



Assessing the Impact of Community Policing Collaborations between the Nigerian Police Force and Local Communities on Crime Reduction in Plateau State, Nigeria

Leawat, Jesse James¹, Yusuf A. Usman²

¹Centre for conflict management and Peace Studies, University of Jos, Plateau State.

²Institute for Governance and Development Studies, Nasarawa State University Keffi, Nasarawa State.

ABSTRACT: This study assessed the Impact of Community Policing Collaborations between the Nigerian Police Force and Local Communities on Crime Reduction in Plateau State. The work adopted the survey design of the ex post facto type in line with the positivist philosophy of research methods. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires. The selection of respondents was based on purposive sampling, targeting individuals who are directly involved with or affected by community policing activities. Secondary data was sourced from a variety of published materials and credible online resources. These sources included academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and relevant materials available on the internet. The secondary data provided a theoretical and contextual background to the study, offering insights into previous research findings, theoretical frameworks of the functionalist perspective as developed by Talcott Parsons in the twentieth century was adopted. The data collected in this study was analyzed using the chi-square statistical tool, employing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26. The result of findings revealed that despite the implementation of community policing initiatives in Plateau State, there is a prevailing public perception that crime continues to occur with considerable frequency. Across all crime types examined—kidnapping, armed robbery, theft, banditry, and other offenses—respondents most frequently reported that these crimes occur “sometimes.” This suggests that although community policing structures have been introduced, their impact on significantly reducing the occurrence of crime is still limited. These findings align with prior studies which argue that without proper integration, adequate resources, and sustained public engagement, community policing may not achieve its intended outcomes. The study concluded that the continued perception of crime occurrence may point to several challenges in the implementation of community policing. These include weak collaboration between the police and local communities, lack of trust, insufficient training for community policing groups, and poor logistical or institutional support from the government. The study recommended that Community partnership should be encouraged. The NPF, State governments and community leaders should improve in building trustworthy connection partnerships, organisational transformation should be improved upon, and a Problem-solving mechanism should be employed through a proactive and methodical analysis of identified problems associated with criminality at each community level.

Corresponding Author:
Leawat, Jesse James

KEYWORDS:

Community Policing,
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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) has the constitutional mandate for maintaining law and order in any society within the Nigerian space. It plays a vital role in maintaining such civility in Plateau State and Nigeria at large. The NPF stands out as the closest law enforcement agency to the public, in contrast with the military and other paramilitary agencies of government that primarily focus on specific roles assigned to them in society. As such, the roles of the NPF encompass nearly every form of social interaction among groups within the Nigerian context (Arisukwu & Okunola, 2013).

The statutory responsibilities of the police include law enforcement, investigation and arrest of criminal suspects, maintenance of law and order, and the promotion of peace and security within society. In response to growing security challenges, the NPF adopted community policing (CP) in 2004 as a strategic security initiative. This strategy was designed to draw

supplementary support from local communities to enhance the capacity of the police force in combating crime. Such crimes include armed robbery, rape, banditry, kidnapping/abduction, ethno-religious conflicts, genocide, and terrorism—issues that had provoked significant public outrage and criticism against both the administration at the time and successive governments (Ikuteyijo & Rotimi, 2012).

Community policing emerged largely in response to public distrust in the NPF's capacity to effectively enforce law and order. This erosion of trust further widened the gap between the police and the public (Kpae & Eric, 2017). However, when community members actively participate in community policing initiatives, there is a notable positive impact on the prevention and control of crime within their neighborhoods (Takagi et al., 2016).

The core philosophy of community policing emphasizes community involvement in problem-solving through strategic collaboration with the police to prevent crime (Cordner, 1998). This partnership between the police and the public has become the cornerstone of modern-day policing (Diarmaid, 2018). Central to this approach is the belief in shared responsibility, where authority and accountability are jointly held by both the police and community members to ensure the safety and security of the society.

However, the NPF structure is still centralised, and the tactic used by the police to law enforcement is very much reactionary rather than proactive. Due to the poor relationship between the police and members of the Nigerian public and the negative perception held by the public, there is a gap in the philosophy of community policing and the actual practice of the same by the Nigerian Police Force. This implies that policing is, therefore, the business for all and sundry as the NPF alone has proven not to be able to successfully solve crimes and resolve criminal activities in society (Amusan & Saka, 2018).

