

**IMPACT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION IN COMMUNITY
SECURITY: A STUDY OF USEN COMMUNITY, OVIA SOUTH WEST LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA, EDO STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The study was motivated by the increasing security challenges facing rural communities and the need to evaluate the role of local government administration in maintaining peace and order at the grassroots level. The objectives of the study were to assess the role of local government administration in maintaining security in Usen community, examine the strategies used to enhance community safety, identify challenges affecting effective security management, and evaluate the role of community participation in supporting local government security efforts. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data were collected through the use of structured questionnaires administered to sixty (60) respondents selected from Usen community. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, and the findings were presented in tables. The findings revealed among others; that local government administration contributes significantly to community security through collaboration with vigilante groups, community sensitization programs, and engagement with traditional institutions. However, challenges such as inadequate funding, poor cooperation among security agencies, insufficient manpower, and lack of logistical support were identified as major constraints to effective security management. The study concluded that effective community security in Usen community depends largely on strong collaboration between local government administration, security agencies, vigilante groups, traditional leaders, and community members. The study thus recommended among others; increased funding for local security initiatives and improved collaboration among security stakeholders and strengthening of community policing programs to enhance grassroots security management in Usen community of Ovia South West LGA.

Keywords: Administration, Community, Participation, Policing, Security, Vigilante

INTRODUCTION

Security at the grassroots level remains a major concern in Nigeria, particularly in rural communities where formal policing structures are often weak or insufficient. Local government administration, being the closest tier of government to the people, is expected to play a supportive role in maintaining peace and order within communities. In Nigeria, insecurity has increasingly become localized, affecting rural settlements through issues such as youth restiveness, land disputes, and petty crime. According to Olawole, Adeyeye and Omitola (2025), insecurity in rural Nigeria reflects weak governance structures and limited coordination between local authorities and security institutions, especially in communities where informal security systems dominate.

Local government administration in Nigeria is constitutionally designed to promote grassroots development and citizen participation. However, its role in security management is largely indirect due to the centralization of policing authority at the federal level. Okojie and Iyere (2025) revealed that insecurity in rural communities has increased the importance of local governance structures in supporting community policing initiatives, and decentralised policing systems improve community safety when supported by local authorities and community participation structures such as vigilante groups and traditional leaders. Similarly, Chukelu (2025) research on community-based security in Southwestern Nigeria shows that collaboration between local institutions and residents significantly enhances crime prevention and intelligence gathering.

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between local government administration and community security in Nigeria. For instance, Aneke and Fayomi (2024) investigated the role of local government administration in addressing insecurity in Nigeria and found that inadequate funding, weak institutional capacity, and poor collaboration with security agencies undermine effective grassroots security management. Similarly, Abiakam and Azuoma (2025) examined community policing and local vigilante operations in South-East Nigeria and concluded that community-based security structures significantly enhance crime prevention when supported by government. Nwodo et al. (2026) also found that community vigilantism strengthens grassroots security but emphasized the need for formal regulation and collaboration with government institutions. Although these studies have contributed to the understanding of local

security governance, they focused on broader national or regional contexts and did not specifically examine the role of local government administration in promoting community security in **Usen community, Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State**. Furthermore, they paid limited attention to the combined roles of local government administration, community participation, traditional institutions, and local security initiatives within a single rural community. This geographical and contextual gap provides the justification for the present study, which seeks to examine the impact of local government administration on community security in Usen community of Ovia South West LGA.

Statement of the Problem

The presence of local government administration in Ovia South West LGA, has not effectively addressed insecurity issues in Usen community. Residents continue to experience challenges such as theft, land disputes, youth-related violence, and inadequate security presence. Aneke & Fayomi, (2024) indicate that weak coordination between local governments and security agencies contributes significantly to persistent insecurity in rural Nigeria. Furthermore, Adeniran & Uke, (2026), stated that decentralized policing systems remain underdeveloped in many LGAs, limiting their effectiveness in grassroots crime prevention.

