

Community Policing and Crime Reduction in Ebonyi State: A Study of Nigeria Police Force, Ebonyi State Command, Abakaliki

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Abstract

The issue of community policing has been at the forefront of burning national issue in Nigeria especially in recent times. It has been argued that the police cannot succeed in crime management without strong collaboration with members of the public. In view of the above, the study examines Community Policing and Crime Reduction in Ebonyi State: A Study of Nigeria Police Force, Ebonyi State Command Abakaliki. The study was anchored on the Participatory Theory propounded by Bohm (1996) and Freire (1997). Descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of this study was 1473 which was reduced to a sample size of 315. Data for the study were collected from primary source. Questionnaire instrument was used in data collection. Data were analyzed using frequency distribution tables and simple percentages whereas the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study. Findings revealed that community policing has significantly contributed in reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State ($r = 0.742$, p -value, 0.011); community policing has contributed in reducing the incidence of armed robbery attack in Ebonyi State ($r = 0.801$, p -value, 0.01); and community policing has significantly contributed in reducing incidence of rape cases in Ebonyi State ($r = 0.621$, p -value, 0.00). The implication of the findings is that community policing has significantly contributed in crime reduction in Ebonyi State. The study therefore recommended that: There is need for increased collaboration between the police and members of the public in order to contain the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State; there is need for increased collaboration between the police and members of the public in order to contain the incidence of armed robbery attack in Ebonyi State; and there is need for increased collaboration between the police and members of the public in order to contain the incidence of rape cases in Ebonyi State.

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1. Introduction

All over the world, one of the key functions of any government is to ensure lives and properties are protected and this basic function is not restricted to any form of government. This is done through a process known as policing and through an institution of the state called the police (Chukwuma and Eke, 2020). Policing has always been necessary in all societies for the preservation of order, safety and social relations. The necessity of policing becomes even more evident in modern societies characterized by diversities and contradictions arising from population heterogeneity, urbanization, industrialization conflicting ideologies. As such, the emergence of the police, a body of men recruited and paid by the state to enforce law and maintain order, has become a part of modern government.

Traditionally, policing was the responsibility of all adults in the community. In medieval society, all adult males were obliged to contribute towards the prevention and control of crime and disorder under the system of 'hue, cry and pursuit' and the 'watch and ward that preceded the emergence of specialized police forces as organs of the state (Ikuteyijo and Rotimi, 2022). However, the emergence of the state, with its vast bureaucracies anchored on centralization, hierarchical authority/power structure, and professional staff changed the traditional policing philosophy rooted in the idea of policing as everybody's business. Ikuteyijo and Rotimi (2022) argued that the emergence of the state as an entity with claim to the monopoly over the means of legitimate violence in society resulted into the creation of specialized agencies such as the police and the armed forces for controlling the use of violence by other groups.

All around the world, approaches to policing vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Adeleke (2020) argued that historical development of policing hinge on four overarching strategies: professional crime fighting, strategic policing, problem-oriented policing and community policing. For decades, Police followed the professional model, which rested on three foundations: preventive patrol, quick response time, and follow-up investigation. Sensing that professional model did not always operate as efficiently and effectively as it could, criminal justice researchers began to evaluate alternative approaches. By the 1970s, researches began to show that rapid response to crime does not necessarily lead to more arrest and that having more Police Officers using methods made popular under the professional or reform model does not significantly reduce crime (Adeleke, 2020). These failures and frustration, led to the concept and idea of community policing (Olushola and Adeleke, 2020).

Community policing is a strong partnership and collaborative effort between the police and members of the public with the view to protect lives and properties. Community policing brings police and citizens together to prevent crime and solve community problems and thereby giving citizens more control over the quality of life in their community (Olushola and Adeleke, 2020). Community policing as a crime management strategy is a security system in which members of the public are involved in the conduct of policing their locality to complement the efforts of the police in crime management and control by giving useful intelligent information to law enforcement agencies in the community. In community policing, the community is usually expected to engage in the policing role through volunteer schemes, initiating neighborhood support networks and augmenting police patrol activities, reducing crime and reducing fear of crime. It is widely acknowledged that good police/public relationship is vital to successful policing. Without sustained public contact, officers would be unable to exercise their discretion appropriately and would find themselves isolated, increasingly hostile and unable to empathize with the public (Adeleke, 2020).

