

SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD LITERACY PROGRAMME AS A STRATEGY FOR CURBING KIDNAPS AND RITUAL KILLINGS IN ETCHE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE.

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Abstract

This study focused on Safe neighborhood literacy programme as a strategy for curbing kidnap and ritual killings in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study was guided by three research questions. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. 240 respondents representing 20% of members of each of the identified Community Based Organisations (CBOs) from ten communities in Etche Local Government Area were selected through proportionate sample technique. An instrument titled "Questionnaire on Safe neighborhood literacy programme as a strategy for curbing kidnap and ritual killings ((SNLPFCKRKQ) was used for data collection. Data was analyzed using mean statistics. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Reliability index of 0.80 was obtained for the instrument. The study found out that the role of safe neighborhood literacy in achieving peace for sustainable development in Rivers State are helping people to be guards over their neighbors, empowering individuals with the skill of identifying criminals in the neighborhood, helping to maintain peace in the community, reduction of criminal tendencies in people, promoting good relationship between the community and the law enforcement agents. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that there should be adequate awareness campaign by the state and local government authorities on the need for Safe neighborhood programmes for youths, adults and adolescent learners who are major stakeholders in development projects of Rivers State.

Keywords: *Safe neighborhood literacy, kidnaps, ritual killings*

Introduction

The widening spread of insecurity in Nigeria is a cause for alarm as all and sundry are affected now. Churches, mosque, markets, schools, homes and highways are all under the rampage of the menace. Rivers State, the Treasure Base

of the Nation is gradually becoming a safe haven for notorious human organs traders. Killings for ritual purposes had become so rampant that most residents of Rivers state are now afraid to go about their normal activities.

Etche Local Government area in Rivers State has been noticed to be a den of ritualists and human part dealers. This situation is highly dangerous and makes it difficult for people to operate in that axis without being harassed or killed and dismembered for ritual purposes. It has gone so bad that even the middle class indigenes do not visit their homes, not even for burial of their relatives. Most victims of kidnaps reported that they narrowly escaped their waterloo in Etche where they watched other unlucky victims butchered like animals. People coming into Rivers State are not sure of getting to their destination without molestations from these hoodlums or falling victims of human parts dealers who reportedly lure their victims to the forest through different means especially at Etche axis. Perpetrators of these crimes operate like commercial vehicle drivers, picking unsuspecting passengers along the road and later diverting them to the bush to ask for ransom from them or kill, dismember and sell their human parts to ritualists. Most victims, who had escaped from the area, said they watched other victims butchered like animals. On 26th of June 2020, the Operatives of the Anti-Kidnapping Unit in a sting operation arrested a notorious kidnapper and serial killer who had not only kidnapped and killed a Nigerians but also three foreign nationals at Umuebulu, Etche. According to Igwe (2004), generally, ritual killing is a common practice in Nigeria. Every year, hundreds of Nigerians lose their lives to ritual murderers, also known as headhunters. These head hunters go in search of human parts-head, breast, tongue, sexual organs-at the behest of

witchdoctors, juju priests, and traditional medicine men who require them for some sacrifices or for the preparation of assorted magical potions.

In this case, safe neighborhood literacy programme becomes necessary in order to train some organized and autonomous group of civilian and community people on how to prevent and indentify criminal around them. The training is for residents or community members. They will be saddled with the responsibility of ensuring crime free neighborhood. Their duty is to report cases of criminal activities and crime suspicions to the police and not to intervene or take laws into their hands. According to Ahmed (2021) with the rising world population, the stress and load on the population are increasing, which has resulted in an increase in the crime rate over the past few years. Since security agents cannot watch over every nook and corner in the cities, neighborhood watch became a temporary and easy way of controlling and reducing crime rate in our communities. The problem of this study is how to use safe neighborhood literacy programme to curb of kidnapping and ritual killing in the study area.

