Original Research Article

The Impact of Community Policing on Crime Reduction in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Lagos State

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of community policing on crime reduction in the Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. Against the backdrop of rising crime rates and a historically strained police-public relationship, the research examines whether community policing has delivered tangible improvements in public safety and trust. Drawing on Functionalist and Collective Efficacy theories, the study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from community stakeholders. Key findings indicate a significant decline in reported crime following the introduction of community policing initiatives, along with improved perceptions of police-community collaboration. However, challenges such as limited resources, inconsistent implementation, and lingering distrust persist. The study highlights the importance of community participation, youth engagement, and culturally sensitive policing strategies in developing practical and sustainable security solutions. Additionally, it highlights the role of informal social control mechanisms, such as traditional leaders and local vigilante groups, in complementing formal police efforts. Research contributions include empirical validation of community policing's theoretical underpinnings in a Nigerian context and policy-relevant insights into grassroots security governance. The study concludes that while community policing holds considerable promise, its long-term success requires institutional reform, continuous civic dialogue, and adequate operational support. Future research is recommended to explore intercultural communication, digital policing platforms, and the differentiated impacts of community policing on vulnerable populations.

Keywords: Community policing, Crime reduction, Public trust, Collective efficacy, Nigeria, Informal security.

1. INTRODUCTION

Crime has emerged as a persistent and evolving threat to public safety and social stability worldwide. In Nigeria, and particularly in urban settings such as Lagos State, the prevalence of criminal activities, ranging from armed robbery to kidnapping, has spurred deep public concern and demands for more effective crime prevention strategies. According to Nwankwo and Okolie-Osemene (2016), both violent and non-violent crimes have surged, with incidents like ransom-driven kidnappings and cult-related killings instilling fear and disrupting social cohesion. These challenges are even more pronounced in Ikorodu Local Government Area (LGA), which recorded a significant proportion

of major crimes committed in Lagos between 2017 and 2019 (Lagos State Police Command statistics, as cited in the document).

Historically, Nigeria's approaches to policing have evolved from indigenous systems rooted in communal norms and values to colonial and post-colonial models characterized by a top-down enforcement structure (Dambazau, 2007; Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005). However, the shortcomings of these traditional and militarized policing methods have prompted calls for more inclusive and community-based strategies. Community policing, a model that emphasizes collaboration between law enforcement and local residents, has gained traction as a viable solution to bridge the trust deficit and enhance public safety (Siegel & Senna, 1997; Reid, 2000). Community policing in Nigeria was formally introduced in 2004 as part of broader police reforms aimed at improving security delivery through participatory mechanisms (Anucha, 2019). The approach encourages local participation in identifying and addressing crime problems, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility (Dirikx & Bulck, 2014). Despite its theoretical promise and initial adoption in Lagos State, questions remain about the practical effectiveness of community policing in specific locales such as Ikorodu.

The existing literature highlights that effective policing requires not only institutional capacity but also community engagement and trust (Leon-Guerrero, 2005; Skogan, 2006 as cited in Rowe, 2008). Nonetheless, empirical assessments of community policing in Nigeria are limited. Most existing evaluations are anecdotal or media-driven, with little empirical grounding (Okeke, 2006). This study seeks to fill that gap by empirically examining the perception and impact of community policing on crime reduction in Ikorodu LGA. Drawing on theories such as Functionalism and Collective Efficacy, which underscore the importance of social integration and communal action in maintaining public order (Caplan, Hanson, & Donovan, 2018; Bohémier, Maksin, & Crowley, 2017), the research aims to critically assess whether community policing strategies have translated into measurable reductions in crime and improvements in public trust. In doing so, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on participatory security governance in Nigeria and offers evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice.

