

## Community Policing and Crime Prevention in Lagos State, Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*This paper critically examined the role of police community relations in crime prevention in Nigeria, with specific respect to Lagos State. Currently, criminal activity appears to be on the rise despite significant government spending on crime control, and the police force appears to be ineffective. The paper reviewed existing relevant empirical reviews and the theoretical framework. The methodology adopted was the use of secondary data with the aid of a content analysis approach. This paper adopted an instrumental case research design and a grounded theory design, both of which are qualitative research methods on a phenomenon through an in-depth or systematic study of a case. This paper reviewed the existing literature on crime prevention and community policing as the main variables of new governance. Thus, it was revealed that some factors are attributed to the inefficient capacity to curb crime, such as lack of personnel, inadequate equipment, poor benefits and training for officers, lack of support and information from the community, and poor budget allocation. The study further emphasised the importance of citizens participating in community policing as a way to supplement the efforts of the police and other security agencies in preventing crime. The study concluded that community policing is a strategy for preventing and controlling crimes in the locality, which involves a partnership between the police and the community working together to create a safe and secure environment in Lagos State. The study recommended, among others, that both State and Local Governments should jointly established Lagos State Security Trust Fund in order to finance both personnel and machinery to prevent and reduce crime in the State.*

**Keywords:** Community policing, developments, crime prevention, Lagos State, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Community and police relationships are anchored on a systematic relationship between the police and the entire citizenry. Police roles and functions are not simply law enforcement but also include tackling a huge range of community problems. Law enforcement is only one aspect of a police officer's job description; they also handle a wide range of community issues. The Nigerian police are undoubtedly part of the global trend of police forces switching from traditional to community policing. In fact, the philosophy and practice of interaction between the community and the police serves as a real vehicle for reforming the police (Dirikx & Bulck, 2020). In 2004, the Nigerian police adapted what was termed community policing, which had been a pragmatic strategy in police reforms. Abegunde & Adebayo (2020) and Ekong (2023) disclosed that the extensively used traditional and incident-driven reactive policing were replaced by proactive policing with a community as the centre of the police objectives.

The rise in criminal activity in different neighbourhoods has made community policing more important in recent years (Ordu & Nnam, 2017). An increasing number of politicians and civic leaders at the federal, state, and municipal levels are realising the significance of community policing as a crucial element of peace and security policy since it is necessary for maintaining law and order in communities. Community policing can play a valuable and noteworthy role in various domains such as peace talks, fostering peaceful coexistence, and formulating policies and initiatives to prevent or counteract localised instability and threats to public safety (Ordu & Nnam, 2017). Law enforcement agencies, including the police, struggle to battle crime and criminals, which makes it difficult for them to complete their task and accomplish the most favourable results on their own. Community policing is a concept that many people in the security and peace sectors are familiar with (Okafor & Aniche, 2015). It stems from achievements such as proactive crime prevention, team policing, police-community partnerships, and the reinstatement of foot patrol.

Community policing in Nigeria is contingent upon the nature, scope, and magnitude of the nation's peace and security issues. Initiatives for community policing include tenant-landlord security harmony, Nigeria's peace and security committees, and groups of physically strong men working shifts to protect the public (Jegade, 2019). In addition, the community is home to youth organisations, civilian joint task teams (like those in the Northeast), and vigilante service groups. Examples of such operations are the Ebube-Agwu operation in the country's South-East and Operation Amotekun in its South-West (Olusegun, 2016). The Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution (as amended) and the 2004 Police Reform/Police Act legally recognise all of these community policing agents and their relevance as a potent instrument for addressing the nation's crime problem. Community policing and crime prevention in Lagos State are the subjects of this study's critical examination.

Youth involvement programs are important in crime prevention measures within the State. These programs are expected to supplement the underlying causes of youth crime because they offer the youth an opportunity to acquire education, skills, and recreation. It is also reported that activities that are positive and involve youth decrease their delinquency and result in a feeling of belonging to the community (Aluko, 2021). Different NGOs and community organisations have established youth programs in various local governments of the State, which not only keep the youths busy but also impart them useful life skills, thus lowering the chances of committing crimes.