Nigerian Police Force: Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is a potent constitutional organ among Nigeria's law enforcement authorities. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Constitution as amended and the Police Act, the NPF has the constitutional mandate to combat the rise in crimes and to maintain law and order. These crimes such as murder, manslaughter, counterfeiting, theft, housebreaking, child stealing/ trafficking, illegal gin distillation, and illegal mining (Igbo, 1999). The NPF is also vested with the following responsibilities, according to the Police Act (2009): the protection of life and property; the detection and prevention of crime; the apprehending of offenders; the preservation of law and order; the due enforcement of law regulations with which they are directly charged; and the performance of such other military duties within and outside Nigeria as may be required.

Community Policing and Community Policing Groups: Community policing is the act of maintaining law and order in a given community with the collaboration of the police and members of the community, either with or without the physical presence of the police. In other words, it is a security initiative in local partnership with the community, deriving its legitimacy from cooperation with the Nigerian Police Force. As such, members of such communities engage the services of organized community policing groups for this interface and services. Some of these organized community policing groups in Plateau State include: Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), community guards, Nigeria Hunters & Forest Security Services (NHFSS), Neighbourhood Watch (NW), Peace Corps, and so on.

The collaboration between the NPF and these CP groups through the communities in intelligence gathering, investigation, interrogation and persecution is geared towards crime reduction activities in Plateau State. CP when fully adopted will be one of the mechanisms to enhance crime prevention and control (Onuaha et al., 2024).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Plateau State has increasingly experienced a rise in criminal activities. The State, in the recent past, has been marked by a history of criminality as an aftermath of the violent conflict the state has experienced since 2001. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons led to an increase in criminal act, ranging from violent conflicts arising from various factors such as land disputes, ethnic tensions, cultism and competition over scarce resources by farmers and herdsmen, 'unknown gunmen' attacks, political and ethno-religious conflict etc. The multi-dimensional facet issues and criminal activities over the years have led to the loss of lives, destruction of properties, displacement of families and communities, and the erosion of social order and cohesion in the state. The Nigerian police force is responsible for internal security issues, civil cases, and disturbances necessary for effective peace and security through Community Policing activities. It is therefore necessary to understand the police's functions and how to complement them when it comes to crime and security in a country (Isa et al., 2021).

Despite efforts by different governments to address these problems of the NPF since the 1990s to the present to increase its capacity and efficiency, particularly in providing equipment, remuneration, and staff recruitment (Arisukwu et al., 2020), which is supposed to reduce crime rate. Notwithstanding these efforts by past and present governments, the police still fall short of efficient and effective law enforcement within the Nigerian space in general, coupled with the rising population of its citizens of over two hundred million people. This shortfall has led to a disturbing increase in criminality and criminal activities in Plateau state and the entire nation. The spate of kidnapping by criminals and bandits, the alarming murder rate, armed robbery, attacks on communities, internet fraud, and the high handedness towards the public by some members of the NPF is both distressing and worrisome. This has, in no small measure, put the NPF in direct conflict with the negative perception by members of the public as well. Nigeria Police Force is also faced with issues of accountability, which is vital to the success of community policing. As a result of accountability, the relationship between the public and the NPF becomes more trusting. With police who maintain human rights

protection principles, standard operating procedures, the determination to bring erring police officers to justice, and treat volunteer information with great confidentiality, the public is more likely to have confidence in interacting with the police (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000). Thereby, corrupt practices and misuse of authority will be reported to the Nigerian police force authorities, regularly.

The position occupied by the NPF in a democratic setting of the country is vital, as how they are associated with members of the society determines how they are perceived. The participation of community members in crime detection, prevention, and control is now evident since the police have inadequate resources and workforce to efficiently and effectively enforce law and order in the large expanse of Plateau state, especially the rural areas. The NPF was therefore seen as ineffective to the social values and believe system of the people, which sometimes fosters antagonism (Sule, 2024). The need to involve members of the communities in the areas of collaborative policing with the police becomes pertinent as they have a better knowledge of the environment (Lanre, 2009).

Furthermore, all of these issues are geared towards reducing crime to its barest minimum. However, there are some severe institutional weaknesses of the NPF to a great extent and these limitations have hindered its capacity and ability to carry out its constituted functions effectively. Some of these weaknesses as highlighted by Arisukwu et al. (2020) includes: inadequate workforce in terms of strength and expertise, poor conditions of service, inadequate equipment, insufficient training for its staff, poor public relations and a constitutional challenge that centralises the police which operates a federal system, and the negative perception of the police by the public.