Safe Neighborhood Literacy

This type of literacy programme is designed to train an organized group of civilian comprising people living in the communities on crime prevention. The training is for residents or community members. They will be saddled with the responsibility of ensuring crime free neighborhood. Their duty is to report cases of criminal activities and crime suspicions to the police and not to intervene or take laws into their hands. They can be organized as autonomous groups

According to Ahmed (2021) with the rising world population, the stress and load on the population are increasing, which has resulted in an increase in the crime rate over the past few years. Since security agents cannot watch over every nook and corner in the cities, neighborhood watch became a temporary and easy way of controlling and reducing crime rate in our communities. With a safe neighborhood watch program in place, the residents of the area feel a sense of security and belonging to one another. The neighbors in safe neighborhood experience good neighborliness and have the interest of others at heart. Therefore, it strengthens the community and brings them together, hence always working for the same single goal. Safe Neighborhood programs can be used to achieve other community welfare. When members of the neighborhood get together for a single purpose, it's very likely that other matters of the community might come up and be dealt with according to the situation. For example, if someone is having problem with parking in/ accommodation or any other issues in the neighborhood, the neighborhood watch programs will very likely solve the issue. However, safe neighborhood programme doesn't guarantee full security as there is likelihood of criminal activities.

Kidnapping

Kidnapping originally stated in Nigeria when the Niger Delta militants used it to draw the attention and reaction of the government and the world to the damages done on their environment by the activities of oil the companies. Consequently that adventure gave way to kidnap as a tool for financial source and exploitation.

Kidnapping can be seen as illegal hostage of an individual or group using force and against the victim/s will. It is an unauthorized arrest and subjection of individuals or group to inhuman treatment and torture in a secluded area or confinement against his or her will by another person for the purpose of making money, ritual sacrifice, political reasons or payback. Ngwama (2014) defined kidnapping as false imprisonment in the sense that it involves illegal confinement of individuals against his or her own will by another individual in such a way as to violate the confined individual's right to be free from the constraints of movement. Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica defined kidnapping as a criminal offence consisting of unlawful taking and carrying away of a person by force or unlawful seizure of detention of a person against his will. This involves taking away of a person to a confinement against the person's will and in the ignorance of legal authorities.

Kidnapping affects the psychology of the affected persons and their family members. The fear of kidnap makes investments and business activities almost impossible in the area that experiences it. The reasons for high rate of kidnap are unemployment, underfunded security forces, political tuggery that has made gun available to the society.

Ritual Killings

Ritual killing refers to killing of victims by their predator or ritual killers and mutilating their body or some special parts human sacrifices or religious reasons. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines ritual murder/killing as the sacrificial slaying of a human as a propitiatory offering to a

deity. People engage in ritual killings to obtain human body parts for portion, charms and other fetish needs. Other reasons for ritual killings are to make sacrifices or prepare magic portions in order to have power, wealth, to be invisible, for protection or business failure, illness, accident and spiritual attacks. The groups of people who are at the greater risk of being victimized are the girls or boys who are virgins, the mentally ill, children and women. Peterside (2021) stated that the spate of ritual killing has become so problematic that our political leaders should declare a national emergency on the crises. He said, "I call for a stiffer jail sentence to deter potential perpetrators from engaging on ritual killings. The trust and confidence of citizens in our law enforcement need to be built, to motivate them to provide credible intelligence required for security operators." This statement clearly shows how devastating and worrisome the acts of ritual killings are to the citizens. Its cruelty is in a large degree and has to be given immediate attention. It is worrisome to know that the people mostly involved in these ritual killings are the highly and mighty acclaimed persons, for instance, politicians and government officials, herbalists who claim that they engage in ritual killings to sustain their powers and affluence.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how safe neighborhood literacy can be used to curb kidnapping and ritual killings in Etche local government area of Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the role of safe neighborhood literacy in curbing kidnap and ritual killing in Etche local government area of Rivers State.
2. Determine the method adopted providing the identified literacy programme for curbing kidnaps and ritual killing in Etche local government of Rivers State.
3. Examine the challenges of disseminating the identified literacy programme for curbing kidnaps and ritual killing in Etche local government of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study.

1. What are the role of safe neighborhood literacy in curbing kidnap and ritual killing in Etche local government area of Rivers State?
2. What are the methods adopted providing the identified literacy programme for curbing kidnaps and ritual killing in Etche local government of Rivers State?
3. What are the challenges of disseminating the identified literacy programme for curbing kidnaps and ritual killing in Etche local government of Rivers State?