Partnership with the NGOs has promoted efficiency in the crime prevention measures in the State. Such organisations usually introduce resources, skills, and new ways of crime prevention. As an example, the collaboration between local police and NGOs has enabled police officers to be trained on how to engage the community and resolve conflicts that will ultimately enhance the overall effectiveness of crime prevention programs (Ogunbela et al., 2021; Adeoye &

Adeleke, 2022). Besides, NGOs often arrange awareness campaigns to inform the residents of crime prevention strategies and the necessity of community participation, which additionally strengthens the work of local entities to fight crime.

## **Conceptual Discourse**

### **Insecurity**

The concept of insecurity would be best understood by first presenting the concept of security. In the view of Igbekoyi & Dada (2020), security refers to “the situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of persons, information and property against hostile persons, influences and actions”. It is the existence of conditions within which people in a society can go about their normal daily activities without any threats to their lives or properties. It embraces all measures designed to protect and safeguard the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups, businesses and the nation against sabotage or violent occurrences (Jegede, 2019). According to Chizoba (2022), it demands safety from chronic threats and protection from harmful disruption as evidence based on portended dangers for peace, progress and development of the country. The citizens need a peaceful and safe environment to be able to attain their social, economic and political dreams.

Security however, can be described as stability and continuity of livelihood (stable and steady income), predictability of daily life (knowing what to expect), protection from crime (feeling safe), and freedom from psychological harm (safety or protection from emotional stress which results from the assurance or knowing that one is wanted, accepted, loved and protected in one’s community or neighbourhood and by people around (Lamidi et al., 2023). It focuses on the emotional and psychological sense of belonging to a social group, which can offer one protection. This description structures the concept of security into four dimensions, and these dimensions can be woven together to give a composite definition of security as the protection against all forms of harm, whether physical, economic or psychological (Eme, 2011; Ojo et al., 2019). It is generally argued, however, that security is not the absence of threats or security issues, but the ability to rise to the challenges posed by these threats with expediency and expertise (Ojo et al., 2020).

Insecurity, on the other hand, is the antithesis of security. However, because of the many ways in which insecurity affects human life and existence, the concept of insecurity has usually been ascribed different interpretations in association with the various ways in which it affects individuals. Some of the common descriptors of insecurity include want of safety, danger, hazard, uncertainty, want of confidence, doubtful, inadequately guarded or protected, lacking stability, troubled, lack of protection, and unsafe, to mention a few. All of these have been used by different people to define the concept of insecurity. These different descriptors, however, run into a common reference to a state of vulnerability to harm and loss of life, property or livelihood. Thus, insecurity is “the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection”. It refers to a lack or inadequate freedom from danger (Eme, 2011; Shiyanbade et al., 2025). This reflects physical insecurity, which is the most visible form of insecurity, and it feeds into many other forms of insecurity, such as economic security and social security.

### **Sources of Insecurity in Nigeria**

To tackle insecurity, a key starting point should be to understand the causes of insecurity as well as to investigate the sources of social disorder and instability. As Andrew & Kennedy (2013) pointed out, it is necessary to distinguish between different causes as each may require a different remedy. Besides, it is to provide a holistic view of the suggestions or recommendations for solutions. More often, however, policymakers are disinclined to isolate and clarify particular

causes. They prefer blanket references, with the consideration that the causes of insecurity are interwoven and contribute to one another.

Like in many other societies, the sources of insecurity in Nigeria have been traced to several factors and explained by different people. These factors have been classified or grouped into external and internal factors. Beyond the external-internal dichotomy, sources of insecurity have also been classified as either remote or proximate and immediate sources/causal factors. In Nigeria, the challenge is not so much about insecurity of external sources, but rather that of internal sources. Hence, the focus of this work is the internal sources. The study recognises that some internal factors have been enhanced and strengthened by the presence of external forces, but there is no doubt that, if the internal situations did not present themselves, the external forces would be unable to infiltrate. The present internal causes of insecurity in Nigeria using the dichotomy of remote and immediate factors can be easily traced to arbitrariness in the exercise of its powers of arrest and prosecution, corruption and perversion of justice, use of crude techniques of investigation, collusion with criminals and incessant cases of accidental discharge of lethal bullets (Olujinmi, 2005 as cited in Shiyabade et al., 2025).

