Community Policing and Crime Prevention in Ekiti State: Interrogating the State Police Option.

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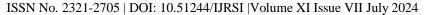**Bamidele Olumilua University of Education Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti**

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the rising tide of insecurity in Ekiti State has necessitated a reevaluation of traditional policing methods Despite Ekiti State being relatively peaceful, the recent uptick in crime, particularly kidnappings, mirrors a broader national trend in Nigeria. This study examines the effectiveness of community policing as a strategic response to these emerging security challenges, alongside the ongoing debate on establishing a state police force. Traditionally, policing in Nigeria has been reactive, which has often led to strained relations between the police and the public. The adoption of community policing by the Nigeria Police Force in 2004 marked a shift towards a community-focused approach, aimed at fostering better relationships and proactively addressing crime. Through a comprehensive analysis of crime trends, community engagement practices, and law enforcement dynamics, this research critically evaluates the potential of community policing to enhance local safety and trust. Additionally, it interrogates the debate on the institutionalization of state police within the federal system adopted by Nigeria, exploring the feasibility, advantages, and pitfalls of instituting a state police. Survey method was adopted for this study to generate responses from the 425 respondents randomly selected for this study. Data were analysized using frequency and percentage. Drawing on data generated, the findings demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between community participation and law enforcement efficacy, while the adoption of state police could be beneficial in the long run, its adoption could be counterproductive if abused by power drunk executive governor. This research study therefore recommend a grassroots participation and locally tailored policing frameworks that can significantly contribute to crime prevention and truly reflect the police mantra in Nigeria "police is your friend" that could bolster Ekiti State's security architecture, promoting sustainable peace and development amidst rising security concerns. The Implementation of a national pilot state police program in select states across Nigeria will go a long way in testing the feasibility of National implementation of state police in addressing contemporary security challenges in Ekiti State and Nigeria in general.

Keywords: Police, Community Policing, State Police, Crime, Kidnapping, Law enforcement, Public Safety.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the police and the community has undergone tremendous changes over the years in Nigeria, and Ekiti State is not left behind in this wind of change, moving from a traditional model to a community-focused approach. Traditionally, policing in Nigeria has been reactive, responding to crimes after they occur, leading to a strained relationship between the police and the public. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) adopted community policing in 2004 as a reform strategy to foster better relationships and proactively address crime. This approach aims to transform police roles from mere law enforcement to

solving a wide range of community issues, promoting mutual trust and cooperation (Kpae & Eric, 2017).

Community policing is a global phenomenon, and Nigeria is part of this shift. This model involves the police working closely with citizens to prevent crime and enhance public safety. It recognizes that effective policing cannot occur without public cooperation. However, despite these efforts, there has been a longstanding estrangement between the police and the community, making collaboration challenging. To address this, innovative policing methods like community policing and problem-oriented policing have been introduced. These methods focus on proactive measures and community involvement to identify and solve problems before they escalate into crimes (Ordu & Nnam, 2017).

In Nigeria, community policing is recognized in the 1999 Constitution and the 2004 Police Reform/Police Act, emphasizing its importance as a tool for addressing crime at the community level (Nwaubani, Anyikwa, & Azuh, 2014). This shift aims to redefine the police-community relationship, making the public co-producers of justice and security. Despite efforts to curb crime, Ekiti State continues to face significant challenges of high crime rates, including theft, burglary, and violent offenses, leading to a sense of insecurity among residents. Recently, Ado Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti State, witnessed a surge in coordinated assassinations, cutting short the lives of two promising young men. Meanwhile, farmers are also groaning under the nefarious activities of marauding herdsmen and local bandits, which has serious implications for internal security within the state (Oyibokure, Okereka, & Mukoro, 2023).