Scope of the Study

The study was delimited in content to examining how safe neighborhood literacy education programmes relates to curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche local government of Rivers State. The study

considered the methods through which seminars and workshop, campaigns The geographical scope of the study covers ten communities in Etche local government in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 1200 members of Community Based Organisations from communities in Etche local government areas from which 240 respondents were selected through proportionate sample technique. The communities include, Ozuzu, Chokocho, Igbo, Ulakwo, Mba, Okehi, Okomoko, Umuebulu, Abara and Afara. The sample represents 20% of each of the identified CBOs. A self structured instrument titled “Questionnaire on Safe neighborhood literacy programme as a strategy for curbing kidnap and ritual killings

((SNLPFCKRKQ) with a reliability index of 0.78 was used for data collection. The reliability index was determined through test-retest method whereby the instrument was administered on 20 respondents each from other security Community Based Organisations outside the sampled population (pretest). Two weeks after, the same test was administered to the same respondents (post test). The two results were correlated using Cronbach Alpha for internal consistency reliability calculation. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation statistics for the research questions and questionnaire items. A criterion mean of 2.5 was used in determining whether an item was taken as agree or disagree. All items with mean score of 2.5 and above were regarded as “Agree” while items below 2.5 were regarded as “Disagree.”.

Research Question 1: What are the roles of Safe Neighborhood Literacy in curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean responses on the roles of safe neighborhood literacy programme in curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche Local Government, Rivers State

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	\bar{x}	Decision
1	Safe neighborhood literacy helps people to be guards over their neighbors.	106 (424)	117 (351)	24 (28)	3 (3)	240 (806)	3.35	Agree
2	Safe neighborhood literacy empowers individuals with the skill of identifying criminals in the neighborhood	83 (332)	155 (465)	2 (4)	- (-)	240 (801)	3.33	Agree
3	Helps to maintain peace in the community	102 (408)	130 (3900)	6 (12)	2 (2)	240 (812)	3.38	Agree
4	Reduces criminal tendencies in people	128 (512)	111 (333)	1 (2)	- (-)	240 (847)	3.52	Agree
5	It promotes good relationship between the community and the law enforcement agents.	119 (476)	120 (360)	1 (2)	- (-)	240 (838)	3.49	Agree
	Grand Mean						3.41	Agree

In response to the research question one, a grand mean of 3.41 recorded shows that all the items in the question are the roles of

safe neighborhood literacy in curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche LGA, Rivers State.

Research Question 2: What are the methods adopted in providing literacy programmes for curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche Local Government Area, River State?

Table 2: Mean responses on the methods adopted in providing literacy programmes for curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche Local Government Area in Rivers State

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	\bar{x}	Decision
1	Town Hall meeting/seminars help people take part in decision making and encourages teamwork	109 (436)	127 (381)	4 (8)	- (-)	240 (825)	3.43	Agree
2	Public enlightenment campaign/seminars appeals to the emotions of the people creating awareness of their actions	113 (452)	121 (363)	2 (4)	4 (4)	240 (823)	3.42	Agree
3	Individual, group and expert's interaction Provides opportunity for learners from different background to be heard, share experiences and skills and to participate in unique ways	99 (396)	138 (414)	2 (4)	1 (1)	240 (815)	3.39	Agree
4	Prison education reduces racial and ethnic barriers that causes violence and reduces crime rate	120 (480)	110 (330)	3 (6)	7 (7)	240 (823)	3.42	Agree
5	Learners will be able to identify their needs, reshape their lives and make right decisions through counseling method	101 (404)	107 (390)	- (18)	- (-)	240 (812)	3.38	Agree
	Grand Mean						3.40	Agree

In response to the research question two, a grand mean of 3.40 recorded shows that all the items in the question are the methods

adopted in providing the literacy programme for curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche LGA, Rivers State.

Research Question 3: What are the factors that hinder the intervention of literacy programmes for curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche Local Government Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean responses on the factors that hinder the intervention of the identified literacy programmes for achieving peace in Rivers State

Sn	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	\bar{x}	Decision
1	Lack of fund and low priority accorded literacy education.	115 (460)	122 (366)	1 (2)	2 (2)	240 (830)	3.45	Agree
2	Inadequate learning centres and infrastructures	98 (392)	129 (387)	12 (24)	1 (1)	240 (804)	3.35	Agree
3	Inadequate and unqualified and sufficient facilitators.	100 (400)	121 (363)	- (-)	19 (19)	240 (786)	3.25	Agree
4	Some adults feel they are too old to learn	88 (352)	129 (387)	20 (40)	3 (3)	204 (782)	3.25	Agree
5	Inadequate government policy	155 (620)	72 (216)	13 (26)	- (-)	240 (862)	3.59	Agree
	Grand Mean						3.37	Agree

In response to the research question two, a grand mean of 3.40 recorded shows that all the items in the question are the methods adopted in providing the literacy programme for curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche LGA, Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question one which sought to ascertain the role safe neighborhood literacy in curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State reveals that Safe neighborhood literacy helps people to be guards over their neighbors, empower individuals with the skill of identifying criminals in the neighborhood, helps to maintain peace in the community, reduction criminal tendencies in people, promoting good relationship between the community and law enforcement agents.

