Community Policing as a Security Strategy for Curbing Kidnapping in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria

[1]J. O. Acha, Ph.D
achajoseph5@gmail.com

[1]K. Chukwuemeka Obetta, Ph.D
chukwuemeka.obetta@unn.edu.ng

Ubana Michael Ubana
ubanamichael4real@gmail.com
Department of Continuing Education and Development Studies
University of Calabar, Calabar

[1]Ogechi Nkemjika
ogechi.nkemjika@unn.edu.ng
[1]Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract
Community groups that can successfully cooperate with one another, handle problems, and work with their local law enforcement agency are exhibiting characteristics of sustainable and safe communities. The study was a descriptive survey. Three research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The population comprised 829,060 community members. A sample size of 928 was used for the study. Data were collected through questionnaire and analyzed using mean and t-test analysis. The results showed that community participation, collaboration between community police and law enforcement agency, and the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities are community policing strategies for curbing kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study found out that criminal activities could be reduced to a great extent because, community police could serve as informant, mediator and as a strong alliance to law enforcement agencies. The study also noted that the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities can prevent and control kidnapping activities in communities. The paper recommends that for an effective community policing in the country, there is need to empower them with adequate training and operational facilities.
Keywords: community, policing, security, kidnapping, vigilante

Introduction
Kidnapping has become a major issue in Nigeria; the situation is not very different from what is happening in Cross River State. There are reports of kidnappings perpetrated on a seemingly daily basis in the state. Some prime cases of this incidence include the abduction of a lecturer at the Institute of Public Policy and Administration, University of Calabar, Mr. E. Eteng, from his residence; Mr. Christopher Aligwe, a business tycoon; a female student of Arthur Jarvis University, Akpabuyo; five male passengers traveling to Oron in a boat; and the presiding pastor of Heavens Gate Church, located at Goodluck

Jonathan By-pass (Okafor, 2022). All of the incidents reported happened within a month. Sadly enough, these unwholesome activities happened even as Operation Akpakwu, the state's security outfit, is said to have been in operation. Operation Akpakwu is a security outfit formed and launched in December 2020 by the Governor of Cross River state, Ben Ayade, in response to the public uproar about abductions, robberies, and cult confrontations that endangered peace and economic activity in the state.

So, to curb this menace in a sustainable way, there is a need to engage members of the community. Umebau (2008) conceived community as a social group of people within a defined geographical locations and whose members share common historical antecedents – interest, religion, custom, culture, language and economic activities; while Elenkwa (2001) categorized community into two main types; the rural and urban communities. The members of the community may not just be indigenes and residents of the community, but they include all those who are directly or indirectly affected by kidnapping and other forms of insecurity going on in that community and state at large. These are the key actors that must be considered in any community engagement process (Daerego, 2022). Supporting this view, ATSDR (2016) noted that community engagement can involve many partners, which may include organized groups, agencies, institutions, or individuals who work collaboratively towards achieving a common goal.

In the case of curbing kidnapping and other insecurity challenges in Cross River State, which is the emphasis of this paper, community engagement brings together federal, state, and local crime fighting agencies (including the police, other relevant security agencies, and other policing organizations like the Operation Akpakwu), social service providers, representatives of the public and private sectors, prosecutors, business owners, and community members under the shared goal of weeding out violent crime and gang activity (like cultism, kidnapping, among others) while seeding in social services and economic revitalization. The benefit of such synergy among these various actors is that even though the initial aim is to fight kidnapping, such a platform can also be used in initiating community policing, a type that will be participatory by all and sundry, and that will ensure that peace and development are maintained for now and for the future (Barley, 2012).

Supporting this view, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (2013) asserted that community policing is a democratic practice that requires the active participation of local government, civic and business leaders, public and private agencies, residents, churches, schools, and hospitals. The duty of preserving the neighborhood's wellbeing should fall on all those who share that concern. Van Rooyen (2001) sees community policing as a strategy which is based on a partnership between the community and the police to find solution for continuing community problems such as crime and other related matters. This proposition is based on the fact that criminals are frequently recognized by the people who suffer as a result of their criminal activities. They will supply information and take measures that will result in the capturing of offenders and a decrease in crime when they work actively with the police as partners in crime fighting and prevention.

