



## COMMUNITY POLICING AND SECURITY ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA<sup>1</sup>



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**Abstract.** *This study examined the impact of community policing on security administration in Akwa Ibom State, focusing on how a problem-solving approach, police-community partnerships, and organizational transformation influenced security outcomes. The research was grounded in Social Resource Theory, which emphasized the importance of establishing a collaborative and supportive relationship between the police and the community. Using both documentary method and open-ended interview the data gathered provided a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between community policing and security issues in Nigeria with a focus on Akwa Ibom State. The objectives were to examine the effect of problem-solving approaches, the impact of police-community partnerships, and the influence of organizational transformation on the effectiveness of security administration. The findings indicated that community policing, when integrated with proactive problem-solving and active community engagement, significantly enhanced security outcomes. It was recommended that security agencies in Akwa Ibom State prioritize regular training on community relations, invest in building partnerships with local stakeholders, and support local vigilante groups in ways that aligned with legal standards and promoted mutual accountability.*

**Keywords:** *Community Policing, Security Administration, Police-Community Partnership, Problem-Solving, Organizational Transformation.*

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## 1. Introduction

Community policing has gained global recognition as a strategic approach to enhancing security administration by fostering collaboration between police forces and local communities (Whitaker, 1980). This model emphasizes proactive engagement, problem-solving, and decentralization of police operations, moving away from the traditional reactive policing methods that often fail to address underlying community safety issues (Goldstein, 1979; Kelling & Moore, 1988). The core idea of community policing is to build trust between law enforcement and the public, thereby improving public safety and preventing crime through active community involvement. In Nigeria, the concept of community policing was introduced to address the country's escalating security challenges, which include armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, and communal violence (Nwagboso, 2012; Ojo, 2016). The traditional policing model in Nigeria, characterized by a centralized command structure and limited community interaction, has been increasingly criticized for its ineffectiveness in managing these complex security issues. This has led to a growing consensus on the need for a community-oriented approach to improve security outcomes across the country.

In Nigeria, the conventional policing approach has proven inadequate in addressing the growing insecurity (Salawi, 2010). Traditional methods, characterized by their centralized nature and lack of community engagement, have struggled to curb rising crime rates effectively (Kpae and Adishi, 2017). This inefficacy is compounded by widespread mistrust between the police and the public, limited resources, and the overly centralized nature of law enforcement operations. The police force's reputation for being distant, corrupt, and unresponsive has further hindered its ability to forge essential community partnerships necessary for effective crime prevention and intervention (Nwaubani, 2014). Consequently, communities have often turned to self-help measures, including the formation of vigilante groups, which, while well-intentioned, sometimes exacerbate the problem by operating outside legal frameworks (Okeshola and Mudiare, 2013).

In response to these persistent challenges which is not peculiar to police administration, the concept of community policing has emerged as a potential remedy for enhancing security administration in Nigeria (Ordu and Nnam, 2017). Community policing promotes a localized and collaborative approach, advocating for closer cooperation between the police and community members to identify, prevent, and address security issues.



Despite the promising initiatives, the implementation of community policing in Akwa Ibom State is yet to create expected results. Akwa Ibom State just as Nigeria as a whole continues to grapple with a multifaceted and persistent security crisis that threatens the stability (Adagba *et al.*, 2012), economic development, and social cohesion of the nation. The country has witnessed a troubling escalation in violent crimes, including terrorism, banditry, armed robbery, kidnapping, and communal clashes. These escalating security challenges have underscored the limitations of traditional policing methods, which are often reactive, centralized, and detached from the communities they serve. This study seeks to explore the role of community policing in enhancing security administration in Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- a) To examine how organizational transformation affects security administration in Akwa Ibom State;
- b) To assess how community policing enhances police-community partnership in Akwa Ibom State;
- c) To examine the extent to which problem-solving approach affects security administration in Akwa Ibom State.

The work proposes that:

- (i) The success of community policing Akwa Ibom State is a function, organizational transformation.
- (ii) Police-community partnership is likely to enhance success of community policing in Akwa Ibom State.
- (iii) Problem solving approach tends to positively affect community policing in Akwa Ibom State.

