

**Community Policing:
“Atalakpa” (Edo State
Security Network) and the
Management of Crime and
Internal Security in
Edo State, Nigeria**

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Abstract

This study assessed the praxis of community policing in managing internal security in Edo State, Nigeria. It also evaluated the nature of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State and its effectiveness. In addition, the study identified the relationship between community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) and the public security force in Edo state. The study further Identified the challenges confronting Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network in Edo State. The study employed survey research design, using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Also, both primary and secondary data were explored. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics involving frequency counts, percentages, mean scores and charts. The findings showed

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that the government falls short of effectively providing security for the citizens; hence, the community opted for Atalakpa community policing, which is focused on fostering greater trust and cooperation between the police and the residents geared towards maximising police resources through community participation in public safety initiatives. The study concluded that the emergence of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) was borne out of the need to reduce crimes and social vices, security of lives and properties, and to complement other security agencies in fighting crime and criminality in rural areas. The study recommends restructuring and overhauling of the Atalakpa- Edo State Security Network to meet its establishment's goals and purpose. Also, there should be better collaboration and partnership between community policing and other security agencies in the area of handing-over/ transporting of suspects, conducting investigation, sharing of information, fire alert, armed patrol, joint duty posting, training and re-training; workshops and seminars, with a view to fighting crime and criminality, and entrenching peace in rural areas.

Keywords: Crime Prevention, Security, Community Policing, Atalakpa, Internal Security, Edo State.

Background to the Study

As police and community leaders search for more effective strategies to increase public safety and raise the standard of living, the movement toward community policing has become stronger in recent years. The agencies that enforce the law are actively evaluating changes to their strategy, organisation, and operating procedures that will allow them to better serve target communities, while also improving the calibre of their services. (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1994). Security is a fundamental human right and an element of well-being. Poverty and inequality are pervasive in different ways where individuals cannot experience security. In addition to providing substantial support for these arguments, numerous significant

publications and policy actions in recent years have reaffirmed the necessity of fostering a notion of security that places people at its centre (Safer World, 2016; Idowu, and Uzoma, 2020).

Today, to safeguard people and property and to control members of the community's behaviour, every society seeks some form of community policing. A variety of theoretical and practical tactics are used in community policing, which is still evolving. However, all community policing initiatives share a number of essential concepts and factors. The communities' needs and responses determine how community policing practices are evolve (Idowu, 2021).

Community policing as a concept was first applied in the United States in the 1970s as a policing philosophy and strategy to include the public in police institutions not as police officers, but as partners in the nation's security affairs for maximum effectiveness and responsiveness (Wong and Lee, 2009). Community oriented policing is a broad policing strategy that relies heavily on community involvement and partnerships, and on police presence in the community, to address local crime and disorder; while problem-oriented policing provides law enforcement agencies with an analytic method to develop strategies to prevent and reduce crime and disorder, which involves problem identification, analysis, response, and assessment (National Research Council, 2018). According to Human Development Report (HDR) (1994), community security or community policing is one of the seven aspects of human security. The HDR urged a redefining of security that puts people first. Over the following years, a consensus developed on this progressive, people-centred strategy for addressing security issues. This made UN Member States to affirm that "development, peace, security, and human rights are interrelated and mutually reinforcing." Through such publications and practical activities on the ground, developmental approaches to enhancing security at the community level have evolved into an essential part of national and international efforts to establish security, stability, and more amenable institutions (UN Summit, 2005).

Community policing, according to Dickson (2007), evolves restructure and procedures in order to ensure that the best people are in charge of policing in their respective communities. Police officers are psychologically and physically prepared for the many demands of their profession through

community policing (Andrews, 2009). Throughout Nigeria, street vigilante groups known as “yan banga” in some parts of the north or “ode adugbo” in some souths which are still active in the majority of the nation today were created by volunteers for traditional policing. However, the establishment of the police force was mandated by the state, in light of the requirement of the need to protect citizens (political elites) during colonial rule (Idowu, 2021; Oluwaniyi, 2011). According to Schanzer et al. (2016), law enforcement necessitates collaboration between the police and locals in order to increase public safety. In order to maximise taxpayer money through public involvement in public safety projects and to build greater public trust in law enforcement, community policing was widely adopted by law enforcement agencies in the 1990s. The Nigerian Police Force is the nation’s strongest constitutional organ saddled with the responsibility and protection of internal security in Nigeria as enthreshed in the 1999 Constitution and the Police Act, with the President having operational control over the Nigerian Police Force (Nigeria Constitution, 1999).

Despite various strategies and efforts adopted by the federal and state governments to put an end to the menace of insecurity, the nation is still plagued with different forms of crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, murder, banditry, cattle rustling, cultism, rape, financial crime, bribery, corruption, to mention but a few. Security experts have also stated that community policing is the answer to successful security provision within the state when it appears that security difficulties and challenges are overwhelming the state’s security institutions (Ikuteyijo, 2009). This paper assesses the praxis of community policing by looking into the operation of Atalakpa Edo State Security Network in managing crime in Edo-State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Despite its potential benefits, community-oriented policing has challenges when it comes to implementation and operation in the real world. This implementation challenge has grown to be a significant police concern. Both the police and the general populace may provide resistance. Police assumed that community-based policing is insufficient for dealing with serious crimes and is too lenient towards offenders. Even though the police spent a significant amount of effort and resources on educating their staff,

the police continue to alienate members of the public while performing their duty. Even after receiving training in community-oriented policing, the law enforcement personnel who benefited from the shortcomings of the conventional approach find it difficult to change their views. The public's impression of police behaviour continues to take precedence over their commitment to provide a service to the community. A community-oriented policing approach may be difficult for the police to effectively apply in their base because of some of the deviant subcultures in the organisation (Idowu, 2021).