The basic sources of insecurity in Lagos State include Traffic Robbery, which is also called “Go-Slow” Crimes. Lagos is famous for its gridlock, which criminals exploit. Armed hoodlums take advantage of slow-moving traffic, especially at night or in early morning hours, to dispossess commuters of electronics, cash, and vehicles. According to the Nigeria Risk Index (2025), approximately 70% of traffic-related robberies in Lagos occur after 10:00 pm. Hotspots consistently flagged include the Long Bridge (Lagos-Ibadan Expressway), Gbagada, Oshodi, and parts of the Third Mainland Bridge during maintenance periods. Another common methods include “smash and grab” (breaking car windows) and the use of toy or real pistols to intimidate drivers (Akinde, 2021).

As observed in Ojo et al. (2020), cultism and “area boy” violence are other security challenges associated with Lagos State. Lagos faces a persistent threat from rival cult groups (such as the *Eiye* and *Black Axe* confraternities) and “area boys” (street urchins). These groups often clash over territorial control of motor parks and the collection of dues. Between January and October 2025, a series of criminal cases were reported. The Lagos State Police Command revealed the arrest of over 1580 suspects in a single quarter for offences ranging from cultism to murder. Various violent cult clashes are empirically more frequent in peri-urban areas like Ikorodu, Fadeyi, and Mushin, where “supremacy battles” often lead to temporary lockdowns of business activities.

The level of criminal activities in many towns, communities or areas in Lagos State is enormous due to many factors. The police force and other security agencies in the state play a significant role in preventing abnormality. Another form of kidnapping and robbery is where criminals use commercial vehicles (yellow buses or unpainted private cars) to lure unsuspecting passengers, who are then robbed or held for ransom while the vehicle is in motion, and this is called “One-Chance Robberies”. Empirically, police data from 2021–2025 shows a significant number of “one-chance” syndicates operating along the Lekki-Epe Expressway and the Ikorodu Road corridor (Ogunbela et al., 2021; Okeshola & Mudiare, 2023; Shiyabade et al., 2025). In early 2025, several victims were rescued from forests in Ibeju-Lekki following abductions originating from these fake commercial vehicles.

Insecurity in Lagos is also tied to property rights. Armed land grabbers often use violence to displace legitimate owners or extort developers, leading to communal unrest and physical assaults, which is referred to as Land Grabbers (*Omo-Onile*). Lagos State Government in conjunction with Local Government Areas, set up a commission named “Land Tenure Security Perceptions in 2025” with the mission to eradicate the fear of *Omo-Onile* violence, which is

significantly influences the cost of doing business in Lagos, i.e. these gangs called *Omo-Onile* usually distort the peace in the community. The state government responded by establishing the Lagos State Special Taskforce on Land Grabbers to track over 85,000 cases in the Lagos Criminal Information System (LCIS) (Okeshola & Mudiare, 2023).

Urban migration and systemic strain in Lagos State have led to the rapid influx of people in the area. This youth bulge without formal jobs creates a recruitment pool for petty crime and cyber-fraud. Evidence-based research revealed that over 95% of migrants to Lagos arrive without guaranteed employment (Sule, 2021; IGI Global, 2025). Finally, the crime index rate already forecasts that the level of crimes in Lagos State will increase due to the fact that Lagos is a fast-growing economy and the state's infrastructure development is incomparable to others in the region. This brings about the various strategies adopted in curbing, reducing and preventing crimes.

