



## COMMUNAL INITIATIVE TOWARDS CRIME CONTROL AND PREVENTION IN KEFFI TOWNSHIP, KEFFI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NASARAWA STATE-NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Since the dawn of human civilization, crime has been a reoccurring problem. There is hardly any society in the world today without the challenges of crime. This paper examines the communal initiative towards crime control and prevention in Keffi Township, Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State-Nigeria. The social survey research design was adopted for this paper. Data were collected using quantitative and qualitative methods. 101 questionnaires were distributed and 99 retrieved from respondents from four selected electoral wards in Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State-Nigeria, through simple random techniques. The technique used in the analysis of data for the paper was the quantitative data analyzed using univariate analysis for this study. Data collected showed that loss of lives and properties are implications of crime and criminality among the residents of the study areas and mobilization of the private security group and private neighborhood patrol team are the two top measures often taken by residents of the area to control and prevent crime occurrence. The paper recommends that there is a need to adjust our political and economic system to alleviate poverty. Alleviating and alleviating absolute poverty from our society will go a long way to not only reduce the menace of crime but also reduced the rate of its occurrence.*

**Keywords:** *Communal, Crime, Crime Prevention, Crime Control, Township*

### **1. Introduction**

Since the dawn of human civilization, crime has been a reoccurring problem. There is hardly any society in the world today without the challenges of crime. Therefore, violations of formal rules do occur in every society (Jain, 2012). Criminal activities have become a way of life in several societies today. With competitiveness and material permeating every sphere of life, social disorder is the inevitable result. New values like individualism and permissive behaviours are coming up. It has been rightly commented that criminal behaviour is a form of ‘adjustment’ brought about by the pressures and tensions of existence, especially frustration. Thus, in a way, the criminal himself is also a victim of his own crime (Hale, 1996).

The concept of crime is essentially concerned with the social order; it deals with the mutual respect and trust for the rights of others, regulating the conduct of the members of society. Although most people believe in peace and harmony, few deviate from this normal behaviour



pattern. This imposes an obligation on the state to maintain normalcy in society which is performed through the instrumentality of law globally. Crime is a violation of the criminal law, which can subsequently followed by legal punishment.

With the rapid increase in urban population left unchecked, the crime rate is also on the increase with its attendant forms. According to Osomo (2004), the rate of urbanization in Nigeria is at 5.3 percent which is said to be among the highest in the world. It has been argued that as urbanization increases, so does crime. The determinants of crime in urban areas would include such economic variables as income inequality and unemployment; socio-economic and demographic variables such as education, population and gender. The rapid rate of urbanization, a factor that combines elements of population density, cultural clash, and population instability, is a strong correlate of crime rates.

The UN Centre for Human Settlement (HABITAT) (1998) notes that by the year 2000, almost half of the world's population would be living in urban areas, compared to 17% in 1950. By the year 2025 less than ten (10) years from now, the Centre estimated the proportion to reach 69 percent. Similarly, the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (2000) observes that the burden of the world's urban population is being carried by developing nations. By 1990, fifty-eight (58) of the one hundred (100) largest metropolitan areas were located in developing countries, as were twenty-two (22) of the world's thirty-three (33) cities with more than five (5) million inhabitants (Jain, 2012). Urbanization is said to have uprooted and dislocated communities and create new inequalities between the 'haves' and the 'haves not.' At the same time, traditional value systems and structures that once served to restrict criminal behaviour have been undermined; people have become isolated, alienated and less constrained by social norms. Population size as a factor in urbanization is said to have triggered criminality (Smah, 2014).

In Nigeria, the police formally established in 1861 constitute the main arm or organ of the criminal justice system which includes the court and prison (correction centre). They are set up to preserve law and especially prevent crime, investigate crime, detect and apprehend offenders, protect life and properties and perform other functions in conjunction with other security agencies namely: Department of State Services, Civil Defence Corps, Customs and Immigration among others (Smah, 2014). The above-highlighted functions or core mandate of the Nigerian police can be actualized if it correlates with the United Nations recommendation of a police-citizen ratio of 1:300 among other crime prevention and control strategies. The non-correlation of this ratio in Nigeria and lack of other crime control and prevention mechanism, criminal gangs, and organized crime syndicate is increasing in sophistication in terms of their roots, foliage, and possession of arms and ammunitions far beyond the knowledge and imagination of the Nigerian police and other security agencies. Based on the foregoing, the paper assessed communal initiative towards crime control and prevention in Keffi Township, Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State-Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria has witnessed an upsurge in crimes during the past two decades; increasing incidence of armed robbery has led to a paralyzing fear which has in turn affected economic and social life in the country. As a result of the growth rates and severity of criminality, successive governments in the country since the early 1980s have introduced diverse crime control measures but without