2. Background and Rationale

The challenge of crime and insecurity in Nigeria, particularly in urban centers, has long defied conventional policing strategies. Ikorodu Local Government Area, situated in Lagos State, stands out as a notable example. With over 3,400 major crimes recorded between 2017 and 2019, constituting a considerable portion of the state's crime burden, Ikorodu has become emblematic of the limitations of traditional, reactive law enforcement strategies (Lagos State Police Command data as cited in the document). The growing sophistication of criminal networks, including cultism, armed robbery, and kidnapping, demands innovative and context-sensitive approaches to policing (Ezuugwu, 2015; Emeh, 2011). Nigeria's post-colonial policing system is widely criticized for being elite-serving, coercive, and largely disconnected from the communities it purports to protect (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2018; Rotimi, 2001). This disconnect, often referred to as the "gap" between police and the public, leads to diminished trust and reduced community cooperation in crime prevention efforts (Tufekci, 2018). The consequences are far-reaching, as police actions devoid of public legitimacy often exacerbate feelings of insecurity and encourage the emergence of informal, sometimes extra-legal, security structures (Adejoh, 2013).

Community policing emerged globally as a response to these challenges, emphasizing partnership, problem-solving, and decentralization (Trojanowicz & Bucqueroax, 1990 as cited in Rowe, 2008). Its core philosophy lies in empowering communities to work alongside law enforcement agencies in tackling crime and social disorder (Reid, 2000; US Department of Justice, 2012). In the Nigerian context, this model was adopted to reposition the Nigerian Police Force towards more democratic and service-oriented functions (Anucha, 2019; Okeke, 2006). However, while the theoretical basis of community policing is sound, grounded in social cohesion and shared responsibility for safety (Bohémier, Maksin, & Crowley, 2017), the practical implementation in Nigeria has been uneven. Many scholars argue that the absence of genuine community ownership, coupled with residual authoritarian policing culture, continues to hinder the effectiveness of community policing in achieving its stated goals (Friedman, 1992; Button, 2007). The rationale for this study stems from a critical need to generate empirical evidence on how community policing is perceived and whether it functions effectively within specific Nigerian contexts, such as Ikorodu. As Rowe (2008) and Reiner (2000) have noted, the success of community policing is contingent on localized adaptations, meaningful community engagement, and a clear break from militarized models of law enforcement. This study thus seeks to examine whether community policing in Ikorodu has been successful in promoting security and public trust, or whether it remains a nominal reform with little practical impact. In light of rising crime rates, increasing fear among residents, and

persistent distrust between police and communities, evaluating the effectiveness of community policing in Ikorodu is both timely and necessary. The findings will have implications not only for policing strategy in Lagos State but also for broader security governance in Nigeria and similar developing contexts.

3. Objectives of the Study:
- To examine the relationship between community policing and crime reduction in the Ikorodu Local Government Area.
- To assess public perception of the effectiveness of community policing initiatives in Ikorodu.
- To determine the influence of community policing on youth engagement and employment.
- To evaluate the impact of community policing on police-community trust and collaboration.

4. Research Questions:
- What is the relationship between community policing and crime reduction in the Ikorodu Local Government Area?
- How do residents perceive the effectiveness of community policing initiatives in their locality?
- To what extent has community policing influenced youth engagement and employment in Ikorodu?
- How has community policing affected the level of trust and collaboration between the police and the community?

5. LITERATURE REVIEW
Community policing has garnered considerable attention as an alternative to conventional policing models, particularly in regions experiencing high crime rates and community distrust. The model is defined not as a rigid program but as a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies supporting the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques (US Department of Justice, 2008). This section reviews key conceptual, historical, and theoretical foundations that frame the discourse on community policing, especially within the Nigerian context. The concept of policing itself extends beyond the formal institution of the police. According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2005), policing involves mechanisms for securing compliance with societal norms and maintaining order, a role that is not limited to formal state agents. This broader understanding supports the integration of informal and community-driven methods in crime prevention and public safety efforts.

Historical accounts reveal that prior to colonial rule, indigenous Nigerian societies practiced various forms of informal policing through age-grade systems, religious institutions, and social sanctions. Dambazau (2007) explains that collective responsibility and traditional values such as respect for elders and extended family systems formed the backbone of social control in pre-colonial Nigeria. These indigenous systems ensured community order and security without the need for centralized, formal policing agencies. However, the advent of colonial rule introduced a policing model that prioritized the protection of colonial interests over the welfare of the local population. Scholars such as Okafor (2006) and Rotimi (2001) argue that colonial police structures were coercive and alienated from local populations. This disconnection persisted into the post-colonial era, where police institutions continued to serve the political elite rather than the general populace (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2018). These critiques underscore the rationale for adopting alternative policing frameworks such as community policing, which seek to restore police legitimacy and enhance public cooperation.

