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# Community Participation and the Operational Efficiency of the Oyo State Security Network Agency (OYSSNA)

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Abstract: This study seeks to contribute to the existing literature on security governance and community participation in policing and highlight the importance of community participation in ensuring adequate security provision by examining the relationship between community participation and the operational efficiency of the Oyo State Security Network Agency (OSSNA). The agency was founded in January 2020 with a view to increasing community participation in policing and creating support for formal policing organisations operating within Oyo State. Readings from extant research revealed that the impact of community participation on OSSNA operations has not been discussed extensively, underlining the need to assess the impact and challenges of community participation to proffer solutions to challenges of capacity in the OSSNA escalated insecurities. The study indicates a significant public perception of OSSNA's insufficient capacity and resources due to a poor communication system. The study affirmed that the OSSNA has consistently rebuffed the community's offers to participate in its operations despite proof that community participation is germane to the agency's attempt to build community trust, gather local intelligence, and respond proactively to emerging security threats. The study identifies several factors facilitating or hindering community participation, including communication, trust, and cultural sensitivity. Based on the findings, the research suggests several recommendations to improve community participation and operational efficiency in the OSSNA. These include designing policies for community involvement, creating information-driven awareness, simplifying information processes through print and online media, increasing direct interactions with the community through joint training and information-sharing sessions, and creating an accessible citizens' feedback platform.

Keywords: Community Participation, Operational Gaps, Community Policing, Public Perception.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Policing is a vital state function in modern democratic societies that ensures the rule of law, public safety, and protects citizens' rights. Effective policing, prevents chaos and lawlessness, promotes peaceful living, and improves socioeconomic development (Akinyemi, 2021). Police officers are therefore expected to be accountable, transparent, and responsive to the people they serve. Maidawa (2023) posits that traditional Nigerian community security was an allstakeholder approach, with community groups and organisations responsible for law enforcement and crime investigation. These groups, often led by respected elders or local chiefs, were responsible for maintaining peace, resolving disputes, and ensuring safety. However, with the establishment of colonial policing systems, these traditional roles were diminished, leading to a shift to state-driven security management system (Tade, 2023).). Colonial policing systems in Nigeria have led to a disconnect between police and communities, resulting in corruption and inefficiency.

Kpae and Adishi (2017) argue that community policing, introduced to improve community participation, has failed due to police management's resistance to abandoning the politically influenced, traditional elitist model. Felbab-Brown (2021) argue that the failure of policing made many Nigerian communities feel abandoned and isolated by the institutions meant to protect them, extending cleavages of distrust in the police and increasing the unauthorized establishment of vigilante groups in most communities. Mou (2023) reasoned that despite limited resources, state-sanctioned policing outfits were established, leading to a public distrust of law enforcement and a sense of impunity among criminals given the increased public perception of a lack of capacity and capabilities in these organisations. The ongoing cycle of corruption and inefficiency in Nigerian law enforcement is likely to continue without significant reforms promoting community participation.

Community participation in policing is a collaborative effort between police and host communities to reduce public

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apathy to formal policing and criminal activities, a concept that Nigeria has implemented since the turn of the millennium. The World Bank (2018) describes community participation as the leveraging the influence of people in development plans, choices, and assets, and police-community partnerships as a means to prevent and reduce crime. Formya, Umar, and Amshi (2024) posit that community participation in policing should normally help improve the relationship between law enforcement and citizens, leading to greater cooperation and trust. Through proactive involvement of the public in crime prevention and information gathering, law enforcement has been able to better address the specific needs and concerns of each neighbourhood. Community participation has not only reduced crime rates where its effectively practised, but has also fostered a sense of belonging and shared-responsibility among residents for the safety and security within their communities.

Increasing insecurity in most regions of Nigeria since the advent of the Boko Haram conflicts in 2012 has led to increased public awareness and demand for the reform of the Nigerian policing system (Ayodele, Shittu, Idowu, and Balogun, 2024). Challenges of growing armed criminality and violent repetitive conflicts and complaints of operational and ethical gaps in formal policing operations in most communities in Southwest Nigeria informed the creation of the Oyo State Security Network Agency (OSSNA) as a stategovernment-sanctioned community policing system in January 2020 (Mou, 2023; Otu and Apeh, 2022). The mandate of the OSSNA was to improve policing effectiveness through the provision of local intelligence and support for formal policing organisations operations and enhancing community participation in Oyo State's policing (Abolade, 2020).