Historically, all around the world, community policing is fast becoming one of the best-known crime management. In West Africa, South America and Asia, it was popularly known as Neighbourhood Watch Organization (Chukwuma and Eke, 2020). In North America, Pasadena Hills, precisely it was under the direction of St. Louis Country police officer, Kyle Jundt, resident Geno Savati and resident Ed-Tyler. In the late 1960s, an increase in crime heightened the need for a crime prevention and management initiative, focused on residential areas and involving local citizens. The National Sheriffs Association (NSA) responded, creating the National Neighbourhood Watch Programme in 1972 to assist citizens and law enforcement agencies (Adeleke, 2020). In 2002, the (NSA) in partnership with the

United State of America (USA) freedom crops, citizen crops and U.S department of justice launched the USA on watch, the face of the revitalized Neighbourhood Watch initiative, which represents the expanded role of watch programmes throughout the United States. In Asia, China and Japan precisely, the essence of establishing community policing is for the police officers and the people they serve to be as close as possible and also must know one another.

In Nigeria, the realization that the police must partner with members of the public led to the establishment of community policing. During the colonial period, policing in Nigeria was primarily focused on maintaining colonial control rather than community engagement (Chukwuma and Eke, 2020). The police force was structured along hierarchical lines with little emphasis on community involvement in crime prevention. Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, there was some recognition of the need for community involvement in policing. However, this period was marked by political instability, which often overshadowed efforts to develop community policing initiatives (Olushola and Adeleke, 2019). Under military rule, the emphasis on community policing fluctuated. Some efforts were made to involve communities in crime prevention, but these were often overshadowed by the centralized control of the military government. With Nigeria's transition to democracy in the late 1990s, there was renewed interest in community policing as a means of addressing rising crime rates and improving police-community relations. Initiatives such as the introduction of Neighborhood Watch groups and community policing forums were established in various parts of the country. In the early 2000s, the Nigerian government formally adopted community policing as a key strategy for crime management. President Olusegun Obasanjo, on 27th April 2004, inaugurated community policing to complement the services of the Nigeria police force in combating crime (Chukwuma and Eke, 2020). This involved the decentralization of policing authority and the empowerment of local communities to play a more active role in crime prevention and detection. The Nigeria Police Force established community policing units and trained officers in community engagement techniques. However, despite this effort, there seems to be rising incidence of crimes in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State.

The rising incidents of armed robbery in Nigeria have become a significant concern. According to reports from the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), armed robbery incidents have been increasing, particularly in urban centers such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt (Chukwuma and Eke, 2020). These reports point to a notable rise in violent crimes, including armed robbery, kidnapping, and rape. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) survey in 2020 that indicated over 700 cases of armed robbery across the nation (Chukwuma and Eke, 2020). The UNODC reported that nearly 3% of Nigerian households experienced armed robbery in 2021. Furthermore, in 2022, reports indicate that over 1000 cases of kidnapping were recorded across Nigeria including Ebonyi State. In the same vein, reports suggest rising incidence of kidnapping rose to over 1450 cases in 2023. According to data from the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and reports by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), kidnapping incidents have surged dramatically, especially in Northern and Southern Nigeria and reported that between 2011 and 2023 at least 18,000 kidnappings were recorded in Nigeria (Nigeria Police Force, 2024). Their report highlights that kidnapping has transitioned from being an isolated criminal activity to a widespread phenomenon across different regions of the country. Businesses, particularly in the oil-rich Niger Delta and Northern regions, have been disrupted due to the constant threat of abductions. Schools have become prime targets, with incidents such as the Chibok and Dapchi school kidnappings drawing international attention. According to UNICEF, over 1,000 schoolchildren were abducted in Nigeria between 2020 and 2022, leading to school closures and declining enrollment in some areas. Families are often left devastated, both financially and emotionally, as they scramble to raise ransoms.

In a similar way, the rising incidents of rape and sexual violence in Nigeria have become a critical issue, drawing attention from various sectors including the government, civil society, and international organizations. Adeboye, (2021) asserted that the reported cases of rape and sexual violence have increased significantly in the past decade. In 2020, for instance, the NPF disclosed that over 700 rape cases were reported within just five months. However, experts argue that these figures are likely

underreported due to the stigma associated with rape and the lack of trust in law enforcement. A UN Women study reported that 1 in 4 Nigerian women had experienced sexual violence by the age of 18 (Chukwuma and Eke, 2020). The UNICEF 2020 report on child sexual abuse also found that Nigeria had one of the highest rates of child sexual violence globally, with approximately 25% of girls and 10% of boys experiencing sexual violence before adulthood (Adeboye, 2021).