## 2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research method to gather comprehensive data and analyze the relationship between community policing, security challenges, and the role of local vigilante groups. A thorough review of existing literature on community policing, security issues, and local vigilante groups in Nigeria was conducted, drawing from scholarly articles, books, reports,



policy documents, and other relevant sources to identify key concepts, theories, and empirical studies related to the topic.

In addition, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including police officers, community members, local vigilante group leaders, and government officials. These interviews provided valuable insights into their experiences, perceptions, and roles in community policing and addressing security challenges (Sarantakos, 1998; Denscombe, 2011). Direct observations were also carried out in some State like Akwa Ibom, focusing on the activities and operations of local vigilante groups, their interactions with community members, and their collaboration with formal law enforcement agencies. The data collected were analyzed using content analysis techniques. This involved examining interview transcripts, field notes, official reports, media articles, and other qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the historical, legal, and operational aspects of community policing, security challenges, and the involvement of local vigilante groups (Ermann, 1977).

### **3. Conceptual framework**

Community policing has emerged as a significant paradigm in modern policing strategies, focusing on the collaboration between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the understanding that security is not solely the responsibility of the police but requires the active participation of the community (Igbuzor, 2013). This framework considers the various definitions, principles, and practices of community policing, particularly as they relate to the Nigerian context.

Community policing is a philosophy and organizational strategy that promotes a partnership between the police and the community to proactively address the conditions that give rise to public safety issues, including crime, social disorder, and fear of crime (Bayley, 2005; Okiro, 2007; Oikhala, 2021). It is built on the premise that the police can improve public safety and community trust by working collaboratively with local residents and other stakeholders to identify and solve problems at the community level. One of the most widely accepted definitions of community policing is provided by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) in the United States (Oyakhire, 2010), which defines it as “a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime” (COPS, 2014). This definition



highlights the importance of problem-solving and partnership as key components of community policing.

According to Trojanowicz (1994) community policing is a philosophy of comprehensive and personalized policing, where the same officer is assigned to patrol and work within a specific area for an extended period. This officer operates from a decentralized location and collaborates proactively with citizens to identify and resolve issues. In essence, community policing involves both the police integrating themselves into the community and responding to its needs, as well as the community taking an active role in its own safety and supporting law enforcement efforts.

The concept of community policing is based on several core principles. First, it emphasizes the decentralization of police services, allowing officers to work more closely with the communities they serve (Goldstein, 1990). Decentralization enables the police to be more responsive to the specific needs and concerns of local communities, rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach to law enforcement. Second, community policing encourages proactive problem-solving, where the police and the community work together to identify the root causes of crime and disorder and develop strategies to address them before they escalate (Skogan, 2006). This proactive approach contrasts with the traditional reactive model of policing, which often focuses on responding to incidents after they have occurred.

Another critical aspect of community policing is the emphasis on building trust and legitimacy between the police and the public. According to Tyler (2004), trust in law enforcement is essential for effective policing, as it encourages community members to cooperate with the police, share information, and participate in joint problem-solving efforts. In the context of Nigeria, where there is often significant distrust between the police and the public due to issues of corruption, abuse of power, and inefficiency, building trust is particularly crucial for the success of community policing initiatives.

In addition to these principles, community policing also involves a shift in the role of the police from being primarily law enforcers to being community partners and problem solvers. This shift requires a change in the police organizational culture, training, and performance evaluation systems to support the new roles and responsibilities associated with community policing (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). For instance, officers are encouraged to engage in community outreach activities, participate in neighborhood meetings, and collaborate with other community-based organizations to address public safety issues.



The adoption of community policing has been recognized as a crucial step towards addressing the country's complex security challenges. The Nigerian government, through the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), has made several efforts to institutionalize community policing, including the establishment of community policing committees and the introduction of community policing initiatives in various states (Alemika, 2013). However, the implementation of community policing in Nigeria has faced several challenges, such as inadequate resources, lack of public awareness, resistance and corruption within the police force. Despite these challenges, community policing remains a viable strategy for improving security administration in Nigeria, particularly in fostering better relationships between the police and the public and in enhancing the overall effectiveness of policing efforts.

Security administration in Nigeria is a complex and multifaceted endeavor, shaped by the country's diverse socio-political landscape, historical legacies, and contemporary challenges. The Nigerian security apparatus is primarily composed of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the military, and various paramilitary organizations. Each of these institutions plays a distinct role in maintaining internal security, law and order, and safeguarding the nation against external threats.