Several observable factors appear to undermine the effectiveness of local government administration in promoting community security. These include inadequate funding for community security initiatives, poor collaboration between the local government and formal security agencies, limited logistical support for vigilante groups, inadequate security personnel, poor intelligence and information sharing, low level of community participation in security matters, and insufficient implementation of community policing strategies. In addition, the constitutional limitation of local governments in controlling security institutions further constrains their ability to respond promptly to emerging security challenges. Previous studies, including those by Aneke and Fayomi (2024), Abiakam and Azuoma (2025), and Nwodo et al. (2026), have examined local government administration, community policing, and vigilante operations in Nigeria. However, these studies focused on broader national or regional contexts and did not specifically investigate how these observable factors influence community security in Usen community of Ovia South West Local Government Area. Consequently, there is limited empirical

evidence on the extent to which local government administration contributes to community security in the community and the challenges limiting its effectiveness. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the impact of local government administration on community security in Usen community of Ovia South West Local Government Area.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of local government administration on community security in Usen community of Ovia South West LGA.

The specific objectives are to:

1. assess the role of local government administration in maintaining security in Usen community.
2. examine the strategies used by the local government to enhance community safety.
3. identify challenges affecting effective security management in Usen community.
4. evaluate the role of community participation in supporting local government security efforts.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of local government administration in maintaining security in Usen community?
2. What are the strategies used by the local government to enhance community safety in Usen community?
3. What are the challenges affecting effective security management in Usen community?
4. What are the roles of community participation in supporting local government security efforts in Usen community?

Methodology

Methodologically, the study adopted the quantitative descriptive survey research method. The population of this study will comprise of the people/inhabitants in Usen Community of Ovia South West LGA in Edo State. The community has an estimated population as at the year 2020 of 5,980 (City fact, 2026). The purposive sampling technique was used to select five respondents from each of the twelve quarters in the community (Aideyanba, Iguedo, Leleji, Obomen camp, Ofaran camp, Ogidigbo, Ogunmwenyin, Okha, Okhue camp, Okoro I, Oladaro, and Olorin, while random sampling method was used to administer the data collection instrument (questionnaire) to give 60 respondents. This study focuses on Usen community in Ovia South West Local

Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. It examines the relationship between local government administration and community security. The study covers security-related issues such as crime prevention, vigilante collaboration, traditional leadership involvement, and community participation.

Data for the study was collected through the use of the questionnaire (4-point likert scale) which was designed based on the research questions raised. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, A and B. Section A focused on the demographic or personal data of the respondents such as age, sex, marital status etc. while section B contains information which borders on the issue under study.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION/LITERATURE REVIEW

Local Government Administration and Community Security

Local government administration is widely recognized as the closest tier of government to the grassroots and is expected to play a key role in maintaining community order and security. However, its effectiveness in security governance depends largely on decentralization, autonomy, and coordination with other security institutions. Olawole, et al (2025) indicated that weak local government structures in Nigeria reduce their capacity to respond effectively to insecurity at the community level, and insecurity in Nigerian rural communities persists partly because local governments lack adequate institutional strength and coordination with formal security agencies, limiting their preventive capacity. Similarly, Jatau, Lenshie & Okoli (2026) argue that community-led security systems succeed only where governance structures, including local governments, provide institutional backing and legitimacy to local actors such as vigilante groups and community leaders.

Community Policing and Vigilante Collaboration

Community policing and vigilante collaboration represent one of the most important independent variables in grassroots security management. Community policing emphasizes partnership between law enforcement agencies and local communities in crime prevention. In Nigeria, the failure of centralized policing has increased reliance on informal security structures. Abiakam and Azuoma (2025) note that vigilante groups have become essential actors in addressing

armed robbery, kidnapping, and communal violence in the South-East due to police inefficiency at the grassroots level.