Several studies like Otu and Apeh (2022) and dwelt on the operational effectiveness of the OSSNA and the attributed high crime reduction in Oyo State since 2020 to the effectiveness of the OSSNA operations. However, contentions in studies like Olumide (2024) and Avodele et al. (2024) primarily exposed how the challenges of low capacity and resources limit OSSNA's effective operations in Oyo State. These contrasting findings highlight the complex dynamics at play within the security landscape of Oyo State. Together, these studies underscore the importance of further studies on roles of community capacity and resources in enhancing the effectiveness of OSSNA law enforcement efforts in Oyo State. The paper explores the role of community participation and engagement in OSSNA's policing and the obstacles impeding community participation in OSSNA operations in Ibadan, Oyo State, in line with Adenuga, Aborisade, and Atere's (2024) findings that promoting community engagement can reduce violent conflicts.

# > Conceptual Framework

 Community Participation: In the context of this paper focusing on the Oyo State Security Network Agency (OSSNA), community participation refers to the involvement of citizens, community groups, and organizations in the decision-making processes and activities of institutions, such as policing agencies. It

involves collaboration, cooperation, and mutual engagement between community members and policing agencies to achieve shared goals and improve public safety. Community participation involves communities in decision-making, enhancing cooperation and compliance with laws. According to a study by Akinyemi (2021) this proactive approach empowers communities, transforms law enforcement, and restores trust. Community participation is essential for mapping operational efficiency in policing in several ways. First and foremost, community members own their communities and therefore possess valuable knowledge and insights about local crime patterns, hotspots, and social dynamics, hence could provide police with early-warning information system for proactive crime prevention. It helps build trust and legitimacy between policing agencies and the communities they serve; enables policing agencies to understand community needs and priorities, which can inform resource allocation and operational decisions; facilitates a more effective response to community concerns, as policing agencies can respond to issues in a timely and targeted manner; and promotes accountability and transparency within policing agencies, as community members can provide oversight and feedback on policing activities.

Community participation also offers valuable input for strategic planning and decision-making within policing agencies, ensuring that community needs and concerns inform operational decisions. Hence, it enables policing agencies to improve operational efficiency, build trust with the community, and ultimately enhance public safety. Modise's (2023) study emphasised community involvement in policing, identifying challenges and promoting proactive participation through forums, events, meetings, community functions to enhance collaborations engagement. Akinyemi (2021) highlights the main challenge with Nigeria's community policing reforms, citing limited community participation, political interference, corruption. The paper also emphasises the importance of building trust and collaboration between the people and law enforcement officers towards fostering a sense of ownership and shared concern for maintaining law and order. It suggests that community policing initiatives should focus on creating platforms for open communication and feedback, as well as providing training for law enforcement personnel and community members on conflict resolution and community engagement. By addressing these key issues, the paper argues that OSSNA's policing efforts can make significant strides towards creating a safer and more peaceful environment in Ibadan.

### > Theoretical Framework

• The Social Resource Theory (SRT): According to Nan Lin's (2002) Social Resource Theory, the police are social resources created to mitigate public insecurity. It recognises that the public's impression of police incompetence, operational inadequacies, and resource shortages frequently contributes to criminal behaviour. The concept highlights how crucial it is for police to tap

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into community resources and proactively address issues in the community by fostering stronger ties between the police and the community. The theory avers that communities possess valuable social resources like trust, cohesion, and collective efficacy, which significantly influence crime prevention and public safety. The SRT emphasises the importance of OSSNA leveraging community participation in crime prevention, highlighting the role of social connections and relations in achieving goals. In policing management, the theory emphasises the need for OSSNA to actively engage community participation taps into local resources and knowledge for early-warnings and proactive policing. By fostering community integration, relationships, and collaboration, the OSSNA operations could create an enhanced supportive capacity from a network that is committed to proactive crime prevention.