The concept of security administration encompasses the systematic management and oversight of security measures, policies, and practices within an organization or governmental entity. It involves planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources and personnel to ensure the protection of assets, information, and individuals from various threats and risks. In the contemporary context, security administration has evolved to address a wide range of challenges, including cyber-security threats, terrorism, organized crime, and natural disasters. According to Schneier (2023), effective security administration requires a holistic approach that integrates physical, digital, and human elements to create a robust security ecosystem. This multi-faceted approach is crucial in an era where threats are increasingly complex and interconnected.

Security administration encompasses several key components. First, it involves risk assessment and management, which entails identifying potential threats, evaluating their likelihood and potential impact, and developing strategies to mitigate or eliminate these risks. A study by Johnson *et al.* (2022) emphasizes the importance of continuous risk assessment in security administration, noting that threat landscapes are dynamic and require constant vigilance and adaptation. Another critical aspect of security administration is policy development and





implementation. This includes creating comprehensive security policies, procedures, and guidelines that align with organizational goals and legal requirements. Albrechtsen and Hovden (2021) argue that effective security policies must be clear, enforceable, and regularly updated to address emerging threats and technological advancements. Training and awareness programme form an integral part of security administration. These initiatives aim to educate employees, stakeholders, and relevant parties about security risks, best practices, and their roles in maintaining a secure environment. Research by Zhang and Li (2024) demonstrates that organizations with robust security awareness programme experience fewer security incidents and recover more quickly from breaches when they do occur.

#### **4. Components of community policing**

Community policing is built on the principle that the closer and more connected the police are to the communities they serve, the more effective they will be in preventing crime rather than merely responding to it after it has occurred. To achieve this mission, community policing comprises three key components: Organizational Transformation, Police-Community Partnership, and Problem-Solving. These components work together to create a holistic approach to law enforcement that is proactive, collaborative, and responsive to the unique needs of each community.

##### **4.1. Organizational transformation**

Organizational transformation refers to the fundamental changes in the structure, management, and culture of a police force required in implementing community policing effectively. This transformation involves decentralizing decision-making processes, empowering officers to take initiative in their assigned communities, and restructuring the police organization to prioritize community engagement over traditional enforcement models. For example, in Lagos State, Nigeria, the Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Corps (LNSC) was established as part of the state's broader efforts to restructure its policing strategies towards a community-oriented approach. The LNSC operates under a decentralized model, allowing officers to work closely with local communities, gather intelligence, and provide a visible presence in neighborhoods. This shift has contributed to a more responsive and proactive policing system, tailored to the specific security needs of different communities within Lagos (CLEEN Foundation, 2014).

Furthermore, organizational transformation requires a shift in the internal culture of police forces, emphasizing the importance of building trust and legitimacy within the community.



Police departments across Nigeria, such as those in Anambra and Ekiti states, have started incorporating community policing principles into their training programmes, focusing on enhancing officers' communication skills, cultural sensitivity, and ethical standards. This transformation is crucial for fostering a police force that is more attuned to the needs and concerns of the communities it serves.

#### **4.2. Police-community partnership**

Another key component of community policing is the establishment of strong, collaborative partnerships between the police and the community. These partnerships are based on mutual trust, respect, and shared responsibility for public safety. The idea is that by working together, the police and community members can identify and address security issues more effectively than either could alone. One notable example of successful police-community partnerships in Nigeria is the involvement of traditional rulers and local vigilante groups in policing efforts. In many rural areas, such as those in the Northern and Southeastern regions of Nigeria, local vigilante groups have been integrated into the formal policing framework, working alongside the police to maintain security. These groups, often composed of respected community members, provide valuable local knowledge and have been instrumental in preventing crimes such as cattle rustling and communal clashes (Alemika, 2013).

In urban areas, initiatives such as the community policing committees in Lagos and Rivers states have provided platforms for regular dialogue between the police and community members. These committees involve representatives from various segments of the community, including religious leaders, business owners, and youth groups, who work together with the police to identify and address security concerns. These partnerships have been credited with reducing crime rates in areas like Ikorodu in Lagos, where community-police collaboration helped dismantle notorious criminal gangs (Nigerian Police Force, 2020).

