

## Factors Influencing the Emergence of Community Involvement in Crime Control in Kuje Area Council of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The study examined the factors that led to emergence of community involvement in crime control in Kuje Area Council of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The widespread of crime in modern society have called for serious concern to all citizens and becomes a worrisome issue in Nigeria. Many communities in Nigeria have experienced different types of crimes in recent years. The increase in crime rates and the inability of the Nigeria police and other security agencies to deal with the situation effectively have given rise to community involvement as a supplement to traditional policing. The study utilized broken window theory to explain the problem. The study employed survey research design using cluster sampling technique to select 111 respondents from the total population of Kuje Area Council. The data collected through questionnaires were subjected to descriptive statistics which were presented in tables showing frequency and percentage responses of the respondents. In-depth interview conducted was analyzed using content analysis of narration. Based on the findings, the study underlined key factors that led to the emergence of community involvement in crime control is primarily due to a combination of factors including public distrust of the police, their perceived inability to effectively control crime, the rise in crime rates, particularly kidnapping, terrorism, robbery, and drug trafficking, which further highlighted the need for community involvement. The study recommends that the police in the Kuje Area Council of FCT, Abuja should involve community members as a strategy to control crime since they are not sufficient to fight the growing rate of crime in the community. In addition, strengthen collaborative effort between law enforcement agencies and community members in proactive responses to crime and other social vices will go along way in preventing and controlling crimes in FCT and Nigeria as whole.*

**Keywords:** Crime Control, Community Involvement, Kuje Area Council, Police, Lives and Property

### Introduction

The major challenges confronting communities today is the increasing crimes and criminalities. The prevailing crime in contemporary society has course serious concern among many scholars in recent time (Mohammed, 2022). It is important to note that the weak response of the Nigerian police towards crime of various types has continues to wreak havoc on lives and property of many citizens in both rural and urban areas of the country (Sambo and Sule, 2021). The entire criminal justice system of the country is fast collapsing which is evident in its ineffectiveness in discharging its responsibility (Arisukwu, Igbolekwu, Oye, Oyeyipo, Asamu, Rasak, & Oyekola, 2020).

In addition, the Nigerian police who serve as security representative of the government in every community have failed to achieve its mandate secure and maintain safe environment for Nigerians. Thus, the country is fast losing its hold to criminality thereby making the crime rate to increase significantly. No part of the country is safe any longer for businesses which called for community involvement in controlling crimes. The importance of community involvement in crime prevention and control became clear in the mid-1990s as cases of robbery, murder, burglary, assault, rape, kidnapping, terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking and abuses, smuggling etc., began to rise and it became clear that the police and other security agencies could not effectively control and prevent them (Hope, 2019). With the development and early success of community and neighbourhood watch operations, residents understood they could do something about the local criminal issues that affected them.

According to Mohammed (2022), the importance of community involvement in crime prevention and control cannot be over emphasized. Hence, the residents of every community in Nigeria are inspired to fully involve in communal crime prevention because that is the only way to take responsibility for local communities to be a safer ground for people to live. Baker (2023) believe that the adequate solution for crime related problems must be based on community participation and citizens' involvement with their communities to solve their peculiar problems. The most important element of community crime prevention appears to be bringing about social interaction, whereby residents of the community maintain a degree of familiarity with each other. Such interaction and familiarity should at least make it possible to detect strangers in the community. Hope (2019), suggest that such interactions may lead to a cohesive neighbourhood. The basic philosophy of community crime-prevention is that social interaction and citizen familiarity can play an important role in preventing, detecting, and reporting criminal behaviour (Arisukwu et al., 2020 & Rotimi, 2021). Community participation is regarded as an important tool for crime prevention.

