

The Efficacy of Community Based Policing Models in Countering Terrorism in North East Nigeria

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Abstract

Terrorism and insurgency in Northeast Nigeria persistently threaten national stability and human security, highlighting the limitations of traditional militarised counter-terrorism strategies. Community-based policing structures, exemplified by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), have become essential collaborators in intelligence gathering, early warning systems, and fostering community trust. Despite their effectiveness, these initiatives encounter ongoing institutional, legal, and sustainability challenges that restrict their incorporation into Nigeria's national counter-terrorism framework. This study analyses the effectiveness of community-based policing in combating terrorism in Northeast Nigeria, emphasising its operational efficiency, institutional and policy backing, legal challenges, and stakeholder views on sustainability. Guided by the Community-Oriented Policing (COP) Model, which highlights collaboration, problem resolution, and decentralisation, the study utilised a quantitative research method. Structured questionnaires were distributed to 67 respondents in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States. Data were collected through Google Forms and analysed using descriptive statistics, which are presented in bar charts. The findings indicate that community policing significantly enhances intelligence gathering, with over 90% agreement, improves early warning systems, and fosters collaboration between communities and law enforcement. Less than half of respondents indicated sufficient institutional support, legal clarity, or funding. The majority viewed community policing as both sustainable and vital to Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy, despite existing constraints. The study concludes that the formal institutionalisation, funding, and policy integration of community policing are essential for enhancing counter-terrorism efforts in Nigeria's Northeast.

Keywords: Community policing, Counter-terrorism, Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), Community-Oriented Policing (COP) Model.

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1. Introduction

Terrorism remains a critical security challenge in the twenty-first century, undermining social order,

destabilising governance structures, and causing substantial human and economic repercussions. The evolution of terrorism, encompassing global extremist movements like ISIS and Al-Qaeda as well as regional

insurgent networks, has highlighted the inadequacies of conventional, state-centric security measures that predominantly depend on military force. Nigeria is a significant focal point in Africa, especially in the Northeast, where the Boko Haram insurgency and its offshoot, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), have conducted a violent campaign for more than a decade. These groups systematically target civilians, security installations, and public infrastructure, exploiting widespread poverty, unemployment, and weak governance to recruit followers and sustain operations (Jatau et al., 2025). The resulting insecurity has led to the displacement of millions, the devastation of local economies, and the emergence of a sustained humanitarian crisis that challenges the resilience of state and community institutions.

Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy has primarily been militarised, utilising joint task forces, air raids, and intelligence-driven security operations coordinated at the federal level in response to this persistent threat. Although these strategies have resulted in short-term tactical successes, they have predominantly not succeeded in establishing sustained peace or in restoring community trust in state institutions. Scholars and policy analysts contend that excessive dependence on centralised command structures and coercive force has unintentionally estranged local populations, diminished intelligence-sharing, and neglected the potential contributions of communities to security management (Ike et al., 2022). Inconsistent engagement between formal security agencies and residents in terrorism-affected regions has fostered significant mistrust and hindered cooperation, thereby limiting opportunities for early warning and prompt local responses to emerging threats.

Despite these shortcomings, community-based policing has emerged as a viable and contextually adaptive alternative for addressing terrorism in Nigeria's Northeast. Community policing initiatives, particularly the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), are founded on principles of local participation, trust, and collaboration, and have effectively addressed significant security deficiencies left by the state. Grassroots security actors are integral to intelligence gathering, the identification of suspicious activities, the support of deradicalisation efforts, and the enhancement of community resilience against extremist influences (Ganiyu et al., 2024; Ameh, 2024; Adamu & Edeh, 2023; Nwankwo & Garba, 2024). Their effectiveness stems primarily from cultural

embeddedness, familiarity with the terrain, and robust social ties, which together facilitate operations in areas where state forces frequently encounter resistance or restricted access. The informal and semi-autonomous characteristics of these groups have prompted significant enquiries regarding accountability, oversight, and long-term sustainability (Kenku & Umar, 2025). The absence of institutional support or legal acknowledgement renders their contributions susceptible to transience and potential exploitation, politicisation, or failure as external backing wanes.

Although community policing offers significant operational advantages, its incorporation into Nigeria's formal counter-terrorism framework is marked by inconsistency and fragmentation. Federal security frameworks persist in emphasising hierarchical, military-led interventions that frequently overlook the lived experiences and indigenous knowledge systems of local communities (Lenshie & Okoli, 2025). The disparity between national policy and local practice has resulted in operational redundancies, competition among stakeholders, and lost opportunities for synergy in countering terrorism. Current empirical research on community-based policing primarily emphasises descriptive evaluations of performance and effectiveness, with limited exploration of the institutional, legal, and policy frameworks required to integrate these models into Nigeria's overarching security system (Oikhala, 2024; Uche & Garba, 2020). As a result, community-based security actors function in a grey area, recognised for their significance but excluded from formal policy and institutional frameworks.

Building upon this context, the present study aims to examine the efficacy of community-based policing models in countering terrorism in Northeast Nigeria. It specifically seeks to explore how these community policing structures operate within the broader counter-terrorism framework, evaluating their effectiveness in intelligence gathering, early warning systems, and operational coordination with formal security agencies. Furthermore, the study assesses the level of institutional and policy support provided to community policing initiatives within Nigeria's national counter-terrorism strategy, while also identifying the legal and administrative challenges that hinder their formal integration into the security architecture. In doing so, the research also investigates stakeholder perceptions of the sustainability, legitimacy, and long-term impact of

community policing efforts in terrorism-affected communities, highlighting both their successes and constraints in fostering security and resilience.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to bridge the gap between state-led and community-driven security initiatives by providing a comprehensive understanding of how community-based policing can be structurally integrated into Nigeria's counter-terrorism framework. It contributes to both scholarship and policy by offering empirically grounded insights that can inform reforms aimed at achieving coordination, coherence, and sustainability among state and non-state security actors. The study's scope is delimited to the terrorism-affected states of Northeast Nigeria, particularly Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, where the activities of Boko Haram and ISWAP have been most pronounced. By analysing the institutional dynamics, legal frameworks, and policy mechanisms that underpin community policing in these areas, this research seeks to advance knowledge on inclusive, participatory, and trust-based approaches to security governance capable of promoting long-term peace, resilience, and community ownership in counter-terrorism efforts.