This suggests that community policing involves a deliberate effort on the part of the police to alter the conventional model of policing, where the task of maintaining law and order is shared by the police and members of the community. Community policing, according to the National Institute of Justice (2014), integrates neighbourhood members in reducing insecurity, utilizing strategies such as collaboration, problem-solving, community participation, trust, and legality. Greene (2000) states that community policing has increased the police forms of crime control and prevention. These forms, according to him, include issues such as public safety, crime prevention, fear of crime and community quality of life. Community policing requires all forms of security structures and communities to establish a collaborative process to exploit the full potential that the formal and intentional interaction of stakeholders can provide. Such collaboration will bring security agencies and the community together at a round table to discuss and map out strategies to deal with crimes in their neighbourhood. This kind of collaboration will lead to permanent channels of communication among the police and other stakeholders in the community; thus creating partnerships among organizations with similar goals (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013).

Another strategy is community participation. This strategy creates an atmosphere where members of the community and the police are seen as equal partners in fighting and preventing crime in communities. This strategy empowers members of the community to solve their own security problems by themselves instead of relying completely on some groups of people. Initiatives that empower communities to help themselves, involve residents in decision-making processes, and encourage broad citizens' involvement will be more effective than those that simply provide services to people or clients (Daerego, 2022).

Other strategies are problem solving and the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits. A problem-solving strategy ensures that there is constant consultation and engagement of various stakeholders in the community so as to identify specific concerns that community members feel are most threatening to their safety and well-being. This way, resources can be used optimally in fighting crimes. Members of communities can ensure the safety of their neighbourhoods through the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits. A quasi-judicial security outfit is a non-judicial security outfit that can interpret the law. The formation of outfits like this in communities is vital to ensuring that perpetrators of crimes are brought to justice, encouraging the peaceful resolution of disputes and restoring trust and social cohesion based on equal rights among members of communities.

There have been studies that established the fact that community policing was used in curbing kidnapping in Nigeria (Ukwayi et al., 2018; & Olaseinde, 2021). However, there is very little, if any, evidence-based research on community policing as an internal security strategy for curbing kidnapping in Cross River State. Hence, the present study.

Purpose of the study
The main purpose of this study is to examine community policing as an internal security strategy for curbing kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria. In particular, the study examined:

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1. How community participation can be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State.
2. How community collaboration can be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State.
3. How the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities can be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State.

Research questions

1. How can community participation be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State?
2. How can community collaboration be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State?
3. How can the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State.

Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of community members and vigilante on how community participation can be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of community members and vigilante on how the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities can be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research deign. This type of research enables researchers to employ interview and questionnaires to determine the opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of people about issues. The study was carried out in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The Senatorial District is made up of Calabar Municipality LGA, Akamkpa LGA, Bakassi LGA, Calabar South LGA, Akpabuyo LGA and Odukpani LGA.

The population comprised 829,060 residents, comprising of 828,804 community members (National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2006) and 129 vigilantes in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State (Nigerian Police Surveillance Unit, 2012). A sample of 928 respondents comprising of 798 community members and 129 vigilantes was used for the study. First of all, a sample size of 798 was determined by the use Taro Yamani sample size determination. After which two LGAs: Calabar Municipality LGA and Akpabuyo LGA were randomly selected. Out of the selected LGAs, 798 respondents were then selected using proportionate random sampling, while the entire 129 vigilantes were selected.

A structured questionnaire titled Community Policing as an Internal Security Strategy for Curbing Kidnapping Questionnaire (CPISSCKQ) was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two parts, I and II. Part I was structured to obtain the general personal information about the respondents such as status (community member and vigilante), gender, and age while Part II was on community policing as a

security strategy for curbing kidnapping in Cross River State. Part II of the questionnaire was further divided into three clusters, clusters A-C in respect to the three specific objectives of the study. Cluster A (items 1-6) provided data on community security strategies that can be used by community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State; cluster B (items 1-7) provided data on the community collaboration strategies that can be used by community policing in reducing criminal activities in Cross River State; while cluster C, (items 1-6) provided information on the extent the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities will cut down kidnapping in Cross River State. Items from clusters A, B and C were structured on a 4 point rating scales of Strongly Agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, Disagree (D) 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1. The instrument was face validated by three experts (two from Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies and one from Measurement and Evaluation unit in Science Education Department, all from University of Nigeria, Nsukka). To ensure the reliability of the instruments, it was pilot tested, and data obtained from the pilot test was analyzed using Cronbach alpha method. Thus, a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was established signifying that the instrument is reliable.

Direct method was applied by the researchers and one research assistant was used in distributing and collecting the questionnaire from the respondents at their various locations used for the study. The research assistant was briefed on the modalities for distributing and collecting the questionnaire from the respondents on the spot. This ensured that the respondents appropriately completed the questionnaire. Thus, there was 100% return of the questionnaire, and these were duly used for data analysis.