Despite police efforts to combat crime and enforce the law, crime rates continue to rise, and public fear of crime is also rising. The majority of police operations were planned and carried out with little involvement from the community. When performing their duties in the community, police officers' reactionary policing strategies and contempt for individuals' rights, dignity, and security concerns exacerbated the gap between them and the populace. Community-oriented policing training aims to close this trust gap between the public and the police by increasing public confidence and trust in the police. Security experts have also stated that community policing is the answer to successful security provision within the state when it appears that security difficulties and challenges are overwhelming the state's security institutions (Idowu, 2021). Ogundiya and Titus (2023) argued that community policing is the panacea to insecurity in Nigeria through documentary sources and that the social and political environment in Nigeria is pervaded by the Boko Haram uprising in the North East zone, banditry and cattle rustling in the North West and North Central zones, ethnic militia in the South South and South East zones and armed robbery and ritual killings in the South West zone. Therefore, this research study seeks to access the nature of community policing, using Atalakpa- Edo State Security Network as its case study. The study evaluates its effectiveness and the challenges of community policing in Edo state.

Objectives of the Study

The study's main goal is to evaluate how community-oriented policing practices are used to manage internal security in Edo-State, Nigeria. Its more specific goals are to:

- i. Examine the nature of community policing, concentration of the Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network, in Edo State as a case study;
- ii. Determine the effectiveness of community policing, using the (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State as a case study;
- iii. Identify the challenges of community policing, looking into the Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network in Edo State;
- iv. Understand the relationship between community policing, using the Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network and the public security force in Edo State.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Action Theory and Partnership Theory

Action theory is a theoretical framework that seeks to understand human behaviour and social interaction by focusing on the purposeful actions of individuals. The concept of action theory has its roots in the work of sociologists such as Talcott Parsons and George Homans, who developed theories of social action and exchange that sought to explain how individuals engage in purposeful behaviour in social situations. Today, action theory is used in a variety of fields, including sociology, psychology, economics, and political science, to understand human behaviour and social interactions. At its core, action theory emphasises the importance of understanding the motives and intentions of individuals in social situations. According to this perspective, individuals engage in purposeful behaviour in order to achieve certain goals or outcomes, and their actions are shaped by a variety of factors, including social norms, values, and institutions. In order to understand human behaviour, it is necessary to understand the goals and motives that drive individuals to act in certain ways.

Action theory also emphasises the importance of social interaction in shaping human behaviour. According to this perspective, individuals are not isolated actors, but are instead embedded in social networks and relationships that influence their behaviour. Social norms and values, for example, are shaped by social interaction and are reinforced through socialisation processes. In the context of community policing, action theory is often used to describe a problem-solving approach to policing that places a focus on community residents and police officers working together. This strategy

highlights how crucial it is to comprehend the underlying factors that contribute to violence in society, and working with community members to develop strategies to prevent crime from occurring in the first place. By engaging in purposeful actions that address the root causes of crime, police officers can work collaboratively with community members to enhance neighbourhood standard of living and enhance safety of the public.

One key aspect of action theory in community policing is the need for police personnel to develop connections and earn the trust of the public, by participating in purposeful actions that demonstrate a commitment to working collaboratively with the community. For example, police officers may hold community meetings, participate in community events, and work with community members to identify and address specific problems in the neighbourhood. Another important aspect of action theory in community policing is the need for police officers to be responsive to the needs and concerns of community members. This is done by engaging in purposeful actions that address the specific needs and concerns of the community. For example, police officers may work with community members to address specific issues such as drug activity, gang violence, or domestic violence.

The concept “partnership” is used to describe a wide variety of relationship types in a variety of settings and environments, and it encompasses substantially dissimilar attitudes and behaviours. Since “techniques for conducting out such (private-public) partnerships are limited only by the imagination, and economic development offices are growing more innovative in their use of the notion,” it has been claimed that there is a limitless range of partnership activities (Lyons & Hamlin, 1991:55). Partnership may involve both the creation and execution of a plan, a series of projects, or a set of operations, though not always.

Co-operation, defined as working together towards achieving the same end, is a component of partnership (Holland, 1984). Partnership is when groups, individuals, community or public come together to achieve their goals through working together as a team. Harding (1990) defined partnership as any action that depends on the consent of participants in the public or private sectors and that also somehow enhances the urban economy and quality of life. Due to practical considerations like resource limitations as well as more ideological considerations, continued or increased involvement

in partnership initiatives between public authorities and/or private entities and non-governmental organisations is probable at the local level (Leach et al., 1994).

These include an assumption in the cost benefits of a cooperative effort, a shift toward empowering local government (where publicly financed services are implemented by private or not-for-profit organisations rather than by the civil service), awareness that one municipal actor frequently lacks all the resources and expertise to deal with the integrated issues raised in many policy areas, and increased consensus that urban regeneration should include the next generation. Therefore, it is necessary to examine these perspectives' theoretical and empirical validity further. In fact, in order to fully comprehend the behaviour and policies of organisations involved in economic development and regeneration, it is necessary to take into account the nature of their partnerships with other actors as well as the flow of resources, power, and information within the networks in which they are a part. However, the above explanation by different scholars on partnership theory attests to the importance of partnership theory in achieving desired goals. In light of this, local law enforcement in Atalakpa, Edo State, Nigeria, is examined using the partnership theory (Rosenbaum, 2003; Idowu, 2020).