### **Community Policing**

Community policing is a proactive approach to law enforcement that emphasises collaboration between the police force and the community to prevent and control crime. In contrast to the conventional models of policing, which are based on the reaction to crime once it has happened, community policing tries to resolve the underlying causes of crime by forming an effective collaboration with the residents and businesses, as well as local organisations (Skogan, 2019, cited in Ojo et al., 2020). Such an approach is a change in the role of the police officers who are considered not as the representatives of law but as members of the community. This is aimed at improving the safety of people, building trust and developing the feeling of collective responsibility (Goldstein, 2019).

The major concept in community policing is that the community has a common duty in ensuring that there is safety. This paradigm is based on the assumption that local people tend to be knowledgeable of the challenges that are impacting their localities and hence is very instrumental in attaining localized-based solutions to suit their local requirements (Cordner, 2010). Community policing promotes trust and mutual respect by incorporating community members in crime related issues and collaborating with them to overcome these issues. The collaboration promotes greater police-community interaction, which is essential in addressing the problem of gangs, drug abuse, domestic violence, and other social problems that lead to crime (Osayekemwen & Adeoluwa, 2022).

The concept of problem-oriented policing is one of the most important elements of community policing, as this approach focuses on identifying and resolving the root causes of crime. Instead of reacting to one or another case, the officers evaluate the trends of criminal activity and the aspects that lead to these trends (Goldstein, 2019). An example is that rather than arrest offenders on various crimes, police can collaborate with community groups in order to resolve some of the socioeconomic issues that lead to drug abuse in particular neighbourhoods (Weisburd & Eck, 2004; Eme, 2011). Community policing offers lasting solutions because the root causes of crime are addressed, and over time, crime levels will be curbed.

Decentralisation is also another key component of community policing. Unlike the conventional models where decisions are made in a centralised chain of command, community policing allows decisions to be made at a lower level, which allows the local precincts and individual officers to act based on their local knowledge of the community they operate (Rosenbaum, 2020, as cited in Shiyanbade et al., 2024). Such a decentralised solution provides a greater level of flexibility in meeting the needs of the community and allows officers to customise strategies to the specific issues that are present within various neighbourhoods. Police officers will

be able to establish a relationship with the community members by making them more visible and accessible, which will increase cooperation and involvement in crime prevention efforts (Fielding, 2005; Osayekemwen & Adeoluwa, 2022).

Community policing usually depends on the training and the attitude of the officers. The officers should also be armed with communication skills, conflict resolution methods, as well as cultural sensitivity in order to effectively interact with people of different backgrounds (Igbekoyi & Dada, 2020; Shiyanbade et al., 2025). This is in contrast to the old training of police, which may emphasise tactical skills, but a model that focuses on the interpersonal skills and the thorough knowledge of the social dynamics of the community. Training is effective since officers are able to develop trust and rapport with the community members, which is a prerequisite for obtaining the cooperation to enable them to prevent crime successfully (Ojo et al., 2019).

Some of the community policing programs can involve regular patrol of the neighbourhoods, attending local events, and youth involvement programs. As an example, certain police stations have developed neighbourhood watch programmes, in which the community in the neighborhoods are encouraged to keep watch over their areas by pulling together to report any suspicious activities (Cordner, 2010). Community meetings can also be organised by other departments to address the issue of public safety, and that would give the residents an opportunity to air their grievances and propose a solution. The activities improve the level of security, as well as create an atmosphere where police are perceived not as a different and opposing force but as part of the community (Rosenbaum, 2020).

Community policing has its problems as well. In other places, poor relations between citizens and the police, particularly in the marginalised communities, may impair their work (Skogan, 2019; Ojo et al., 2019). Historical discrimination, police misconduct, and police inability to maintain accountability are some of the factors that have contributed to mistrust and unwillingness of the community members to cooperate with the police (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005). To solve these problems, transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights should be considered as the key principles of community policing by police departments. Gaining the confidence of the community through recognising previous failures and becoming willing to improve the situation, police departments will be able to regain trust and prove that the department is committed to offering equal service to every member of the community (Peak & Glensor, 1999, cited in Shiyanbade et al., 2024).