2. Literature Review

Community Policing Structures and Local Security Networks

Community-based policing has emerged as a central theme in security discussions, particularly in areas facing terrorism and insurgency. In Northeast Nigeria, the Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgencies have persisted for over a decade, leading to the emergence of community policing structures, particularly the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), as essential participants in grassroots security provision. Ganiyu et al. (2024) performed a qualitative study with 120 members of the CJTF and local residents in Borno State, employing purposive sampling and thematic content analysis. The findings indicated that the CJTF was instrumental in intelligence gathering, early warning systems, and fostering trust between communities and formal security agencies. The study identified challenges including insufficient formal training, inadequate coordination with state actors, and accountability issues.

Similarly, Mohammed and Bala (2022) investigated how the CJTF strengthened security in the states of Yobe and Borno. The study employed structured interviews with 100 community members and security personnel,

revealing that the CJTF notably enhanced local surveillance and deterrence of Boko Haram activities. However, the authors warned that the viability of these community-led initiatives relies on institutional backing and legal acknowledgement. Adamu and Edeh (2023) examined the intelligence-gathering capabilities of community policing units in Maiduguri in a related study. The mixed-methods research, incorporating surveys and interviews with 150 respondents, demonstrated that community policing improved the transmission of actionable intelligence to formal security agencies. The research highlighted the significance of mutual trust and the incorporation of local knowledge into national counter-terrorism strategies.

The findings align with those of Okonkwo and Lawal (2022), who investigated grassroots security networks in Adamawa and Yobe States. The study, utilising 200 survey responses and key informant interviews, concluded that local vigilante groups played a crucial role in disrupting terrorist logistics and recruitment. The authors cautioned that in the absence of formal oversight, these groups may develop into parallel power structures.

Community Engagement and Public Trust in Counter-Terrorism

Research consistently emphasises the significance of community involvement and public confidence in the effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies in Northeast Nigeria. Ameh (2024) carried out a mixed-methods study with 150 participants, comprising community members and police officers in Yobe State, utilising stratified random sampling and structured questionnaires. The research indicated that community policing initiatives notably enhanced public trust and promoted grassroots intelligence sharing. The absence of sustained engagement and institutional support constrained long-term effectiveness.

Eze and Garba (2024) conducted a comprehensive analysis of community engagement as a catalyst for security sector reform in Northeast Nigeria. The qualitative study, which involved interviews with 80 stakeholders, including traditional leaders and civil society actors, demonstrated that participatory approaches enhance resilience and mitigate radicalisation. The authors highlighted the importance of inclusive dialogue and transparency in establishing trust between communities and security agencies.

Danjuma (2023) examined the role of community policing in countering violent extremism within the context of Yobe State. The study utilised cluster sampling and survey instruments with 200 respondents, revealing that community policing contributed to a reduction in fear and an increase in cooperation with law enforcement. The findings indicate that community involvement in security decisions correlates with increased support for counter-terrorism initiatives.

Hassan and Okeke (2021) performed a quantitative study in Borno and Adamawa States, employing descriptive statistics to analyse data from 250 participants. The research indicated a positive correlation between community trust in local policing units and a reduction in terrorist incidents. The study concluded that mechanisms for building trust, including regular community meetings and operational transparency, are essential for sustaining counter-terrorism gains.

Policy Integration and Institutional Challenges

Community-based policing has demonstrated potential in countering terrorism; however, various empirical studies reveal ongoing institutional and policy-related challenges that hinder its effectiveness. Oikhala (2024) performed a qualitative study with 80 police officers and community stakeholders in Borno and Yobe States. The study employed quota sampling and document analysis, revealing that while community policing initiatives were formally adopted, they were not integrated into national security frameworks. The lack of explicit legal mandates and funding mechanisms obstructed their scalability and sustainability.

Okoro and Ahmed (2023) investigated the structural limitations of community-based security initiatives in Adamawa State. The research, which involved 120 survey responses and interviews with local vigilante leaders, indicated that these groups were effective in deterring terrorist activities, yet functioned within a legal vacuum. The absence of formal recognition and training resulted in tensions with state security agencies and heightened concerns regarding human rights violations.

Uche and Garba (2020) examined the institutional obstacles to community policing in addressing violent extremism. The study utilised mixed methods and surveyed 200 respondents across three Northeastern states, revealing that bureaucratic inertia and fragmented policy implementation constrained the effectiveness of grassroots security initiatives. The authors contended

that the absence of coherent policy integration may lead community policing to function as a reactive rather than a strategic tool.

Alao et al. (2025) presented a comprehensive empirical analysis of counter-terrorism efforts in Northeast Nigeria, highlighting the disparity between federal narratives and local conditions. The study, which involved interviews with 100 stakeholders and an analysis of government policy documents, concluded that community-based actors were frequently excluded from strategic planning, despite their essential role in security provision.

Intelligence Gathering and Early Warning Systems

The primary advantage of community-based policing in Northeast Nigeria is its ability to facilitate localised intelligence gathering and early warning systems. Ibrahim and Musa (2021) performed a field study in Borno State with a sample of 150 community members and police officers, chosen via stratified sampling. The study utilised structured questionnaires and interviews, revealing that community policing units played a crucial role in identifying suspicious activities and reporting potential threats prior to escalation. The authors highlighted that the closeness of community officers to residents improved the timeliness and accuracy of intelligence.