Action theory and partnership theory can complement each other in their approach to crime prevention. Action theory provides a useful framework for understanding the situational factors that contribute to criminal behaviour, while partnership theory emphasises the importance of collaboration and cooperation between different stakeholders to address the broader social context in which crime occurs. The combination of these two theories can provide a more holistic approach to crime prevention by addressing both the situational and social factors that contribute to criminal behaviour. As such, policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and community organisations should consider using both theories in designing effective crime prevention strategies. By working together, different stakeholders can contribute their unique perspectives and resources to address the problem of crime and create safer and more prosperous communities. Against this background, the two theories are employed as the analysis of community policing in relation to Atalakpa (Edo State Security Network) in Edo State, Nigeria.

Conceptual Review: Community Policing

Community-oriented policing is a theory that encourages organisational solutions, with the use of cooperation and challenge methods, which proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues including crime, social dysfunction, and fear of violence (Alemika, 2012). This attitude and strategy are built on working together with the community and the police to discover innovative answers to current issues with crime, the community, and other connected issues. According to Okonkwo (1996), Police community partnerships are steered by the policy of “community policing,” which also calls for a problem-solving methodology sensitive to local requirements. Okeke (2014) argued that there should be a paradigm shift from traditional policing to model policing, which calls for the participation of the Nigeria Police and the community. In order to tackle crime and other social ills, the police and the residents joined forces. This does not indicate that the police have lost their authority or that their primary responsibility for maintaining law and order has been delegated; rather, community policing involves working with the local community to create a place where residents can feel safe and secure.

In order to transform the relationship between the public and the police into one where the community is a co-producer of justice and a high-quality police service, community policing must exclusively focus on positive engagement with the people who make up the community and are the service’s customers (Folashade & Patience, 2013). Engaging in police relations is one of the tactics for improving the performance of the Nigerian police effectively and efficiently. This would transform policing in Nigeria into one that is modern and professional and can guarantee the greatest level of safety for people and property (Fashola, 2015). Society policing is an active approach that encourages addressing issues that are either criminal in nature, have a negative impact on people’s quality of life, or make them feel more afraid of crime. It entails locating, analysing, and solving the root causes of community issues (Okereke, 2014). Community-oriented policing comprises three key components (Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services, 2012): Community Partnerships, Organisational Transformation, and Problem-Solving.

Community Partnerships

COP encourages partnerships with stakeholders in the community, including other government agencies (prosecutors, health and human services, child support services and schools); community members/groups (volunteers, activists, residents, and other individuals who have an interest in the community); nonprofits/service providers (advocacy groups, victim groups, and community development corporations); and private businesses. The media is also an important mechanism that police use to communicate with the community.

Organisational Transformation

COP emphasises the alignment of management, structure, personnel, and information systems within police departments to support the philosophy. These changes may include increased transparency, leadership that reinforces COP values, strategic geographic deployment, training, and access to data.

Problem-Solving

Proactive, systematic, routine problem-solving is the final key component of COP. COP encourages police to develop solutions to underlying conditions that contribute to public safety problems, rather than responding to crime only after it occurs. The SARA model (which stands for Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment) is one major conceptual model of problem-solving that can be used by officers.

At the heart of COP is a redefinition of the relationship between the police and the community, so that the two collaborate to identify and solve community problems. Through this relationship, the community becomes a “co-producer” of public safety in that the problem-solving process draws on citizens’ expertise in identifying and understanding social issues that create crime, disorder, and fear in the community (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988; Gill et al., 2014; National Research Council, 2018).

The purpose of the police is to protect and uphold the interests of the dominant classes and groups in society; therefore, whether the police plays a significant role in promoting or thwarting change attempts will depend on how they are perceived by society (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2001). The function of the police will be to increasingly uphold the status quo of political

oppression and economic inequality in authoritarian and unequal societies. In contrast, the police are more likely to perform services in a democratic society that will advance social economic development and the democratic dividend (Aiya, 2012). The problem of insecurity in Nigeria has taken on enormous proportions, compelling the nation's political and economic standing and, in fact, the entire population, to lament the loss of their loved ones, investments, and the absence of safety throughout the majority of the country (Onifade, & Urim, 2013). There is still cause for concern given the daily loss of innocent life and the locals' outburst of suppressed rage (Nwaze, 2011), based on experience, the amount of bloodshed in the Nigerian civil war was child's play in comparison to recent terrorist strikes and activities of Fulani headsmen in various local communities.

In Nigeria, the level of insecurity has outgrown the abilities of the government's police and other security personnel (Achamba, & Akpor, 2013). And there has not been enough progress in preventing crime and insurgency (Onifade, & Urim, 2013). It was discovered that in the Nigerian society, there is a significant correlation between rising ethnic hatred, religious prejudice, political competition, and unhappy inheritance. The underlying tendencies of numerous ethnic militant uprisings and the prevalent religious fundamentalism in some areas, which is expressed by some factions of Nigeria's preeminent religious establishments, have inevitably exacerbated the scale and propensity of insecurity and expanded its scope in many different ways (Egwu, 2001).

According to Ajibade and Erinoshio (2011), there are a few important causes for the recent rise in countrywide insecurity. They noted that Nigeria's crime situation has gotten worse as a result of the government's response to the country's ongoing crises of widespread unemployment and fuel shortages. For them, there are a few important causes for the recent rise in countrywide insecurity. They noted that Nigeria's crime situation has gotten worse as a result of the government's response to the country's ongoing crises of widespread unemployment and fuel shortages. The rate of unemployment, low income and savings, which have forced many laid-off workers into a struggle for existence, the high rate of inflation, and political intolerance have all greatly influenced the level of insecurity in the nation, particularly at the grassroots level (Adegoke, 2013).