Similarly, Nwodo, Nwodo & Umoh (2026) emphasize that vigilante groups operate as hybrid security structures that fill the gap left by formal policing, especially in rural communities where police presence is limited. However, Ojedokun & Aderinto (2015), stated challenges such as lack of training, inadequate funding, and weak coordination with formal security agencies, these limitations reduce the long-term effectiveness of community policing initiatives.

Community Participation and Traditional Institutions

Community participation and the involvement of traditional institutions are critical variables in grassroots security governance. Local residents, traditional rulers, youth groups, and religious leaders often serve as the first line of intelligence and conflict resolution. According to Odion, Chuke & Uhumwangho (2024), local non-state actors play a crucial role in strengthening security outcomes through intelligence sharing and early warning systems in Nigerian communities. Their study emphasizes that security improves significantly when communities are actively involved in decision-making and surveillance activities.

Furthermore, Elphick et al. (2020) highlight that trust between citizens and security actors is essential for effective community-based policing, as it increases willingness to report crimes and cooperate with authorities. In many Nigerian rural communities, traditional institutions remain central to dispute resolution and conflict management, thereby complementing formal security structures.

Resource Allocation and Security Funding

Resource allocation is a major determinant of the effectiveness of local government administration in security provision. Without adequate funding, local governments cannot support surveillance systems, logistics, or community-based security groups. Research indicates that poor funding of local government institutions is a major barrier to effective security management in Nigeria. Nwankwo and Nkwede (2023) found that financial constraints limit the ability of local governments to implement community policing programs effectively. Additionally, insecurity itself negatively affects economic activities, which further reduces internally generated revenue at the local level (Ijirshar, Udaah, Mile, Vershima & Adaudu, 2025). This creates a cycle where

insecurity reduces revenue, and lack of revenue worsens insecurity. Therefore, adequate and sustainable funding is essential for strengthening local government involvement in community security.

Abiakam and Azuoma (2025), in their study titled “Community Policing and Security Issues in Nigeria: A Study of Local Vigilante Operations in the South-East Region (2019–2023)”, examined the growing reliance on vigilante groups in addressing insecurity caused by the inability of formal security agencies to effectively respond to grassroots crime. The problem of the study was the inefficiency of the Nigeria Police Force in rural crime control. The researchers adopted a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews with community leaders, vigilante members, and security personnel. The study was guided by Deterrence Theory, which explains how punishment and threat of enforcement influence criminal behavior. Findings revealed that vigilante groups significantly contributed to reducing armed robbery, kidnapping, and communal violence, although their effectiveness was constrained by inadequate funding, lack of formal training, and weak institutional coordination.

The study concluded that community policing structures improve grassroots security when properly supported. It recommended formal integration of vigilante groups into state security frameworks, improved funding, and structured training programs to enhance effectiveness.

Similarly, Nwodo et al. (2026), in their work titled “Community-Based Vigilantism and Grassroots Security in Nigeria”, investigated the structure and effectiveness of informal security systems in Enugu State. The problem addressed was the rising insecurity in rural communities despite the presence of formal policing institutions. The study used a mixed-methods approach, combining household surveys and key informant interviews with vigilante leaders and traditional rulers. The theoretical framework adopted was the Hybrid Security Governance Model, which explains the interaction between formal and informal security actors. The findings showed that community-based security groups improved intelligence gathering, rapid response to crime, and local surveillance. However, challenges such as human rights concerns, lack of regulation, and poor government support were identified. The study concluded that vigilante systems are effective but require formal regulation and institutional oversight. It recommended legal frameworks for integration and improved accountability mechanisms for community security actors.

In another related study, Aneke and Fayomi (2024), investigated Policing and Local Government Administration: A Solution to Terrorism and Insecurity in Nigeria”, by examining the role of local governments in enhancing community security. The study employed a qualitative secondary data analysis approach, drawing from policy documents and previous studies. It was anchored on Social Disorganization Theory, which links insecurity to weak institutional structures and poor community cohesion. The study found that local government administration plays a significant role in facilitating community policing through coordination, resource allocation, and partnership with security agencies. However, lack of autonomy and inadequate funding limit their effectiveness. The study concluded that strengthening local government institutions would significantly improve grassroots security outcomes. It recommended decentralization of policing functions and increased funding for local security initiatives.