In Ebonyi State, it appears that criminal activities such as kidnapping, armed robbery and rape have been on the increase over the years. Over 500 cases of rape and 900 cases of armed robbery have been reported in the last 10 years (Chukwuma and Eke, 2020). It seems that community policing has not been given desired attention in fight against crimes by the police authorities in the state. Year in year out, cases of armed robbery, rape and kidnappings are reported in the state (Chukwuma and Eke, 2020). The police ought to have established strong collaboration with the members of the public in reducing the incidence of these criminal activities. This seems not to be the case. It is in view of the forgoing that the study became imperative to examine the effect of community policing on crime reduction in Ebonyi State with focus on Nigeria Police Force, Ebonyi State Command Abakaliki.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian police and the public ought to have cordial relationship, but in recent years it appears the police have failed in collaborating with members of the public in protecting the live and properties of people. In an ideal society, the police at all times ought to be servants of the people and providing the security output expected, anything short of that is a weakness to the system thereby, creating a vacuum to fill. It has been observed that the police are often in conflict, with a significant percentage of the population in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State and Ebonyi State in particular. Ebonyi State has been grappling with increasing incidents of kidnapping, armed robbery, and rape, particularly over the last decade. It appears that kidnapping for ransom has become a lucrative criminal enterprise in Nigeria. Initially, it was concentrated in the Niger Delta, where militants targeted expatriates in the oil sector. However, the phenomenon has since spread nationwide, particularly in the North-West and South-East regions. Banditry, terrorism, and political instability have fueled the rise of kidnappings, with school children, travelers, and wealthy individuals becoming frequent targets. Moreso, armed robbery seems a widespread issue in both rural and urban areas in the State, with criminals targeting banks, homes, and travelers. In less-policed regions, armed groups take advantage of weaker law enforcement. Cattle rustling and attacks on farming communities are also prevalent. In a similar vein, rape and sexual violence cases seem to have been on the rise, and this issue has gained more attention with advocacy groups and social media movements raising awareness in Ebonyi State and beyond. Victims often face stigmatization, leading to underreporting of cases. Traditional gender norms and inadequate legal protection for victims compound the problem. While the Nigerian government has initiated various strategies to combat these crimes, including deploying military forces and launching community policing efforts, results have been mixed. It appears that the police does not have strong partnership with members of the public to reduce the rising incidence of kidnapping, armed robbery and rape cases in Ebonyi State. In view of the forgoing, the study examined the effect of community policing in crime reduction in Ebonyi State with focus on Nigeria Police Force, Ebonyi State Command Abakaliki

1.3 Research Questions

The researcher shall raise the following research questions to guide the study:

1. To what extent has community policing contributed in reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State?
2. To what extent has community policing contributed in reducing the incidence of armed robbery attack in Ebonyi State?
3. To what extent has community policing contributed in reducing incidence of rape cases in Ebonyi State?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the effect of community policing on crime reduction in Ebonyi State: Specifically the study was aimed to:

1. To examine the extent community policing has contributed in reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State.
2. To determine the extent community policing has contributed in reducing the incidence of armed robbery attack in Ebonyi State.
3. To determine the extent community policing has contributed in reducing incidence of rape cases in Ebonyi State.

2. Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Community Policing

The concept of community policing has been variously defined. The most wide spread definition of community policing used by various actors in peace building considers the term a philosophy and an organizational strategy that seeks to promote a collaborative relationship between community and local police organization to prevent and solve the problem of crime. Olushola (2020) wrote that community policing is emerging as a promising complementary approach to more traditional forms of policing. By bringing the police closer to the people and developing partner relations with citizens, this approach aims at restoring trust between civilians and the police and at gaining community support for police reform, especially in settings where the police forces are perceived as brutal, corrupt and unaccountable. This can be especially important in post-conflict countries where confidence has been lost in conflict.

Adeleke (2020) argued that community policing is when individuals and organizations partner with the police force to make their communities safer and to prevent crime. Community policing is a philosophy that promote organizational strategies in the community to combat potential situation that might create public safety issues. The fundamental element of community policing are community partnership, problem solving and prevention. Community policing is one concerned method of enforcing the law without engaging in discrimination by preventing the formation of situations that can lead to crime. As such, community policing involves a cooperative effort on both the community and the police, with the police engaging in pro-social activities to enhance the well-being of the community and the community taking an active role in helping the police carry out law enforcement activities. Through this reciprocal and beneficial interactions, community policing is meant to improve poor police-community relations and increase the responsiveness of police services to the community needs by identifying in partnership issues within the mandate of the police that need to be addressed at the community level.

Community policing is a type of policing that has the police working with members of the community and having the community taking a more active role in crime control and prevention. Community policing also differs from the traditional type of policing because instead of the traditional method of crime control the community oriented policing seek to have members of the police force focusing on major crime while the community will take care of the smaller ones. Then the theory that if you stop the minor crimes from occurring could possibly lead to a decrease in the major crimes, and that would be one of the benefits of having community policing (Ikuteyijo and Rotimi, 2022). Community policing is a value free system which permits a police department to work cooperatively with individual citizens, and both public and private organizations to identify and resolve issues which potentially affect the livability of specific neighborhood area, or the city as a whole (Marenin, 2018).