The provision of security is one of the primary duties of government in every country. The Federal Republic of Nigeria's Constitution (1999) states unequivocally that "the security and welfare of the citizen must be the major priority of the government" (FGN Constitution, 1999). The government assigns the Nigerian police this job, which involves maintaining internal security. The Nigerian police are tasked with upholding all legal requirements, preventing and detecting crime, and maintaining peace and order. They must complete these tasks properly and efficiently without making mistakes (Egwu, 1990). Nigerians wonder if the police fulfilled their duties in accordance with the constitution, given the high level of insecurity in the nation. The majority of the populace believes that the Nigerian police fall short of expectations. According to Odekunle, (2014), arguments have been made that it is not necessary to provide evidence of the Nigerian police's bad performance in the current local situation because the situation's primary causes have already been identified. Aside from the numerous obstacles that have hindered their achievement throughout the years, they are now faced with interpersonal issues that not only exacerbate their material deficiencies but also have a significant negative impact on their current performance (Odekunle, 2014).

Emergence of Community Policing in Local Communities in Nigeria

In Nigeria's ethnic society, law enforcement has been considered as one of the most successful methods for reducing crime. This is carried out as part of a collaborative effort between security agents and local residents to support the police by acquiring valuable information. The influence of community-oriented policing, which incorporates collaboration and naturally bridges the tensed relationship between the police and the public that typically impedes better regulation in Nigeria, was shown during the regional system in Nigeria (Nwakkama, 2012). For instance, in the Southwest area, politicians recruited police officers for the local council at a rate never before seen. The upkeep of calm, serenity, and prosperity grew so dependent on the competence of the local council's police. Because of uneducated individuals, inadequate training, bad behaviour, and the possession of tyranny, blackmail, and incapacitation tools in the arms of local leaders, local government officials, and lawmakers, the local police were ineffectual (Arase & Iwuofor, 2007; Idowu, 2021).

Legislators, traditional leaders, and colonial officers frequently mistreated local councils and police officers appointed by native authorities in the indigenous community. It is known that the Native Authority Police in Nigeria had a very negative reputation for using excessive restraint and harassment to win over supporters of the ruling party. They were also accused of denying opposition parties permission to hold rallies, interfering with their gatherings, and applying the law against disorderly conduct to opposition party politicians in a weak way. The majority of Nigerian politicians and other stakeholders have been calling for state police in recent years due to experiences with brutality, oppressive behaviour, extortionate ambition, inhumane treatment, and general misuse of the local police force by the ruling parties, politicians, government officials, traditional rulers, and other personalities (Hills, 2008). Political upheaval has a long history in southwest Nigeria, especially during the First and Second Republics, when political crises occurred in the area.

Community Policing in Nigeria

Community policing existed in the traditional Nigerian context before the colonial era. Therefore, Nigerians are not unfamiliar with this form of policing system; for instance, community policing was common there before colonial power and persisted in being so, even after Nigeria's independence in 1960 (Inyang and Abraham, 2013). In order to elevate the calibre of police services and, as a result, reduce crime rates, community policing enhances problem-solving methods, collaboration between formal and informal law enforcement, and partnerships between security agencies and the public. The people did not trust the Nigeria Police Force because they believed it to be cruel, dishonest, and ineffective, according to numerous studies on police-public relations in Nigeria (Zumve, 2013). The community policing programme has also been backed by significant training programmes created to acquire new skills and change attitudes and behaviours, in addition to major awareness-raising and sensitisation campaigns targeted at both the general public and the police force.

The objectives of policing programmes including citizen advisory boards, landlord security administration, community forums, foot patrols, neighbourhood watches, and door-to-door visits are to raise public satisfaction with police and to improve public confidence in law enforcement. Additionally,

people are more inclined to contact the police to report problems and share details about crimes and offenders if they engage in these activities (Maguire, 2000).

Atalakpa Community Policing in Edo State

The Esan community established a community policing organisation known as Atalakpa to protect them from criminals in their neighbourhood. To do this, the Esan community organised more than 1,000 young people under the name “Atalakpa” (meaning Tigers). In collaboration with the Nigerian Police, Atalakpa offers the police vital information, and occasionally the two organisations work together to battle criminals. Most of the operations occur in the night under the direction of Edo State Network Security. With the support of the state governor, the police trained members of the Atalakpa group (Kingsley, 2021). Atalakpa vigilante group emerged as an attempt to curb the incessant menace of criminality and insurgency in the community. The vigilante group operate under the directives of chiefs, traditional rulers and the elders of the locality. The structure of Atalakpa vigilante group which is under the Edo State Security Network is maintained by the government. The command structure is similar to that of the police. It consists of the state coordinator with all its scrutiny of staff at the state headquarters, the zonal commanders at the zonal level, the sector commanders, tactical commanders who are special outfits designed to take care of special problems, and the unit commanders.

Before the advent of the colonial masters, there was a traditional system of cultural heritage that allowed the people take care of the security of their community and this was done by a group of men called “Egbolughe”, also known as youths of the area. They were divided by quarters and charged with the responsibility of maintaining security in their various quarters. In recent times, the traditional rulers, chiefs and elders have been saddled with the responsibility of organising their community policing outfit and this includes selecting transparent, vibrant, credible and respectable figures to be in charge of safeguarding the community as a whole and this process is usually done after an individual volunteers to be a member of the team. The state policing has to do with the government while the community policing has to do with the neighbourhood watching over themselves but there is a synergy between them which means they work hand in hand with

police situated in the community. Members of Atalakpa vigilante group are mixed with the police at the stoppage or checkpoint in a particular community. Incidents and suspects are handed to the police.