Adamu and Edeh (2023) corroborated these findings in their research on CJTF operations in Maiduguri. The mixed-methods research, comprising surveys and focus group discussions with 120 respondents, indicated that CJTF members frequently served as the initial line of defence by communicating essential information to formal security agencies. The study found that community policing effectively connected civilians and law enforcement, especially in regions with limited state presence.

Bello and Tanko (2020) investigated the function of local vigilantes in Adamawa State. The qualitative study, which involved interviews with 100 vigilante members and local leaders, revealed that these groups were effective in identifying terrorist hideouts and intercepting recruitment efforts. The authors noted that the absence of standardised reporting protocols can result in misinformation or duplication of efforts.

Yusuf and Ibrahim (2021) performed a comparative analysis in Borno and Yobe States, employing

descriptive statistics to evaluate data collected from 200 respondents. The findings demonstrated that community policing units led to a 30% decrease in terrorist incidents over a two-year span, primarily attributed to enhanced early warning systems. The research recommended the implementation of formal training programs to improve the analytical skills of community officers.

Community Resilience and Deradicalization Efforts

Recent studies have highlighted the significance of community-based policing in enhancing resilience and aiding deradicalisation initiatives in Northeast Nigeria. Nwankwo and Garba (2024) performed a mixed-methods study with 180 participants from Borno and Yobe States, employing cluster sampling and structured interviews. Their findings revealed that community policing initiatives, particularly those involving youth engagement and religious leaders, helped reduce susceptibility to extremist ideologies. The research indicated that resilience was developed through localised educational initiatives, economic empowerment, and inclusive dialogue.

Danjuma (2023) examined the influence of community policing on deradicalisation efforts in Yobe State. The study utilised survey instruments administered to 200 respondents, analysed through descriptive statistics, revealing that community officers significantly contributed to identifying at-risk individuals and facilitating their connection to rehabilitation programs. Trusted local figures in policing roles have been demonstrated to diminish stigma and promote participation in deradicalisation initiatives.

Okoro and Ahmed (2023) analysed the role of community-based security structures in fostering long-term stability in Adamawa State. The qualitative research, conducted through interviews with 100 community leaders and vigilante members, revealed that these groups played a crucial role in restoring social cohesion following terrorist attacks. The study highlighted that community policing addressed immediate security threats while also facilitating post-conflict recovery and reconciliation.

Uche and Garba (2020) contributed to this discussion by examining the preventive function of community policing in relation to violent extremism. The study, involving 250 respondents from three Northeastern states, demonstrated that proactive engagement, including youth mentorship and vocational training,

diminished the attractiveness of extremist recruitment. The authors contended that community policing should be integrated into wider social development frameworks to attain sustainable deradicalisation.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the Community-Oriented Policing (COP) Model, initially developed by Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990), which provides the theoretical framework for analysing the function of community-based policing structures in combating terrorism in Northeast Nigeria. The COP model, prevalent in modern policing research, underscores three essential components: community partnerships, problem-solving, and organisational decentralisation. The principles foster collaborative relationships between law enforcement agencies and community members, aiming to address the social, economic, and environmental factors that contribute to insecurity and crime (Weerawardhana & Wijewardhana, 2024). The COP framework advocates for proactive engagement, trust-building, and the co-production of security among state and non-state actors, rather than depending exclusively on reactive or militarised responses (Dias Felix & Hilgers, 2020).

This study employs the COP model as an analytical framework to examine the functioning of grassroots security structures, including the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and local vigilante groups, in communities impacted by terrorism. These people show the model's main ideas by working closely with local people to acquire information, spot risks, and build public trust. These are all things that directly help the state's counter-terrorism goals (Ezeji, 2023). The partnership aspect of the COP model elucidates how collaboration between communities and security agencies improves intelligence-sharing and responsiveness, a dynamic notably observed in the CJTF's collaboration with the Nigerian military in Borno and Yobe States. The problem-solving component corresponds with the adaptive strategies utilised by community policing units to tackle the underlying causes of insecurity, including unemployment, radicalisation, and local grievances that extremist groups exploit. The principle of decentralisation illustrates the adaptable, community-oriented characteristics of these security initiatives, which function effectively in contexts where formal state institutions are either deficient or nonexistent.

The significance of the COP model in this study is its ability to connect theoretical frameworks with practical applications in counter-terrorism. This framework facilitates the analysis of the transition of community-based policing from informal, ad hoc arrangements to a more structured and institutionalised element within Nigeria’s national security framework. This model situates the operations of the CJTF and similar grassroots actors within a theoretical framework that emphasises inclusivity, local ownership, and participatory governance in security provision. The model also shows how important it is to have support from institutions, legal recognition, and policies that make sense. These are some of the main ideas that this study aims to examine empirically. The COP model elucidates the effectiveness of community policing in enhancing resilience and intelligence-driven security in Northeast Nigeria, while also providing a theoretical framework for its formal incorporation into the nation's comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy.