The finding corroborate with Ashcroft (2001) who stated that a number of trends suggests that unless city officials begin to approach crime problems differently, the growth, health and well being of cities will deteriorate. This awareness has led to a focus on tackling the underlying problems

of the communities, based on careful analysis and planning in collaboration with citizens and local agencies.

In agreement to this finding, Mcfee (2013) asserted that are many tools and resources available in building a line of defense around your home, not the list of which is installing a trusted home security system. Your neighbors can be that resource. Neighbors are notorious for helping each other out, whether it is just lending a cup of sugar or pulling a family out of burning home.

Research Question two which sought to ascertain the method adopted in providing literacy educations programme for curbing ritual killings in Etche Local Government, Rivers State shows that majority of the community based organisations agreed that town hall meeting/seminars help people take part in decision making and encourages teamwork, public enlightenment campaign/ seminars appeals to the emotions of the people creating awareness of their actions, Individual, group and expert's interaction provides opportunity for learners from different

background to be heard, share experiences and skills and to participate in unique ways, prison education reduces racial and ethnic barriers that causes violence and reduces crime rate, learners will be able to identify their needs, reshape their lives and make right decisions through counseling method. This finding is in agreement with Madumere (2017) who stated that public enlightenment should be one that appeals to the emotion of creating awareness of people's actions and how earth suffers of this prompting them to positively change their behaviours. Agadoni (2019) posited that some seminars teach subjects geared to personal growth such as learning to be more assertive, to better manage stress or to choose the right sort of investment. She added that attending seminars provides an excellent way for business people to network. Gautam also affirmed that working in small groups provides learners with the opportunity to articulate ideas and understanding uncover assumptions, misconceptions and negotiate with others to create products or reach consensus. It helps students to discover deeper meaning in the content and improve thinking skills. The findings also corroborates with Bender (2018) who maintained that the significant of personal benefits of prison education includes increased personal income, lower unemployment, greater political engagement, volunteerism and improved health outcomes.

Factors that hinder the intervention of literacy education programme for curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche Local Government, Rivers State

The finding of the study to answer research question three revealed that the factors that hinder the intervention of literacy education programme for curbing kidnaps and ritual killings in Etche Local Government, Rivers State are lack of funds and low priority accorded literacy education by the three tiers of government, inadequate learning centers and infrastructures, inadequate/qualified and facilitators, some adult's feelings that they are too old to learn and inadequate government policy.

The finding is similar to Stevens (2018) who in his studies identified lack of time and financial barrier and mindset as a barrier to adult learning. She explained that balancing work and family commitments while making some sort of social life is a task already enough, therefore adding class into the other needs that have to be met will really get an adult hands full. Even when you find a way to squeeze it in, there is the question of whether you will have energy left to give. She added that money is a huge factor when it comes to adult learning. With bills to pay and mouths to feed, enrolling in a class seems like an unnecessary extravagance. Another biggest barrier for adult learners is self doubt, that is, the feeling of can I do this? Going to school look like a step backward.

Conclusion

Any society that begins to live in fear of the unknown especially in relation to unsecured lives is doom bound. Almost the entire population in Rivers State, especially in Etche local government area goes about their businesses unsure of

getting back home alive as a result of kidnaps and ritual killings. Literacy as a facilitator of freedom is the tool with which to transform this situation in the study area, hence the need for safe neighborhood literacy programme. Based on the findings, this study concluded that safe neighborhood literacy helps people to be guards over their neighbors, empower individuals with the skill of identifying criminals in the neighborhood, helps to maintain peace in the community, reduction criminal tendencies in people, promoting good relationship between the community and the law enforcement agents.

Recommendations

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

1. The state adult literacy education agency should ensure that the curriculum for literacy education programmes in the state should be reviewed, planned and articulated to include safe neighborhood literacy programme for youths, adults and adolescent learners who are major stakeholder in the development project of Rivers State.
2. The state and local government authorities should ensure that the facilitators of this programme are well equipped both financially and with programme vehicles.
3. There should be adequate awareness campaign by the state and local government authorities on the need for Safe neighborhood programme for adults and youths in the state.
4. There should be collaborative efforts among government security agencies,

and community leaders in the effort to achieve safe neighborhood literacy programme.

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