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Oyo State Security Network Agency was established in January 2020 as a localised policing system charged with the provision of local intelligence and operational support for the formal policing organisation operating within Oyo State. The agency, also known as Amotekun, has since been instrumental in combating crime, particularly in rural areas where formal policing may not reach. In order to preserve peace and order in the state, OSSNA personnel are deployed to respond to a variety of security threats and collaborate closely with other security organisations. The establishment of Amotekun has been widely applauded by residents for its impact in reducing crime rates and ensuring the safety of the community (Otu and Apeh, 2022; Awotayo et al., 2024). However, studies like Olumide (2024), Felbab-Brown (2021), and Obado-Joel (2021) contend that the agency may lack resources and capabilities and a proper oversight and accountability framework for effective operations in Oyo State. These challenges they claim could potentially lead to abuse of power and misuse of resources, which may eventually erode public confidence in law enforcement.

According to Akinyemi's (2021) study, Nigeria should implement a community-driven policing strategy to address public mistrust and the difficulties associated with a decline in trust in the police force. This reform would demonstrate police commitment to serving community interests, rather than just enforcing laws. Positive interactions between police and residents could gradually rebuild trust and improve law enforcement perception. Ibrahim, Saleh, and Mukhtar (2016) argue that for community stability, officer safety, and effective policing, policing authorities should involve the public in decision-making processes. These fosters open communication and trust in police-community relationship. They suggest that there should be unfettered collaborations between police and the people they serve. Community members must also collaborate to establish acceptable norms and guidelines. Modise's (2023) study suggests that community engagement can help law enforcement organisations and individuals collaborate to address issues, improve public trust, and conduct proactive analysis. It emphasises the importance of overcoming communication barriers and developing strategies to overcome these barriers, especially in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, for successful community policing initiatives.

Sir Robert Peel's policing reforms in Britain in the late 20th century, emphasised trust and cooperation between police and the public as panache for effective policing. Jones (2016) surmises the emphasis is on assessing stakeholders' consensus in building a working society, arguing that stability based on interrelationship and interconnectivity is necessary for the sustenance of any social system. Employing the argument in Emile Durkheim's functionalism theory, Jones (2016) posits that society is composed of interrelated components that should collaborate to ensure social stability. Ineffective formal policing can negatively impact society's security and can only be solved through positive interactions between all stakeholders. Social interaction system breakdown can have significant developmental effects, necessitating proper collaboration and communication between law enforcement, government officials, and community members to ensure general safety and well-being at all times. Recognising and integrating the interconnections of social institutions in all societal engagements could lead to a thriving and prosperous society. Collaboration among all parties is crucial for promoting safety and security within the community. Strong relationships and open communication channels enable efficient problem-solving. participation in maintaining social stability leads to limitless growth and prosperity, ensuring a thriving and prosperous society.

Oke, Braimah, and Masajuwa's (2017) study analysed Nigeria's community policing strategy, focusing on strengthening the country's security architecture through public participation and engagement. The study emphasised the need for local intelligence gathering and capacity development through community participation, allowing communities to take ownership of their security and work collaboratively with law enforcement agencies. The study aimed to improve public perception of policing effectiveness in Nigeria. According to Ngwu and Ahuruonye's (2017) study, community-orientated policing in Nigeria aims to build strong relationships between the police and the community, promoting communication and alliance in crime prevention and resolution. Given that formal policing structures have been criticised for ethical and operational gaps and human rights abuses by the public community policing thus remains the best alternative for promoting public safety and trust

## > Challenges to Community Participation in Policing

Adenuga, Aborisade, and Atere (2024) suggest that the impacts of community participation in policing in Nigeria could be hindered by several factors, including public distrust, corruption, partisan politics, a centralised structure, a traditional culture of force, underfunding, inadequate resources, the rise of vigilante groups, recruitment of unqualified personnel, inadequate remuneration, and a lack of information with residents. Fostering cooperation is challenging in Nigeria's policing sector due to the public's

perception of the police as dishonest and unreliable (Ikuteyijo, 2009). The Nigeria Police Force's centralised structure and reactionary approach to crime fighting also hinder the decentralisation of authority, which is essential for community policing (Kpae and Adishi, 2017). The traditional culture of force and brutality also makes it difficult to embrace community policing. Additionally, community policing requires greater funding for training, equipment, and better officers' pay, but it is often underfunded (Fomnya, Umar, and Amshi, 2024). The rise of local vigilante groups and the recruitment of unqualified personnel further exacerbate these issues.