The statutory role of the police and other formal security agencies in crime prevention and control remains vitally important for the people and stability of the entire society. Right from the colonial era the police have been protecting lives and properties. However, the Nigerian Police Force and other security agency which is supposed to be the hope of the common man, or the ordinary man has turned out to become something people are afraid of even to talk about in public places because of corruption, delayed justice, impartiality among others (Rotimi, 2021). The increasing public concern about crime in recent times has resulted in the role of community participation in crime prevention. Presently, criminal activities seem to be on the increase while the police force appears to become dysfunctional despite government huge expenditure on crime control (Odekunle, 2014). But this dysfunctional or inability of the prosecutorial agent of the state to combat the crime phenomenon is usually blamed on lack of sophisticated crime control equipment, poor welfare package, poor training of personnel, lack of assistance/information from civil society, poor budgeting allocation among others. This explains why the efficiency of the police as a law enforcement agency is very much in doubt. These further elaborate on the role of community participation in crime prevention and control to complement the efforts of the police force and other security agencies.

In recent years, many communities in Nigeria have witnessed crimes of various descriptions. Kuje Area Council of FCT, Abuja is not an exception. Thus, crime is becoming a problem in contemporary Nigeria. The police who are the primary agents in the fight against crime are ineffective. Their ineffectiveness may be as a result of the fact that they are understaffed, under-equipped and lacked public cooperation Rotimi (2021). These have created problem of under policing in Nigeria including Kuje Area Council. Thus, violent and property crimes are committed daily without detection and prosecution in the area council. Many people are being dispossessed of their valuable property and others are killed or maimed for life by criminal groups like armed bandits and kidnappers. The increase in crime wave and the inability of the Nigeria police to deal with the situation effectively have given rise to the community involvement to complement the role of conventional policing.

Indeed, several factors have contributed to the emergence of community involvement in crime control in Nigeria. These include the perceived ineffectiveness of traditional policing methods, the need for enhanced security due to rising crime rates, and the desire for greater community participation in addressing local issues. Additionally, a lack of trust in law enforcement, coupled with a need for more localized and responsive approaches to crime prevention, has spurred community engagement. Against this backdrop, community participation seems more prominent as an alternative strategy for crime prevention and control in Kuje Area Council of FCT, Abuja which this study seeks to examine the role of community involvement in crime prevention and control in society, particularly rural community.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Emergence of Community Involvement in Crime Control**

Community involvement in crime control emerged out of public distrust and reactions to the inability of the police to protect them and the disconnection between the public and the police in the community. According to Lateef (2019), the involvement of community members (tied with common values and social bonds or friendship ties) has positive effect on crime prevention and control. The over reliance on the traditional (professional) policing style neglected the contributions of members of the community in crime prevention and problem solving. It made policing to be reactionary without effective engagement of the public to proactively prevent crime and solve problems. The focus of community policing is problem-solving and community engagement through partnership in crime prevention (Bayley, 1994). According to Igbo (2016), and Lateef (2019); for policing style to be recognized as community policing, there must be included some type of consultation or collaboration between the police and local citizens for the purpose of defining, prioritizing, and/or solving problems. According to Dambazau (2009), Police partnership with the public is the cornerstone of the contemporary policing. The people present a viable human resource if effectively mobilized for crime prevention and control. The challenge in Nigeria is that the police is a colonial creation, created mainly to enforce colonial laws and not necessarily to serve the security needs of the people. So right from inception, the police in Nigeria were not recruited and trained to serve the people. This deprivation of service to the people has been sustained through police maltreatment of the public in the stations or in the streets as suspects. The public are therefore apprehensive of partnering with the police in crime prevention and control. This growing mutual suspicion between the public and the police is the major challenge affecting community participation in crime prevention in rural Nigeria.

Community involvement in crime control focuses on making the police and the public efficient partners in crime prevention and control in a community. It pays more attention to service to the people rather than mere law enforcement. It relies on decentralization of police organization, community engagement/collaboration, and problem solving to achieve its goals and focus on the community. Another challenge is satisfying the security priorities of members of the community as victims, suspected offenders, residents, visitors, indigenes, settlers and business owners (Dickson, 2017). According to Baker (2023), informal means of social control prevents property crime more than violent crimes in a society. This is because violent crimes like rape occur in remote and isolated areas. Harmonizing the complex security concerns of members of the community with that of the police and government of the day is a huge challenge in Nigeria. For instance, Matsukawa & Tatsuki (2018) argues that violence against women is on the increase globally, women are often not represented adequately in any community platforms for crime prevention and control. In fact, in Nigeria women are considered properties to be protected by men and are therefore not giving opportunity to participate in community policing operations. This exclusion of women who are major victims of rape and other domestic violence is a disservice to the society. Also, it is important to note that the quality of contacts the police have with the public in the community will affect their perception and willingness to engage with police in crime prevention and control in the community.