Community policing is the concept that represents an important change in law enforcement philosophy. Community policing involves working with residents in order to minimise crime and create safer and more connected communities. This collaborative approach enables police departments to move beyond a reactive stance, addressing the social factors that contribute to crime and ultimately fostering a more resilient and supportive community structure (Goldstein, 2019).

### **Causes of Residential Neighbourhood Crime**

Bearing in mind the interdependent nature of crime, that is, crime generally operates like a network in that controlling a particular crime while leaving the others is as bad as not controlling any (Shiyanbade et al., 2024), hence, literature has revealed three main sources (causes) of residential neighbourhood crime. One, crime occurring as a result of poor environmental design (Skogan, 2019; Osajie, 2021), second, crime emergence as a result of offenders getting ample opportunity without adequate restriction (Olufolabo et al., 2015; Ojo et al., 2020) and crime arising from the absence of social development, which most times appear in the form of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, corruption, poor family and community cohesion, among others (Fielding, 200; Lamidi et al., 2023).

Statistics show that certain age groups are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour. In 1992, young people between 12 and 17 years were implicated in 13 per cent of the violent occurrences and 27 per cent of all property offences. Meanwhile, adults between 18-34 years were implicated in 55 per cent of all violent occurrences and empirical proof credits 25 per cent of the increase in crime during the 1960s to the increase in the balance of adolescents in America (Goldstein, 2019). Essentially, it is virtually impossible to discuss age as a risk factor without mentioning the part that being female or male plays as a risk factor connected to a crime. It has long been proven that males are much more likely to be involved in crime than females (Chilton & Datesman, 1987, as cited in Osajie, 2021). United States statistics indicate that women commit far fewer crimes than men – In every five arrested men, only one woman is arrested (Mazerolle et al., 2020).

Poverty is seldom cited as a factor linked to crime, although the correlation between poverty and crime has yet to be consistently verified by research (Hartnagel & Lee, 1990; Lamidi et al., 2023). The three essential definitions of poverty in contemporary use, according to Shiyabade et al., (2024) are absolute poverty (those without the most primary needs for survival such as food, shelter and clothing); relative poverty (families and individuals whose income and other source levels are scant in comparison to the majority of people within the economy); and exclusionary poverty (persons excluded from society's basic living requirements and opportunities). Exclusionary poverty more perfectly describes the condition of life of people living in poverty because it exceeds simple economic considerations like looking at an individual's access to health care and quality of diet, transportation possibilities for socialising and partaking in community life (Eme, 2011).

Although studies have failed to confirm a poor individual's greater likelihood of criminal engagement and that white collar crime proves inconsistent, poverty continues to be linked to crime (Abegunde & Adebayo, 2020). Further, while researchers take great care to warn against simplistic relationships that relate poverty to crime, there is considerable agreement that living in poverty greatly rises risk of criminality (Dirikx & Bulck, 2020; Lamidi et al., 2023). In similar studies, it was submitted that violent crime, low level of educational achievement, long season of unemployment and poverty are connected across themselves (Ekong, 2023). Efforts made to relate some of these risk factors to the Nigerian situation reveal the following: Recently, a World Bank report on Nigeria's poverty level noted that at 33.1 per cent, Nigeria is ranked third in the world. (World Bank, 2014). In the same vein, studies have corroborated this assertion (Ogwumike, 2002). Agbor & Eyo (2022) posited that poverty is one of the leading causes of neighbourhood crime in Nigeria.

Educationally, Nigeria has been rated very low in terms of its national policy on education (Chizoba, 2022; Lamidi et al., 2023), poor budgetary allocation to education (Longley, 2019) and the threat to Western education in some sections of the country by the terrorist groups. Olujinmi (2005) listed illiteracy as one of the socio-economic determinants of crime in Nigeria.

Likewise, Longley (2019) and Ojo et al. (2020) posited that there is a correlation between crime rate and corruption in Nigeria. Lamidi et al. (2023) in their study submitted that corruption is a factor in evaluating poverty and that they are all connected to a crime.