Ojedokun and Aderinto (2015), explored the role of informal policing structures in crime control at the local level. The problem addressed was the inability of formal security agencies to effectively monitor rural and highway crime. The study adopted a qualitative design, using key informant interviews and focus group discussions. It was anchored on Routine Activity Theory, which explains crime occurrence based on motivated offenders, suitable targets, and absence of capable guardians. The findings showed that informal policing significantly contributed to reducing rural crime but faced challenges such as lack of legal recognition, poor coordination, and inadequate resources. The study concluded that informal security systems remain essential in rural Nigeria but require integration into formal policing structures. It recommended stronger collaboration between police and local security actors.

Furthermore, Yusuf (2024), focused on evaluating how vigilante groups contribute to crime prevention. The study used a descriptive survey design, supported by interviews and thematic analysis. It was guided by Social Bond Theory, which emphasizes that strong social relationships reduce criminal tendencies. Findings revealed that vigilante groups were effective in crime prevention due to their proximity to residents and local knowledge, but issues such as lack of funding, weak regulation, and occasional abuse of power were evident. The study concluded that vigilante operations are effective but require stronger institutional oversight. It recommended improved remuneration, training, and police collaboration.

Research Gaps

Existing studies on community security and local government administration in Nigeria have largely focused on national or regional security issues, with limited attention given to specific rural communities such as Usen community in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State. Most previous studies concentrated more on vigilante groups, police activities and general insecurity without adequately examining the direct role of local government administration in grassroots security management. There is also limited empirical evidence on how local government authorities collaborate with traditional rulers, youth groups and vigilante organizations to maintain peace and security in rural communities. In addition, any studies failed to capture the perception and experiences of residents regarding the effectiveness of local government security efforts. Methodically, many earlier studies relied mainly on qualitative or secondary data, leaving a gap in community-based quantitative evidence.

This study therefore fills these gaps by providing a community-specific investigation of Usen community, examining the role of local government administration in security management, assessing community participation in security efforts and generating current empirical data on grassroots security challenges in Ovia south West LGA.

Usen Community in Ovia South West Local Government Area, Edo State

Usen Community is one of the prominent rural communities in Ovia South West Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State, Nigeria. It is strategically located along the Benin–Ore road axis and serves as a semi-rural settlement with strong links to both agricultural activities and nearby urban centres such as Benin City. Usen is part of the larger Edo cultural and historical space dominated by the Benin Kingdom heritage. Like many communities in Ovia South West LGA, Usen has a strong traditional governance structure headed by a monarch and supported by chiefs and elders who oversee cultural preservation, dispute resolution, and community cohesion. The estimated population of Usen as at the year 2020 is 5,980 (City fact, 2026). The community is largely inhabited by the Edo-speaking people, and social life is strongly influenced by kinship ties, extended family systems, and communal living. Traditional institutions remain very influential in maintaining order and resolving conflicts, especially in the absence of strong formal security presence. The economy of Usen community is mainly agrarian-based. The majority of residents

are engaged in crop farming (cassava, yam, maize, plantain, vegetables), small-scale trading and roadside commerce, palm produce processing and timber-related activities and artisanal and local craft production

Due to its proximity to major roads, Usen also experiences some commercial activities linked to transportation and transit trade. However, like many rural communities in Nigeria, economic opportunities are constrained by infrastructure deficits and periodic insecurity challenges. Usen has several quarters which include Aideyanba, Iguedo, Leleji, Obomen camp, Ofaran camp, Ogidigbo, Ogunmwenyin, Okha, Okhue camp, Okoro I, Oladaro, and Olorin. Usen operates a dual governance system:

1. Traditional governance system: Led by the monarch and council of chiefs, handles cultural affairs, land matters, and dispute resolution and plays a key role in community security intelligence
2. Local government administration (Ovia South West LGA): responsible for development planning, basic infrastructure, and coordination of community affairs, works (often informally) with community leaders on security issues and limited direct security enforcement power due to Nigeria's centralized policing system

Security in Usen reflects the broader challenges of rural communities in Ovia South West LGA. The community has experienced occasional cases of youth restiveness, land and boundary-related disputes and petty theft and rural crime and concerns about inadequate police presence. In response, the community relies heavily on vigilante groups, youth surveillance structures, traditional rulers and elders and informal intelligence sharing networks. These informal systems often work in collaboration with police officers stationed in nearby areas, although coordination is sometimes inconsistent.

Community Role in Security Management

Usen community demonstrates a strong example of community-based security participation, where residents contribute to safety through reporting suspicious activities, supporting vigilante patrols, participating in community meetings on security matters and assisting in conflict resolution through traditional institutions, this aligns with broader findings in Nigerian rural governance, where community participation is essential for effective grassroots security (Alemika, 2020; Odion et al., 2024).

Justification for the Selection of Usen Community

Usen community was selected for this study because it is one of the major communities in **Ovia South West Local Government Area, Edo State**, and has experienced various grassroots security challenges that require active involvement of the local government administration. The community has a functional traditional leadership structure, community-based vigilante groups, and regular interactions with local government authorities on issues relating to peace and security, making it an appropriate setting for examining the impact of local government administration on community security.

Furthermore, the researchers are indigenes of Usen, which is predominantly a rural community where agriculture and small-scale businesses constitute the main means of livelihood. As such, the maintenance of peace and security is essential for socio-economic development and the well-being of residents. The choice of Usen also addresses the gap in existing literature, as few empirical studies have specifically examined the role of local government administration in promoting community security within the community. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to provide useful evidence for improving grassroots security management in Usen community and other rural communities with similar characteristics in Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Community Policing Theory, which emphasizes collaboration between law enforcement agencies, local government authorities, and community members in preventing and controlling crime. The theory is based on the idea that policing is most effective when it is decentralized and involves active participation of citizens. According to Skogan (2019), community policing improves trust between the police and the public, enhances intelligence gathering, and strengthens crime prevention strategies. It shifts policing from reactive enforcement to proactive problem-solving. It was initially developed and popularized in modern criminology by Herman Goldstein (1979–1980s), he is widely regarded as the intellectual pioneer of modern community policing. Later institutional development came through policing reforms in the United States and United Kingdom in the 1980s and 1990s.

Core Tenets (Principles) of Community Policing Theory

The theory is built on several key principles that guide its application in security governance:

1. Police–Community Partnership: Security is most effective when the police and community members work together as partners rather than as separate or distant actors.
2. Decentralization of Policing: Decision-making authority should be moved closer to local communities, allowing officers and local institutions (including local governments) to respond quickly to local security issues.
3. Problem-Oriented Approach: Instead of reacting to crimes after they occur, policing should focus on identifying and solving the root causes of crime and insecurity (e.g., youth unemployment, land disputes).
4. Community Participation: Citizens are not passive recipients of security; they are active participants through information sharing, neighborhood watch, collaboration with security agencies and support for local vigilance systems
5. Trust and Legitimacy: the effectiveness of policing depends on public trust. When communities trust security agencies, they are more likely to report crimes and cooperate.
8. Integration of Formal and Informal Security Systems: the theory recognizes the role of traditional rulers, vigilante groups, local government authorities and in supporting formal policing structures.