Community policing encompasses a variety of philosophical and practical approaches and is still evolving rapidly. Mastrofski (2006) cited in Arisukwu, (2017) saw community policing as an attempt to link the police more closely to the community in 'partnership' arrangements, joint activities to co-

produce services and desired outcomes, giving the community a greater say in what the police do, or simply engaging with each other to produce a greater sense of police-community compatibility. Bayley (2020) brought in a philosophical dimension to the meaning of community policing. According to him it is a new philosophy of policing, which emphasizes the working partnership between police officers and citizens in creative ways in order to solve community problems relating to crime, fear of crime, and neighborhood disorders. The opinion of Bois and Hartnett, (2022), community policing is security management approach that relies heavily on the articulation of policing values that incorporate citizen involvement in matters that directly affect the safety and quality of neighborhood life. The common line of argument among the researchers is that the effectiveness in the way through which community policing is implemented in any given community will largely determine the outcomes whether it will be successful or not (Young & Tinsley, 1998).

Bowden (2017) asserted that the success of the outcome of the partnership between the police and community largely lies on the amount of trust that exists in their relations. Without trust between police and citizens, effective policing is impossible. Brogden and Nijhar (2023) noted that community policing partnerships develop information exchange whereby the community provides the police with information about problem conditions and locations, crime concerns, active criminals, and stolen property, and in return police provide the community with information pertaining to community fears, problems, tactical information and advice about preventing and reducing crime

Bowden (2017) noted that the best approach to Community policing is when the latter is seen as also problem solving - an interactive process, involving police and communities identifying crime problems and developing appropriate solutions according to Cordner, (2007) problem solving aspect of community policing relies more on preventing crime than traditional methods, through deterring offenders, protecting likely victims and making crime locations less conducive to identified problems. Carter (2022) added that problem solving are measured by asking the question 'is the problem solved?' rather than focusing on traditional methods, such as, the number of arrests. In contrast to the traditional model, community policing recognizes that the knowledge and experience of line officers is of critical importance to the police organization. In order to be responsive to community problems and engage in problem solving, the rank and file must have greater autonomy in making decisions. The independence and freedom of line officers to respond to local community problems is encouraged by the decentralization of the police structure, and the formal recognition that police work is, by its very nature, highly discretionary.

Crime

The concept of crime has many definitions based on its usage. Merriam Webster Dictionary (2015) defines crime as an act or the commission of an act that is forbidden or gross violation of law. The types of crime which is common in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State are; kidnapping, murder, pick pocketing, robbery and rape to mention a few. Crime is usually associated with the need to punish offenders. However, it could also include action or inaction which results to an individual, group of persons or property violating the criminal law. Generally speaking, the concept of crime involves moral values or codes and its violation which results to punishment (Alemika, and Chukwuma, 2020). Put differently, crime is usually perceived as a random nature and committed by people with no connection to the victim. Morrison (2019), submits that media plays a greater part in shaping perception of the public concerning crime, ignorant to the differences between this observations and the reality of crime. There are four frameworks to determine the definition of crimes. The first of these is that crime can be seen from the social construction paradigm but this school of thought makes it difficult to define crime because crime is best explained by culture affiliations or simply put it is culture bound. Media has played the role of making the definition of crime difficult because of how crime is defined in a society is largely dependent on how the media presents it to the general public (Alemika 2015). Media in this regard refers to both print and electronic media. Governments have formulated measures to curb criminal activities which are enshrined into criminal policy. Some scholars have argued that criminal policy plays the role of defining crime and creating crime rather than to prevent its escalation and this has made it difficult to have a

general acceptable definition of crimes (Morrison, 2019). The state judgment on crimes is not based on the religious affiliation of the offenders and this further illustrates the difficulty in defining crime within the purview of several perspectives.

Origin of Community Policing

The Nigerian police was established by the British colonial administration in 1861 to enforce sanitary regulations in Lagos. Arisukwu (2017) observed that the British colonial administration, who was responsible for the administration of Lagos, realized that its assignment included the maintenance of law and order. In 1861, the British were granted permission from London to create the Consular Guard, which comprised of 30 men. In 1863, the Consular Guard became known as the "Hausa Guard". The Hausa Guard was regularized in 1979 by an Ordinance creating a Constabulary for the Colony of Lagos. The force was mainly paramilitary in nature, but performed some civil police functions (Adeleke, 2020). The Hausa Guard, which consists of Hausa-speaking ex-slaves, was established to undertake semi-military duties of pacifying the indigenous population and ensuring colonial political domination. In 1896, the Lagos Police Force was created and armed like the Hausa Constabulary.