#### **4.3. Problem-solving**

Problem-solving is one the essential component of community policing. This approach focuses on identifying and addressing the root causes of crime and disorder rather than simply responding to incidents as they occur. Problem-solving in community policing involves analyzing patterns of criminal activity, understanding the social conditions that contribute to crime, and developing targeted strategies to address these issues. For instance, in Enugu State, the police collaborated with community leaders to address the rising issue of drug abuse among





youths in certain neighborhoods. Through community meetings and workshops, the police and community members identified the underlying factors contributing to this problem, such as unemployment and lack of recreational facilities. The police then worked with local government authorities to implement programmes that provided job training and established youth centers, which helped reduce drug-related crimes in the area (CLEEN Foundation, 2014).

Another example of effective problem-solving in community policing is the “Safe School Initiative” launched in response to the spate of kidnappings in schools across Northern Nigeria. This initiative involved a collaborative effort between the police, school authorities, parents, and local communities to enhance security measures in and around schools. By addressing the specific vulnerabilities that made schools targets for kidnappers, such as inadequate fencing and poor lighting, the initiative has helped to reduce the incidence of school-related abductions (Amnesty International, 2020).

#### **4.4. Theoretical underpinnings**

Policing through the community is necessary to strengthen the security architecture of any society. Policing is generally seen as the process and intervention that ensures the maintenance of law and order in the society. However, contemporary thoughts in community policing are premised on three core areas: citizens’ involvement, problem solving and organizational transformation. Citizens’ involvement resonates with Normative Sponsorship Theory of Community Policing (Tiedke *et al.*, 1975). This theory posits that cooperation and the people’s goodwill are conditions precedent and necessary factor for a harmonious community or society. A more profound theory of community policing is the Social Resource theory by Wong (2008). The theory is premised on the functions of the police, the relationships between the police and the people and lastly, the reasons the people need the police. The social resource theory exempts and exonerates the State from the incidences of crime and criminality. Crimes and criminalities are acts of individuals that may have been challenged by lack and needs that are not met which may be occasioned by poverty or greed. The theory also posits that crimes and criminalities are aided by police inefficiency (Yero *et al.*, 2012). The social resonance theory sees the police as a social resource that ought to bridge some of the challenges of the people.

### **5. Community policing in security administration**

Community policing has emerged as a critical strategy in modern security administration, particularly in societies facing complex and persistent security challenges. As a policing



philosophy, community policing emphasizes the importance of building strong relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. This approach seeks to shift the role of the police from being solely enforcers of the law to being partners in maintaining public safety and order. The role of community policing in security administration is multifaceted, involving crime prevention, fostering trust, enhancing information gathering, and promoting collaboration between the police and the public.

### **i. Crime Prevention and Reduction**

One of the primary roles of community policing in security administration is crime prevention. Traditional policing models often focus on reacting to crimes after they occur. In contrast, community policing adopts a proactive stance, aiming to prevent crime through early intervention and addressing the underlying social conditions that contribute to criminal behavior (Goldstein, 1990). By engaging with community members, police officers can identify potential issues before they escalate into serious crimes. For instance, regular community patrols, neighborhood meetings, and collaboration with local organizations can help police officers understand specific community needs and develop tailored strategies to address them.

In Nigeria, there have been notable instances where community policing has played a pivotal role in crime prevention. For example, in Lagos State, the Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Corps (LNSC), a community policing initiative, was established to assist the police in curbing crime in the state. The LNSC officers, who are often recruited from local communities, work closely with the police to gather intelligence and provide early warnings about criminal activities. This initiative has contributed to the reduction of crime rates in various neighborhoods, particularly in areas previously known for high levels of criminal activity, such as Mushin and Oshodi (Alemika, 2013).

In recent time, Akwa Ibom State government under the current administration launched a security outfit called “Ibom Community Watch on the 14th December, 2023. The Ibom Community Watch involves the establishment of local security networks in communities throughout Akwa Ibom State. These networks consist of trained community members who work closely with law enforcement agencies to monitor and report suspicious activities. The initiative also emphasizes collaboration between the government, traditional rulers, and residents to ensure a proactive and collective approach to community security. Another example is the community policing initiative in Enugu State, where the Enugu State Command launched a community policing advisory committee. This committee comprises traditional rulers, religious



leaders, youth leaders, and other stakeholders who work with the police to identify and address security challenges in their communities. The initiative has been credited with reducing incidents of kidnapping and armed robbery in the state by fostering greater cooperation between the police and the community (Nwaubani, 2020).