Considering the environmental and building design as a risk factor, first, in Nigeria, there is a weakly enforceable law guiding the mode of residential neighbourhood design, as we have it in the developed nations. The little exemption is in Government Reservation Areas (GRAs), and this only lasts for a short period after full development. Secondly, the government's role in the area of layout planning (in the form of site and service scheme) and drawing up of master plan, as well as monitoring, is not effectively implemented, hence, government control over development is not loudly felt in most of the Nigerian urban settlements. Furthermore, the degree of poverty among

the medium and low income group which cover over 75% of the working class seems not to allow for proper residential neighbourhood planning as government seems not to be up and doing in the area of making housing affordable through housing finance and provision of neighbourhood infrastructure, among others, for the generality (Otu, & Elechi, 2015).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Community policing has always been theoretically based. Several theories have been put forth by academics in an effort to provide a theoretical explanation, serve as a starting point for academic discussions, and guide community policing implementation initiatives. The Normative Sponsorship Theory by Tiedke et al. (1975) highlights the philosophical foundations of community policing. Kellings (1982) proposed the Broken Windows Theory, which states that when intentional impoliteness like intoxication, begging, vandalism, disorderly conduct, and littering persists, an environment is fostered that encourages the commission of more serious crimes. Gap Theory by George J. Thomson focused on the widening “gap” between the police and the community in many areas, while Structural Functionalism Theory by Durkheim (1858) explored the functions of social institutions such as family, religion, economy, politics, and education and how they interact and interrelate with one another in solidarity for the stability of the society. People who are mistreated by the police become less willing to assist them and resign from the force. The “gap” would widen until law enforcement officials understood how important it is to look out for the public.

In light of the different theories identified above, the Broken Windows Theory (BWT) is a better theoretical construct to offer a grounded explanation of community policing and crime prevention, especially in urban areas such as the selected study area. Presently, the Broken Windows Theory is a necessary component of any conversation on community policing (Allender, 2004).

The Broken Windows Theory, which was first put forth by social scientist George L. Kelling in 1982, contends that visible indicators of criminal activity in cities lead to an increase in crime (Longley, 2019). This idea states that a neighbourhood with obvious symptoms of minor disorder, such as broken windows, is vulnerable to criminal attack, much as a structure with one broken window is vulnerable to more destruction (Friedersdorf, 2020). When a community starts to overlook relatively minor infractions of the law, such as using illegal narcotics, damaging abandoned buildings, fighting in the street, etc., it can lead to chaos. To combat this threat, deliberate and cautious actions are needed, which will ultimately prevent more serious crimes like robbery, assault, burglary, assassination, etc. According to this theory, protecting citizens' lives and property cannot be handled by the police or the criminal justice system alone. Thus, community involvement in policing activities is vital.

The justification for selecting this theory is premised on the assumption that the theory applies to neighbourhoods that are populated by unemployed youths with unregulated behaviour and slum areas in various localities in Lagos state that are known for various social ills and require the fusion of police and community effort to guarantee peace and order.

### **Methodology**

The study employed descriptive research designed as a methodology through which a qualitative approach of multi-sited ethnography, which incorporates biographical narrative techniques. This analytical design is a direct operationalisation of the concepts of the theoretical framework that the study aims to understand by looking at the ways in which community policing can prevent, eradicate or curb crimes in Lagos State. These were done through the review of empirical literature

and studies as a major source of data, and to learn the array of community policing experiences in crime prevention. This can only be achieved through the secondary sources of data. This is done by drawing inferences from existing literature to explore the perspective of community policing and crime prevention *vis-à-vis* insecurity in Lagos State. The paper used desktop analysis through thematic analysis that reinforced by a qualitative review of the existing literature. The steps to analyse data were done in systematic phases, such as idea initiation and generation, theme search, theme review, theme definition and naming, and generation of analytical reports.