much success. To effectively combat crime and reduce the fear of crime, comprehensive socio-economic development planning aimed at effective and equitable social services delivery as well as efficacious citizens' political participation is necessary. But with the growing population of Keffi town and the increase in urbanization, the rates of crime keep increasing in the area which in turn affects the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of the people due to fear of crime or being a victim of crime. To contend with the consequences of criminal activities, which include lives and properties, fear of the unknown, victimization by conventional criminals, amongst others have now affected the people of Keffi psychologically with help from Nigeria police which is not enough, residents of Keffi has resolved to pay for private security.

The impact of fear of crime has led to depression, decreased physical functioning and lower quality of life among people Keffi, despite the various crime control measures and task forces that have respectively been introduced and established during the past two decades, criminals continue to operate in greater number over a wide sphere. Millner (1998) argued that 'where people have no confidence in the ability of the state to protect them from crime, alternative forms of private crime control initiative, ranging from private to security firms, to vigilantes groups and death squad often emerge'.

This concern has led to the emergence of private security initiatives for the prevention and control of crime and incivility. The private initiatives arose as consequences nature of the failure of the state and her security apparatus to protect the life and property of citizens especially in Keffi and its environs due to fear of crime. The form of communal crime and social control initiative in Keffi town include neighborhood patrol, vigilantes (Tsohon Kasuwa Vigilante Group, Korofi Youth Vigilante club, Low-cost Volunteer Vigilante Group and GRA Concern Vigilante Association among others), and Private Security or Corporate Guards, which at times led to 'mob action and jungle justice'. Most times, crime suspects would have been killed or molested before police arrived (Agbola 1997, Fabiyi 2004).

Studies have been conducted on the communal initiative towards crime control and prevention in various parts of the globe including Nasarawa State and Nigeria at large. Nevertheless, not an iota of such studies has been conducted on a communal initiative towards crime control and prevention in Keffi Township, Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State-Nigeria that is the gap the study anticipates to fill. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the communal initiative towards crime control and prevention in Keffi Township, Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State-Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The research answers the following questions:

- i. What is the nature of criminal activities in Keffi Township, Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State-Nigeria?
- ii. Are the police effectively and efficiently preventing and controlling crime occurrences in Keffi Township, Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State-Nigeria?
- iii. What are the implications of criminal activities on the residents of Keffi Township, Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State-Nigeria?



- iv. What measure or strategy do residents of Keffi Township evolve to preventing and controlling criminal activities outside the formal crime control and prevention mechanism?
- v. How effective and efficient is this mechanism or strategy to the crime rate in Keffi Township?

## 2. Literature Review

### Crime

Crime is the violation of formally enacted laws and is referred to as formal deviance which includes: robbery, theft, rape, murder, and assault, (Albert, 2003). crime Tan (2013) defines crime as a violation of 'property rights' where the focus was prioritized on crime against property. This will not give a comprehensive understanding of crime; hence there are many other areas where crimes are committed. For instance, crimes can be established in corruption, rape, terrorist criminal activities, kidnapping, human trafficking, assault, vagrancy and failure to pay public tax, utility bills or transport, drugs and narcotics abuse, wanton environmental destruction and unauthorized dumping of toxic substances (Tenibiaje, 2010; Tretter, 2013).

From an ideological perspective particularly in criminal law, crime is regarded as an act or omission forbidden by law on pain of punishment or else is a violation of the law (Usman, Yakubu, & Bello, 2012). Similarly, Tenibiaje (2010) expresses crime as an act that violates the law of the society or serious offence against the law of the society for which there is a severe punishment by law. In other words, crime is any culpable action or omission prohibited by law and punishable by the state. In these views, crime is a violation of any law of a given society and offenders are punishable following the set of that law. These laws can either be criminal laws or societal unwritten laws, norms and values, any offender or violator of such laws is culpable to punishment.

### Theoretical Framework

This paper is situated within the functionalism theory. Functionalism also refers to as the structural-functionalist approach is one of the oldest and still a relevant theory in sociology and many other social science disciplines today. This sociological perspective was propounded upon a twin emphasis:

- i. Application of the scientific method to the objective social world and
- ii. The use of an analogy between the individual organism and society (Jain, 2011).