The data analyses employed in this study were both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions. A mean of 2.50 was used as the benchmark for decision-making, since a four-point rating scale was used for the study. Thus any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was considered as accepted by the respondents, while any item with a mean below 2.50 was considered as unaccepted by the respondents. T-test statistics was used to test the differences in the mean responses of community members and vigilantes at 0.05 level of significance. All computations were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22.

Presentation of results
The responses of the respondents on each of the items in the questionnaire were computed and presented on tables based on the three research questions and two hypotheses that were formulated for the study.

Research question 1: How can community participation be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State?

Results of research question one are presented on table 1.

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Table 1: Mean and standard deviation responses of respondents on how community participation can be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State (n = 928)

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Active share in policing by individuals of community will make policing a community business	3.47	0.58	Accepted
2	Encourage full participation by establishing strong mutual trust between security outfits and community members	3.08	0.65	Accepted
3	Encourage full participation by establishing mutual respect between local security outfits and community members	3.36	0.62	Accepted
4	Active participation of institutions such as worship centres, banks, market centres, schools, among others,will halt the activities of kidnappers and other forms of crime	3.20	0.68	Accepted
5	Make members of community to participate in decision making	2.66	1.04	Accepted
6	Integrating community members into every stage of policing	3.34	0.69	Accepted

$\bar{x}$ = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

From table 1, it can be seen that all items 1-6 had mean scores greater than 2.50 indicating that respondents identified all item statements as ways through which community participation can be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of community members and vigilante on how community participation can be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State.

The results of hypothesis 1 are presented on table 2.

Table 2: t-test analysis of difference in the responses of community members and vigilante on how community participation can be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State

Groups	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t_{cal}	P-value	Decision
Vigilante	129	3.24	0.54				
Community member	798	3.16	0.47	927	1.44	0.15	Not Rejected
Total	927						

n = Sample, $\bar{x}$ = Mean, SD = Standard deviation, df= Degree of freedom, t-cal. = t-calculated, P-value = Probability value

This hypothesis was tested by carrying out an independent sample t-test by comparing respondents' responses on how community participation can be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State. There was no significant difference in the mean response for community members ($\bar{x} = 3.16$, $SD = 0.47$) and vigilante ($\bar{x} = 3.24$, $SD = 0.54$), *t-cal* (927) = 1.44, *p* = 0.15 at 0.05 level of significance. Following this result, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Hence, responses of community members and vigilante on how community participation can be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State did not differ by the various respondents. Therefore, null hypothesis one was not rejected.

Research question 2: How can community collaboration be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State?

Results of research question two are presented on table 3.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation responses of respondents on how community collaboration can be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State? (n = 928)

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Build strong allies between members of community with all forms of security outfits	3.29	0.61	Accepted
2	Build strong allies between members of community with law enforcement agencies in arresting hoodlums in communities	3.08	0.62	Accepted
3	Make every member of the community to cooperate with security agencies through communication of Intelligence to the agencies	3.13	0.67	Accepted
4	The collaboration of worship centres, banks, market centres, schools, among others with security agents in fighting kidnapping	3.22	0.92	Accepted
5	Encourage every member of the community to cooperate in the fight against all forms of crimes	3.13	0.73	Accepted
6	Interprets laws for people	2.12	0.79	Rejected
7	Make community members take full responsibility in safeguarding their community	3.10	0.70	Accepted

$\bar{x}$ = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

From table 3, it can be seen that items 1- 5 and 7 had mean scores greater than 2.50 indicating that respondents identified the item statements as ways through which community collaboration strategies can be used by community policing in reducing kidnapping in Cross River State. Item six was however rejected by the respondents.

Research question 3: How can the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State?

Results of research question three are presented on table 4.

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Table 4: Mean responses of respondents on how the formation of quasi-judicial security
outfits in communities can be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce
kidnapping in Cross River State

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Formation of vigilantes, neighbourhood watch can help prevent kidnapping in communities	3.25	0.65	Accepted
2	Formation of local security outfits can reduce kidnapping in communities	2.99	0.84	Accepted
3	The numerous local security outfits can serve as avenues for members of community to discuss feelings and perception of crimes perpetrated in communities	3.19	0.56	Accepted
4	Educating local security outfits on how to interpret laws.	3.20	0.68	Accepted
5	Education received from the numerous local security outfits can also serve as a useful security tip	2.45	0.85	Accepted
6	The numerous local security outfits can serve as avenues for members of community to devise means to deal with crimes in communities	2.50	0.91	Accepted

$\bar{x}$ = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

From table 4, it can be seen that items 1-4 and 6 had mean scores greater than 2.50
indicating that respondents identified these item statements as ways through which the
formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities can be used for community
policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State. However, item 5 was not identified
by respondents as a way through which the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in
communities can be used for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River
State ($\bar{x} < 2.5$).