Several authors have emphasized that community policing must be adapted to local cultural and institutional contexts to be effective. Friedman (1992) cautions against a one-size-fits-all approach, noting that many countries claim to practice community policing while merely transplanting models without regard to local realities. Similarly, Rowe (2008) notes that the failure of community policing in many developing countries is often due to shallow implementation driven by access to international funding rather than genuine systemic reform. The theoretical foundations of community policing are diverse but often include participatory governance and organizational decentralization. Skogan (2006, as cited in Rowe, 2008) highlights three key components: citizen involvement, problem-solving, and decentralization. These elements are critical for fostering mutual trust and enabling responsive policing. Additionally, Cheurprakobkit and Puthpongsiriporn (2005) emphasize the importance of cultivating a service culture within police institutions, highlighting that effective community policing is contingent upon attitudes and values that support respectful and cooperative engagement with the public.

Mass media also play a significant role in shaping public perception of police and community policing efforts. Dirikx and Bulck (2014) argue that media consumption can influence adolescents' willingness to cooperate with police, pointing to the broader socio-psychological variables that affect the success of community policing initiatives. This aligns with the view of Innes (2003), who sees community

policing not only as a crime control strategy but also as a mechanism for rebuilding social order and reinforcing the moral authority of the state. Beyond theory, empirical studies support the potential of community policing to foster public safety and civic engagement. For example, a study by Cheurprakobkit and Puthpongsiriporn (2005) in Malaysia found that strong police-citizen partnerships led to improved trust and problem-solving capabilities. Likewise, the San Diego model of community policing demonstrated that localized problem identification and tailored interventions resulted in more effective crime prevention (as referenced by the same authors).

Nevertheless, scholars have also identified limitations in the implementation of community policing. Button (2007) notes that when community policing fails to address cultural dynamics or is implemented superficially, it often results in disillusionment and reduced effectiveness. This critique is especially relevant to Nigeria, where trust in the police is historically low, and systemic corruption further undermines reform efforts (Onyeozili, 2005). Overall, the literature suggests that while community policing has the potential to address complex crime and security challenges, its success depends on genuine community engagement, institutional accountability, and cultural alignment. As such, examining the implementation and public perception of community policing in Ikorodu provides a valuable lens through which to assess the viability of this approach in the Nigerian security context.

6. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design to empirically assess the perception and effectiveness of community policing as a crime reduction strategy in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Lagos State. The methodological approach is guided by the need to generate verifiable data to evaluate public opinions and discern the relationship between community policing and crime trends in the area. The research design is rooted in survey methodology, which is appropriate for collecting standardized data from a large population within a specific geographical scope. According to Reid (2000), surveys provide a reliable means of obtaining information on people's perceptions, attitudes, and experiences with policing and public safety. A structured questionnaire was utilized as the primary instrument for data collection. The instrument included items addressing demographic information, perception of police effectiveness, the role of community involvement in crime prevention, and the perceived impact of community policing on local security.

The target population for this study consisted of adult residents of the Ikorodu Local Government Area. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select participants, ensuring accessibility and timely administration of the instrument. This approach is consistent with similar studies that aim to capture perceptions within a defined locality while acknowledging practical limitations (Cheurprakobkit & Puthpongsiriporn, 2005). The sample size was determined based on population accessibility, resource constraints, and the need to capture a range of perspectives within the community. In alignment with the guidelines offered by Skogan (2006, as cited in Rowe, 2008), the sample size was sufficient to allow for statistical analysis and meaningful interpretation of trends in public perception.