The exponents of this sociological perspective are scholars like Durkheim (1888-1917) the French sociologist whose writings form the basis of this theory, Parsons (1902-1979) - a Harvard University sociologist who also played a significant role in the development and advancement of the theory; Weber (1864-1920) and another European sociologist (Schaefer, 2004). The theory emphasizes the way that the parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability. It sees society as a vast network of connected parts, each of which helps to maintain the system as a whole. According to the approach, if an aspect of social life does not contribute functionally to a society's stability, survival, or continuous existence – if it does not serve some identifiably useful function or promote value consensus among members of society; and such function can be adopted and performed by another institution. It is upon this tenet that this theory proved relevant for this study; due to the Nigerian police deficiency to effectively and efficiently police the study area (Keffi Township) has led to the emergence of private security organization such as: to complement the effort of the Nigerian police to secure lives and properties in Keffi Township.



The analogy between society and organization as emphasized by this theoretical approach focused attention on the homeostatic nature of the social systems; social systems work to maintain equilibrium and to return to it after external shocks disturb the balance among social institutions. Such social equilibrium is achieved most importantly through the socialization of the society into the basic values and norms of that society so that consensus is reached. Though the perspective is not without its criticisms; first, it has been criticized for it focuses overly on the good aspects of society paying little attention to the society's other faces. In this, it presents the image of some utopia – a different world from everyday experience. Secondly, it does not adequately address change, concentrating instead on the existing conditions.

### **Communal Initiative towards Crime Control and Prevention in Nigeria**

The effective sustenance of the society is hinged on an efficient law enforcement process (Obasanjo & Mabogunje, 1992). However, this is not so with Nigeria where crime and violence are moving on a fast lane. Given the spate of violence, and the level of degeneration in the body polity, one may be right to conclude that the Nigeria Police have exhibited glaring inadequacies, and demonstrated incapability to effectively enforce the law and maintain order in the society. It is no longer safe to walk alone mostly during the night; Robberies, assassination, arson, looting of public properties and child theft amongst other vices have become the rule and order of the day.

The several years of military misrule have militarized the psyche of the average Nigerian to a point where life became meaningless. By a calculated design, the police have been so much politicized and ethicized to a point where esprit de corps was utterly nonexistent. In the hope of perpetuating self-succession and destroying police cohesiveness, the police were owed several arrears of salary as a way of subjecting them to mental anguish and inactivity; by the time the country returned to democratic rule in 1999, what was left of the initial not-too-efficient law or enforcement agency, was an unarmed, demoralized, 'rag-tag semi-zombies' agency. Most of them survive by naked extortion from commercial drivers at various illegal checkpoints set up for that purpose.

It is against this background that one can begin to comprehend the reasons behind some level of the collapse of police ineffectiveness in law enforcement. It also explains why some police join armed robbery gangs while others rent out or sell their rifles to armed robbers for an agreed fee. No wonder the widespread public loss of confidence in the police as well as the rising wave of armed robberies by criminals emboldened by their close connection to the police. It could therefore be argued that, by helping to arm the criminals, the police are also a constituent part of police ineffectiveness. The attendant uncertainty of life dating back to the military era has led to the emergence of ethnic militia groups all over the country whose activities have constituted a threat to the security of lives and properties. In the face of repressive military rule which peaked during the infamous Abacha dictatorial years, several ethnic militant groups emerged to take their fate into their own hands. The vanguards of these new forms of resistance to constituted authority were the Ogoni and the Andoni peoples of Rivers State among others (led by the late environmentalist, Ken Saro Wiwa) who were demanding autonomy after years of official environmental degradation and social deprivation of their communities. The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) triggered the ill wind of change and 'the fever caught on' (Kegley, 1995).

Many other groups have since emerged under different aegis of demanding their ethnic rights. In the Southwest, there is the O'dua People's Congress (OPC) founded by Dr. Frederick Fasehun in





August 1994 as a non-violent pan-Yoruba organization seeking to protect the interest of the Yoruba race (Ayode, 1989). Holding sway in the North is the Arewa People's Congress acting as an antithesis against the activities of the OPC. The Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Bakassi Boys and the Igbo People's Congress, some couched under the umbrella of Ohaneze, are in the Southeast agitating for Igbo nationality cause. In a seeming effort not to be outdone in this rat race syndrome for ethnic identity are the Ijaw Youth Movement and the Egbesu among others, defending the minority rights in the oil-rich South-South. One feature common to all these groups notwithstanding the furor generated by their activities is that they all have basic appeals. Even the most ardent critics of the groups will testify to these appeals manifested by the tacit support given to them by the government at the state level. While the State Governors have did come out openly to ban these groups some state Houses of Assembly have duly recognized them in their states of operations. In Anambra State, for example, the state legislative body provided guidelines for their 'Bakassi Boys' operations (Fabiya, 2004). The former Governor Mbadinuju even co-opted them as the state vigilante group on the public payroll.