In applying this theory to local Government administration in community security, the theory explains collaboration between local government and security agencies; justifies the role of vigilante groups and community participation and supports the idea that security is most effective when decentralized.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Responses from 60 Respondents on the Impact of Local Government Administration in Community Security in Usen Community

S/N	QUESTIONS	SA Frequency (%)	D Frequency (%)	SD Frequency (%)	A Frequency (%)	Total
1	The local government administration plays an	24	20	10	6	60

	active role in maintaining peace and security in Usen community.	(40.0%)	(33.3%)	(16.7%)	(10%)	(100%)
2	The local government responds promptly to security challenges reported in Usen community.	18 (30.0%)	22 (36.7%)	12 (20.0%)	8 (13.3%)	60 (100%)
3	The presence of local government officials has helped reduce crime rate in Usen community.	20 (33.3%)	24 (40.0%)	9 (15.0%)	7 (11.7%)	60 (100%)
4	The local government uses collaboration with vigilante groups to improve security in Usen community.	26 (43.3%)	21 (35.0%)	8 (13.3%)	5 (8.4%)	60 (100%)
5	Community meetings and sensitization programs are used by the local government to address security issues.	19 (31.7%)	23 (38.3%)	11 (18.3%)	7 (11.7%)	60 (100%)
6	The local government provides support (logistics or funding) to community security initiatives in Usen community.	15 (25.0%)	20 (33.3%)	16 (26.7%)	9 (15.0%)	60 (100%)
7	Lack of adequate funding affects the ability of the local government to manage	30 (50.0%)	18 (30.0%)	8 (13.3%)	4 (6.7%)	60 (100%)

	security in Usen community.					
8	Poor cooperation between security agencies and the local government reduces security effectiveness in Usen community.	25 (41.7%)	20 (33.3%)	10 (16.7%)	5 (8.3%)	60 (100%)
9	Inadequate manpower and resources limit effective security management in Usen community.	28 (46.7%)	19 (31.7%)	8 (13.3%)	5 (8.3%)	60 (100%)
10	Community members actively provide useful information that helps improve security in Usen community.	22 (36.7%)	25 (41.7%)	8 (13.3%)	5 (8.3%)	60 (100%)
11	Traditional leaders in Usen community play a significant role in maintaining peace and order.	27 (45.0%)	21 (35.0%)	7 (11.7%)	5 (8.3%)	60 (100%)
12	Youth groups and vigilante participation enhance the effectiveness of local government security efforts.	29 (48.3%)	20 (33.3%)	7 (11.7%)	4 (6.7%)	60 (100%)

Source: Authors' Survey, 2026

Table 1 presents the responses of sixty (60) respondents on the impact of local government administration on community security in Usen community, Ovia South West Local Government Area, Edo State. The responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale comprising Strongly

Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The analysis is based on frequency distributions and percentages.

The first questionnaire item examined whether the local government administration plays an active role in maintaining peace and security in Usen community. The result shows that 24 respondents (40.0%) strongly agreed and 20 respondents (33.3%) agreed, giving a total of 44 respondents (73.3%) who expressed agreement. Conversely, 10 respondents (16.7%) disagreed, while 6 respondents (10.0%) strongly disagreed, representing a combined disagreement of 26.7%.

The second item sought to determine whether the local government responds promptly to security challenges reported in Usen community. The findings reveal that 18 respondents (30.0%) strongly agreed and 22 respondents (36.7%) agreed, representing a combined positive response of 66.7%. On the contrary, 12 respondents (20.0%) disagreed and 8 respondents (13.3%) strongly disagreed, accounting for 33.3% of the respondents.

The third item investigated whether the presence of local government officials has contributed to reducing crime in Usen community. The result indicates that 20 respondents (33.3%) strongly agreed and 24 respondents (40.0%) agreed, representing 73.3% of the respondents. Meanwhile, 9 respondents (15.0%) disagreed and 7 respondents (11.7%) strongly disagreed, amounting to 26.7%.

The fourth item examined whether collaboration between the local government and vigilante groups improves security in Usen community. The responses show that 26 respondents (43.3%) strongly agreed while 21 respondents (35.0%) agreed, giving a combined agreement of 78.3%. Only 8 respondents (13.3%) disagreed and 5 respondents (8.4%) strongly disagreed. .