Providing security means taking responsibility because security is an all-time job which means every member of Atalakpa vigilante group must be active at all times, but they have been weighed down in recent times due to different challenges which include lack of financial encouragement from the government, lack of proper weapon to challenge criminals who use sophisticated weapons and lack of proper training. Another challenge has to do with public perception as some members of the community do not find them worthy of being respected, thereby hindering them in carrying out their operations.

Research Design

The research adopted quantitative and qualitative research methods, using descriptive survey research design with both primary and secondary sources of data explored. Key Informant Interview and questionnaires provided the primary data while secondary data on the other hand was drawn from content analysis of academic literature, publications on community policing locally and internationally, news media, and experiences from members of the group, community leaders, the public security bodies and official records from government agencies such as the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.

Area of the Study

Esan South-East Local Government Area in Edo State is the subject of this study. It was created in 1991 as an LGA as part of local government reform, and it has its administrative centre in Ubiaja. It covers an area of 1,306 KM² and contains 167,721 people, making it the largest landmass in Esan Land (National Census, 2006). According to estimates, the population has increased significantly. There are 10 political wards in Esan South-East. Ubiaja, the administrative centre, has two wards (Ward 6 and Ward 7). Two wards make up Ewohimi, one of the largest towns in the LGA (Ward 1 and Ward 2). Ewatto occupies Ward 3 while Ohordua sits atop Ward 4. Emu, Okhuesan, Orowa and Inyenlen occupy Ward 5 just as Oria, Onoghola and Illushi occupy Ward 8, while Ward 9 comprises Illushi and Ifeku Island.

Ugboha owns Ward 10. Esan South-East LGA consists of fourteen (14) kingdoms: Ubiaja kingdom, Ewohimi Kingdom, Ewatto Kingdom, Ohordua Kingdom, Emu Kingdom, Okhuesan Kingdom, Orowa Kingdom, Inyenlen Kingdom, Uroh Kingdom, Oria Kingdom, Onoghlo Kingdom, Illushi Kingdom, Ifeku Kingdom, and Ugboha Kingdom.

Esan South East is predominantly an agrarian area. Majority of the people are farmers who deal in oil palm, beans, yam, and cassava. However, it has a few agro-allied ventures relating to: table water factories, block industries, sawmills, hotels and other commercial enterprises. Being one of the oldest administrative centres in Midwestern Nigeria, several colonial and government buildings dot the landscape of Ubiaja, including Prisons, Federal Department of Agriculture, and Council Secretariat, among others. The local government area is an agricultural hub, with the greater majority of residents cultivating farmlands. Esan South-East is home to Agbazilo Mechanised Constituency Farm, Oria; Go Ahead Farm, Ubiaja; Federal Department of Agriculture, Ubiaja; Gotek Rice Processing Factory, Ugboha; Edo State Rice Farm, Illushi; and other large-scale farms.

Esan South-East is blessed with numerous mineral and agricultural resources including but not limited to clay, kaolin, sandstone, laterite and timber. However, most of the minerals remain untapped and underutilised. Meanwhile, in terms of entertainment, Esan South-East is home to numerous traditional dance groups such as Igbabonelimhin, Ojeke, Abayon, etc. The Ubiaja carnival which holds December 26 every year is the flagship cultural festival in the LGA. Guests come from far and near to come to catch a glimpse of the annual cultural fiesta. But based on the descriptions of the study's focus area provided above, the study focused on three towns in Edo State's Esan Southeast Local Government Area: Ubiaja, which serves as the local government's administrative centre, Ewohimi, and Ewatto town. The three towns were chosen because Atanakpa community policing is present and active in each of them.

Research Population

This study assessed the praxis of community policing in managing internal security in Edo State. The study adopted quantitative and qualitative research methods using descriptive survey research design with both primary and

secondary data sources. The population of the study is made up of males and females who are at least 18 years old, literate or illiterate, and who fall into one of the following groups:

- i. Public security force (the public security)
- ii. Indigenous Ruler
- iii. Community leaders (Youths and Elders)
- iv. Community policing Group (Atalakpa)
- v. General public

The sample for this study is 150 respondents which cuts across public security force (the public security), indigenous rulers, community leaders (youths and elders), community policing group (Atalakpa) and the general public. Quota sampling technique was used to select samples for the study. Two sets of instruments tagged “Structured Questionnaire” and Structured Interview Guide” were used for the study. The two instruments were validated by the experts in peace and security. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics involving frequency counts, percentages, mean scores and charts were used to answer the questions raised.

Data Analysis Techniques

The method of data analysis and interpretation used for the study is content and descriptive analysis. The study applied both qualitative and quantitative analysis to present the various data gathered. The quantitative data gathered was coded and entered using statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS). Quantitative analysis involves descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and percentages in the form of tables and figures. The qualitative analysis also involves the categorisation of the data from the interviews and field notes into common themes. The data was analysed using descriptive techniques based strictly on what respondents said during the data collection process.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration was done to deal with the integrity of the researcher and the protection of the target respondents and the key informants that were interviewed. The study adhered to and complied with ethical standards relating to the research such as informed consent.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Analyses of Respondents' Demographic Data

The responses to the question in Section A of the administered questionnaire are presented and interpreted using frequencies and percentages.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents' percentages by place

Town/Location	Frequency	Per cent
Ewatto	50	33.3
Ubiaja	50	33.3
Ewohimi	50	33.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey by the Researcher,2023

Table 1 above shows that one-third of the study participants (n=50, 33.3%) were selected from each of the Ewatto, Ubiaja and Ewohimi towns.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents' percentages by sex

Sex	Frequency	Per cent
Male	73	48.7
Female	77	51.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 indicate that the majority of study participants— n=77, or 51.3 per cent— are female while the remaining 73 (48.7%) are male.