One major problem with these militia groups is the threat they pose to the Federal Government which does not recognize them and outlawed them. Explaining the rationale for declaring the groups' activities illegal, the then Minister for Police Affairs, Major-General Jemibewon (Red.), cited the arbitrariness of the outfits' (especially OPC) activities as the major reason (The Comet, 2000). However, this tirade has no meaning for the states which count on the militant groups for the protection of lives and properties in the face of police inertia.

Another major factor surrounding these groups and which constitutes an obstacle to effective law enforcement is their means of operation which threatens the nascent democracy in Nigeria. The militia groups have usurped the role of the regular police in contravention of 1999 constitutional provisions (The Constitution, 1999: Section 220). Concerning this outrage is the 'jungle justice' approach which, aside from usurping judicial role, has led to the loss of many innocent lives and properties in flagrant disregard for fundamental human rights including rights to a fair hearing.

### **3. Methodology**

The study was conducted in Keffi town, Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. A social survey design was adopted in this study where information was gathered from a sample of individuals. According to the National Population Census Commission (2006), Keffi Local Government Area has a population figure of 92,801. However, the target population is 51,325 people being the population of people living in the four electoral wards which include both males and females between the ages of eighteen (18) years and above who are residents within the four selected electoral wards. The population of the four selected electoral wards was projected at 75,776 as of 2020 based on the annual growth rate of 3.3% using the geometric formula. This paper applied the Watson (2002) statistical formula and scale for determining sample size. With a 95 percent confidence level, a risk of 1 in 20, margin of error of + or - 5 and a variability degree of 20 per cent, applied to the study population (25, 785), a sample size of one hundred and one (101) was drawn for this study. The paper adopted the simple random techniques of the probability sampling procedure. It allows for adequate and objective representation of all elements drawn from the study population which ensures objective generalization and conclusion. The paper used a quantitative method of data. Data for the study was collected from the Keffi town, Keffi Local Government Area. A questionnaire was used for the collection of quantitative data and consists of



some questions printed or typed in a definite order on a form or set of forms. The researcher chose the questionnaire instrument because of anonymity, as it gives greater confidence to the respondents to express themselves freely. Also, questions are factually answered, uniformity is achieved due to standardized questions and it facilitates data processing. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents and they have to answer the questions on their own. The data was organized and then analyzed with the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Quantitative data analyzed using univariate analysis for this study.

#### 4. Results and Discussions

The analysis is based on the data collected from the field.

**Table 1: Respondents views on prevalent cases of crime and criminality**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	69	69.7
No	30	30.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Table 1 indicates respondents' views on prevalent cases of crime and criminality with a confirmation of 69.7 of the respondents agreeing to the statement. This implies that a larger percentage of the respondents accepted that there is the prevalent case of crime and criminality in Keffi Township, Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State-Nigeria

**Table 2: Types of crime Prevalent in selected Areas in Keffi Town**

Types of crime	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Robbery	34	34.3
Property Theft	34	34.3
Crop Theft	5	5.1
Murder	4	4.0
Assault	1	1.0
Pick Pocketing & Bag snatching	16	16.1
Kidnapping	-	-
Other	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Table 2 shows the types of crime and criminal activities prevalent in the study area with an affirmation of 34.3 percent of the respondents accepting that robbery and property theft are the most prevalent crimes in Keffi Town. This result demonstrates that robbery and property theft are the most prevalent kind of criminal activities in the area.

**Table 3: The Implications of Crime to Resident of Keffi**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Loss of lives and properties	35	35.4
Discourages investment	14	14.1
Loss of confidence in the security agency	25	25.3
All of the above	25	25.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021.



Table 3 indicates respondents’ views on the implication of crime to a resident of Keffi. This was acknowledged by 35.4 percent of the total respondents in the study area. This denotes that loss of lives and properties is a severe implication of crime to the resident in the sampled area of the study and criminal activities left unchecked can cause more harm than good, especially to human lives and properties.