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To identify the extent to which collaborative efforts between law enforcement agencies (NPF) and local communities contribute to reducing crime rates in Plateau State. The study tested the validity of the following hypotheses:

H₀¹: There is no significant difference in the collaborative efforts between the Nigerian Police Force and communities through Community Policing groups in crime rates reduction in Plateau State, Nigeria.

H₁¹: There is a significant difference in the collaborative efforts between the Nigerian Police Force and communities through Community Policing groups in crime rates reduction in Plateau State, Nigeria.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

This research study adopts the survey design of the ex post facto type in line with the positivist philosophy of research methods. The ex post facto design is a non-experimental research technique in which pre-existing groups are compared on one or more dependent variables. Kerlinger (1986) clarified that in the framework of social science research, an ex post facto investigation seeks to reveal possible relations by observing an existing condition or state of affairs and searching back in time for plausible contributing factors; furthermore, independent variables are not manipulated in ex post facto research. The population for the study comprises officers and men of the NPF, members of the community policing groups in Plateau State (Operation Rainbow, Nigeria Hunters & Forest Security Services, Vigilante Group of Nigeria, etc.) and the citizens of Nigeria who are not Policemen or members of any paramilitary agency.

The sample for the study therefore, was drawn from the population of the three Senatorial districts of the State, as projected by the Plateau State Bureau of Statistics (PSBS, 2016). Northern senatorial zone comprising Jos North, Jos South, Jos East, Bassa, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom Local Government Areas (LGA) have a population of 1,904,857. The central zone has 1,369,327 from Bokkos, Mangu, Pankshin, Kanke, Kanam and Mikang LGAs. The Southern zone has a total of 1,289,710 population from Shendam, Quanpan, Wase, Langtang North, and Langtang South LGAs.

To determine the sample size of the study, the G*Power software was used for sample size determination in this study due to its reliability and flexibility in calculating the minimum required sample size based on specified statistical parameters such as effect size, significance level, and power. It is particularly suitable for planning hypothesis-driven research and ensures that the study is neither underpowered nor overpowered, thereby enhancing the validity of the findings (Faul et al., 2009). By using G*Power software, the study ensured adequate sensitivity to detect statistically significant effects related to community policing and crime perception in Plateau State.

Using the G*Power software for a chi-square test (χ^2), the minimum required sample size for the quantitative study was calculated based on a variable ratio (var1/var0) of 1.5, an alpha level of .05, and a desired statistical power of .95 (Faul et al., 2009). The analysis indicated that a minimum of 159 participants was sufficient to achieve reliable results. However, the study ultimately sampled a total of 171 participants, exceeding the minimum requirement and thereby enhancing the robustness of the findings.

Two LGAs were selected from each of the zones for the study. This is the population of the two LGAs in each of the zones. Northern zone: Jos North and Barkin Ladi 634,952. Central zone: Bokkos and Mangu 456,442. Southern zone: Shendam and Wase 515,884 (PSBS, 2016). These LGAs provided a proper representation of the populace in the state and capture both urban and rural communities. To determine the sample size of the study, the G*Power software was used for sample size determination due to its reliability and flexibility in calculating the minimum required sample size based on specified statistical parameters such as effect size, significance level, and power is 159, as such, a sample size of 171 participants was drawn from the population comprising of police officers,

community policing groups, and members of the community. These cut across socio-demographic characteristics (Age, gender, occupation, socio-economic status, marital status, religion, and rank).

Data was collected through structured questionnaires. Structured questionnaires allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions, experiences, and suggestions in line with the objectives of the study regarding community policing and crime prevention in Plateau state. The selection of respondents was based on purposive sampling, targeting individuals who are directly involved with or affected by community policing activities. Secondary data was sourced from a variety of published materials and credible online resources. These sources included academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, newspapers, magazines, and relevant materials available on the internet. The secondary data provided a theoretical and contextual background to the study, offering insights into previous research findings, theoretical frameworks, and global perspectives on community policing and crime prevention.