Data analysis was conducted using chi-square statistical tests to examine the relationships between key variables, including perceptions of community policing, crime reduction, and youth involvement in local policing efforts. The choice of chi-square is justified by its appropriateness for analyzing categorical data and its widespread use in criminological and sociological research (Dirikx & Bulck, 2014). To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire underwent a content validation process, drawing from established scales in previous policing and community safety studies (Siegel & Senna, 1997; Innes, 2003). Items were reviewed and refined for clarity, consistency, and relevance to the study objectives. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. The confidentiality of responses was assured. As emphasized by Friedman (1992), ethical data collection practices are fundamental to establishing credibility and trustworthiness in social research, particularly in sensitive areas such as crime and policing. The methodology thus aligns with the study's objectives to produce empirically grounded insights into the dynamics of community policing in Ikorodu and to inform practical strategies for improving public safety through collaborative security efforts.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the results derived from data collected through structured questionnaires administered to residents of Ikorodu Local Government Area. The goal was to assess their perception of community policing and its effectiveness in reducing crime, improving police-community relations, and enhancing local security dynamics.

Crime Trends Before and After Community Policing

Figure 1 illustrates crime rates recorded over six years, divided into two phases: pre-implementation (2016–2019) and post-implementation (2020–2021) of community policing strategies in Ikorodu. The data reflects a clear downward trend in reported crimes following the introduction of community policing initiatives. In the pre-implementation years, the crime rate hovered between 690 and 720 cases annually, indicating a consistently high incidence of crimes such as robbery, theft, and cult-related violence. However, in the years following the formal introduction of community policing (2020 and 2021), crime reports dropped to 540 and 430, respectively. These findings suggest that community policing may be influencing positive outcomes in terms of crime deterrence and early intervention. This aligns with the observations of Okeke (2006), who emphasized that community policing fosters ownership of security by residents, enhancing localized surveillance and information sharing.

Further corroborating these outcomes, Rowe (2008) reported that decentralized policing encourages officers to develop strategies that are specifically tailored to the needs and peculiarities of each community, which may explain the improvements seen in Ikorodu post-implementation.

Nevertheless, the decline in crime should be interpreted with caution. As Friedman (1992) notes, metrics of policing success can often be influenced by reporting behaviors, which may be underreported or misclassified in areas with weak administrative oversight. Thus, while the trend is positive, a broader institutional and qualitative assessment would further reinforce the interpretation.
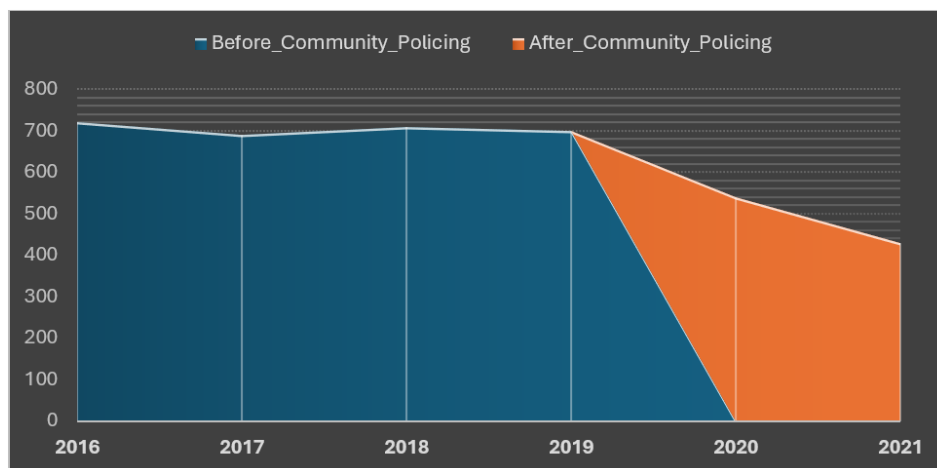

Figure 1: Crime Rate Before and After Community Policing

Perception of Police-Community Relationship

The nature of police-community interaction was another focal area of this study. Figure 2 presents the distribution of respondents' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the relationship between police and residents in their community. The results show that 30 respondents (approximately 15%) rated the relationship as "Very Effective," while 65 (32%) saw it as "Effective." Approximately 45 participants (22%) were neutral, and 63 respondents (comprising the combined totals for "Ineffective" and "Very Ineffective") represented a notable 31%. This mixed response pattern reveals a polarized public view of police engagement. While some residents recognize improvements, possibly due to community outreach efforts and neighborhood patrols, a significant portion remain skeptical, likely due to historical distrust and incidents of police misconduct. This sentiment echoes the analysis by Alemika and Chukwuma (2005), who observed that police legitimacy in Nigeria suffers from a legacy of state repression and brutality.