In 1894, the Niger Coast Constabulary was formed for areas now known as Delta, Rivers and Cross-Rivers states, following the proclamation of the Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893. In 1888, the Royal Niger Constabulary was established in Northern Nigeria which was later split into Northern Nigeria Police Force and the Northern Nigeria Regiment (Adeboye, 2021). In 1914, the Northern and Southern police forces were united and in 1930, the present Nigeria Police Force, with headquarters in Lagos, was fully established (Adeboye, 2021). An Inspector General of Police was appointed as the Commander that was replaced with Commissioner in 1937, but reverted to its original title of Commissioner in 1951 after the introduction of a new Constitution. The title "Commissioner" was assigned to the officers in charge of the Regions (Aborisade, 2012).

The amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Police Forces in 1914 also saw the establishment and formation of special police branches such as the Criminal Investigation Department, the Immigration and Passport Control, the Central Motor Registry, the Police Colleges, the Force Communication, the Police Band etc. (Arisukwu, 2017). The unification of the forces also made it imperative to fight the alarming increase in such crimes as murder, manslaughter, counterfeiting, theft, house-breaking, child stealing, illegal distillation of gin and illegal mining (Adeboye, and Igbo, 2021). The force was reconstituted and a Police Council vested with powers in respect of policy, organization, finance, establishments and condition of service was created.

The central tenets of community policing that stresses involvement and responsiveness to the community are similar to the principle set forth by Sir Robert Peel in 1829 when he opined that the police are the public and the public are the police. However, as the police evolved in the United States, they grew further apart from the public they served. This social distance by the police away from the public was enhanced due to the advent of patrol cars which replaced the traditional foot patrol.

Traditional police departments are insular organizations that respond to calls for service from their offices. This insular professional approach began to change in many agencies in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During this period, there was a paradigm shift in America from the traditional, professional model of policing to a more community partnership and proactive model of policing (Byongook, 2020). Thus, Community policing started in the United States as a way of shifting police from its traditional reactionary way of policing to a more proactive policing. For decades, the U.S. police followed professional model, which rested on three foundations: preventive patrol, quick response time, and follow-up investigation.

Sensing that the professional model did not always operate as efficiently and effectively as it could, Criminal justice researchers set out to review current procedures and evaluate alternative programmes. One of the first known of these studies was the Kansas City, Missouri, Preventive Patrol Experiment. The study found that preventive patrol did not necessarily prevent crime or reassure citizens. Following

the study, many police departments assigned police units to proactive patrol. Another of such significant study was that done by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling. They introduced the theory of "broken windows". The theory assumes that a community will be free of major crime if minor crimes are gotten rid of. They concluded that in order to solve both minor and major problems in a neighborhood and to reduce crime and fear of crime, police must be in close, regular contact with citizens. That is police and citizens should work cooperatively to build a strong sense of community and should share responsibility in the neighborhood to improve the overall quality of life within the community (Alemika 2015).

Philosophy of Community Policing

The philosophy of community policing is for citizens and police to share responsibility for their community's safety. It means that citizens and the police will work collectively to identify problems, propose solutions, implement action and evaluate the results in the community. The idea of Community policing is quite different from traditional policing that emphasizes strict police authority on crime prevention. In community policing, the police must share power with residents of a community, and critical decisions need to be made at the community level, rather than at police stations (Cuneyt, 2022). The goal of community policing is to decentralize police decision making authority. To achieve this goal, it requires the successful implementation of three essential and complementary components or operational strategies namely community partnership, problem solving, and change management (Cuneyt, 2022). Community policing was intended to address the causes of crime and reduce the fear of crime in affected communities. It employs creative management styles so as to engage responsible members of the public in proactive problem-solving tactics to minimize the level of criminal activities and facilitate law enforcement in the communities. The core elements of community policing are as follows:

- A broader definition of police work;
- A reordering of police priorities giving greater attention to crime and disorder;
- A focus on problem-solving and prevention, rather than incident driven policing;
- A recognition that the „community“, however defined, plays a critical role in solving neighborhood problems, and
- A recognition that police organization must be restructured and reorganized to be responsive to the demands of this new approach and to encourage a new pattern of behavior;
- A recognition that police services, operation and management must be decentralized for effectiveness, so that local police officers can speedily address problems and needs encountered at the local levels;
- That the training of police officers must cover the areas of social interactions and problem-solving in addition to traditional policing skills;
- There must be a partnership between the police and the communities in defining or identifying, local problems and needs and developing solutions to identified problems;
- Commitment to development of long-term and proactive policies and programmes to prevent crime and disorder.