The study by Ibrahim, Saleh, and Mukthar (2016) on community participation impact on policing effectiveness in Nigeria highlights the need to adopt three salient strategies: community partnership, policing organisational transformation, and mutual problem-solving. It identifies the main challenge to effective community role in Nigerian policing as the police culture, corruption, and political pressure. The study calls for political and corruption-free policing and increased community integration into Nigerian policing operations.

### III. EMPERICAL EVIDENCES

Empirical studies om the effects of community participation on the OSSNA operations in Oyo State are few. Most studies emphasise the legality and the effectiveness of the OSSNA security operations. Ordu and Nnam's (2017) study on community participation in policing in Nigeria found that it raises public awareness of security issues and encourages community concern about crime prevention. However, he noted that public complaints of ethical gaps are eroding confidence in community policing initiatives. The study suggests that improving police-community relations through a culture of social justice, rectitude, and conscience can dispel mistrust, promote understanding, and encourage community involvement in Nigerian policing.

A study by Suleiman, Wushishi, Abdulkadir, and Oguine (2024) in Biya Emirate, Niger State, found that Nigeria police's efforts to reduce crime in the Bida community through community participation have been unsuccessful due to rising unemployment, poor community participation, lack of adequate resources, and uncoordinated collaboration. The study emphasises the need for a holistic

approach, focusing on root causes like poverty, lack of opportunity, and the need for collaboration between police, police management, and community members to implement effective strategies to combat local crime and promote social development in Nigeria.

Adenuga, Aborisade, and Atere (2024) investigate the role of Yoruba indigenous security system officials in resolving violent disputes in 64 rural villages in southwest Nigeria. The top three most common crimes found were cultism and gang violence, farmer-herder confrontations, and physical attacks. These confrontations were resolved by border-localised policing, native intelligence, and the employment of juju by local security personnel. The study discovered that violent disputes in rural communities are steadily decreasing, and it suggests boosting the use of Yoruba indigenous community resources to minimise violence and encourage indigenous community engagement in policing.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

A survey design was adopted to collect primary and secondary data from 435 purposively selected participants. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane's (1976) formula for the study. The respondents for the study were purposively selected from the population comprising personnel of; the Nigerian Police Force, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corp, Department of State Security, OSSNA, Local Vigilante Corp, Community Leaders, Youth Groups, Park Management System Workers, and the staff of the 11 Ibadan Local Government Councils, Oyo State Government Officials, and other residents in the selected research area. Primary data were collected through survey questionnaires and key informant interviews. Secondary data on "community participation and community policing in Nigeria" were obtained from journals, newspapers, books, and online resources. Data was analysed and presented through descriptive analytic methods, percentages, tables, and graphs to facilitate easy understanding.

### > FINDINGS OF THE STTUDY

• Impacts of public participation on OSSNA Policing in Ibadan

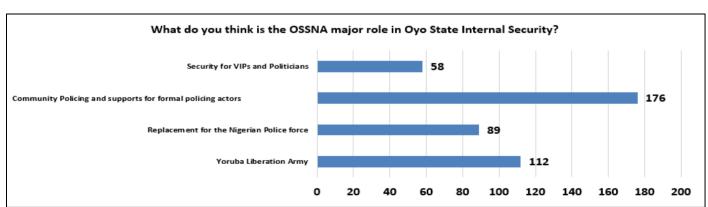


Fig 1 Public Understanding of the OSSNA Roles in Oyo State Security Operations

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The result in Fig. 1. reveals that only 40% of 435 respondents can clearly articulate the role of the OSSNA as community policing and formal policing support structure. However, 13% of respondents believe the OSSNA's operations are solely for VIPs and politicians, 21% believe it's Oyo State's replacement for the Nigeria Police Force, and 26% believe it's the Yoruba liberation army.

The Oyo State Security Network Agency (OSSNA) has experienced daily growth, with its capacity and capabilities

managed by available government resources. Initially with 1,500 personnel, it has now grown to 2,500, with the deployment of 500 forest rangers in October 2024. The state government prioritise providing modern equipment and plans to open airstrips and deploy drones for Amotekun operations. The perception that OSSNA lacks capacity is incorrect, as the operation is developing and will continue to deliver effectively based on its mandate (KII/IBADAN/OSSNA-OFFICIAL/ MALE/2025).

Table 1 Respondents Views on the Capacity of the OSSNA for Security Operations in Ibadan, Oyo State.