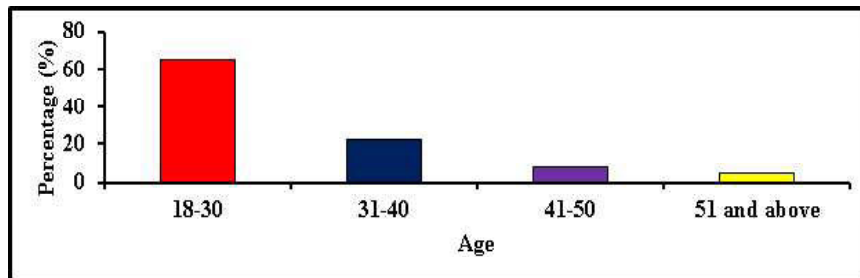


Figure i: Distribution among the participants by age

The figure above reveals that the vast majority of responses (n=97, 64.7%) were between the ages 18- 30, closely followed by those within the 31-40 years age range (n=33, 22%) and 41-50 years (n=12, 8%), while respondents who were 51 years and above (n=8, 5.3%) represent the minority group.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents' percentages according to their marital status

Marital status	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent
Single	96	64.0	64.0
Married	54	36.0	36.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Study by a Researcher, 2023

The majority of responders, as indicated by Table 3 above, are married (64%), while 36% are single.



Figure ii: Distribution of respondents by educational qualification

The chart above shows that 49 (32.7%) of the total respondents are graduates and above, 8 (5.3%) are holders of primary school certificates, 44 (29.3%) have SSCE, 47 (31.3%) are Diploma/NCE/HND holders, while 2 (1.2%) possess other qualifications.

Analysis of Research Questions

Objective 1: Nature and justification for community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State

Question 1: Who in Nigeria is accountable for the safety of people and their property?

Table 4: the respondents' percentage distribution on whose responsibility is security in the State

Option	Frequency	Percent
Government	138	92.0
Private security companies	8	5.3
Community policing efforts	4	2.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

According to Table 4 above, 92 per cent of respondents believed that the government is responsible for ensuring the safety of people and property, followed by private security firms with a belief of 5.3 per cent and community policing initiatives with a response rate of 2.7 per cent.

Objective Two: Examine the effectiveness of Community Policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State)

Question 2: is security and safety a challenge in Edo State?

Table 5: Percentage distribution of respondents on whether security is a challenge in Edo State.

Option	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	132	88.0
No	15	10.0
Don't know	3	2.0
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey by Researchers, 2023

Table 5 shows that 132 respondents (88 per cent) agreed that safety and security in Edo State are problems, 15 respondents (10 per cent) disagreed, and 3 respondents (2 per cent) were unsure.

Question 3: Do you think we need community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State?

Table 6: The need for community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State

S/N	ITEMS	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	Do you think we need community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State?	144 (96.0)	4 (2.7%)	2 (1.3%)
2	Is community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State security Network) in Edo State allowed to bear arms?	107(71.3%)	23(15.3%)	20(13.3%)

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

Table 6 shows that 96% agreed that community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) is needed in Edo State, 2.7% disagreed, while 1.3% were undecided. More than two-third of the study participants (n=107,

71.3%) agreed that 98% agreed that community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State is allowed to bear arms, 23 (15.3%) disagreed, while 20 (13.3%) were undecided.

Question 4: Do you think that the presence of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State has reduced criminal activities in the state?

Table 7: The percentage of respondents who said that the existence of community policing in Edo State (represented by the Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) had resulted in a decline in crime

Option	Frequency	Percent
Yes	117	78.0
No	25	16.7
Don't know	8	5.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey of Researchers, 2023

Table 7 above shows that 78% of the total respondents agreed that the presence of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State has reduced criminal activities in the state, 16.7% disagreed, while only 5.3% were indifferent.

Question 5: What is your level of confidence in the services of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State?

Table 8: Percentage distribution of respondents on the level of confidence in the services of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State

Option	Frequency	Percent
Highly effective	41	27.3
Effective	69	46.0
Less effective	34	22.7
Not effective	6	4.0
Total	150	100.0

Source: 2023 Field Survey of Researchers

From Table 8 above, 27.3% of all participants gave the community policing services a positive rating, claiming that policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State is ‘highly effective’, 46% said it is effective, 22.7% indicated ‘less effective’ while 4% reported ‘not effective.’

Question 6: What is the performance of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State in assisting the government’s efforts to give the people security?

Table 9: proportion of participants who rated the effectiveness of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State as a support system for the state’s efforts to protect its residents.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Highly effective	50	33.3
Effective	64	42.7
Less effective	34	22.7
Not effective	2	1.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023

The information above demonstrates how the respondents described community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State, Nigeria, as complementing government efforts in the provision of security to citizens: extremely efficient 50 (33.3 per cent), effective 64 (42.7%), less effective 34 (22.7%) and not effective 2 (1.3%).