Meaning and Nature of Insecurity in Nigeria

The concept of insecurity has been variously defined. Buzan (1991) in Aminu, Hamza and Ali (2015) sees insecurity as political, economic, social and environmental threat that affect the individual as well as the state at national and international levels. By implication, insecurity is the presence of threat to acquire values or tendencies that would undermine national cohesion and peace. Similarly, Chukwuma

(2020) saw insecurity as lack of protection from crime (being unsafe) and lack of freedom from psychological harm (unprotected from emotional stress resulting from paucity of assurance that an individual is accepted, has opportunity and choices to fulfill his or her own potentials including freedom from fear. Corroborating the above, insecurity has been broadly conceptualized by Akin (2008) as lack of freedom from danger or threat to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the well-being of its people.

Thus, insecurity is the absence of freedom from or the presence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and the corporate existence of a nation and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values... as well as danger to life and property (Ibrahim, and Igbuzor, 2022). However, this work posits that insecurity as an antithesis of security refers to a condition that exists due to lack of effective measures put in place to protect individuals, information and property against hostile persons, influences and actions and uncertainty on the part of the citizens or government as it concerns the nature of their future conditions or wellbeing. It is simply a situation in which individuals in a given society cannot go about their daily activities as a result of threat to and harmful disruption of their lives and property and are not sure of their wellbeing and future conditions.

The dynamic nature of insecurity in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State can be grasped from the various manifestations of insecurity in the nation's quest for a new social order. Hence, Aminu, Hamza and Ali (2015) proposed that the dynamism of insecurity in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State can be seen from various manifestations of conflict and insecurity such as ethno- religious conflicts. Communal and societal conflicts according to Ibrahim and Igbuzor (2002) have emerged as a result of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness and identity often structured around ethno-religious identities.

In all parts of Nigeria, ethno-religious conflicts have assumed alarming rates. It has occurred in places like Shagamu (Ogun State), Lagos, Abia, Kano, Bauchi, Nassarawa, Jos, Taraba, Ebonyi and Enugu State respectively. Groups and communities who had over the years lived together in peace and jiarmony now take up arms against each other in gruesome "war" owing to claims over scarce resources, power, land, chieftaincy, local government, councils, control of markets, "Osu caste system" and sharia among other trivial issues which have resulted in large scale killings and violence amongst groups in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State (Aminu, Hamza and Ali, 2015). In these conflicts, new logics of social separation and dichotomy have evolved in many communities in Nigeria. There is the classification of the "settler" and "indigene", "Christian" and "Moslem", and "osu" (slave) and "Nwadiala" (free born). These ethno-religious identities which have become disintegrative and destructive social elements threatening the peace, stability and security in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State can be inevitably linked to poverty.

Secondly, politically based violence has exemplified the level of poverty and insecurity in the nation. Politics in the current civil dispensation like the previous Republics have displayed politics of anxiety which has played down on dialogue, negotiation and consensus. The anxiety is as a result of perceived or real loss of power by an elite stratum. Put different the quest for political power is among those elites that won it before, those that lost it and those who want it back.

Currently, politicians are already strategizing about the control and retention of power come 2027 elections. To this end, inter and intra-political party conflicts have become rife in which politicians are deploying large resources to out-do each other, changing the rules and legislations of the political game, distorting laws and employing violence and political assassination to settle political scores. Party meeting, campaigns and conventions have become war threats where small and light weapons like guns and cutlasses are freely displayed and used to rig elections, harass and intimidate electors. Aminu, Hamza and Ali, (2015) laments that a resort to violence, including armed militancy, assassination, kidnap, et cetera, have somewhat suddenly become attractive to certain individuals in seeking to resolve issues that could have ordinarily been settled through due process. The end-products of such

misadventures have often been catastrophic. They include the decimation of innocent lives, disruption of economic activities, and destruction of properties among others.

Similarly, economic-based violence and insecurity is another dynamic aspect of insecurity in Nigeria. According to Eme, (2011) in a popular parlance, this thesis is also known as "political economy of violence" in which cries of resource control and revenue sharing regularly rent the air between proponents and opponents. Although by no means limited to oil in the Niger Delta, the most prevalent campaign about the link between resources and conflict focuses on oil and the Delta region. Put differently, there is evidence to suggest that oil has given rise to vertical and horizontal conflicts between National, State and society or between dominant and subordinate geopolitical zones, classes and groups across Nigeria, given the pivotal role that oil plays in the restructuring power relations in Nigeria. Assets such as grazing and farming and water resource, have tended to give rise to horizontal conflicts that involve communities across the geopolitical zones and the Fulani Herdsmen. The other thesis is that conflict in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State is poverty induced. This explanation is closely related to relative deprivation, rather than absolute poverty. Moreover, organized violent groups have heightened insecurity threat in the nation such as ethnic militia, vigilantes, secret cults in tertiary institutions and political thugs. Various reasons and circumstances account for their emergence. The causes of the manifestations are the failure of the state and its institutions, poverty, economic disempowerment, the structure of the state and Nigeria's federalism, non-separation of state and religion, politics of exclusion, culture of patriarchy and gerontocracy and ignorance and poor political consciousness.