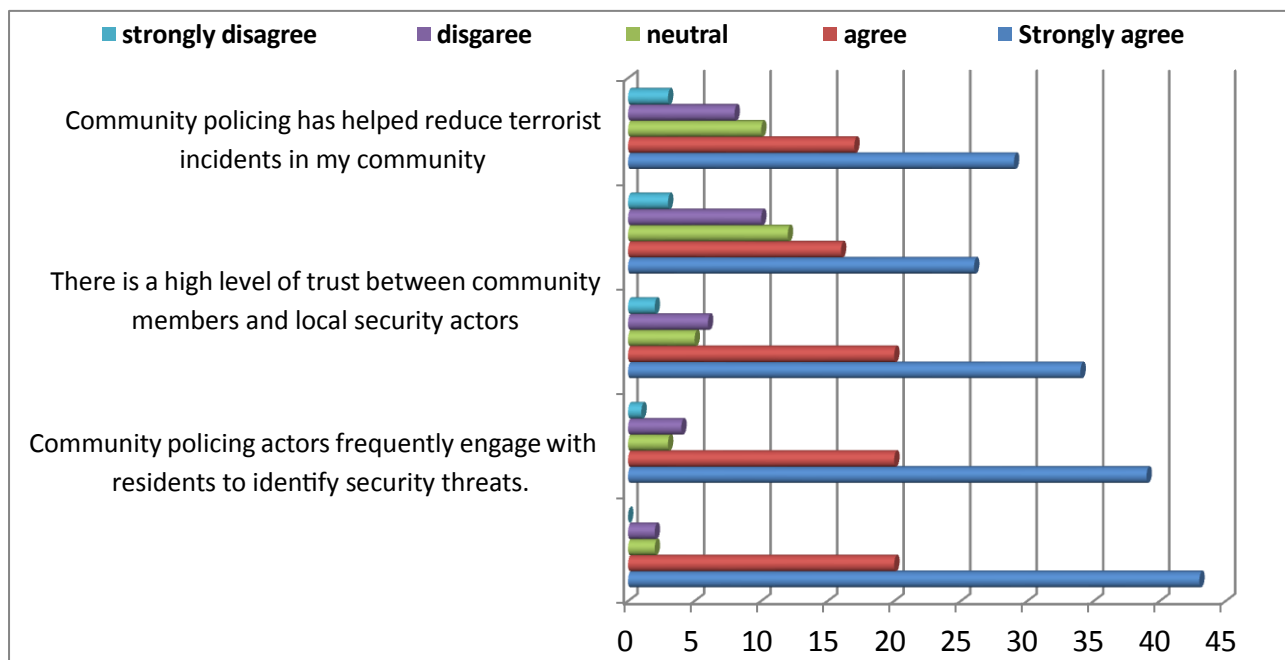
4. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design. The study population comprises approximately 80 individuals, including community members, Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) operatives, and local law

enforcement officers actively engaged in community policing initiatives across selected communities in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States. Using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula with 5% margin of error, a sample size of 67 respondents was determined to ensure representativeness within the available time frame. A purposive sampling technique was initially employed to select participants directly involved in community-based security activities, while snowball sampling was used to identify additional respondents through peer referrals, improving access to hard-to-reach participants and fostering trust during data collection. Structured questionnaires containing closed-ended and Likert-scale items were used to collect data on perceptions of effectiveness, institutional support, legal challenges, and sustainability of community policing. Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize the data and highlight emerging patterns, providing empirical insights into the structural and operational dimensions of community-based policing within Nigeria’s counter-terrorism framework.

5. Results

Operational Effectiveness of Community-Based Policing



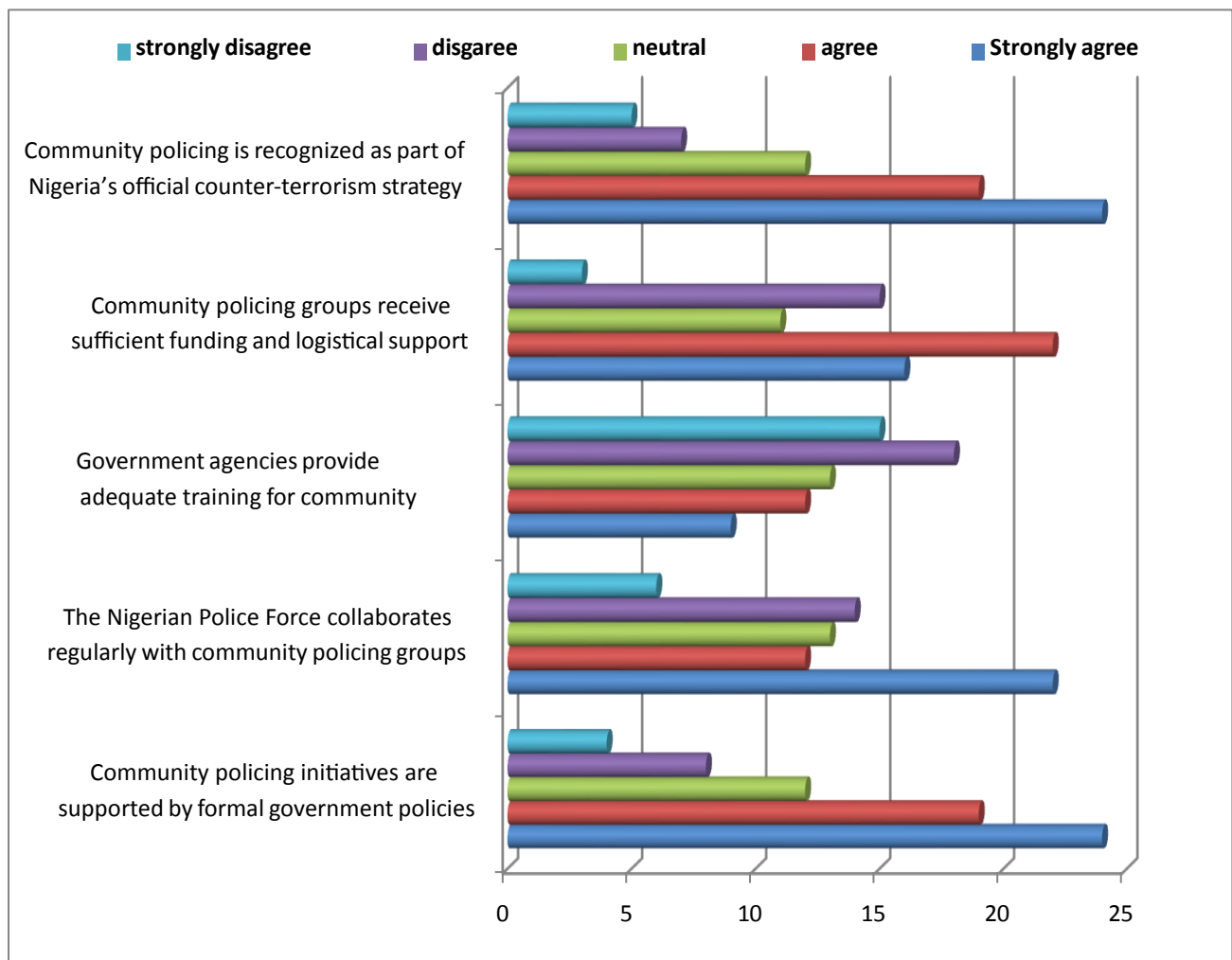
Source: field data 2025

Figure 1- participants’ view of Operational Effectiveness of Community-Based Policing