Traditional reactive policing methods have proven inadequate, exemplified by the arrest of the suspects involved in the murder of the young men in Ado Ekiti after they had carried out their attacks successfully, resulting in delayed responses and inadequate investigations. This reactive approach has eroded public trust in the police, hindering cooperation in crime prevention efforts. The lack of community engagement further exacerbates the problem, making it difficult to develop effective crime prevention strategies (Onuoha, Ekpechu, & Arua, 2021; Joseph, 2024). The escalating challenges of insecurity and crime in Ekiti State, Nigeria, especially the reemergence of kidnapping and killings like the recent case of two young men murdered broad day light in cold blood in Ado -Ekiti the the state capital on June 20 2024 have prompted an urgent need for innovative and effective policing strategies have prompted an urgent need for innovative and effective policing strategies. Traditional policing methods, often centralized and distant from the grassroots, have struggled to adequately address these challenges and the localized nature of crime. This has led to a growing discourse on alternative approaches that can enhance public safety and community well-being.

Community policing has emerged as a promising paradigm shift, emphasizing the importance of building trust and collaboration between law enforcement agencies and local communities. This approach advocates for the active participation of community members in identifying and addressing security issues, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and partnership. By leveraging local knowledge and fostering open communication, community policing aims to create an environment where crime is deterred through collective vigilance and proactive problem-solving (Oyibokure, Okereka, & Mukoro, 2023).

Simultaneously, the concept of state policing has gained traction as a potential solution to the limitations of the centralized police force. Proponents argue that state police forces, being more attuned to the unique cultural, social, and geographical contexts of their regions, can offer more responsive and tailored law enforcement. However, the idea of state policing is not without its critics, who raise concerns about the potential for abuse of power, political interference, and inconsistencies in law enforcement standards across different states.

This research seeks to explore the viability and effectiveness of community policing as a crime prevention strategy in Ekiti State. It also aims to critically examine the proposition of establishing a state police force, considering its potential benefits and challenges. The ultimate goal is to offer evidence-based recommendations that can inform policy decisions and contribute to the development of a more effective

and equitable security architecture in Ekiti State.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to assess the impact of community policing and crime prevention strategies in Ekiti State, by interrogating the state policing option, the Feasibility and Potential Benefits of State Police

1. Evaluating the effectiveness of community policing in reducing crime rates.
2. Examining the level of community involvement in crime prevention and its impact on public safety.
3. Analyzing the challenges faced in implementing community policing and crime prevention strategies.
4. Identifying best practices and recommending strategies for improvement.
5. Assessing the overall impact on community-police relations and trust.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community policing is a philosophy advocating organizational strategies that harness partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address public safety concerns like crime, disorder, and fear (Goldstein, 1990). Central to this concept is fostering trust and collaboration between police and community members through initiatives such as neighborhood watch programs and collaborative problem-solving efforts (Skogan, 2006).

Key elements of community policing include decentralization, allowing for flexible and responsive local issue management; community partnerships to engage stakeholders in problem-solving; and problem-oriented approaches that address root causes of crime (Bayley, 1994). Contrasting with reactive law enforcement, community policing aims to enhance police legitimacy through transparency and aligning actions with community values (Tyler, 2004). Thus, empowering communities is another pillar, providing platforms like citizen police academies for residents to engage with law enforcement and contribute to crime prevention (Rosenbaum, 1994). This approach encourages community ownership of safety responsibilities.

Crime prevention strategies encompass primary, secondary, and tertiary approaches aimed at reducing crime risks and addressing underlying social factors (Clarke, 1992). Primary prevention targets environmental factors conducive to crime, while secondary prevention focuses on at-risk groups through interventions like vocational training (Sherman, Gottfredson, MacKenzie, Eck, Reuter, & Bushway, 1997). Tertiary prevention involves rehabilitating offenders to prevent recidivism (Laub & Sampson, 2001).

Environmental design, or Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), modifies physical environments to deter crime through strategies like natural surveillance (Crowe, 2000). Community engagement plays a vital role, with programs like neighborhood watch enhancing community safety (Sampson et al., 1997). Community policing enhances crime prevention by involving communities in identifying and solving local crime issues, utilizing community intelligence for targeted interventions (Gill et al., 2014). It fosters social cohesion and development, creating environments less conducive to criminal behavior (Skogan & Frydl, 2004).