Objective Three: Relationship between the community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State and the public security forces.

Question 7: Is there any relationship between community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State and Public Security Forces?

Table 10: Percentage distribution of respondents on the relationship between community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State and Public Security Forces.

Options	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	121	80.7
No	13	8.7
Don't know	16	10.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: 2023 Field Survey of Researchers

Table 10 As seen above, 80.7% of respondents felt that there is a connection between local policing in Edo State (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) and Public Security Forces. 8.7% disagreed, while 10.7% were undecided.

Question 8: How would you describe the relationship between community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State and other security agencies i.e. the Nigeria Police and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC)?

Table 11: Percentage distribution of respondents on the relationship between community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State and other security agencies:

Options	Frequency	Percent
Cordial	36	24.0
Not cordial	23	15.3
Collaborative	57	38.0
Complementary	23	15.3
Mutual	9	6.0
Antagonistic	2	1.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

Table 11 above shows that the respondents described the relationship between community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State and other security agencies i.e the Nigeria Police and NSCDC as follows; cordial 36(24%), not cordial 23(15.3%), collaborative 57(38%), complementary 23(15.3%), mutual 9(6%) and 2 (1.3%). Some of the officials of the Nigeria Police Force and Atalakpa agreed that they have cordial working relationships among themselves in the fight against criminality in Edo-State.

Question 9: Do you agree that community policing and the public should work together to provide security in Edo State?

Table 12: Percentage of respondents who said that Edo State needs to partner with the people and community policing to provide security.

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	148	98.7
No	2	1.3
Don't know	-	-
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey of Researchers, 2023

Table 12 demonstrates that 98.7% of respondents thought that a partnership between social and community police is necessary for providing security in Edo State while 1.3% disagreed. A DPO that was interviewed also agreed that there is a need for public and community partnership in the fight against criminality and security in Edo State.

Question 10: Where do you think the relationship/partnership between public/community policing and public Security forces is needed?

Table 13: Percentage distribution of respondents on perceived areas where the relationship/partnership between public/community policing and public Security forces is needed.

ITEMS	YES	NO	MEAN	RANK
Handover/transport of suspects	125(83.3)	25 (16.7)	1.83	3 rd
Conducting investigation	122 (81.3)	28 (18.7)	1.81	4 th
Sharing of information	136 (90.7)	14 (9.3)	1.91	1 st
Fire alert	84 (56.0)	66 (44.0)	1.56	7 th
Armed Patrol	126 (84.0)	24 (16.0)	1.84	2 nd
Joint duty posting	112 (74.7)	38 (25.3)	1.75	5 th
Training and Re-training, Workshops and seminars.	111 (74.0)	39 (26.0)	1.74	6 th
Criterion mean = 1.50				

Source: Field Survey of Researchers, 2023

Table 13 outlines the deemed needs for a relationship or collaboration between the public security forces and the public/community policing alliance. The outcome shows that all items had mean scores above the cutoff when using a threshold average score of 1.50 for the statements that were true. This implies that there is a need for a relationship or partnership between the public/community policing and the Public Security forces in the areas of suspect handover/transport, conducting investigations, sharing of information, fire alert, armed patrol, joint duty posting, training and re-training, workshops, and seminars. A respondent from the interview, who is a Divisional Police Officer (DPO) equally corroborated the fact that police and Atalakpa officials work as a team in the fight against criminality to the extent of them going on joint duty posting in some strategic locations.

Objective Four: Identify the challenges facing community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State

Question 11: What are the various security threats in Edo State Nigeria?

Table 14: Various security risks in Nigeria’s Edo State expressed as a percentage

Items	Frequency	Percent
Lack of machinery/equipment/firearm	6	4.0
Money/human rituals	10	6.7
Kidnapping	20	13.3
Killing/assassination/murder	13	8.7
Improper financing	16	10.7
Bad road network	2	1.3
Lack of cooperation with the community	1	0.7
No vehicle for patrol	2	1.3
Herdsmen killing people in the state	4	2.7
Cultism	4	2.7
Stealing/theft/pick pocketing	7	4.7
Drug trafficking	7	4.7
Child trafficking	2	1.3
Internet/Yahoo fraud/cybercrime	6	4.0
Arm robbery	12	8.0
Unemployment	6	4.0
Poverty	5	3.3
Illiteracy	1	0.7
Corruption	3	2.0
Increase in population	3	2.0
Human right abuse	4	2.7
Thuggery	1	0.7
Social infrastructure	1	0.7
Inequality	1	0.7
Lack of training	1	0.7
Human right abuse	1	0.7

Burglary	1	0.7
Terrorism	4	2.7
Racism	1	0.7
Underdevelopment	1	0.7
Not respected	1	0.7
Political disruption	1	0.7
Increased social vices	2	1.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey of Researchers, 2023

Table 14 above displays the various security threats in Edo State in Nigeria. The major security threats include the following: kidnapping (13.3%), improper financing (10.7%), killing/assassination/murder (8.7%), armed robbery (8%) and money/human rituals (6.7%).

Question 12: What causes the various security threats listed above?