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of community members
and vigilante on how the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities can
be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State.

The results of hypothesis 2 are presented on table 5.

Table 5: t-test analysis of the mean responses of community members and vigilante on how the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities can be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State

Groups	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t_{cal}	P-value	Decision
Vigilante	129	3.09	0.58				
Community member	798	2.99	0.43	9257	1.89	0.06	Not Rejected
Total	927						

n = Sample, $\bar{x}$ = Mean, SD = Standard deviation, df= Degree of freedom, t-cal. = t-calculated, P-value = Probability value

This hypothesis was tested by carrying out an independent sample t-test by comparing respondents' responses on how the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities can be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State. There was no significant difference in the mean response for community members ($\bar{x}$ = 2.99, SD = 0.43) and vigilante $\bar{x}$ = 3.09, SD = 0.58), *t-cal* (927) = 1.89, *p* = 0.06 at 0.05 level of significance. Following this result, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Hence, responses of community members and vigilante on how the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities can be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State did not differ by the various respondents. Therefore, null hypothesis two was not rejected.

Discussion of the findings
The results of this study revealed that community participation can be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down on kidnapping in Cross River State. Some of the ways community participation can be used in cutting down on kidnapping in the state are hereby discussed. Community participation can be used as a strategy for community policing simply by allowing members of the community to take an active part in policing. Adopting this approach would mean that everybody would see the security of their community as their business. As a matter of fact, putting the people at the centre of security affairs would make them feel that the security of their lives and properties lies in their hands. The study also shows that for members of the community to be fully active, there must be strong mutual trust and respect between all forms of security outfits and community members. Trust is a necessary ingredient that must be built between two parties for them to achieve a common goal. Further findings indicate that community policing has a great impact for the performance of Nigeria Police in curbing crimes in the society. Findings also reveal that community policing has built a robust community engagement in policing issues which were no longer allowing hoodlums and criminals to commit crimes and vanish to the community without any possible trace and arrest. The active participation in all security affairs by institutions such as worship centres, banks, market centres, and schools can frustrate all forms of criminal activities, including kidnapping, in the state. Other ways in which community participation can help reduce kidnapping in the state is by fully integrating all members of communities in every stage of policing, including decision-making.

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The study found that community collaboration can be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State. Of course, building strong alliance between members of the community and all forms of security outfits, including law enforcement agencies, would facilitate the ease of fishing out and arresting hoodlums in communities. This type of cooperation will create avenues for communication and sources for gathering intelligence on every move of criminal elements within communities. Other ways through which community collaboration can be used for community policing is through the collaborative efforts put together by worship centres, banks, market centres, schools and security agents in fighting kidnapping and other related crimes. By adopting this strategy, every member of the community takes full responsibility for safeguarding their community. Lastly, the study revealed that the formation of vigilantes, neighbourhood watch, among others can help prevent and reduce kidnapping in communities. They can effectively achieve this by being educated on how to interpret laws that pertain to prosecuting criminals.

t-test analysis of the mean response of community members and vigilante on how community participation can be used as a strategy for community policing to cut down kidnapping in Cross River State did not differ by the various respondents. Similarly, t-test analysis of the mean response of community members on how the formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities can be used as a strategy for community policing to reduce kidnapping in Cross River State did not differ by the various respondents.

Conclusion
Based on the findings, it was concluded that engaging members of a community through active participation and collaboration, can be used as a strategy for community policing in cutting down kidnapping in the state. The formation of quasi-judicial security outfits in communities such as vigilantes, neighbourhood watch, among others, can prevent and control kidnapping activities in communities.

Recommendations
1. There is a need for effective community policing in the country. Not just institutionalizing the types of machinery, so adequate operational facilities should be given to security agencies to assist in their proper functioning.
2. The government needs to increase its funding for security agencies so that modern and adequate equipment to combat kidnapping and other crimes could be acquired. However, such funds should be properly monitored to avoid diversion into private pockets; also the security agencies such as the Nigerian police should be rid of its corrupt elements. It is also imperative that security agents must be encouraged through regular promotion, good salary, and decent accommodation.
3. Appropriate training programmes should be organized to acquaint vigilante neighbourhood watch on how to carry out investigations especially by working with community members.
4. The government should upgrade the access to justice delivery and enhance a distributive mechanism that will serve as an integral and necessary orientation for better democratic dividend and at the same time viable in the punishment of violent kidnapping offenders.

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