However, the associated impacts of these insecurity situations in the nation's quest for a new social order are imminent. In his opinion Eme (2011) highlighted a checklist of the impact of conflicts and insecurity in a social order to include but not limited to: social dislocation and population displacement; social tensions and new pattern of settlements which encourages Muslims/Christians or members of an ethnic group moving to Muslim/Christian dominated enclaves; heightens citizenship question and encourages hostility between "indigents" and "settlers"; dislocation and disruption of family and communal life; general atmosphere of mistrust, fear, anxiety and frenzy; dehumanization of women, children, and men especially in areas where rape, child abuse and neglect are used as instruments of war; deepening of hunger and poverty in the polity; atmosphere of political insecurity and instability including declining confidence in the political leadership and apprehension about the system; governance deficit as a result of security agencies inefficiency and corruption. Conclusively, this study posits that the worst consequence of the dynamism of insecurity in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State is aggravated poverty.

Role of Community policing in promoting rural security in Nigeria

Community policing involves a cooperative effort on both the community and the police, with the police engaging in pro-social activities to enhance the well-being of the community and the community taking an active role in helping the police carry out law enforcement activities. Through this reciprocal and beneficial interactions, community policing is meant to improve poor police- community relations and increase the responsiveness of police services to the community needs by identifying in partnership issues within the mandate of the police that need to be addressed at the community level (Liou, and Savage, 2016). The ultimate goal of community policing is to create a professional, representative, responsive and accountable institution that works in partnership with the public (Olushola and Adeleke, 2020). Bringing police forces closer to the people is believed to contribute to fear reduction, increased satisfaction with police services, and the development of problem solving techniques. The police are very important in the maintenance of law and order in any democratic society. The police are the closest law enforcement agents to the public, unlike the military and other paramilitary agencies that concentrate on their specific core jobs/roles in the society, police roles cover every segment of group social interactions in the society (Olushola and Adeleke, 2020).

The police occupy a vital position in any democratic society and their relationship with the public influences how they are perceived and supported by the public. Policing therefore is everybody's

business as the police alone cannot effectively solve criminal activities in a society (Ikuteyijo and Rotimi, 2012), The police play many roles from law enforcement, arrest and investigation of suspected criminals to peace building and maintenance of order in a society.

The crime prevention efforts of the police are more in the urban areas than rural areas (Olushola, 2020). Often times, rural crime pattern and rural policing are different from that of urban centers. Crime rate in the rural areas are assumed to be low mainly due to informal socio-cultural means of social control available in the rural areas. The family and religious values shape the norms and values in a rural community than the urban centers where such values have loose impact on people who live individualistic lives rather than community life styles in rural areas (Bayley, 2020). Comparing rural to urban crime is like comparing apple to orange because urban population and multi-cultural nature of city lives make life style independent and complicated. On the other hand, rural areas have more quiet and less population of people who are usually related by blood or socially. The common crimes in a rural areas are mainly agriculture related (California Casualty, 2017). Routine activity model argues that increased human presence in a given area is expected to be associated with both an increase and a decrease in criminal activity (Boivin, 2018). Empirical studies in developed countries have used the routine activity model to predict crime occurrences in rural areas (Ibrahim, and Igbuzor, 2022). To what extent can this be used in rural areas in developing countries like Nigeria where the absence of data on rural crime makes it difficult to predict the type of crimes that will occur (Hemel, and Vijayendra 2023). These crimes are mainly committed by unemployed youths who struggle for survival with less education and skill acquisition opportunities in rural areas. There exists higher population of unemployed youths in rural Nigeria than urban areas (Ibrahim, and Igbuzor, 2022). Data from International victim survey suggests that crime is higher in developing countries than in developed countries (Grote and Neubacher, 2016). Rural areas in developing countries are usually characterized by poverty and food insecurity, Grote and Neubacher (2016). The level of poverty is exacerbated by corruption and bad governance. Failure of government to provide adequate security attracts criminals who exploit the poor infrastructure to terrorize innocent rural dwellers. However, according to Ceccato (2016), crime generally tends to be low in rural areas than urban areas of developed countries like United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), and Sweden than urban areas.