The neutral responses also suggest a population that is cautious in judgment, potentially waiting to observe more consistent behavioral reforms from the police before forming a definitive opinion. This finding supports Dirikx and Bulck's (2014) assertion that cooperation with police is contingent on sustained, credible, and visible engagement, especially among adolescents and younger demographics. Cheurprakobkit and Puthpongsiriporn (2005) stress the importance of cultivating a "service culture" within police institutions, one that emphasizes respect, accountability, and collaboration. The results here imply that such a culture is still developing in Ikorodu, with meaningful progress but also significant room for improvement.
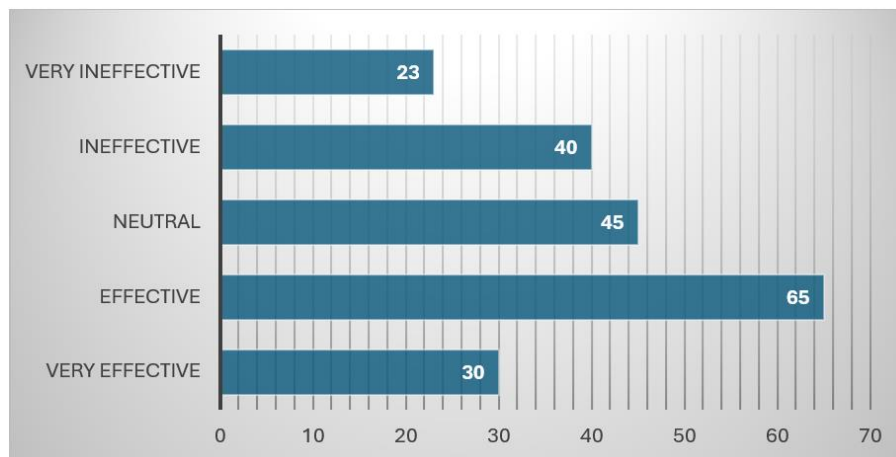
Figure 2: Respondents' Perception of Police-Community Relationship

Crime Type Distribution

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of crime types most frequently reported by residents. Theft leads with 120 cases, followed by robbery (80), assault (60), cultism (55), and fraud (40). These figures reflect the nature of insecurity facing communities within Ikorodu. The prevalence of theft and robbery is consistent with trends reported by the Lagos State Police Command, which classified these crimes as among the most prevalent in the region during 2017–2019. The notable incidence of cultism and assault further highlights the social dimensions of criminality in the area, often linked to youth unemployment, gang rivalry, and communal disputes. This pattern of criminal activity aligns with the theoretical framework of functionalism as articulated by Caplan, Hanson, and Donovan (2018), where deviant behavior arises from systemic inequalities and lack of access to legitimate opportunities. Merton's concept of "strain" becomes particularly relevant in contexts like Ikorodu, where socioeconomic deprivation may prompt individuals to resort to illicit means of achieving societal goals.

Collective efficacy theory also finds support here. Bohémier, Maksin, and Crowley (2017) argue that the willingness of residents to intervene informally and collaborate with law enforcement is vital in reducing local crime. In communities with stronger bonds and mutual trust, such as neighborhoods where community policing committees are active, crime is more likely to be reported and controlled.