	Respondent's Querry	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total
a	I think the OSSNA operations could be more effective with better capacity	168 (39%)	102 (24%)	54 (12%)	43 (10%)	68 (16%)	435 (100)
b	I think the OSSNA have the necessary public Support for its operations	78 (18%)	86 (20%)	46 (11%)	182 (42%)	43 (10%)	435 (100)

The results from Tab. 1(a) reveals that 270 out of 435 respondents believed that the OSSNA operations could have been more effective with increased capacity, with over 63% of respondents stating that improved capacity is needed for

better performance. Additionally, over 52% of respondents believe that the OSSNA lacks the necessary support for its operations in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Public participation in OSSNA operations in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Table 2 Respondents' Views on Public Participation in OSSNA Policing Activities in Ibadan, Oyo State.

	Respondent's Querry	Never (%)	Once (%)	Rarely (%)	Often (%)	Regularly (%)	Total
a	How often have you interacted with OSSN during operations in the past three years?	66 (15%)	54 (12%)	145 (33%)	92 (22%)	78 (18%)	435 (100)
b	I have attended community information session and training organised by the OSSNA	258 (59%)	132 (30%)	28 (6%)	12 (3%)	5 (1%)	435 (100)

The results from Table 2 above revealed that 15% of the respondents have never interacted with the OSSNA during operations in their communities in the past three years. 33% of respondents rarely encounter the Corps during operations, while about 40% confirmed their regular interactions. Additionally, 59% of respondents have never attended any security awareness training or community interactive sessions with the OSSNA in their communities in Ibadan. Only 30% of participants have attended such programs before, and only 4% have attended such programmers.

The management emphasises the importance of avoiding excessive public interaction to prevent corruption and ensure effective operations. However, some of us believe that building relationships with the public is crucial for trust and cooperation. Striking a balance between these two perspectives is essential for creating a successful, community-orientated policing approach in OSSNA (KII/OSSN-COMMANDER/MALE/IBADAN/2025).

> Factors limiting community participation in the OSSNA operations in Ibadan, Oyo State.

The introduction of Amotekun policing initiatives was welcomed by many communities, but the Amotekun people always refused to acknowledge our proposals for support. This lack of appreciation has left the community feeling discouraged. We hope that the Amotekun people will eventually realise the value of community cooperation and accept our assistance, as their numbers are not enough to cover their areas of operations. The community aims to work with the Amotekun to make our neighbourhoods safer, but their lack of appreciation has left us feeling isolated and disappointed(KII/VIGILANTECOMMANDER/IBADAN/MALE/2025).

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Table 3 Respondents'	Views on their	Willingness to Par	rticipate in (	OSSNA Oi	perations in Ibadan Ovo State

	Respondent's Querry	Yes (%)	Maybe (%)	No (%)	Total
a	Do you think the Amotekun will perform better with community participation in its operations?	340 (78%)	67 (15%)	28 (7%)	435 (100%)
b	I am willing to support the OSSNA policing operations in my community	355 (82%)	43 (9%)	37 (9%)	435 (100%)

The result in Table 3 above revealed that 78% of respondents in Oyo State believe that integrating all stakeholders into the operations of the OSSNA is necessary for improved effectiveness and legitimacy. However, only 6% of respondents, or 28 out of 435, disagree. Additionally, over 82% of respondents in Ibadan are willing to support the OSSNA's policing operations with their resources.

### V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed a lack of public understanding of the roles of the OSSNA in policing operations in Ibadan, indicating a lack of effective communication and community integration systems. Most respondents felt that the OSSNA lacked proper capabilities for effective policing, which is a challenge for its effectiveness and sustainability in Oyo State. Proper communication of policing roles and capabilities can help eliminate expectation gaps and build trust, as it reduces expectation gaps, increases trust and cooperation, and enhances legitimacy. Public awareness initiatives, such as community meetings and social media updates, can help demystify policing operations and build trust. The lack of high public understanding of OSSNA operational roles after three years of operations in Oyo State contradicts the findings of Ordu and Nnam (2017) that community policing should increase public awareness and understanding of security issues.