The results presented in the chart above indicate a strong positive perception of the operational effectiveness of community-based policing in countering terrorism in Northeast Nigeria. A substantial majority of respondents agreed that community policing enhances intelligence gathering (94%) and contributes significantly to early warning systems (88%). Similarly, (81%) agreed to the engagement of community policing actors with residents

and the development of trust between community members and local security actors (63%). However, a smaller proportion of respondents expressed neutrality or disagreement, particularly regarding trust and reduction of terrorist incidents.

Institutional and Policy Support



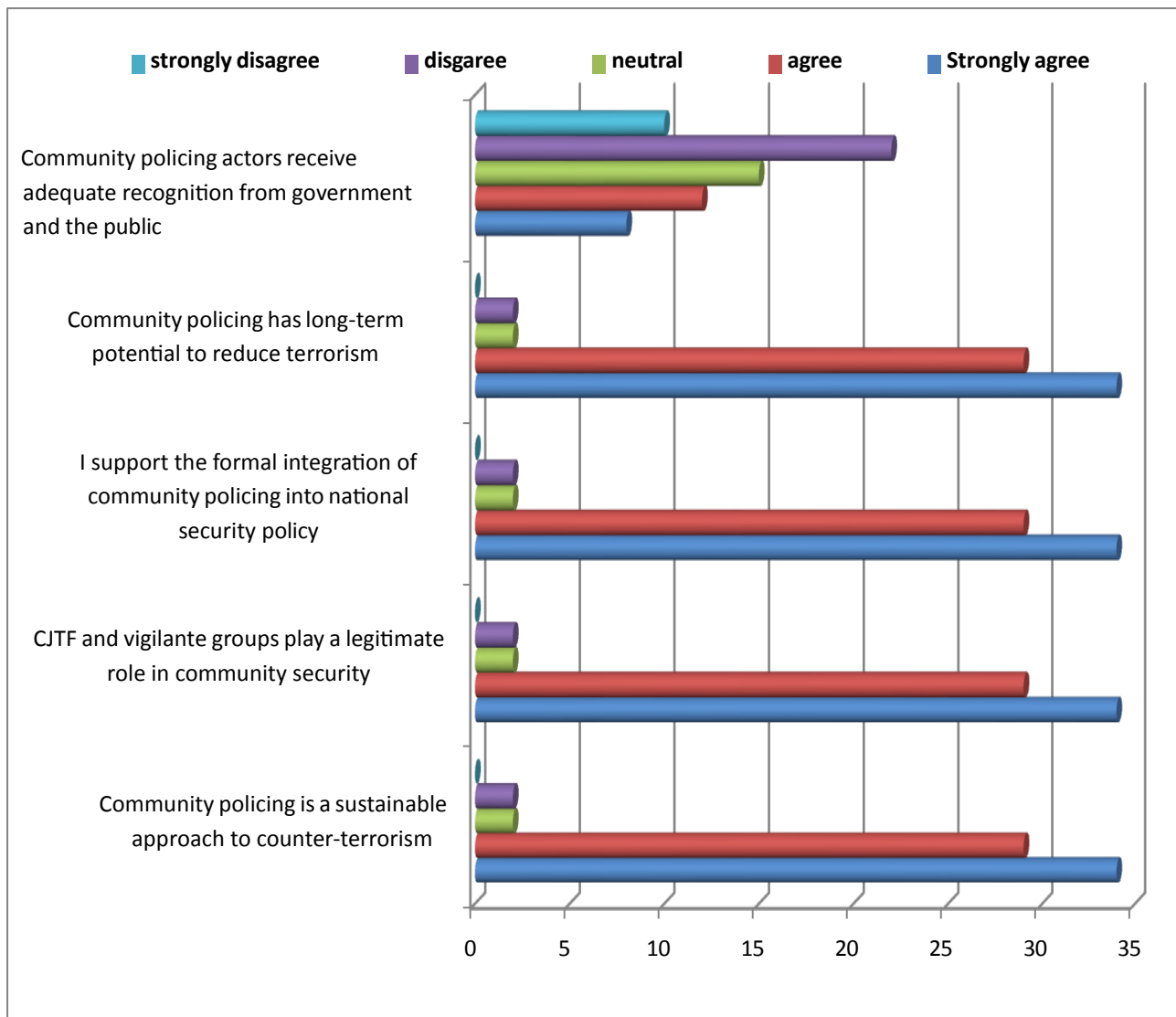
Source: field data 2025

Figure 2- participants’ view of Institutional and Policy Support

The results in figure 2 indicate moderate institutional and policy support for community-based policing in Northeast Nigeria. While a majority of respondents agreed that community policing is supported by government policies (64%) and recognized within the

national counter-terrorism strategy (64%), fewer perceived consistent collaboration with the Nigerian Police Force (51%). However, regarding training and funding adequacy, over 50% expressed neutrality or disagreement.