According to Alemika (2015), several factors contributed to this shift which include:

- i. **Public Distrust of Police:** Negative perceptions of the police, including issues like corruption, brutality, and lack of responsiveness, led to a breakdown in trust and cooperation between the public and law enforcement.
- ii. **Ineffectiveness of Traditional Policing:** The traditional, centralized approach to policing was seen as insufficient to address the diverse and complex crime challenges, especially in rural areas with limited resources.
- iii. **Rise in Crime Rates:** Escalating crime rates, including violent crimes and property theft, created a sense of insecurity and urgency for communities to find solutions.
- iv. **Resource Limitations:** The police often lacked the necessary resources, equipment, and manpower, particularly in rural areas, making it difficult to effectively patrol, investigate, and prevent crime.
- v. **Community Empowerment:** The success of early community-based initiatives, such as neighbourhood watch programs, demonstrated the potential for community participation in crime prevention and control.
- vi. **Social and Economic Factors:** Poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities, particularly among young people, were identified as drivers of crime, further emphasizing the need for community-based solutions.

**Cultural and Social Context:** Strong community ties and social bonds can be leveraged to foster cooperation, information sharing, and collective action against crime.

These factors collectively contributed to the recognition that community participation is crucial for effective crime control in Nigeria, leading to the development and implementation of community policing strategies.

### Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Broken Window theory which was developed and popularized James Q. Wilson and George Kelling (2022). According to the theory, failing to address minor infractions leads to a flood of greater offenses (Barley, 1994). Hoodlums will continue to shatter windows if damaged ones are not fixed. In other words, a broken window sends the message to criminals that a society lacks informal social control and is hence incapable or unwilling to defend itself against a criminal invasion (Barley, 1994). According to the argument, it is not so much the shattered window itself that is essential as the message that people take from it. It is a sign of the community's defenselessness and fragility, as well as a reflection of the people's cohesion.

The clear benefit of this theory over many of its criminological forefathers is that it allows efforts in the sphere of criminal justice policy to impact change rather than depending on social policy. Modern innovations have reduced the theory's usefulness since some crimes are committed by persons who do not live in the crime's surroundings.

The idea is essential in understanding community engagement in crime prevention because it urges the community to concentrate on keeping order in order to battle both crime fear and crime itself. The idea also illustrates how a collaborative effort by both official security and community residents may assist reduce crime in the neighbourhood.

### Methodology

The study adopts survey research design in studying factor that necessitated the emergence community involvement on crime control in Kuje Area Council of FCT, Abuja. The study purposively selected two electoral wards (Kabi and Gaube) in Kuje Area Council of FCT, Abuja, These communities share a number of things in common, they are both rural communities, they are neighbouring communities sharing common boundary, with various quarters headed by the leaders of those quarters and above all being presided over by their traditional rulers who are the paramount rulers of the communities. They are agrarian communities with predominant subsistence agricultural practices. Their markets are the major pull factors that attract people

from far and near to trade in mainly food items and other domestic consumables at home. The language commonly spoken are English, Hausa and Gbaga with a mixture of other ethnic languages in Nigeria such as Gwandara, Koro and Yakum.

The population for this study was drawn from the two selected electoral wards of Kabi and Gaube, the study population comprises of people who have stayed at least one year in the study areas. There are between eighteen and twenty-three compounds in Kabi and five major areas in Gaube. Data was collected from respondents with the use of questionnaires in the two communities selected for this study, which are Kabi and Gaube. This was selected using purposive sampling method to cut across and represent divers' qualities of the demographics of the two communities. One hundred and eleven questionnaires were gotten back from both study areas out of one hundred and forty that were randomly distributed in selected areas. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of simple percentages. All the analyses were done using SPSS 25 version program.