The fifth item focused on whether community meetings and sensitization programmes are used by the local government to address security issues. The findings reveal that 19 respondents (31.7%) strongly agreed and 23 respondents (38.3%) agreed, resulting in a total agreement of 70.0%. However, 11 respondents (18.3%) disagreed and 7 respondents (11.7%) strongly disagreed, making a total disagreement of 30.0%.

The sixth item assessed whether the local government provides logistics or funding to support community security initiatives. The responses indicate that 15 respondents (25.0%) strongly agreed and 20 respondents (33.3%) agreed, representing 58.3% agreement. In contrast,

16 respondents (26.7%) disagreed and 9 respondents (15.0%) strongly disagreed, accounting for 41.7% disagreement.

The seventh item examined whether inadequate funding affects the ability of the local government to manage security in Usen community. The table shows that 30 respondents (50.0%) strongly agreed and 18 respondents (30.0%) agreed, giving a combined agreement of 80.0%. Only 8 respondents (13.3%) disagreed and 4 respondents (6.7%) strongly disagreed.

The eighth item investigated whether poor cooperation between security agencies and the local government reduces security effectiveness. The findings reveal that 25 respondents (41.7%) strongly agreed and 20 respondents (33.3%) agreed, amounting to 75.0% agreement.

The ninth item assessed whether inadequate manpower and resources limit effective security management in Usen community. The responses indicate that 28 respondents (46.7%) strongly agreed and 19 respondents (31.7%) agreed, giving a total agreement of 78.4%. Only 13 respondents (21.6%) expressed disagreement.

The tenth item examined whether community members actively provide useful information that improves security in Usen community. The findings reveal that 22 respondents (36.7%) strongly agreed and 25 respondents (41.7%) agreed, representing a combined agreement of 78.4%. Only 13 respondents (21.6%) disagreed. The eleventh item focused on the contribution of traditional leaders to maintaining peace and order. The responses show that 27 respondents (45.0%) strongly agreed and 21 respondents (35.0%) agreed, representing an overall agreement of 80.0%. Only 12 respondents (20.0%) expressed disagreement. Finally, the twelfth item examined whether youth groups and vigilante participation enhance the effectiveness of local government security efforts. The result indicates that 29 respondents (48.3%) strongly agreed and 20 respondents (33.3%) agreed, giving the highest overall agreement of 81.6%. Only 11 respondents (18.4%) disagreed.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that local government administration plays a significant role in maintaining community security in Usen community of Ovia South West Local Government Area. The majority of respondents agreed that the local government contributes to peace and order through coordination of security activities, collaboration with vigilante groups,

and engagement with community stakeholders. This finding suggests that grassroots governance remains important in addressing rural insecurity and promoting social stability. The study further revealed that collaboration between the local government and vigilante groups is one of the major strategies used to enhance community safety in Usen community. Respondents strongly agreed that vigilante participation improves surveillance, intelligence gathering, and crime prevention.

This finding aligns with the empirical study of Abiakam and Azuoma (2025), who found that vigilante groups significantly contribute to reducing kidnapping, armed robbery, and communal violence in rural Nigeria where formal policing structures are weak. Similarly, Nwodo et al. (2026) observed that community-based security groups improve rapid response to crime and strengthen grassroots policing efforts. The findings also showed that community meetings and sensitization programs are used by the local government administration to address security challenges. This indicates that awareness creation and community engagement are recognized as important components of security management. The result supports the findings of Chukelu (2025), who reported that community participation and local sensitization initiatives improve public cooperation and enhance local crime prevention strategies.

Another important finding of the study is that inadequate funding affects the effectiveness of local government security management in Usen community. Most respondents agreed that lack of sufficient financial resources limits the ability of the local government to provide logistics, manpower support, and adequate coordination of security operations. This finding corroborates the work of Aneke and Fayomi (2024), who concluded that poor funding and weak local government autonomy reduce the effectiveness of grassroots security administration in Nigeria. The study also found that poor cooperation between security agencies and local government authorities negatively affects community security. Respondents indicated that weak coordination among stakeholders creates operational gaps in crime prevention and response mechanisms.