However, the continued prominence of cultism and fraud raises concerns about the reach and depth of community policing interventions. According to Ejizu (2011), indigenous forms of social control were once effective in maintaining order due to deeply ingrained communal values and sanctions. The challenge today lies in adapting these traditional mechanisms to work in synergy with modern law enforcement under the community policing framework.
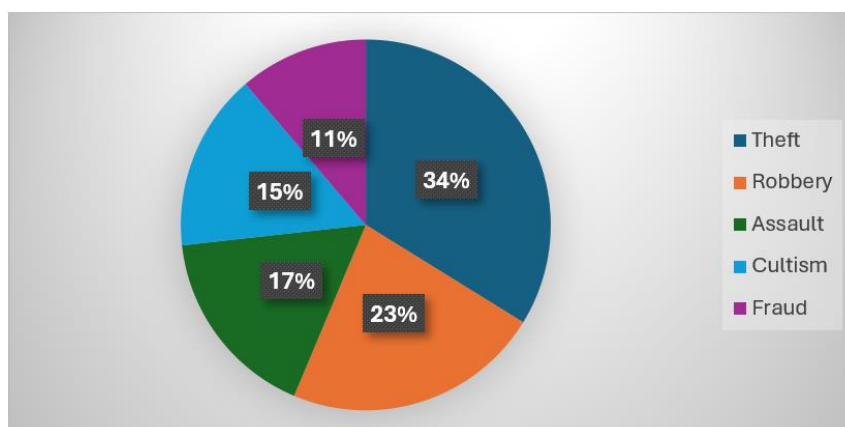

Figure 3: Frequency Distribution of Crime Types Reported

Youth Engagement and Public Trust

A notable insight from the qualitative responses collected alongside the quantitative data was the recurring emphasis on youth involvement. Several respondents noted that the success of community policing hinges significantly on its ability

to engage the youth in meaningful ways. Unemployed and disillusioned youth are often the primary perpetrators or victims of violence in Ikorodu, as corroborated by Ezuugwu (2015). Programs that recruit young people into neighborhood watch groups or provide them with roles in local security planning were cited as particularly effective. This supports observations by Innes (2003), who argued that public safety is enhanced when community members, especially those at risk of exclusion, are made stakeholders in crime prevention processes. Still, skepticism persists. Respondents expressed doubts over the consistency of police engagement and the sustainability of youth-centered security programs. As emphasized by Skogan (2006), community policing is a continuous process, not a static product. Failure to institutionalize regular community dialogues and update officer training can erode early gains.

Institutional Limitations and Trust Gaps

Despite these positive outcomes, a substantial number of respondents cited institutional limitations that continue to undermine community policing. These include inadequate funding, poor officer conduct, and perceived corruption. The "gap theory" used in this study's theoretical framework, as described by Tufekci (2018), highlights this enduring disconnect between public expectations and police behavior. Reiner (2000) cautioned that policing cannot achieve universal legitimacy due to its inherently coercive nature and its entanglements in politics. In the Nigerian context, this concern is amplified by decades of militarized policing and politicization of security services. The result is a public that often remains guarded, withholding vital intelligence and resisting full cooperation. This challenge underscores the need for continuous reorientation and institutional reform within the police force. As observed by Hills (2014), effective community policing requires not only procedural changes but also cultural shifts that encourage accountability and empathy.

Community-Driven Partnerships and Informal Networks

One of the most encouraging findings from the study was the role of informal community structures in bolstering crime prevention. Respondents consistently referenced traditional leaders, religious institutions, and local vigilante groups as key contributors to community safety. This resonates with the views of Dambazau (2007), who noted that African communities historically relied on collective responsibility and culturally embedded norms for social regulation. Similarly, Adejoh (2013) acknowledged the growing role of informal security structures (ISS) in urban neighborhoods, particularly where state policing has failed to provide consistent coverage. Participants expressed that when traditional and formal policing institutions collaborate, such as through joint town hall meetings or co-managed neighborhood patrols, the results are markedly better. This partnership approach supports Innes's (2003) thesis that thriving community policing hinges on co-production, where both citizens and law enforcement contribute to problem-solving.

Reflections on Effectiveness and Implementation

Ultimately, the data suggests that community policing in Ikorodu has yielded measurable benefits but remains a work in progress. The reduction in crime rates, improved public engagement, and increased youth involvement all point toward a promising trajectory. However, these gains are tempered by persistent issues, including resource constraints, residual mistrust, and inconsistencies in implementation. As Friedman (1992) cautioned, without embedding community policing as a value system rather than a mere program, its long-term sustainability is doubtful. The study's findings further validate the relevance of the collective efficacy framework in interpreting variations in crime reduction. Neighborhoods with stronger social ties, higher public trust, and proactive community associations tended to report lower crime rates and greater satisfaction with community policing. These insights align with Cheurprakobkit and Puthpongsiriporn (2005), who argue that effective community policing creates ripple effects that extend beyond security to include greater civic participation and institutional trust.