## **ii. Building trust and legitimacy**

Trust and legitimacy are crucial elements in effective security administration. Without public trust, law enforcement agencies struggle to gain the cooperation necessary to maintain order and ensure justice. Community policing plays a vital role in building and sustaining this trust by fostering a sense of partnership between the police and the community (Tyler, 2004). When community members perceive the police as allies who are genuinely concerned about their well-being, they are more likely to report crimes, provide valuable information, and assist in crime prevention efforts.

In the Nigerian context, where public trust in the police is often low due to corruption, abuse of power, and inefficiency, community policing offers a pathway to rebuilding these fractured relationships. For instance, the introduction of the “Police Public Relations Committees” (PPRC) in various states, such as Kano and Rivers, has been instrumental in improving relations between the police and the public. These committees serve as a platform for dialogue between the police and the community, allowing residents to voice their concerns and grievances while providing the police with feedback on their performance. This engagement has helped to restore public confidence in the police force, particularly in areas where distrust was previously widespread (CLEEN Foundation, 2014). Additionally, in Ekiti State, the community policing initiative has been tailored to address the specific needs of rural communities. The “Farmers Protection Corps,” established by the state government in collaboration with local police, focuses on protecting farmers from herdsmen attacks, a significant security issue in the region. This initiative has not only enhanced the security of rural areas but also strengthened the relationship between the police and the farming community, leading to increased cooperation and trust (Oladunjoye, 2020).

## **iii. Enhancing information gathering**

Effective security administration relies heavily on the ability of law enforcement agencies to gather accurate and timely information. Community policing enhances this aspect by creating open lines of communication between the police and the public. Community members are often



the first to notice suspicious activities or potential threats, and their willingness to share this information with the police can be crucial in preventing crime and ensuring public safety (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). In Nigeria, community policing has significantly improved the flow of information between the police and the public. For example, in Kaduna State, the establishment of the “Kaduna Vigilante Service” as part of the state’s community policing efforts has been instrumental in gathering intelligence on criminal activities. The vigilante members, who are often well-known in their communities, work closely with the police to identify and report potential security threats. This collaboration has been particularly effective in rural areas, where the formal police presence is limited, and has led to the arrest of several criminal gangs involved in cattle rustling and banditry (Murtala, 2019).

Similarly, in Edo State, the “Edo Security Network,” a community policing initiative launched by the state government, has improved information gathering and sharing between the police and local communities. The network comprises community volunteers who assist the police in monitoring their neighborhoods and reporting suspicious activities. This initiative has led to the apprehension of several criminals involved in armed robbery, kidnapping, and cult-related violence, demonstrating the critical role of community policing in enhancing security through effective information gathering (Okafor, 2021).

#### **iv. Promoting collaboration and partnership**

Community policing also plays a crucial role in promoting collaboration and partnership between the police, other government agencies, and community organizations. Security administration is a collective effort that extends beyond the police force, requiring the involvement of various stakeholders to address complex security issues effectively. Community policing fosters this collaborative approach by encouraging the police to work closely with local governments, schools, religious institutions, and non-governmental organizations to create comprehensive security strategies (Rosenbaum, 1994).

In Nigeria, the implementation of community policing has seen the formation of community policing committees, where members of the public, local leaders, and police officers come together to discuss and address security concerns. For example, in Oyo State, the “Oyo State Security Network Agency” (Amotekun Corps) was established as a collaborative effort between the state government, traditional rulers, and local communities to tackle insecurity in the state. The Amotekun Corps, which operates as a community policing outfit, works in partnership with the Nigeria Police Force to address various security challenges, including armed robbery,



kidnapping, and herdsmen attacks. This collaboration has been credited with improving the overall security environment in the state and has been hailed as a model for other states in the region (Oluwasegun, 2021). Another example is the “EbubeAgu Security Outfit” in the Southeast region of Nigeria, which was established as a regional community policing initiative by the governors of the five Southeast states. This security outfit works in collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies to combat crime in the region. The formation of Ebube Agu has led to increased cooperation between the police and local communities, resulting in a more coordinated approach to addressing security challenges in the region (Nwabueze, 2021).