**Table 4: Measures taken by their community to prevent and control Crime**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Mobilization of the private security group	31	31.3
A private neighbourhood patrol team	26	26.3
Building fences with security wires	17	17.2
Mobilization of police presence	9	9.1
All of the above	16	16.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Table 4 is an illustration of the respondent’s view on measures taken by their community to prevent and control Crime. Information from the study indicates that an overwhelming proportion of the total respondents admitted that mobilization of private security groups is the most appropriate measure taken by their community to prevent and control crime. This implies that mobilization of private security groups is the best measure of crime prevention and control.

**Table 5: Response on whether there is communal security group**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	66	66.7
No	33	33.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 5 shows respondents’ view whether there is a communal security group with a larger percentage of the respondents approving that there is a communal security group with 66.7 percent of the total respondents in the sampled area of the study. This denotes that there is a communal security group and has greatly enhanced the prevention and control of crime and criminality in Keffi Town, Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

**Table 6: Respondents views on whether the communal security groups are effective and efficient**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	75	75.8
No	24	24.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Table 6 indicates respondents’ views on whether the communal security groups are effective and efficient in the sampled areas of study. Data from the study revealed that communal security groups are effective and efficient and has positively impacted the peace enjoyed in Keffi town, Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State-Nigeria





### Discussion of Findings

Findings from this study show that loss of lives and property is the implication of crime to the residents of their areas. Crime is the major cause of death in the country. According to them, since the end of the civil war, Nigeria has never recorded the amount of loss in life and properties as done from 1999 to date (Nnoli, 2003). This shows that criminal activities left unchecked can cause more harm than good, especially on human life and property, loss of confidence in the security agency, etc. The findings agree with the submission of some scholars that “retail businesses suffer a shortage of customers as the most affluent people leave the neighborhood and people generally avoid the streets’.

Again, findings from this study show that mobilization of the private security groups and private neighborhood patrol teams are the two top measures often taking by residents of this area to control and prevent crime occurrence. This result shows a further loss of trust and confidence in the capacity of the formal crime-fighting agencies as the bulk of the respondents rely on and make do with the informal mechanism/initiative of crime control and prevalent. This finding, therefore, agrees with Millner (1998) argument that, where people have no confidence in the ability of the state to protect them from crime, alternative forms of private crime control initiative, ranging from private to security firms, to vigilante groups and death squad often emerge.

Furthermore, on whether there is a communal security group in their area, findings from this study show the majority of the respondents indicated there is a communal security group in the sampled area of the study. This shows that the bulk of the respondents are relying more on private security groups on cases of crime in their area. This result shows the diverse forms of private crime and social control initiative in Keffi as captured by Agbola, (1997) and Fabiyi (2004).

Study findings display that private security group is effective and efficient. This result again shows that the private security group or the informal crime mechanism is effective and efficient. This finding is in tune with Alemika (2000) research finding conducted in Nigeria. It shows that many communities and individuals take several measures to reduce their feelings and vulnerability and minimize their risk of criminal victimization.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Crime is present in our society and increasing rapidly. It cut across property crime, to murder and such like. The fight against this deadly monster of crime has not been effective and efficient with the formal crime control agencies making the populace lose trust and confidence in them and their mechanism giving rise to private security agencies that caught the fancy and trust of the people with the formal crime-fighting agencies in place; a situation which abounds as a result of the negative economic situation in the country and inequitable allocation of resource. The implications of all this have been felling on lives and properties and so on. Finally, private crime control mechanism has been very effective and efficient and should be supported to operate hand in hand with the formal security agencies for effective and efficient protection of lives and properties. Based on the findings, this study recommends that:

- i. A combination of both the formal and the informal crime control and prevention mechanism for effective and efficient delivery. To this effect, there is a need to increase the number of the force of the security operative especially meeting with the best practice in modern time.



- ii. Again, opportunities for economic survival should be broadened since societies beget their kind of crime. Most criminal activity observed in the study areas is not recidivist in nature, but rather born out of survival implicative. With these opportunities broadened crime of various kinds can be reduced to the barest minimum in Keffi Township.
- iii. Furthermore, youths should be more creative. Within this creativity, they should create jobs and employed others thereby adding values to themselves and the society at large to curtail their involvement in criminal activity.
- iv. Finally, there is a need to adjust our political and economic system to alleviate and eradicate poverty should not be a concept or matter of semantics but rather an ideological practice. Alleviating and alleviating absolute poverty from our society will go a long way to not only reduce the menace of crime but also reduced the rate of its occurrence.

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