The data collected in this study was analyzed using the chi-square statistical tool, employing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26. The chi-square test was employed in this study to examine the association between community perceptions of crime frequency and the implementation of community policing efforts. This statistical method is appropriate for analyzing categorical data, such as respondents' frequency ratings of crime occurrences (e.g., "never," "rarely," "sometimes," "often"), and determining whether observed distributions differ significantly from expected frequencies under the assumption of no association. Given the study's focus on understanding patterns in public responses across multiple crime categories, the chi-square test provides a robust tool for identifying significant differences in perceptions and assessing the perceived effectiveness of community policing.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

The study adopts the functionalist perspective as the theoretical framework, developed by Talcott Parsons in the twentieth century. The functionalist perspective postulates that behaviour in society is structured. This implies that the association that exists between community members are ordered in terms of rules. Therefore, social relationships are structured and patterned and repeated (Harlambo & Holborn, 2005). The basic tenets of the functionalist perspective are that in every social reality is value consensus. They believe that members of a community are in a pact regarding what is worthwhile, desirable and worthless. Members agree on norms, values, and the beliefs obtainable in the society. A high level of agreement in a community binds the community members together to forms a united and integrated component. Functionalists also assume that stability pervades communities and phenomena. The theory is of the view that a certain level of stability and order is essential for social systems survival. Functionalists believe that once values and norms are upheld, the community would be conflict free.

1.6 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of study Participants

The demographic characteristics of the study participants (Table 1) provide essential background information for understanding the composition of the sample. Key variables such as age, gender, and level of educational attainment were examined to capture the diversity and representativeness of the 171 respondents involved in the study.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics (N =171)

	Frequency	Percentage %
Age		
18-29 years	39	22.8
30-39 years	47	27.5
40-49 years	39	22.8
50-59 years	29	17.0
≥ 60 years	17	9.9
Gender		
Male	100	58.5
Female	71	41.5
Level of Educational Attainment		
Primary	3	1.8
Secondary	85	49.7
Tertiary	64	37.4
Others	19	11.1

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 171 study participants. The age distribution shows that the majority were within the 30–39 years age group (27.5%), followed by those aged 18–29 years and 40–49 years, each accounting for 22.8%

of the sample. Participants aged 50–59 years made up 17.0%, while those aged 60 years and above constituted the smallest group at 9.9%. In terms of gender, males were the majority, representing 58.5% of the participants, while females accounted for 41.5%.

Regarding educational attainment, nearly half of the participants (49.7%) had completed secondary education, 37.4% had tertiary education, 11.1% fell into the "Others" category (which may include vocational or non-formal education), and only 1.8% had attained primary education. These figures suggest a relatively young to middle-aged sample with moderate to high levels of educational attainment and a slightly male-dominated gender distribution.

Sense of security before the impact of community policing (VGN/NHFSS, NW) on crime and security in community

Table 2. Respondents' Opinion on Sense of Security Before the Impact of Community Policing (VGN/NHFSS, NW)

Opinion on Security (Before Community Policing)	Frequency	Percent %
Very Poor	25	14.6
Poor	128	74.9
Good	15	8.8
Very Good	2	1.2
Excellent	1	0.6
Total	171	100

Table 2 presents respondents' opinions on their sense of security before the implementation of community policing initiatives such as the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), Nigeria Hunters and Forest Security Service (NHFSS), and Neighborhood Watch (NW). The vast majority of participants (74.9%) rated their sense of security as "Poor," while 14.6% described it as "Very Poor," indicating that over 89% of the respondents felt insecure prior to the intervention. A small proportion expressed more positive views: 8.8% rated the security situation as "Good," 1.2% as "Very Good," and only 0.6% as "Excellent." These findings highlight a general perception of inadequate security in the community before the advent of organized community policing structures.

Hypothesis Testing:

To test the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the collaborative efforts between the Nigerian Police Force and communities through Community Policing groups in crime rates reduction in Plateau State, the Chi-square (χ^2) statistical tool was employed. This non-parametric statistical method is suitable for examining whether there are significant differences between observed and expected frequencies in categorical data. In this context, it was used to determine whether the frequency of various crimes (e.g., kidnapping, armed robbery, theft, banditry, and other crimes) differed significantly from what would be expected if collaborative efforts had no effect. The results (Table 3) provide insights into public perceptions of crime occurrence in relation to these community policing initiatives.