Table 15: Responses in proportions regarding what causes the various security threats

ITEMS	YES	NO	MEANRANK
Unemployment	106 (70.7)	44 (29.3)	1.71 1 st
Increased population	17 (11.3)	133 (88.7)	1.11 5 th
Poverty	52 (34.7)	98 (65.3)	1.35 2 nd
Inequality	25 (16.7)	125 (83.3)	1.17 3 rd
Increased social vices	21 (14.0)	129 (86.0)	1.14 4 th
Others	4 (2.7)	146 (97.3).0)	1.03 6 th
Criterion mean = 1.50			

Source: Field Survey of Researchers, 2023

Table 15 shows the reasons for the numerous security threats shown above. The outcome shows that just one of the items had a mean score over the cutoff using a criterion mean score of 1.50. This suggests that a key contributing factor to the many security threats mentioned above is unemployment. Ranking the causes of the various security threats shows that unemployment (mean = 1.71) constitutes the most prominent cause of the various security threats, closely followed by poverty (mean=1.35), inequality (mean=1.17), increased social vices (mean=1.14) and increased population (mean=1.11), while “other factors” (mean=1.03) is the least in the ranking order. The High Chief interviewed in Ubiaja also listed high rate of unemployment of the youths and poverty as major causes of the various security threats in his community.

Question 13: Identify challenges to security provision in Edo State by community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network).

Table 16: Challenges to security provision in Edo State by community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network)

Items	Frequency	Per cent
Lack of arms/ammunition	27	18.0
The law or policy should help them	7	4.7
Poor funding	29	19.3
Manpower	4	2.7
Poor remuneration	12	8.0
Autonomy\lack of federal govt. support/backing	18	12.0
Kidnapping	4	2.7
Cultism	3	2.0
Lack of training	4	2.7
Inefficiency/Lack of commitment	4	2.7
Laziness of the people in charge	2	1.3

No good road network to patrol the community	2	1.3
Community support	1	0.7
Sharing of information	2	1.3
Bribery and corruption	2	1.3
Unemployment	1	0.7
Illiteracy	5	3.3
Lack of prompt response by police	1	0.7
Collaboration with other security forces	3	2.0
Government policy	2	1.3
Shortage of patrol vehicle	8	5.3
They are aggressive	1	0.7
Lack of social amenities	2	1.3
Fear of possible hijack by the community due to familiarity	4	2.7
Lack of trust or confidence in the community policing	2	1.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey of Researchers, 2023

Table 16 displays the challenges to security provision in Edo State community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network). The major challenges include the following: lack of arms/ammunition (18%), poor funding (19.3%), lack of autonomy/federal government backing (12%), poor remuneration (8%) and shortage of patrol vehicles (5.3%). The feedback from the interview conducted with the Deputy Zonal Commandants of (Atalakpa) Edo State Security Network in Ewohimi also corroborates the fact that poor funding and lack of arms and sophisticated weapons are two of the major challenges facing Atalakpa in Edo State.

Discussion of Findings

According to the study's conclusions:

- i. Government is in charge of ensuring the safety of people and their properties;
- ii. The government is ineffective in fulfilling its duty of guaranteeing security;
- iii. The emergence of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) was borne out of the need to reduce crimes and social vices, and ensure security of lives and properties, collaborate with/ complement other security agencies in fighting crime and criminality and ensure peace in the rural areas;
- iv. Provision of security and safety is a challenge in Edo State;
- v. There is a need for community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State;
- vi. The presence of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State has reduced criminal activities in Edo State;
- vii. The level of confidence in the services of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State is high;
- viii. In Edo State, Nigeria, community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) provides an efficient supplement to government efforts to provide security for its residents;
- ix. There are relationships between community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State and Public Security Forces;
- x. The relationship between community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State and other security agencies (Nigeria Police and NSCDC) is cordial, collaborative and complementary;
- xi. Community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in Edo State has former/retired public security officers among their staff/ members;
- xii. There is a need for public/community policing cooperation in supplying safety in Edo State;
- xiii. The relationship/partnership between public/community policing partnership and public Security forces is needed;

- xiv. The relationship/partnership between public/community policing partnership and public Security forces is needed in the area of handing-over/transporting of suspects, conducting investigation, sharing of information, fire alert, armed patrol, joint duty posting, training and re-training; workshops and seminars;
- xv. Kidnapping, improper financing, killing/assassination/murder, armed robbery and money/human rituals constitute the different security risks in Nigeria's Edo State;
- xvi. Unemployment remains a major factor responsible for various security threats being experienced in the state; and
- xvii. Lack of arms/ammunition, poor funding, lack of autonomy/federal government backing, poor remuneration, and shortage of patrol vehicles among others are the major challenges to security provision in Edo State by community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network).

Recommendations

Sequel to the findings from the study, the following suggestions and recommendations are made. The study concludes that the responsibility of provision of security is not effectively made by the government, hence there is the need for restructuring and overhauling of community policing (Atalakpa- Edo State) in order to meet the goals and aspirations of its founders and for effective service delivery. To ensure this,

- i. There should be better collaboration and partnership between community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) and other public security institutions for handing-over/transporting of suspects, conducting investigations, sharing of information, fire alert, armed patrol, joint duty posting, training and re-training; attending workshops and seminars with a view to fighting crime and criminality and entrenching peace in the rural areas.
- ii. The Government should formulate and implement laudable economic policies geared towards job creation and improving the living standard of its citizens in order to reduce their tendency of getting involved in crimes.

- iii. The law establishing community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) should be overhauled and reviewed by making provisions for the bearing of arms/ammunition for enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of security forces and improved security architecture.
- iv. Government, NGOs and philanthropists should show greater commitment to the funding of community policing (Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network) in order to enhance their commitment to work and improve national security.
- v. The Government should ensure better conditions of service for officers of Atalakpa-Edo State Security Network through prompt payment of salaries, provision of befitting accommodation, payment of leave bonuses, making provision for retirement age, and job security in order to boost their morale and enhance service delivery.

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