko Area of Ondo State. Simple random sampling was used to randomly select community leaders, members of vigilantes, Amotekun corps, hunters and community youths from the chosen population. From each community, proportionate sampling technique was used to select 25 community leaders, members of vigilantes, Amotekun corps, hunters and community youths from 10 communities through the use of simple random sampling techniques. The communities include: ? kà, Etioro, Akungba, Ikare, Ogbagi, Arigidi, Erusu, Ikaram, Ibaram and Ugbe In all, 250 respondents from 10 communities constitute the sample.

A self-developed questionnaire titled: Impact of Community Security Outfit and Security Education in Combating Criminal Activities Questionnaire (ICSOSECCAQ) was used for data collection. The instrument is divided into two sections. Section A and B. Section A sought for information such as: age, gender and level of education while section B sought for information relating to impact of community security outfit and security education for combating criminal activities in Akoko Area of Ondo State.

In order to determine the validity of the instrument, critical evaluation of the items in the questionnaire were carried out by given the instrument to five experts in the Department of Social Science Education at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko. They provided corrections, comments and guidance during this process, the instrument also underwent face and content validity check to ensure they comprehensively covered all relevant aspects of the variables they intended to measure. Test re-test reliability method was used to determine the stability of the instrument. Instrument was administered on the participants on two different occasions within an interval of two weeks, result of the first and second administration was correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), and the result was 0.78, this coefficient demonstrated that the instrument was

reliable. The data that was collected through questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods including tables of frequencies, mean, median, mode, standard deviation and simple percentages for easy understanding; it was processed through the use of statistical packages for social science (SPSS).

Results

Research Question 1: What are the people's perceptions on the impact of community policing in Akoko Area of Ondo State?

Table 1: People's perception on the impact of community policing in Akoko Area of Ondo State

S/N	Items	SA		A		D		SD		Mean (\bar{X})	Std. D.
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1.	The people are familiar with community policing in your area	151	60.4	99	39.6	–	–	–	–	3.60	.49
2.	Community police have a role to play in combating and preventing crime in your area	116	46.4	131	52.4	3	1.2	–	–	3.45	.52
3.	Community police are very effective in combating and preventing crime in your area	192	76.8	52	20.8	–	–	–	2.4	3.72	.58
4.	Do the people cooperate with the police in crime prevention in your area	184	73.6	52	20.8	14	5.6	6	–	3.68	.57
5.	There is vigilante organisation and introduction of night watchmen in your area	188	75.2	56	22.4	6	2.4	–	–	3.72	.49
Grand Mean										3.63	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 shows response of the people's perception on the impact of community policing in Akoko Area of Ondo State. For **item 1**, 60.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that the people are familiar with community policing in their area while 99 agreed. Their mean score = 3.60 while standard deviation = .49. For **item 2**, 116 of the respondents strongly agree that community police have a role to play in combating and preventing crime in their area, 131 agreed while 3 disagreed. Their mean score = 3.45 while standard deviation = .52. For **item 3**, 192 of the respondents strongly agree that community police are very effective in combating and preventing crime in their area, 52 agree while 6 (2.4%) strongly agree. Their mean score = 3.72 while standard deviation = .58. In summary, majority of the respondents agreed to all the items raised about the people's perception on the impact of community policing in Akoko Area of Ondo State. The grand mean 3.63 obtained showed that the people's perceptions on the impact of community policing was high.

Research Question 2: What are the people's perceptions on the impact of security education in Akoko Area of Ondo State?

Table 2: People's perceptions on the impact of security education in Akoko Area of Ondo State

S/N	Items	SA		A		D		SD		Mean (X)	Std. D.
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
4.	The people are familiar with security education in your area	198	79.2	48	19.2	4	5.6	6	1.6	3.68	.57
5.	Security education have a role to play in combating and preventing crime in your area	222	88.1	17	6.8	11	2.4	-	4.4	3.72	.49
6.	Security education are very effective in combating and preventing crime in your area	206	82.4	25	10.0	19	2.4	-	7.6	3.72	.49

S/N	Items	SA		A		D		SD		Mean (\bar{X})	Std. D.
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
9.	The people carried the police along with matters arising in your area	211	84.4	39	15.6	-	-	-	-	3.84	.36
10.	There is monthly community gathering on security education in your area	195	78.0	42	16.8	13	5.2	-	-	3.72	.55
Grand Mean										3.78	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows response of the people's perceptions on the impact of security education in Akoko Area of Ondo State. For **item 6**, of the respondents strongly agreed that the people are familiar with security education in their area, 48 while 4 disagree. Their mean score = 3.77 while standard deviation = .45. For **item 7**, 222 of the respondents strongly agreed that security education have a role to play in combating and preventing crime in their area, 17 agreed, while 11 (4.4%) disagreed. Their mean score = 3.84 while standard deviation = .46. In summary, majority of the respondents agreed to all the items raised on the people's perceptions on the impact of security education in Akoko Area of Ondo State. The grand mean 3.78 obtained showed that the people's perception on the impact of security education was high.

Discussions

The results indicated that the people are familiar with community policing in their area, community police have a role to play in combating and preventing crime in their area, community policing is very effective in combating and preventing crime in their area, the people cooperate with the police in crime prevention in their area and there is vigilante organisation and introduction of night watchmen in their area. This study is similar with the findings of Kasali and Odetola (2013) who found that the people's perception about community policing in Akoko Area of Ondo State, Nigeria is generally positive, with many people believing that it is an effective mechanism for controlling crime and improving community relations with the police. This perception is based on the idea that community policing emphasizes the involvement of local communities in policing their own areas through the use of local vigilantes and other community-led

initiatives.

Findings also showed that the people are familiar with security education in their area, security education have a role to play in combating and preventing crime in their area, security education are very effective in combating and preventing crime in their area, the people usually carried the police along with matters arising in their area and there is monthly community gathering on security education in their area. This study is in line with the study of Iyamu. and Edozie, (2015) who sees security education as a cooperative, dynamic and lifelong process through which a society generates knowledge, values and skills for its survival, sustenance, enlightenment and empowerment against all forms of danger and threats to its wellbeing and coexistence.

Conclusion

It is evident that community security outfit and security education have a role to play in the protection and safety of life and property. There are many challenges in effectively implementing community policing, which have been identified by various authors such as a lack of organisational commitment and culture change, a lack of community engagement and ownership, unequal power dynamics, a lack of control and customization at the local level, a lack of incentives and training for officers, a mismatch between police beats and community perceptions, a lack of community capacity, unclear definitions of community roles, insufficient crime information for communities, and a lack of feedback on actions taken. It is this gap that arouses the researcher's interest to undertake a study on the impact of community security outfit and security education for combating criminal activities in Akoko Area of Ondo State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that, community-led security initiatives should be established to empower communities to develop and manage their own security outfits as this will fostering ownership and accountability. It is also recommended that the school should also include it in their curriculum to enable them to teach security awareness, safety protocol and crime prevention strategies, equipping them with ess

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