Implementing community policing faces challenges such as resistance to change within law enforcement, resource constraints, and the need for effective collaboration and evaluation methods (Rosenbaum, 1994; Skogan, 2006; Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Political and socio-economic factors also influence sustainability and effectiveness (Gill, Weisburd, Telep, Vitter, & Bennett, 2014). In efforts to bolster community policing and crime prevention, several strategic approaches prove pivotal. Among these, forging robust community partnerships stands paramount. By cultivating ties with local entities—ranging from community organizations to educational institutions and businesses—law enforcement gains vital resources and backing for crime prevention endeavors (Rosenbaum, 1994). These partnerships not only amplify community

engagement but also pinpoint and tackle specific local concerns.

Equally crucial are training and capacity-building initiatives, essential for effective execution of community policing strategies. Officers require specialized training in community interaction, problem-solving, and cultural competency to navigate diverse societal landscapes and tackle intricate social issues (Skogan, 2006). Continuous professional development ensures officers are equipped with requisite skills for proactive community policing.

Moreover, integrating technology holds promise in augmenting community policing and crime prevention. Tools such as geographic information systems (GIS), crime mapping, and data analytics empower law enforcement to discern crime patterns, optimize resource allocation, and tailor interventions (Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Digital platforms, including social media, further aid in community engagement, information dissemination, and feedback solicitation.

The centralization of policing in Nigeria has its roots in the colonial era when the British established a unified police force to maintain control over the territory. This centralized structure was maintained post-independence, resulting in the formation of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), which is controlled by the federal government. While this model aimed to ensure uniformity and centralized command, it has also led to several challenges that impact the effectiveness and trustworthiness of the police force.

Ohonbamu (1972) highlights the inherent organizational dilemmas faced by a centralized police force in a federal system like Nigeria's. One major issue is the inefficiency stemming from a top-down approach to policing, which often results in slow decision-making processes and delayed responses to local security issues. The centralized command structure means that directives and policies are crafted at the federal level, far removed from the unique and diverse security challenges faced by different regions and communities within the country. For instance, a security strategy that might be effective in urban Lagos may not be suitable for the rural areas of Ekiti State. The lack of flexibility and local input in the centralized system hampers the ability of the police to effectively address region-specific crimes and security concerns. This one-size-fits-all approach can lead to suboptimal outcomes, as it does not account for the varying socio-cultural and geographical contexts within Nigeria.

The centralization of the NPF also creates a significant disconnect between the police and the communities they serve. Local communities often feel alienated from a police force that is perceived as an external entity rather than an integral part of the community. This alienation is exacerbated by the deployment of police officers from different parts of the country to areas where they may not understand the local language, culture, or customs. Such deployments can hinder effective communication and cooperation between the police and the community. Johnson, Johnson, and Ifedayo (2013) discuss how this disconnect leads to a lack of trust and cooperation between the public and the police. When the community does not trust the police, they are less likely to report crimes or cooperate with investigations, further undermining the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts. This trust deficit is often rooted in experiences of police corruption, brutality, and inefficiency, which are perceived as systemic issues within the NPF.

The centralized police system in Nigeria has been criticized for various shortcomings that impede its effectiveness in maintaining security and public trust. The push for state police is driven by the need to address these challenges through a more localized and responsive approach to law enforcement.

Adedeji (2012) identifies several critical issues associated with the centralized police system in Nigeria. These include inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of accountability. Inefficiency arises from the bureaucratic nature of the centralized system, where decisions are made at the federal level, leading to slow responses to local security needs. Corruption within the centralized force undermines public trust and hampers effective policing. The lack of accountability is exacerbated by the distance between the police

leadership and the communities they serve, which often results in a disconnect and lack of responsiveness to local concerns. Egunjobi (2016) argues that the current federal policing system fails to adequately address the diverse security needs across Nigeria's various states. Each state has unique security challenges that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot effectively manage. The push for state police is seen as a means to decentralize control, allowing for more localized and effective crime prevention and law enforcement strategies. Localized police forces can tailor their strategies to the specific needs of their communities, improving responsiveness and effectiveness.