Community policing plays a critical role in security administration by promoting crime prevention, building trust and legitimacy, enhancing information gathering, and fostering collaboration between the police and the public. The examples from various states across Nigeria demonstrate the effectiveness of community policing in addressing specific security challenges and improving the overall security environment.

## **6. Organizational transformation within the police force**

The study found that organizational transformation within the police force is essential to support the principles of community policing. Government officials and stakeholders acknowledged that a shift toward a more transparent, accountable, and community-oriented police force is vital for community policing to succeed. According to Public Relations Theory, fostering strong relationships between police and community requires organizational support that prioritizes accountability and the community’s welfare (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). However, many officers noted resistance to change within certain ranks and the limited emphasis on community policing principles in existing training programmes. Officers interviewed expressed concerns that, although community policing has gained traction in Nigeria, the institutional structure of the police force does not yet fully support these principles. They highlighted the need for organizational reforms that would prioritize community engagement, integrate community feedback into policing strategies, and promote officers who demonstrate a commitment to community-centered values.

Some police officers suggested that periodic leadership training could help transform organizational culture to better align with community policing objectives. Research supports this approach, showing that when police officers are encouraged to engage with the community



and are rewarded for doing so, they are more likely to adopt practices that emphasize transparency and responsiveness (Goldstein, 1990). Implementing these reforms would promote a culture of accountability within the police force and ensure that officers prioritize community welfare in their operations.

The discussion and analysis underscore that community policing holds significant potential for enhancing security administration in Nigeria. While the community policing model faces challenges, such as resource constraints, lack of training, and existing mistrust, the collaboration between law enforcement, local communities, and vigilante groups demonstrated notable benefits for security outcomes. Effective community policing requires a sustained commitment to fostering police-community partnerships, implementing organizational reforms, and supporting local vigilance efforts within the bounds of legality and accountability. By addressing these areas, Nigeria could further develop a community-oriented security strategy that promotes mutual trust, efficiency, and safety.

## **7. Police-community partnerships and trust building**

A central component of community policing is building trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve, as mutual trust is essential for collaboration and information sharing. Interviews with both police officers and community members underscored that such partnerships are critical to successful community policing efforts in Akwa Ibom. Through joint initiatives and the support of local vigilante groups, communities have been empowered to participate in their security, providing valuable insights to law enforcement about local issues. Community leader Mr. Akpan described the evolving relationship between the police and the community as follows:

*“The relationship has improved over the years, especially with community policing initiatives. People are more willing to report incidents and work with the police to maintain peace. However, there’s still a bit of mistrust because of past incidents of misconduct. Some people still feel hesitant to fully open up to the police.”*

He suggested that steps like increased dialogue, transparency, and collaborative decision-making could further bridge this trust gap. Moreover, involving community members in the planning and execution of crime prevention strategies, such as neighborhood watch programmes, could solidify police-community relationships and encourage active public



participation. This aligns with research that emphasizes transparency and community involvement as key factors in building and maintaining trust in community policing efforts (Tyler, 2005). In Urban and Rural policing model in Algeria, the goal is to ensure the establishment of close co-operation between the rural communities and the police, the creation of opportunities for rural areas to solve their problem as well as the establishment of structured procedure for problem solving between the rural areas and the policing among others (Kwaja, 2019, p.431).

However, lingering mistrust due to past incidents of police misconduct remains a barrier to full collaboration. While local vigilante groups help bridge some communication gaps, tensions occasionally arise between these groups and formal law enforcement agencies. Research indicates that establishing clear guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of vigilante groups can prevent misunderstandings and help integrate these groups into formal security frameworks (Brogden, 2004). Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring that police-community partnerships operate effectively and respectfully.