### **Community Policing and Crime Prevention in Lagos State**

Empirical evidence suggests that because the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is often viewed with suspicion due to past human rights abuses, community policing is expected to humanise the force and foster ‘a police is your friend’ atmosphere in the community (Skogan 2019). Thus, beyond merely catching criminals, the expectation is to reduce the fear of crime within Lagos neighbourhoods through visible local presence (Fomnya et al., 2024). This is the bedrock strategy by residents to act as eyes and ears, providing early warning signals and intelligence that the police lack due to their limited local knowledge (Shittu et al., 2023).

The trust in the establishment of Community Advisory Committees (CACs) as a strategy serves as a formal platform for regular meetings between police officers and community leaders to discuss neighbourhood-specific crime trends and security modalities (Skogan, 2019).

Lagos State is the second most populous city in Africa, with about 17,156,000, behind Cairo in Egypt, and is estimated to be the second fastest-growing city. Lagos is the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria. The presence of Air and Seaports make the city unique for all forms of business activities. Lagos was purposively selected to explore its population dynamics and has been facing security challenges with respect to community-oriented policing implementations. Lagos was created on May 27, 1967. While the State is essentially a Yoruba-speaking environment, it is a socio-cultural melting pot of Nigerians and Foreigners alike. With its large population and volume of economic activities, Lagos poses some security challenges to the police.

Lagos State Police Command has 15 area Commands and 129 Divisional Police Headquarters. Ikeja, the state capital, falls under Area F Command with 17 Divisional Police Headquarters. The Lagos state police command has a police staff strength of 49,127 officers and men. The commissioner of police's office at the state command headquarters, Ikeja, is on top of the state police command structure. The Area commanders and the DPOs make up the other command structures, respectively. The study dwelt more on the experiences of the police and the public at the lowest command structure because that is where police-public interactions through community-oriented policing exchanges take place more.

The police in Lagos were trained with a community-oriented policing training manual, and their trainers were equally trained together. However, the Lagos area is a total contradiction of other states in terms of general lifestyle and population dynamics, making state policing a little complicated. This contradiction equally reflected police public perceptions and willingness to partner together through community-oriented policing to reduce communal conflicts.

While the police in other states are eager to trust and partner with the public, most especially the local communities for prevention through community-oriented policing, the officers in Lagos are still skeptical in partnering with the public in communal crime prevention and control. Lagos, as a megacity, has unique security challenges in terms of population and the diverse backgrounds of the Lagos population. Challenge in Lagos also includes inequality – the difference between poverty and wealth, and in people's well-being and access to things like work, housing and education. Inequality can arise in the provision of housing, access to services, access to open

land and security (Ojo et al., 2019). The unique composition of the Lagos population makes it difficult for the people to be adequately mobilised to partner with the police through community-oriented policing.

Lagos state is populated by people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, which can create problems in community-oriented policing operations, unlike other states in Nigeria with a relatively small population of “outsiders” in the state. This relatively homogenous population makes it easier to manage crime through a community-oriented policing style. Also, Lagos has many police station branches. This somewhat more significant number of police stations makes it difficult to coordinate community-oriented policing in Lagos State.

Importantly, there are series of training and strategies put in place to enhance the effectiveness of community policy in managing communal conflicts. While there are some noticeable changes in the attitude and conduct of police officers after training, many of them failed to perform some of the skills they were trained in class while on duty in the street. From the assertion, it could be seen that the police understand the benefits of working with the people through a community-oriented policing style, but the implementation of the principles of this policing strategy seems to be problematic for them (Okeshola & Mudiare, 2023).

Though the police claim to be friendlier to the public after community-oriented policing training, some of them do not display courtesy while handling the crowd. Also, because the training did not expose them to the public, they were ill-prepared to handle public attitudes and fear. This, therefore, creates a disconnection between the philosophy of the Commissioner of Police and practical operations to meet public expectations and manage communal crime in Lagos State.

Despite recording some improvements in crime rates in the State, especially the instances of petty theft and vandalism, there are major challenges (Fomnya et al., 2024). Violent crimes, including armed robbery, kidnapping, etc., continue to exist, in part because of insufficient police capacity and because of the high-density environment. In addition, poverty, unemployment, and low levels of access to education are some of the socioeconomic elements that promote crime in the State (Skogan, 2019). These conditions, according to Sule (2021), result in a situation where a section of the population perceives crime as the only way to survive economically, which highlights the necessity of social interventions and policing efforts.