Saidu et al. (2019) highlight the ongoing debate about restructuring Nigeria's policing system. They argue that state police could better manage regional security issues without the constraints of centralized control. By decentralizing policing authority, states could develop security strategies that are more in tune with local realities and needs. This restructuring could lead to more effective crime prevention and community engagement, fostering a safer environment. Bakare, Murana, and Aliu (2018) support this view by examining state policing in other federal systems. They note that in countries like the United States and India, state police forces operate effectively within a federal structure, addressing local security issues more efficiently than a centralized system could. These examples suggest that Nigeria could benefit from adopting a similar decentralized approach.

Agwanwo (2014) posits that state police could enhance operational efficiency by being more attuned to local cultures and community dynamics. This localized understanding would enable state police to implement strategies that are more relevant and effective in their specific contexts. Additionally, state police could foster better relationships with local communities, improving trust and cooperation, which are crucial for effective policing. Adegoke (2014) discusses the challenges faced by the Nigeria police in maintaining security, noting that a decentralized police force could mitigate some of these issues by fostering closer relationships between police and communities. Such relationships are essential for gathering intelligence and building trust, which are critical for effective law enforcement. Eke (2021) argues that state police are a prerequisite for effective security in Nigeria, given the country's diverse and complex security challenges. By comparing Nigeria's centralized system with other federal systems, the study underscores the potential for improved security outcomes through decentralization.

Ugwu, Ngige, and Ugwuanyi (2013) discuss options for sustainable national security, emphasizing that state police could contribute significantly to a more resilient and responsive security framework. They advocate for a balanced approach that combines state and federal policing efforts to address Nigeria's complex security landscape.

While the potential benefits of state police are significant, there are also concerns about political interference and the risk of abuse of power by state governments. Nwogwugwu and Kupoluyi (2015) argue that safeguards must be put in place to prevent state police from being manipulated by local politicians for personal or political gain. Ensuring accountability and oversight is crucial to mitigate these risks and ensure that state police serve the public effectively and fairly.

Tangban and Audu (2020) explore the controversy over state police creation, emphasizing the potential for increased regionalism and ethnic conflicts. They argue that state police might exacerbate existing tensions and lead to uneven law enforcement standards across the country. Therefore, any move towards state police must include robust mechanisms to ensure uniform standards and prevent abuse.

A key argument in favor of state policing is the potential for improved police efficiency and accountability. Advocates believe that state police forces can address the specific needs and dynamics of local communities more effectively than a centralized system.

Agwanwo (2014) posits that state police could significantly enhance operational efficiency by being more

attuned to local cultures and community dynamics. This localized understanding could lead to better crime prevention strategies and a quicker response to security threats. In a centralized system, police officers may be unfamiliar with the unique characteristics and challenges of the areas they are assigned to, which can hinder effective law enforcement. By contrast, state police officers, who are part of the community, can utilize their intimate knowledge of local issues to anticipate and prevent crimes more effectively. Adegoke (2014) discusses the challenges faced by the Nigeria Police Force in maintaining security, noting that a decentralized police force could mitigate some of these issues by fostering closer relationships between police and communities. Local police forces are more likely to understand the specific concerns and expectations of the community, which can help in building trust and cooperation. This is essential for gathering intelligence and preventing crime.

Eke (2021) supports this view, emphasizing that the presence of state police can lead to stronger community engagement, where the police are seen as partners in ensuring safety rather than as an external force. This partnership can be instrumental in creating a cooperative environment where community members feel comfortable sharing information and working with the police to address security issues.