Legal and Administrative Challenges



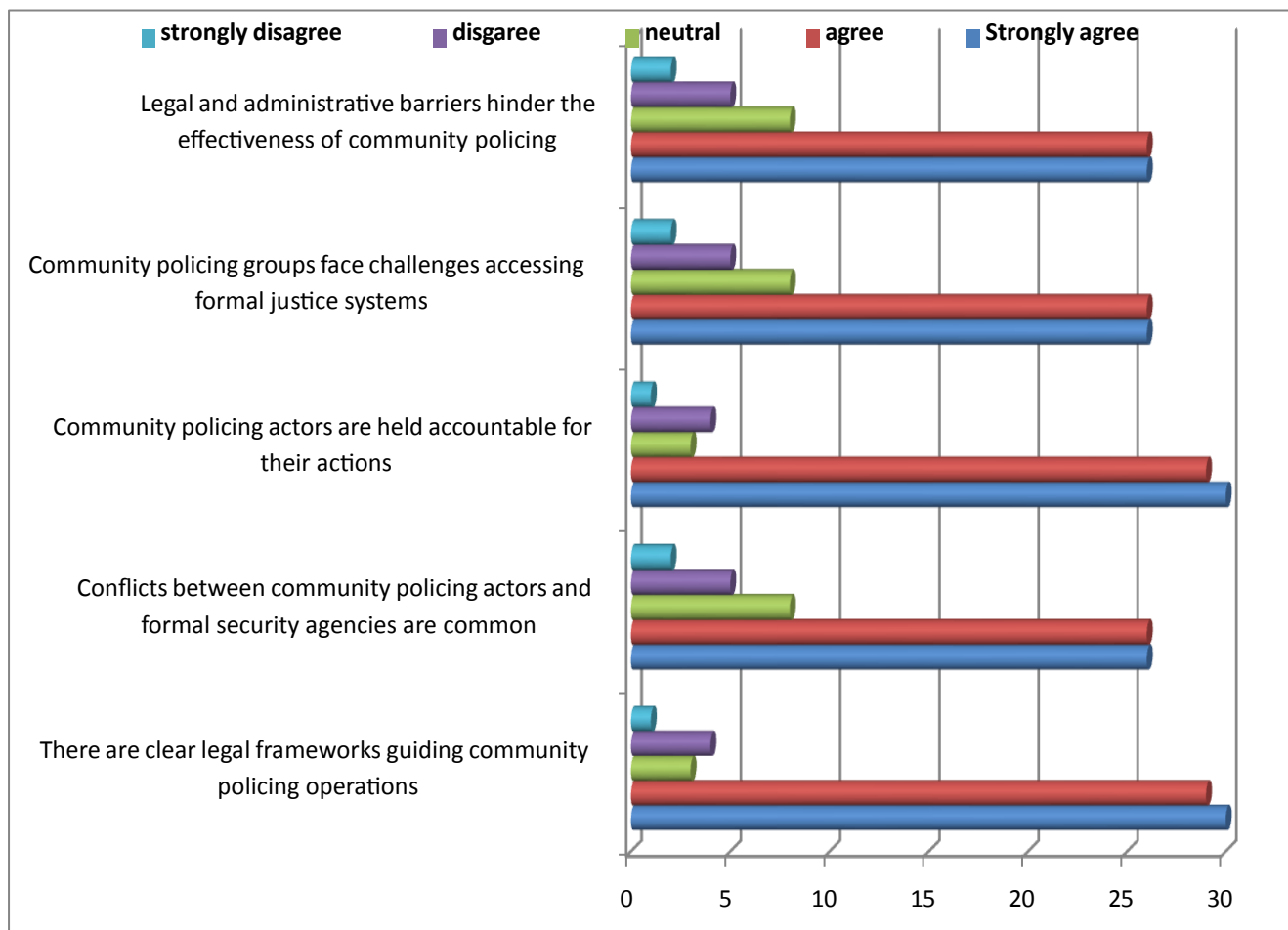
Source: field data 2025

Figure 3- participants’ view of Legal and Administrative Challenges

Figure 3 indicates that respondents generally acknowledge the existence of legal and administrative frameworks governing community policing but also point to significant implementation challenges. Specifically, 88% agreed or strongly agreed that clear legal frameworks guide community policing operations, and an identical 88% believed that community policing actors are held accountable for their actions. However, 78% also agreed or strongly agreed that conflicts

between community policing actors and formal security agencies are common, highlighting persistent coordination gaps. Similarly, 78% reported that community policing groups face challenges accessing formal justice systems, and the same proportion agreed that legal and administrative barriers hinder effectiveness.

Stakeholder Perceptions and Sustainability



Source: field data 2025

Figure 4- participants’ view of Stakeholder Perceptions and Sustainability

From Figure 4 a striking 94% of respondents agreed that community policing is a sustainable approach to counter-terrorism, with identical levels of agreement affirming that CJTF and vigilante groups play a legitimate role, community policing has long-term potential to reduce terrorism, and should be formally integrated into national security policy. However, only 30% agreed that community policing actors receive adequate recognition from government and the public, while 48% disagreed, suggesting that despite their effectiveness, these actors remain underappreciated and insufficiently acknowledged by official structures.

6. Discussion

This study's findings provide essential insights into the operational, institutional, legal, and perceptual dynamics of community-based policing in the context of

countering terrorism in Northeast Nigeria. Based on the Community-Oriented Policing (COP) Model established by Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990), which highlights the importance of community partnership, problem-solving, and decentralisation, the findings confirm that community engagement is crucial for improving intelligence gathering, early warning systems, and trust- building in counter-terrorism efforts. Simultaneously, they reveal enduring structural deficiencies associated with institutional support, policy integration, and legal clarity, which collectively limit the long-term viability of these grassroots initiatives.