8. Contribution to Research

This study makes several important contributions to the growing body of literature on community policing, particularly within the Nigerian context, where empirical evaluations remain limited. While community policing has been extensively studied in developed countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom (Siegel & Senna, 1997; Reid, 2000), its practical application and localized outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa remain under-researched. This study addresses that gap by providing evidence-based insights into how residents of the Ikorodu Local Government Area perceive and experience community policing as a tool for crime reduction.

First, the research provides empirical validation of theoretical frameworks that have often remained abstract in Nigerian security discourse. It integrates Functionalist Theory (Caplan, Hanson, & Donovan, 2018) and Collective Efficacy Theory (Bohémier, Maksin, & Crowley, 2017) within the context of community-based policing, offering a localized interpretation of how social cohesion, shared norms, and institutional trust affect public

safety outcomes. By doing so, it adds to the theoretical refinement of these models and illustrates their applicability in urban Nigerian settings.

Second, the findings contribute to methodological advancement by employing a dual quantitative and qualitative approach to capture community perceptions. While previous assessments of community policing in Nigeria have been largely anecdotal or descriptive (Okeke, 2006; Friedman, 1992), this study combines structured data with interpretive insights, yielding a more comprehensive understanding of local experiences and expectations.

Additionally, the study provides practical, policy-relevant knowledge by documenting the specific challenges and successes associated with implementing community policing in Ikorodu. These include youth engagement, inter-agency collaboration, and the role of informal structures such as vigilante groups and traditional leaders (Adejoh, 2013; Dambazau, 2007). Such insights can guide policymakers, police institutions, and civil society actors in designing more contextually grounded and participatory crime prevention strategies. Ultimately, the study contributes to academic discourse by challenging existing assumptions about the universality of community policing models. Echoing concerns by Rowe (2008) and Button (2007), it underscores the need for culturally sensitive adaptations rather than wholesale transplantations of foreign models. This nuanced understanding promotes a more grounded and critical approach to public safety reforms across Africa. This research not only addresses a substantial empirical void but also advances theoretical, methodological, and policy conversations on community policing in Nigeria and comparable socio-political contexts.

9. Future Research Directions

This study on the role of community policing in crime reduction in Ikorodu has laid a strong empirical and theoretical foundation. However, it also opens new avenues for future inquiry, especially in light of shifting socio-political landscapes and emerging forms of community engagement. As policing structures evolve and communities become more vocal in governance, it becomes necessary to revisit community policing from more dynamic, intersectional, and comparative perspectives. One compelling future direction involves examining the intersection between community policing and intercultural communication practices, especially in multi-ethnic urban settings. Ehigie and Braimoh (2024) argue that cultural narratives and communicative contexts significantly shape perceptions of authority and legitimacy. In much the same way that traditional beliefs mediated responses

to justice in Konaté's *La Malédiction du Lamantin*, community members in Nigeria may interpret police behaviors differently based on cultural filters. Future research can explore how these culturally embedded worldviews affect trust, cooperation, and responsiveness within community policing frameworks.

Moreover, longitudinal studies are necessary to evaluate the sustainability of crime reduction outcomes associated with community policing. Short-term assessments often ignore the cyclical nature of community trust and the delayed effects of crime displacement. Studies, such as those by Obi and Nwankwo (2022), already emphasize the importance of institutional memory and long-term civic relationships in determining the success of policing. Another promising line of research is the role of technology and digital platforms in community policing, especially in youth-led initiatives. With the increasing use of mobile apps and social media for reporting crimes, future studies can investigate how digital tools mediate public-police interactions and whether they foster or erode trust. Such explorations could be further enriched by comparative analyses with countries where digital community policing is already matured. There is also a strong case for researching the psychosocial impacts of community policing on vulnerable groups, particularly women, youths, and ethnic minorities. As highlighted by Adesina (2016), most studies adopt a universalist lens, overlooking group-specific narratives that shape victimization and justice-seeking behavior. Exploring these dimensions could contribute to a more inclusive framework for community-oriented security.