The ability of state police to respond quickly and appropriately to local security threats is another significant benefit. In a centralized system, the chain of command and bureaucratic processes can delay response times. In contrast, state police, with their localized command structure, can act swiftly to address immediate threats. This rapid response capability is crucial in preventing crimes and managing emergencies effectively.

Bakare, Murana, and Aliu (2018) argue that state police forces can also enhance accountability. Since state police would operate under the direct oversight of local government authorities, there is a potential for greater accountability and responsiveness to local concerns. This can help in reducing instances of police misconduct and corruption, which are often reported in the centralized system. Saidu et al. (2019) discuss how localized oversight can lead to better policing outcomes. When local authorities and communities have a say in how their police force operates, it can lead to more transparent and accountable policing practices. This local accountability can drive reforms and improvements that are tailored to the specific needs of the community.

Despite the potential benefits, there are significant concerns regarding the implementation of state police in Nigeria. These concerns highlight the complexities and potential drawbacks that must be addressed to ensure the successful adoption and operation of state police forces.

One major concern is the risk of political interference and abuse of power by state governments. Nwogwugwu and Kupoluyi (2015) argue that state police could be manipulated by local politicians for personal or political gain. This manipulation could undermine the rule of law and human rights, leading to a situation where the police serve the interests of political elites rather than the public. The potential for such abuse is a significant obstacle, as it could erode public trust in the police and the justice system. Tangban and Audu (2020) explore the controversy surrounding the creation of state police, emphasizing the potential for increased regionalism and ethnic conflicts. They argue that state police might exacerbate existing tensions and lead to uneven law enforcement standards across the country. In a diverse nation like Nigeria, with its complex tapestry of ethnic and regional identities, the introduction of state police could deepen divisions and create inconsistencies in the application of the law. This could result in certain regions or groups feeling marginalized or unfairly treated, further fueling conflict and instability. Another criticism is the potential lack of uniform standards and training across different state police forces. Abdullahi (2019) notes that without a centralized system, there could be significant disparities in the quality and professionalism of police officers. This inconsistency could undermine the effectiveness of law enforcement and complicate efforts to coordinate between different state police forces and the federal police.

Obarisiagbon (2019) highlights concerns about accountability and oversight in a decentralized police

system. Ensuring that state police forces operate transparently and are held accountable for their actions is crucial. Without robust oversight mechanisms, there is a risk that state police could operate with impunity, leading to increased corruption and human rights abuses. Buhari (2018) discusses the potential for duplication of efforts and resources between state and federal police forces. The existence of parallel law enforcement structures could lead to inefficiencies and conflicts over jurisdiction. This overlap might not only waste resources but also create confusion about the roles and responsibilities of each police force, hindering overall effectiveness in maintaining law and order.

METHODOLOGY AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design to gather data on Community Policing and Crime Prevention in Ekiti State, while Interrogating the adoption of State Police option in enhancing community policing and crime prevention Ekiti State.

The population of the research area encompasses all residents and law enforcement officers of Ekiti state, a diverse area comprising urban and rural settings totaling approximately 2.398,957 people (National Population Commission, 2006). This demographic diversity enriches the examination of community policing strategies.

A multistage sampling technique is employed, to select one local government from each of the three senatorial district in Ekiti State, using simple random sampling.

Therefore, selected for this study are Ikere-Ekiti (Ekiti South), Ado-Ekiti, (Ekiti Central) Oye-Ekiti, (Ekiti North). Instructively, based on the Nigerian census report of 2006, the population figures of the three (3) LGAs are 600,044 (NBS, 2006).

Table 3.1: Respondents Distribution in the selected Three Local Government Area of Ekiti State

State	LGAs	Population Figure For each LGAs	Population Figure For total LGAs
Ekiti	Ikerre-Ekiti	148,558	600,044
	Ado-Ekiti	313,690	
	Oye-Ekiti	137,796	
Total		600,044	

For quantitative data, Cochran's formula determines a sample size of approximately 422 respondents, adjusted for non-responses (Cochran, 1977). Structured questionnaires gather quantitative data on perceptions and experiences,. Pre-testing ensures clarity and reliability of instruments.