### **Challenges Associated with the Implementation of Community Policing**

Although community policing is known to have numerous possible advantages in terms of improving the safety of people and establishing trust between the police and the communities, it faces a series of challenges in the process of its execution. The scepticism and distrust that may be inherent between the communities served and the police departments is one of the challenges. In most regions, especially those that have poor policing-community relationships, citizens can perceive police officers as outcasts or dictators, instead of allies in community security. This mistrust may impede community interaction and collaboration, as law enforcement agencies cannot easily develop the collaborative atmosphere, which community policing is based on (Kappeler & Gaines, 2018).

The second obstacle is that the police officers do not have sufficient training and resources. Community policing implies a contrasting set of skills to those of traditional policing, which is focused on communication, problem-solving, and making relationships. Nevertheless, several police officers are partially trained in these aspects. Therefore, they might not interact with people in the community appropriately or comprehend the particular demands and issues of urban areas they are patrolling (Rosenbaum, 2020). Lack of appropriate training may cause misconceptions, tensions, and failure to have productive community work.

Moreover, organisational culture in the police departments may be a major impediment to the application of community policing. The classic forms of policing tend to be very top-down-oriented, with the power and decision-making being concentrated in the hands of upper-ranking officers. This hierarchical structure may clash with the participatory essence of community policing that presupposes the contribution and interaction of members of the community at every level. Unless police officers are motivated to adopt community-oriented policing or they feel pressured to focus on the traditional approach to enforcing the rules, the success of the community policing projects may be undermined to a great extent (Ojo, Shiyanbade, & Onabanjo, 2017; Goldstein, 2019).

Another impediment to successful community policing is resource constraints. Most police departments have budget constraints that may impact the staffing, training, and community outreach. Local authorities can find it difficult to devote funds to community policing in low-income communities, such as neighbourhood meetings, youth involvement activities or partnership building activities. The police departments may not be able to initiate and maintain community policing activities without the required resources, which would lead to a reduced effect on crime and trust with the community (Parks & Reisig, 2019).

In addition to this, community policing implementation can be complicated by the dynamic aspect of community issues. Societies never remain the same; they are subject to changes associated with economic changes, demographic shifts, and changes in social issues. This can make police departments struggle to change their strategies to adapt to novelties or new issues in the community (Rosenbaum, 2020). This flexibility is very important because what might have worked in a particular neighbourhood at a certain time may no longer work in another scenario or in future.

It may be difficult to gauge the success of community policing programs. Community policing impacts are usually more qualitative and subjective, unlike traditional law enforcement initiatives, which can be readily measured and quantified by referring to crime statistics. Such a challenge of measuring success may cause a lack of trust in the worth of community policing and make it difficult to ensure further reinforcement of community members as well as policymakers (Mazerolle et al., 2020).

Lagos State has been struggling with several crime issues, and as a result, crime prevention strategies have been adopted. Such tactics include community policing programs, crime watch programs, youth participation programs and partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Evaluation of the effectiveness of such crime prevention measures is important to know their effect on the community's well-being and the safety of the people.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the thematic and desktop analyses, the paper concluded that community policing has significantly prevented and controlled crimes in the locality, which involves a partnership between the police and the community working together to create a safe and secure environment in Nigeria, not only in Lagos State. Thus, the implementation of this strategy to curb crimes in Nigeria may be too broad, but it is achievable if it is well coordinated in a manner that members of the community are all pulling together in the same direction. Again, whether the government is successful in providing the Police Department with the resources necessary for the implementation of community policing, as well as the extent to which the police use those resources, will be essential to the success of community policing initiatives. However, the populace must recognise the importance of this agency (community policing) in crime control, curbing and preventing communal conflict/crisis in their communities, states, regions, and the nation at large.

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