According to research on the operational efficacy of community-based policing, more than 94% of respondents agree or strongly agree that community policing is a useful tool for obtaining information about terrorist activity and makes a substantial contribution to

early warning systems. This indicates that local entities, especially the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and vigilante groups, have become essential in connecting formal security institutions with impacted communities. The results provide robust support for the partnership aspect of the COP model, highlighting the importance of collaboration and co-production of security between communities and law enforcement agencies. The observed effectiveness corresponds with the findings of Ganiyu et al. (2024), who indicated that CJTF actors in Borno State played a crucial role in delivering actionable intelligence and enhancing communication with formal security agencies. Adamu and Edeh (2023) similarly found that community policing units improved the accuracy and timeliness of intelligence flows in Maiduguri, facilitating a more rapid response to threats. The moderate agreement level (approximately 63%) concerning public trust between community members and local security actors indicates persistent scepticism and the limited involvement of specific social groups in security operations. This observation aligns with the concerns articulated by Mohammed and Bala (2022), who cautioned that inadequate coordination and sporadic misuse of authority may undermine community trust. This finding, within the framework of the COP model, indicates a partial realisation of the partnership principle; cooperation is present but unevenly distributed, occasionally obstructed by historical distrust and a lack of transparency.

The evidence regarding institutional and policy support indicates a less favourable outlook. Sixty-four percent of respondents recognise that government policies endorse community policing and that it is integrated into Nigeria's counter-terrorism framework. However, less than 45% concur that sufficient funding, training, and logistical support are available. This finding reveals a fundamental contradiction: while the concept of community policing has received rhetorical acknowledgement, the practical support mechanisms are still inadequate. This aligns with the findings of Okoro and Ahmed (2023), who observed that community policing initiatives in Adamawa State frequently lacked consistent funding and legal recognition. It also concurs with Uche and Garba (2020), who identified bureaucratic fragmentation and inadequate policy coordination as significant obstacles to effectiveness. This deficiency within the COP framework undermines the principle of decentralisation, which promotes the empowerment of local units through institutional and policy support. In the absence of such support, local actors must depend on

informal networks and voluntary mobilisation, which constrains their operational capacity and renders them vulnerable to exploitation or political manipulation. The absence of state-level institutionalisation results in a disjunction between policy rhetoric and practical realities, undermining the sustainability and scalability of community policing in counter-terrorism efforts.

The analysis of the legal and administrative challenges confronting community policing in the study area reveals a complex duality. About 88% of respondents assert that clear legal frameworks are in place to guide operations and ensure accountability among community policing actors; however, the same proportion also indicates the presence of recurrent conflicts, administrative bottlenecks, and restricted access to justice systems. This ambivalence highlights a discrepancy between formal acknowledgement and practical execution. While certain legal frameworks are established at the state level to govern the CJTF, the enforcement of these regulations is inconsistent, and mechanisms for accountability are frequently inadequate. This aligns with Oikhala's (2024) assertion that community policing units in Borno and Yobe States function within a semi-formalized framework, where overlapping jurisdictions often result in conflicts with formal security agencies. Okoro and Ahmed (2023) noted that legal ambiguity can lead to human rights violations or abuses of power by local vigilante groups. From the perspective of the COP model, these tensions indicate the partial institutionalisation of the partnership between state and community actors. The model promotes decentralisation and local ownership, yet it also assumes the existence of clear accountability structures and standardised procedures. Without legal clarity, community policing initiatives may become disjointed and reliant on individual personalities, which, although potentially effective in the short term, could jeopardise legitimacy and professionalism in the long run.

The results indicate complex stakeholder views on the sustainability and legitimacy of community-based policing in counter-terrorism efforts. More than 94% of respondents strongly agree that vigilante groups and CJTF have valid roles in community security, that community policing is a viable counterterrorism strategy, and that these strategies have the ability to lower terrorism in the long run. The perceptions indicate widespread social support for community policing as a legitimate and essential element of local security frameworks. Only 30% of respondents believe that

community policing actors receive sufficient recognition from the government and the public, highlighting a gap between societal acceptance and institutional acknowledgement. The findings align with those of Nwankwo and Garba (2024), who emphasised that community policing improves social cohesion and resilience in Borno and Yobe States, yet it is still undervalued in policy discussions. Danjuma (2023) similarly found that communities in Yobe State regarded local policing as a crucial counter-extremism measure; however, government engagement and resource allocation were inadequate to maintain its operations. The COP model illustrates that, despite the flourishing of informal community partnerships, the lack of reciprocal institutional recognition hinders their incorporation into the formal security system. The partnership principle of the COP model is only partially realised; horizontal collaboration among community actors is robust, whereas vertical collaboration between these actors and state institutions is lacking.

These findings confirm the theoretical assumptions of the COP model while also emphasising the contextual challenges associated with its application in counter-terrorism contexts. The evidence substantiates the model's primary assertion that proactive collaboration between communities and law enforcement improves the efficacy of security interventions. The data indicate that communities in Northeast Nigeria are pivotal in intelligence gathering and early warning, which the COP model recognises as results of collaborative problem-solving. The ongoing existence of institutional, legal, and policy deficiencies indicates that the structural foundations required for the comprehensive implementation of the COP framework remain inadequately developed. The restricted training and funding identified in this study stand in stark contrast to the model's focus on decentralised empowerment and organisational reform. Weerawardhana and Wijewardhana (2024) contend that community-oriented policing is effective only when institutions delegate authority, resources, and accountability to local actors, a condition that is predominantly unfulfilled in Nigeria's counter-terrorism framework.

The findings extend previous literature by demonstrating that, although community policing is effective in intelligence gathering and early warning, its institutional sustainability depends on more robust policy frameworks and legal recognition. This study contrasts with earlier research, including that of Bello and Tanko (2020) and

Yusuf and Ibrahim (2021), which primarily focused on the operational outcomes of community policing. It highlights the complex interplay between community legitimacy and state recognition. Situating these findings within the COP theoretical framework reveals that the success of community-based policing relies not only on community enthusiasm or effectiveness but also on the establishment of formal structures that institutionalise collaboration, resource allocation, and accountability. The findings substantiate the core principles of the COP model, especially its focus on partnerships and problem-solving, while also highlighting the constraints of its implementation in contexts marked by weak state capacity and fragmented policy environments.