## Results

**Table 1 Knowledge of community involvement in crime control**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aware	95	85.6
Not aware	16	14.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Work, 2025

Table 1 shows that 85.6 percent of the respondents are aware of community involvement in crime control while 14.4 percent of the respondents are those that are not aware of community involvement in crime control in the study area. Therefore, it means that respondents are aware of community involvement in combating crime in Kuje Area Council. In addition, during an interaction with some community leader reveals that members of community in the study area were fully aware of the existence of community involvement in crime control. In fact, the community normally operate on a regular basis, especially at night and sometimes they do arrest criminals during their operations.

**Table 2 Factors that necessitate the emergence of community involvement in crime control**

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Police ineffectiveness	30	27.0
Lack of trust in police	30	27.0
Increase in crime wave	44	39.6
Don't know	7	6.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Work, 2025

Table 2 shows that 27 percent of the respondents believe that the emergence of community participation in combating crime was because of police ineffectiveness to crime, 27 percent are those that are of the opinion that it is lack of presence of police, 39.6 percent of the respondents believe that community participation emerges as a result of the increase in crime wave, while 6.3 percent are of view that they don't know the reason for the emergence of community participation in combating crime. This indicates that majority of the respondents believe that the emergence of community participation in combating crime emerges as a result of the increase in crime waves. Community participation in crime control in Nigeria was necessitated by several factors, including the limitations of traditional policing, the rising crime rates, and the need for a more collaborative approach to safety and security. Essentially, the public's distrust of the police, coupled with the police's inability to effectively manage crime, led to the recognition that community involvement is crucial for a safer environment. In line with

the above, during an interaction with some community leaders they opined that increase in crime rate couple with the ineffectiveness of formal security agencies necessitate the introduction of community participation in their area. He narrates those crimes like petty theft, house breaking and youth violence have significantly increased which is the reason for the Introduction of community participation combating crime.

**Table 3 Level of community involvement in crime control**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High	36	32.4
High	46	41.5
Average	19	17.1
Low	10	9.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Work, 2025

In table 3, 32.4 percent of the respondents believe that the level of community participation in controlling crime is very high, 41.5 percent of respondents believe that it is high, 17.1 percent believe that the level is average, and 9 percent of respondents believe that it is low. It implies that community involvement in crime control is high among the inhabitant of Kuje Area Council of Abuja considering the persistent crime and criminalities in the area. Community participation in crime control in Nigeria is crucial, especially in the face of limited police resources and rising crime rates. Effective community policing, which involves active collaboration between citizens and law enforcement, has shown positive results in reducing crime and fostering a sense of security. This collaborative approach builds trust, promotes accountability, and allows for a more targeted approach to addressing the root causes of crime.

**Table 4 Responses on the rate of crime in their community**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High	32	28.8
High	37	33.3
Average	26	23.4
Low	10	9.0
Very low	6	5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Work, 2025

The table 4 indicates that there is high rate of crime in the study area as indicated by 33.3 percent of the respondents, while 28.8 percent said that crime rate was very high, only 9 percent accepted that crime rate was low. This implies that there is high rate of crime in the study area which influence community involvement to control crime; hence, the need for adequate government and community security intervention measures. The high crime rate in the study area is committed more due to absence of police within the area. This result supports the argument that people indulged in crime in Nigeria to lack of police presence.

**Table 5 Responses on the most common crime in their community**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Theft	78	70.3
Drug abuse	14	12.6
Assault	9	8.1
Murder	5	4.5
Rape	5	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Work, 2025

The table 5 above shows that theft (70.3 percent) is the most common crime committed

in the study area. This is followed by drug abuse. The list among the crimes committed in Kuje area council is assault and murder as well as rape. Thefts are usually driven by hunger, poverty and want. Petty thefts/stealing of domestic products are the common items stolen in the area as attested to by the respondents. This result is in line with the crime statistics of the Nigerian police Statistics (2024) which stated that property crime was the highest reported crime in Nigeria.