The study prioritizes ethical guidelines, securing informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and obtaining ethical approval to uphold participant rights (APA, 2017; Creswell, 2014; Fowler, 2014).

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Data was collected from a sample of 422 respondents in the selected three Local government of Ekiti State for this study. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in the table below:

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	210	49.8
Female	212	50.2

Age		
18-25	100	23.7
26-35	150	35.5
36-45	90	21.3
46-55	52	12.3
56 and above	30	7.1
Occupation		
Student	120	28.4
Employed	180	42.7
Self-employed	70	16.6
Unemployed	52	12.3
Educational Level		
Primary	50	11.8
Secondary	150	35.5
Tertiary	222	52.6

Source: Field work, 2024

Responses to Research Questions

The responses to the research questions are presented in the following tables.

1. How effective are community policing initiatives in reducing crime rates in Ekiti State?

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Very Effective	120	28.4
Effective	150	35.5
Neutral	80	18.9
Ineffective	50	11.8
Very Ineffective	22	5.2

Source: Field work, 2024

The data shows that a significant proportion of respondents perceive community policing initiatives as effective in reducing crime rates. Specifically, 28.4% of respondents believe these initiatives are very effective, while 35.5% consider them effective. This indicates that over half of the respondents view community policing positively. The relatively small percentages of respondents who find community policing ineffective (11.8%) or very ineffective (5.2%) suggest that while there are areas for improvement, the overall perception is favorable.

2. What is the level of community involvement in crime prevention activities, and how does it impact public safety?

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Very High	100	23.7
High	160	37.9
Moderate	100	23.7

Low	40	9.5
Very Low	22	5.2

Source: Field work, 2024

The level of community involvement in crime prevention activities is perceived to be high by 37.9% of respondents and very high by 23.7%. This indicates a strong engagement from the community in public safety efforts. Moderate involvement is noted by 23.7% of respondents, while low and very low involvement are less frequently reported (9.5% and 5.2% respectively). This suggests that community involvement is generally robust, which is crucial for the success of crime prevention strategies.

3. What challenges are faced in implementing community policing and crime prevention strategies in Ekiti State?

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of Trust between Community and Police	100	23.7
Insufficient Funding	120	28.4
Inadequate Training for Police Officers	80	18.9
Poor Infrastructure	70	16.6
Lack of Community Engagement	52	12.3

Source: Field work, 2024

Several challenges are identified in implementing community policing and crime prevention strategies. The most frequently cited challenge is insufficient funding (28.4%), followed by a lack of trust between the community and police (23.7%). Inadequate training for police officers (18.9%), poor infrastructure (16.6%), and lack of community engagement (12.3%) are also significant barriers. These findings highlight the need for resource allocation, trust-building initiatives, and comprehensive training programs to enhance the effectiveness of community policing.

4. What are the best practices for improving community policing and crime prevention efforts in Ekiti State?

Best Practices	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Enhanced Training for Police Officers	110	26.1
Increased Funding and Resources	140	33.2
Building Trust and Transparency	90	21.3
Community Engagement and Participation	52	12.3
Use of Technology and Data Analysis	30	7.1

Source: Field work, 2024

The best practices identified by respondents for improving community policing and crime prevention efforts include increased funding and resources (33.2%), enhanced training for police officers (26.1%), and building trust and transparency (21.3%). Community engagement and participation (12.3%) and the use of technology and data analysis (7.1%) are also considered important. These practices underscore the importance of financial support, professional development, trust-building, and technological advancements in enhancing public safety initiatives.