7. Conclusion

This study finds that community-based policing is essential for combating terrorism and re-establishing stability in Northeast Nigeria. The application of the Community-Oriented Policing Model reveals that community engagement, trust-building, and decentralised partnerships are fundamental to effective grassroots counter-terrorism efforts. The findings indicate that empowered communities, when integrated into formal security structures, function as early warning agents, contribute intelligence, and enhance resilience.

However, the sustainability of these advancements relies on the resolution of institutional, legal, and policy deficiencies that presently hinder the effectiveness of community policing initiatives. Insufficient formal recognition, funding, and training contribute to vulnerabilities that weaken the overall counter-terrorism framework. Thus, the institutionalisation of community policing via comprehensive reforms constitutes not only a policy decision but also a national necessity for the attainment of enduring peace and stability.

The study concludes that community-based security models signify a shift from coercive, top-down approaches to participatory, intelligence-driven, and trust-based governance. Nigeria's ongoing efforts to address terrorism can benefit from the comprehensive incorporation of community policing within the national security framework, which presents a viable approach to fostering inclusive peacebuilding, enhancing human security, and strengthening social resilience in the Northeast and other regions.

8. Recommendations

Firstly, the Nigerian government should formally institutionalise community policing structures such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) by integrating them into the national counter-terrorism framework. This formalisation requires the establishment of legal and policy instruments that clearly define their mandates, operational boundaries, and accountability mechanisms. Legal recognition would enhance coordination between community-based actors and formal agencies, including the Nigerian Police Force and the military, ensuring standardized operational procedures that mitigate the risks of human rights violations and the misuse of force. Institutionalising these structures would also operationalise the Community-Oriented Policing (COP) principle of decentralisation, ensuring that locally driven security initiatives become legitimate and complementary components of Nigeria's national security governance.

Secondly, comprehensive training and capacity building are essential to transform community policing actors from reactive vigilante formations into professional security operatives. Structured training programmes should prioritise intelligence gathering, conflict resolution, human rights awareness, and inter-agency communication. Partnerships with police academies, universities, and international security organisations would help ensure consistent skill development across local units. By integrating counter-radicalisation and community mediation modules, such training would strengthen the ability of community policing actors to address the underlying social factors that fuel terrorism. This aligns with the problem-solving dimension of the COP model, which stresses empowering local actors to tackle the root causes of insecurity rather than relying solely on reactive enforcement.

Thirdly, ensuring sustainable financial and logistical support is vital for the longevity of community policing initiatives. The government, in collaboration with the private sector and international partners, should establish a dedicated "Community Security Trust Fund" to finance operations, training, welfare, and equipment acquisition. Such a funding mechanism would reduce dependence on irregular donations and local patronage systems that often compromise neutrality and accountability. Stable funding would also boost morale among community policing personnel and enhance their operational capacity in surveillance, mobility, and communication. This recommendation reflects the institutional support aspect of the COP framework, which emphasises

sustainability as a foundation for effective community-police partnerships.

Furthermore, improving cooperation between state and community stakeholders is critical to the success of counter-terrorism operations in Nigeria's Northeast. Establishing multi-level coordination platforms such as joint operations centres and shared intelligence networks would strengthen communication channels and reduce redundancy in security operations. Regular inter-agency meetings and integrated command structures would facilitate the seamless incorporation of community-generated intelligence into the national security apparatus. This cooperative approach embodies the partnership principle of the COP model, which underscores trust and information-sharing as essential elements of an efficient and cohesive security system.

In addition, legal and accountability reforms are necessary to address the administrative and ethical challenges confronting community policing initiatives. The Ministry of Justice and the Police Service Commission should develop clear codes of conduct, reporting protocols, and disciplinary procedures to guide the activities of community policing personnel. Establishing independent oversight bodies is equally crucial to handle grievances, monitor operations, and prevent abuses of power. Transparent accountability mechanisms would not only strengthen public trust but also reduce friction between formal and informal security actors. In line with the COP framework, such accountability structures are indispensable for maintaining legitimacy and ensuring that policing remains community-oriented rather than coercive.

Moreover, enhancing public awareness and civic engagement is fundamental to the success of community policing. Continuous public education campaigns should be implemented to sensitise citizens to the importance of collaboration in intelligence sharing and community vigilance.

Media platforms, town hall meetings, and traditional institutions can serve as vital channels for promoting transparency and inclusion in security governance. Traditional and religious leaders should be actively engaged as mediators and advocates for peaceful coexistence. This participatory approach reinforces the partnership and ownership principles central to the COP model, ensuring that community policing is grounded in local legitimacy and sustained citizen trust.

Equally important is the integration of socioeconomic development with security interventions. The persistence of terrorism in Northeast Nigeria underscores the need to address its socioeconomic roots. Community policing efforts should therefore be aligned with broader development initiatives focused on youth empowerment, job creation, education, and poverty alleviation. Linking security with development helps to reduce the structural vulnerabilities that extremist groups exploit for recruitment. This strategy resonates with the problem-solving aspect of the COP framework, which prioritises addressing the root causes of insecurity over reactive enforcement. By combining development with security, the government can enhance community resilience and foster long-term stability.

Finally, strengthening regional cooperation and knowledge sharing is crucial given the transnational dimensions of terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin. Nigeria should collaborate closely with neighbouring countries such as Chad, Niger, and Cameroon to harmonise community policing strategies and foster collective security. Regional frameworks for cross-border intelligence sharing, joint training programmes, and cooperative counter-terrorism operations would significantly enhance the effectiveness of local and national efforts. Additionally, creating a regional database of community-based policing practices and success stories would facilitate continuous learning and operational synergy.

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