## **8. Problem-solving approach in community policing**

The problem-solving approach in community policing also aims to proactively address the root causes of crime rather than merely reacting to incidents as they arise. According to Eck and Spelman's SARA model (Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment), problem-solving in community policing requires systematic steps to assess issues and implement targeted interventions (Eck and Spelman, 1987). For example, Akwa Ibom State exemplifies the challenges faced in implementing effective policing strategies. The state, like many others in Nigeria, has struggled with security issues due to the limitations of traditional policing methods. The conventional approach has often been marked by a reactive stance, insufficient community engagement, and a lack of local ownership in security matters. This led to establishment of the Ibom Community Watch by Akwa Ibom State Government which represents a significant step towards addressing these issues. This new security outfit aims to strengthen community policing initiatives by fostering closer ties between law enforcement and local communities. Launched as part of the state's efforts to enhance security, the Ibom Community Watch aims to integrate community involvement with policing practices, reflecting a commitment to the principles of community policing (The whistler, 2023).





In Nigeria, it was observed that the use of community-based crime prevention programmes and neighborhood watch initiatives has been positively received. Interviews and direct observations indicated that these programmes encouraged a proactive approach to security, whereby both community members and police officers could identify and mitigate potential threats before they escalate. For instance, a Police Officer emphasized that this approach helped address underlying social issues like unemployment among youth and conflicts between farmers and herders. As he explained:

*"The problem-solving approach has allowed us to be more proactive in identifying issues before they escalate. For example, rather than just responding to crimes after they occur, we work with community leaders to address underlying problems, like unemployment among youth or conflicts between farmers and herders. This way, we can help prevent some incidents from happening in the first place."*

This resembles the outcome of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) in Rwanda which is anchored on the principle of partnership between the Police and Community inviting crime. Due to success of COPS, the World Economic Forum-Global Competitiveness Report for 2014/2015 ranked Rwanda as the first country in Africa and the twenty-first globally where citizens trust and rely on police services to enforce law and order. Similar reports of partnership between police and communities are made about Botswana and South Africa (Stihole, 2017).

Despite its effectiveness, a significant challenge remains in the form of limited resources and inadequate training for police officers. Many officers lack the tools and knowledge needed to thoroughly investigate and address community-specific concerns, a gap that underscores the necessity for enhanced capacity-building initiatives. Some police officers stated that additional training in problem-solving methods specific to community policing would improve their ability to collaborate with the public and address issues before they escalate. Studies have confirmed that adequately resourced and well-trained police officers are more likely to achieve successful outcomes in problem-solving community policing models (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997).



## 9. Conclusion and recommendations

This study has provided a comprehensive examination of community policing and its impact on security administration in Nigeria. The findings indicate that problem-solving approaches, police-community partnerships, and organizational transformation within community policing all play significant roles in enhancing security outcomes. The results demonstrate that a problem-solving approach within community policing leads to more effective management of security issues, as evidenced by the substantial impact of this strategy on crime prevention and resolution. The establishment of strong police-community partnerships has proven to be vital in improving the effectiveness of security measures, fostering better cooperation, and building trust between law enforcement and local communities. Furthermore, organizational transformation within community policing has shown a significant effect on security administration, highlighting the importance of continuous reforms and improvements in the organizational structure of policing.

Overall, these findings underscore the effectiveness of community policing strategies in addressing security challenges in Nigeria. By emphasizing problem-solving, fostering partnerships, and implementing organizational changes, community policing can lead to enhanced public safety, greater community engagement, and improved trust in law enforcement agencies. The study, however, did not intend to introduce a new conceptual framework. There is also need for further study to expand theoretical literature. Nevertheless, the study's results support the ongoing development and implementation of community policing initiatives as crucial components of effective security administration with empirical applications to Awa Ibom State in Nigeria. Based on the above findings, the study recommended among others:

- a. Community policing strategies should prioritize problem-solving approaches that address the root causes of crime and security issues. Law enforcement agencies should invest in training programmes that equip officers with the skills to identify and address underlying problems within communities. Regular community meetings and collaborative workshops should be held to gather input from residents and develop tailored strategies for crime prevention and resolution.
- b. To improve security administration, it is essential to strengthen partnerships between police officers and community members. Establishing and maintaining open channels of communication, promoting mutual trust, and fostering active collaboration are critical. Community policing committees and neighborhood watch programmes should be supported



and expanded to enhance community involvement in security efforts. Efforts should be made to include diverse community representatives in these partnerships to ensure broad-based support and cooperation.

c. Organizational changes within community policing should be actively pursued to improve security administration. This includes decentralizing decision-making processes, enhancing training programmes, and ensuring better resource allocation.

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