5. How has community policing affected community-police relations and trust in Ekiti State?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Significantly Improved	130	30.8
Improved	150	35.5
Neutral	90	21.3
Deteriorated	40	9.5
Significantly Deteriorated	12	2.8

Source: Field work, 2024

The impact of community policing on community-police relations and trust is largely positive, with 30.8% of respondents reporting that it has significantly improved relations, and 35.5% noting an improvement. Neutral responses are given by 21.3% of respondents, while a smaller proportion report deteriorated (9.5%) or significantly deteriorated (2.8%) relations. These findings suggest that community policing has generally enhanced trust and relations between the community and the police, although continued efforts are needed to address any remaining issues.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data indicates that community policing initiatives are generally perceived as effective in reducing crime rates and improving public safety in Ekiti State. High levels of community involvement and positive impacts on community-police relations and trust are also noted. However, challenges such as insufficient funding, lack of trust, and inadequate training need to be addressed to further improve the effectiveness of these strategies. Best practices for enhancing community policing include increased funding, enhanced training, building trust, community engagement, and the use of technology.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The rising insecurity and crime rates in Ekiti State, alongside the broader national trend in Nigeria, necessitate a rethinking of traditional policing methods. This study has explored the viability and effectiveness of community policing as a crime prevention strategy and critically examined the institutionalization of a state police force within the Nigerian Federal setting.

Community policing, with its emphasis on building trust and collaboration between law enforcement agencies and local communities, presents a promising shift from reactive to proactive policing. The adoption of community policing in Nigeria aims to transform the police's role from mere law enforcement to becoming integral members of the community, addressing a wide range of issues and fostering mutual trust and cooperation. However, the longstanding estrangement between the police and the public remains a significant challenge, requiring continuous efforts to bridge this gap through innovative and community-focused policing strategies.

The potential introduction of state police forces offers another layer of localized, responsive law enforcement tailored to the unique cultural, social, and geographical contexts of each region. While this approach holds promise for enhancing operational efficiency and accountability, it also raises concerns about the risks of political interference, abuse of power, and regional disparities in law enforcement standards.

The study's findings underscore the importance of grassroots participation and tailored policing frameworks

in crime prevention. By leveraging local knowledge and fostering open communication, both community policing and state policing initiatives can create an environment where crime is deterred through collective vigilance and proactive problem-solving.

To move forward, it is essential to implement a national pilot state police program with representatives from each of the Geo- political zones with Ekiti State as a beneficiary of such pilot program, to assess its successful implementation and address potential challenges. Additionally, enhancing community engagement, training, public awareness, and accountability mechanisms will be crucial in building a more effective and equitable security architecture.

Investment in several training programs designed for police officers focusing on community policing principles, cultural competence, conflict resolution, and human rights is very crucial. This will ensure that officers are well-equipped to handle community-specific issues with sensitivity and effectiveness.

Improving Communication Channels will enhance the channels of communication between the police and the public to facilitate the reporting of crimes and criminal activities. This can be achieved by establishing dedicated hotlines, social media platforms, and mobile apps that allow for anonymous tips and real-time reporting. Effective communication will ensure the police are proactive in preventing crimes rather than merely reacting to them.

Improved Accountability Mechanisms Developing an improved and robust accountability mechanisms to monitor police conduct and address complaints from the public. This can include independent oversight bodies and transparent complaint processes to ensure that police actions are fair and just. This will go a long way in getting feedbacks from the public and build trust between the NPF and the public

Establishment and strengthening of local security committees comprising police officers, community leaders, and representatives from civil society organizations will go a long way to reduce crime and gives the local populace opportunity to strategize on ways to curb and manage crime rate. These committees can coordinate local security initiatives and ensure a collaborative approach to crime prevention. Launching of various public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the importance of community policing and their role in crime prevention. This can include workshops, media campaigns, and school programs to promote community involvement in policing efforts.

Finally, technology is very crucial in the fight against crime leveraging technology and data analysis can significantly improve whatever crime prevention strategies adopted. The use of surveillance cameras, crime mapping, and data analytics can help in identifying crime hotspots, predicting crime patterns, and deploying resources more effectively. Investments in modern technology and training for police officers in data analysis and technological tools are essential for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of community policing efforts. Collaboration with tech companies and research institutions can provide innovative solutions for crime prevention.

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