This finding is consistent with the study by Ojedokun and Aderinto (2015), which revealed that lack of institutional collaboration weakens the effectiveness of informal policing systems in rural communities. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that traditional rulers, youth groups, and community members play significant roles in maintaining peace and supporting local government security efforts. Respondents agreed that residents actively provide information and

support community-based security initiatives. This confirms the argument of Odion et al. (2024), who emphasized that local non-state actors such as traditional institutions and vigilante groups are essential for strengthening security outcomes in Nigerian communities.

The findings of this study strongly support the Community Policing Theory, which serves as the theoretical framework of the study. The theory emphasizes partnership between security agencies, local government authorities, and community members in maintaining law and order. The active involvement of vigilante groups, youth associations, traditional leaders, and residents in Usen community reflects the principles of community policing, particularly citizen participation, collaboration, and decentralized security management.

The study confirms the core assumption of Community Policing Theory that security is more effective when communities actively cooperate with local authorities and security institutions. The findings demonstrate that community participation improves intelligence gathering, strengthens surveillance, and promotes collective responsibility for security. However, the challenges of inadequate funding, weak institutional coordination, and limited manpower also show that effective community policing requires sufficient government support and administrative capacity.

CONCLUSION

The study established that local government administration plays an important role in maintaining peace and security through collaboration with vigilante groups, community sensitization programs, and engagement with traditional institutions and community stakeholders. The findings revealed that community-based security efforts have contributed positively to crime prevention, intelligence gathering, and maintenance of peace in Usen community. The study also showed that active participation by community members, youth groups, and traditional leaders significantly strengthens local security arrangements and supports local government security initiatives. The study identified several challenges affecting effective security management in the community. These include inadequate funding, poor cooperation between security agencies and local government authorities, insufficient manpower, and limited logistical support. These challenges reduce the effectiveness of local government administration in addressing security issues promptly and efficiently.

The study further established that community participation remains a critical factor in sustaining grassroots security. The findings support the Community Policing Theory, which emphasizes collaboration, trust, and partnership between government authorities and community members in maintaining law and order. The study concludes that effective community security in Usen community depends on strong collaboration between local government administration, security agencies, traditional institutions, vigilante groups, and residents. Where such cooperation exists, security outcomes are improved and community stability is strengthened.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The local government administration should allocate more financial resources toward community security activities such as vigilante operations, surveillance equipment, patrol logistics, and security sensitization programs.
2. There should be improved coordination and communication between the local government, police, vigilante groups, and other security stakeholders to ensure effective response to security challenges in Usen community.
3. Vigilante groups should be formally recognized, trained, and monitored to improve their effectiveness and prevent abuse of power. Adequate supervision will enhance professionalism in community-based security operations.
4. Community members should be encouraged to actively participate in security meetings, report suspicious activities, and cooperate with local security structures. Public awareness campaigns should be intensified to strengthen collective responsibility for security.
5. Traditional rulers and community elders should be more actively involved in peacebuilding and dispute resolution processes because of their influence and understanding of local community dynamics.
6. Government should deploy more security personnel to rural communities like Usen and provide necessary logistics such as patrol vehicles, communication equipment, and operational support for effective security management.
7. Youth groups should be engaged in productive community development and security-related activities to reduce youth restiveness and strengthen local peace initiatives.

8. The government should strengthen community policing policies by encouraging regular interaction between security agencies and residents to improve trust, intelligence gathering, and crime prevention.
9. The local government should organize workshops, town hall meetings, and public sensitization campaigns to educate residents on crime prevention, conflict management, and community cooperation in security matters.
10. Greater administrative and financial autonomy should be granted to local governments to enable them respond more effectively to grassroots security challenges.

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