Finally, building on the discourse by Ehigie and Braimoh (2024), researchers could further investigate how pragmatic competence, understanding unwritten rules of engagement, communication, and cooperation, enhances or hinders police-community relations in intercultural contexts. Such an angle would deepen our understanding of communication-based policing practices across Nigeria's diverse ethnic landscapes.

10. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several targeted recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of community policing in Ikorodu and similar urban communities in Nigeria. First, the Nigerian Police Force should institutionalize continuous training and reorientation programs for officers deployed to community policing units. These programs should emphasize cultural sensitivity, conflict de-escalation, and participatory engagement, in line with suggestions by Cheurprakobkit and Puthpongsiriporn (2005) that a service-oriented

police culture is central to effective public engagement. Second, the government should strengthen collaboration between formal policing structures and informal community actors such as traditional leaders, vigilante groups, and youth associations. As Dambazau (2007) noted, Nigeria's indigenous systems of social control have historically been effective and can complement modern community policing initiatives when properly integrated. Third, adequate funding and logistical support must be provided to ensure the operational viability of community policing units. Many of the implementation setbacks noted in this study stem from under-resourced units unable to carry out sustained outreach or patrols. As Friedman (1992) pointed out, without real investment, community policing risks becoming a symbolic reform. Fourth, digital tools and mobile reporting platforms should be adopted to facilitate timely community feedback and incident reporting. This will encourage transparency and reduce the bureaucratic bottlenecks associated with traditional policing complaints procedures.

Finally, regular town hall meetings and trust-building dialogues should be organized to provide community members with opportunities to voice concerns, assess police performance, and co-create solutions. This aligns with the participatory ideals promoted by Rowe (2008) and helps bridge the historical trust gap that undermines the legitimacy of policing in Nigeria. These recommendations, if implemented consistently, can strengthen the foundations of community policing and promote safer, more cooperative urban communities.

11. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the role of community policing in reducing crime within Ikorodu Local Government Area, Lagos State, providing empirical insights into its effectiveness, public perception, and practical challenges. The results indicate that while community policing has contributed to a measurable decline in crime rates and fostered improved relations between police and residents, it remains constrained by structural, cultural, and resource-based limitations. The findings demonstrate that community policing is not merely a tactical shift, but a philosophical and cultural transformation in how security is conceptualized and delivered. The involvement of community members in identifying and solving security problems, as advocated by Reid (2000) and the US Department of Justice (2008), has helped enhance localized crime prevention efforts. Respondents recognized improvements in police-community dialogue and acknowledged greater youth involvement in safety initiatives, a critical factor in addressing crimes like cultism and robbery, which are prevalent in Ikorodu.

However, significant challenges persist. Historical distrust between citizens and police, rooted in Nigeria's colonial and post-colonial experiences (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005; Okafor, 2006), continues to affect the depth of community engagement. Limited resources, poor institutional coordination, and inconsistent implementation further undermine the sustainability of community policing efforts. Additionally, the study highlights that crime and security are deeply embedded within broader socio-cultural and economic realities. Echoing the theoretical contributions of Bohémier, Maksin, and Crowley (2017), the presence of collective efficacy and social cohesion plays a decisive role in determining the success of community policing. Neighborhoods with stronger communal ties tend to report better outcomes.

This research has also highlighted the need for more inclusive, culturally sensitive, and participatory approaches to public safety. The integration of traditional authorities, youth leaders, and religious institutions into policing frameworks should not be symbolic but operational and continuous. As Ehigie and Braimoh (2024) suggest in their intercultural analysis, understanding the pragmatics of community engagement is crucial for achieving authentic, long-term legitimacy in policing practices. Community policing in Ikorodu has made significant strides, but it must be viewed as an evolving practice that requires adaptive learning, deeper collaboration, and institutional commitment. Future efforts must prioritize both structural reform and the cultivation of trust if community policing is to fulfill its potential as a cornerstone of democratic, people-centered security in Nigeria.

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