The study reveals that only two-fifths of respondents have encountered the Amotekun Corps (OSSNA) during their operations in the past three years, indicating a low level of community communication and integration within the OSSNA operations. Despite claims of a well-defined communication system and adequate capacity by OSSNA officials, public opinions tend to favour low capacity and operational gaps. The study suggests that proper communication of challenges and capabilities with the community could enhance public understanding and support for the OSSNAOSSNA should concentrate on strengthening channels of communication and encouraging transparency in its communication with the people of Ibadan in order to increase community involvement. Fostering a culture of open communication and collaboration can increase efficiency and effectiveness in operations. These findings align with the findings in Suleiman, Wushishi, Abdulkadir, and Oguine (2024), which suggest that community policing without public support is bound to fail.

The OSSNA operations in Ibadan face a low level of public awareness and information about their roles in security operations. Despite high public support and 80% willingness to contribute, the lack of understanding about the agency's

functions among community members and ineffective communication between the OSSNA and the community hampers community participation, leading to a disconnect in information sharing. This lack of information fuels public perception of operational gaps in the OSSNA's operations in Oyo State. This aligns with findings in Olumide (2024) and Ayodele et al. (2024) that conclude that lack of proper information about the OSSNA fuels public perception of operational gaps in the OSSNA's operations in Oyo State. The study therefore emphasised the need for increased transparency and communication efforts to improve public participation in the OSSNA operations in Ibadan, Oyo State.

The reports of the interviews with OSSNA management and personnel reveals that the management of the organisation policy of low interactions with the local community discourages community involvement, negatively impacting public trust and misperceptions. Specifically, evidence obtained from respondents to interviews in Ibadan confirmed a lack of communication and interactions between the OSSNA and the public. This was a major obstacle to effective community engagement. The study also found that limited resources and training on community policing initiatives and management's restrictions were also identified as barriers to building strong relationships between the police and the community. These results run counter to findings in Tade (2023), which found that the Amotekun's successful launch and accomplishments have changed the relationship between the police and the community in Nigeria and affected public trust and cooperation with the organisation.

The lack of capacity within the OSSNA for effective communication diminishes community members' motivation to participate. This finding aligns with the assertions in Ibrahim, Saleh, and Mukhtar (2016) which contend that in order to maintain community stability, officers' safety, and effective policing, policing authorities must engage the public in decision-making processes. The study equally revealed that the OSSNA's adoption of the militarised Nigerian policing culture has alienated the public, creating fear and distrust among community members. This militarised approach has escalated tension and conflict, rather than fostering safety and security. The study findings align with conclusions in Famosaya (2020), which suggest that policing authorities should concentrate on addressing the extant policing culture to prevent unethical practices, improve public legitimacy, and prevent negative interactions.

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### VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study on community participation in the operations of the OSSNA affirmed that there is a locally perceived capacity shortage in the OSSNA. The organisation's policing styles do not encourage frequent communication with the people to reduce personnel corruption. The study affirmed that the OSSNA has been a significant contributor to maintaining internal security, in Oyo State, however neglecting community participation negatively impairs public perception of the agency's capabilities. The study suggests that community participation is crucial for the OSSNA to enhance its capacity. This is because the Oyo State Government's resources are limited, and community participation is the only other source for capacity improvement available to the OSSNA. By involving community members in decision-making and encouraging their input, the organisation can access local knowledge and resources to enhance its effectiveness. This collaborative approach will not only address the capacity shortage but also enhance transparency and accountability within the OSSNA, ultimately making the organisation more efficient and trustworthy.

The study therefore emphasised the need for Oyo State Security Network Agency (OSSNA) to leverage community participation for effective security operations in Ibadan, Oyo State. To enhance public participation, the study suggests increasing public awareness and involvement in OSSNA's activities and the fostering of a sense of ownership and collaboration. This can lead to more effective security measures and improved public safety. The study also emphasizes the importance of improving OSSNA communication strategies by simplifying information dissemination through accessible materials and using multiple channels like social media and community meetings. Feedback from the community is crucial for continuous improvement. To foster community engagement, the study suggests hosting regular events, leveraging local leaders for operational support, providing incentives for safety training, highlighting security awareness issues, implementing crime prevention training, capacity building, establishing community-friendly feedback mechanisms, creating welcoming spaces for community engagement, and ensuring easy-accessibility considerations for community members. By implementing these strategies, the study avers that the OSSNA can foster stronger relationships with the community it serves and enhance community participation, public safety and trust in local policing governance in Oyo State, Nigeria.

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