Table 3. Chi-square test for difference in the collaborative efforts between the Nigerian Police Force and communities through Community Policing groups in crime rates reduction in Plateau State

	Observed N	Expected N	χ^2	df	p-value
Kidnapping					
Never	10	42.5	215.835	3	<.001
Rarely	23	42.5			
Sometimes	125	42.5			
Very often	12	42.5			
Always	10				
Armed robbery					
Never	7	34.0	267.412	4	<.001
Rarely	31	34.0			
Sometimes	117	34.0			
Very often	13	34.0			
Always	2	34.0			
Theft					
Never	1	34.0	269.824	4	<.001
Rarely	8	34.0			
Sometimes	113	34.0			
Very often	46	34.0			

Always	2	34.0			
Banditry					
Never	31	42.5	72.588	3	<.001
Rarely	57	42.5			
Sometimes	78	42.5			
Very often	4	42.5			
Never	31	42.5			
Other crimes					
Never	15	42.5	106.753	3	<.001
Rarely	51	42.5			
Sometimes	94	42.5			
Very often	10	42.5			
Never	15	42.5			

Table 3 presents findings addressing the study hypothesis. The chi-square tests show statistically significant differences between observed and expected frequencies across all crime types, indicating a strong public perception of continued crime despite community policing efforts. For kidnapping, most respondents reported it occurred “sometimes” ($n = 125$), with a significant result of $\chi^2(3) = 215.835$, $p < .001$. Armed robbery followed a similar pattern, with “sometimes” being the most reported ($n = 117$), $\chi^2(4) = 267.412$, $p < .001$. Theft was also reported predominantly as occurring “sometimes” ($n = 113$), $\chi^2(4) = 269.824$, $p < .001$. For banditry, “sometimes” was the highest response ($n = 78$), yielding $\chi^2(3) = 72.588$, $p < .001$. Other crimes reflected the same trend, with “sometimes” being the most frequent response ($n = 94$), $\chi^2(3) = 106.753$, $p < .001$.

1.7 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal that despite the implementation of community policing initiatives in Plateau State, there is a prevailing public perception that crime continues to occur with considerable frequency. Across all crime types examined—kidnapping, armed robbery, theft, banditry, and other offenses—respondents most frequently reported that these crimes occur “sometimes.” This suggests that although community policing structures have been introduced, their impact on significantly reducing the occurrence of crime is still limited. These findings align with prior studies which argue that without proper integration, adequate resources, and sustained public engagement, community policing may not achieve its intended outcomes (Awoyemi et al., 2025; Modise, 2023; Albrecht, 2019).

The continued perception of crime occurrence may point to several challenges in the implementation of community policing. These include weak collaboration between the police and local communities, lack of trust, insufficient training for community policing groups, and poor logistical or institutional support from the government (Eguo, 2023; Blair et al., 2021). Additionally, the uniformity of responses across different crime types indicates that the strategies currently employed may not be sufficiently targeted or effective in addressing the specific security needs of various communities.

Furthermore, the fact that crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, and theft are still seen as recurring events highlights the need for deeper community engagement and a more structured problem-solving approach. As noted by Headley and Kalesnikaite (2025). (2016), the success of community policing depends on meaningful collaboration, shared responsibility, and mutual accountability between the police and the public. When these elements are weak or absent, the initiative risks becoming symbolic rather than functional.

1.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study provides grounds to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that while there are collaborative efforts through community policing, and their effectiveness in reducing crime remains questionable. This underscores the importance of revisiting the design and execution of community policing strategies in Plateau State to enhance their impact on crime prevention and public safety.

1.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Community partnership should be encouraged: The NPF, State governments and community leaders should improve in building trustworthy connection partnerships to succeed in combating crime in the communities through community evaluations and engagement, as well as initiatives to educate members of the public, that CP tactics is used to achieve this. The usefulness of information obtained from citizens and other stakeholders regarding community issues and concerns can assist in informing police activities best suited to address these concerns is the strength of this technique.
- ii. Organisational transformation should be improved upon: It entails aligning to a clear focus mandate or goal, which is the fight against crime and criminality. The NPF organizational management structure through an information system, should

be Known to all stakeholders in order to facilitate community collaborations and collaborative/proactive problem-solving desired outcome.

- iii. Problem-solving mechanism should be employed: Through a proactive and methodical analysis of identified problems associated with criminality at each community level in order to generate and thoroughly evaluate appropriate solutions. Problem solving is a novel approach to policing that addresses not only the causes of crime and the fear of crime but also all community members' quality of life.

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