**Table 6 Responses on the causes of crime in the community**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poverty/Unemployment	76	68.5
Laziness	8	7.2
Lack of parental control	17	15.3
Greed	6	5.4
Illiteracy	4	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Work, 2025

Majority of the respondents (68.5 percent) as shown in 6 are of the opinion that poverty and unemployment are the major causes of crime in Kuje communities. This is followed by lack of parental control. This indicates that the family as one of the first and major socialization unit in child upbringing has a major role in shaping the life and future of its members. The blame should not only be put of government for high unemployment rate, family members should assist in training and guiding their young members to trade the part of honour and hard work and not to waste their time and future waiting for elusive white collar jobs that are limited.

## **Discussion**

The findings of the study on factors influence the emergence of community involvement in crime control shows that the number of police officials in Kuje Area Council is grossly inadequate to cater for the security challenges and crime management in urban and rural areas (Muhammed, 2022). Security is everybody's business as all members of the community including the police are major stake holders in crime prevention (Orisikwu et al, 2020). The people need to partner with the police in crime prevention and control to promote a safer and healthy community. Informal security agents like vigilante and neighbourhood watch need to synergize with the police and other security agencies to enhance safety and protect human rights of the people (Hope, 2019). This partnership will explore the benefits of the abundant social capital (human resources) available in the rural community. The gap in police low staff strength and low budgetary provisions by government cannot be covered by technology alone. Human beings constitute stake holders that will drive and manage deployed technology to achieve results of a safe and peaceful society. The capacity of this human resource can be boosted through regular trainings, interactions and enlightenment. When human beings are the drivers of security and safety measures in a community, it leads to sustainable peace and harmony within the community (Lateef, 2019). Criminal elements within the community become uncomfortable as the light is focused on them by other community members. Engagement of the human social capital will make the people to own the crime prevention approaches adopted and bond better among themselves. Each one will then become his or her neighbour's keeper. The benefit of a safe and secured rural community in driving peace and development in rural Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. The atmosphere for insecurity makes the entire society a victim and frustrates human dignity. Therefore all the agents of socialization in the society must uphold and sustain the cultural norms and values that promote safety and team work in preventing crime and control (Alemika, 2015).

Community-policing strategy offers a veritable vehicle of driving a sustainable crime prevention and control efforts and problem solving in rural Nigeria. The public especially the youths constitute a major resource needed to achieve peace and secured community in partnership with the police. These youths are already aware of the culture and the people and are

therefore able to proactively nib crime from the bud and solve problems together with the police in a community. Community-policing give the people the voice and choice in security matters within their community (Orisikwu et al, 2020). This confers a sense of belonging to the people and facilitates easy flow of information and ideas between the people and the police. This synergy will make the people the police and the police the people (Dambazau, 2009). The deployment of modern technology in crime profiling and data collection will bust the effectiveness of community policing (Sambo, 2021).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Crime occurs in both urban and rural areas of human society. The pattern and rate of crime in society differ from one another. Members of communities particularly the rural populace suffers from the adverse effects of poverty and unemployment which result to reason for crime in most communities in Nigeria. There is usually low police presence in terms of police size and patrol in most communities. This makes it possible for some criminal elements to hide in communities while committing crime. The community members therefore must be part of the security operations in their community to proactively prevent and control crime through collaborations with the police in community policing, vigilante and other informal means of crime control.

To achieve a safe community, the members of community and the police must partner through community-policing in crime prevention and control within their communities in guaranteed safety of lives and property. If this is done effectively, our community will no longer be a haven for criminals to hide and perpetuate their havocs undetected or reported to police. A more people-oriented and community participatory policing style is recommended. It also unveils common crime challenges in Nigerian communities and helps the police and the people to focus on crime prevention and control. There should be adequate police patrol in rural areas to ward off would be criminals both day and nighttime.

Rural community members must form vigilante groups; neighbourhood watch and partner with police through community policing in preventing crime in their area.

The government should provide adequate mechanism to checkmate the police roles in protecting the life and property in the study area to mitigate crime rate.

The community members should ensure that they corporate and provide full support to the security agencies to ensure that the community are safe as well as report all suspected criminals in their communities.

Security is every body's business and to this end the family, traditional and religious bodies should be used to socialize members of the community on their roles and expected security awareness and actions in the community. Crime reporting to local leaders, family heads and the police should be made to become a way of life by all community's members.

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