The neglect inherent in the rural areas has made it a safe haven for all kinds of crime and criminality developing countries like Nigeria. Crime in rural areas prevents social cohesion and affects sustainable development negatively (Hemel, and Vijayendra 2023). Hoodlums now use rural areas as their operational base from which they carry out their heinous activities. There is a profound lack of police presence in the rural areas than the urban centers (Lindstrom, 2015). Youth unemployment, poverty, hunger, poor health and living conditions and ethno- religious challenges are responsible for violence and disenchantment within the rural areas (Hemel, and Vijayendra 2023). According to National Bureau of Statistics, (2017a, b), "the labour statistics report of Nigeria in 4th quarter 2017 has shown that there is 7.9 million Nigerian youths aged 15-34 that are currently unemployed". These youths are vulnerable and lack the capacity and skills to sustainably engage in or finance any entrepreneurial venture ((Hemel, and Vijayendra 2023)). Also, poverty and lack of education is equally implicated in high rate of unintended pregnancies among teenage girls in rural Nigeria (Hemel, and Vijayendra 2023). This unplanned population in the hands of families that cannot provide their basic needs will exacerbate the crime situation in the community. It is important to note that trans-border trading and poorly regulated borders by security agents constitute a security challenge among border communities (Alemika, and Chukwuma, 2020).

Despite all these negligence by the government, the rural areas in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State are made up of people with relative homogeneity in general way of life. This abundant human resource could be utilized by the police in the general policing of the communities. According to Alemika (2015), the local people have a vital role to play in governing or reducing security beyond the criminal justice system. The members of the community need to show interest in what goes on in their environment. Suspicious and out of the ordinary activities must be noted and reported promptly to law enforcement agents. In addition members of the community as stake holders in crime prevention can form

neighborhood watch, vigilante and community policing operations to proactively prevent crime in their community (Chukwuma, 2020).

Community participation in crime prevention and control has become necessary as the police lack the manpower and resources to effectively police the rural areas of Nigeria alone. It is therefore imperative to involve the community members who own and understand their environment better in the overall policing of rural communities in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State (Arisukwu & Okunola, 2013). According to Ibrahim and Igbuzor (2002), Western states now favour collaborative policing for better crime. Globally, it is people that drive development initiatives, and popular participation has become the order of the day. Community participation in crime prevention in rural Nigeria will ensure that security issues become everybody's business.

The Challenges of Community Policing In Nigeria

Quite naturally, every social system or subsystem is confronted with a number of challenges that hampers its operational and management performances, and community policing is not an exception. Community policing is awash with obstacles, namely, bribery and corruption, selective enforcement of law, community negative perception of police, public loss of trust and confidence, inadequate manpower, poor community relations, 'godfatherism', lack of visionary schemes, among others.

Bribery-cum-corruption is particularly systemic in the Nigeria police formation; a situation which some observers in the country Referred to as an intractable problem (Goldstein, 2020). In specific terms, graft has been implicated as police officers¹ major flaw that makes them not to gain public support, confidence and co-operation needed for effective community policing in Nigeria. Furthermore, to affect its legitimacy and the performance of its functions of crime prevention, control, or management. These challenges include poor funding by the government, systemic corruption and internal decadence, inadequate manpower, partisanship, ethnicity, lack of accountability, defects in constitutional provisions, and apparent lack of public confidence, further leading to weak or low legitimacy (Aminu, Hamza and Ali, 2015).

In community policing, the community tend to control the police and get them corrupt in the process. The implication is that when the police are controlled by the community, the police connive at their illegal activities (Liou, and Savage, 2016). This auspicious security measure or programme has suffered for many years under the taint of corruption. The crime of graft is getting something of value through dishonest or unfair means, especially using political connections or community relationships. On this note, the police may deliberately use illegal or unconstitutional means to make arrests and, in the process, ensure that the charges are thrown out of court. Police corruption is indeed multidimensional and complex; it takes various forms within and outside the police organisation. The rot and decadence in the police subsystem are: include kickbacks, favouritism, recruitment malpractice, partisanship, complicity, whitewash and cover-up, and romantic exuberances and compensation. All these shortcomings, we must admit, are inimical to effective community policing in Nigeria.

One of the major setbacks in community policing is the selective enforcement of law syndrome that is commonplace in Nigeria. The poor and minority groups in the community tend to alienate themselves from the police because most of the law enforcement operations focus on the behaviours of the poor, minorities, downtrodden and underprivileged members of the society. The problem centres on widespread favouritism to a group of politicians and privileged upper class community members. Olushola and Adeleke, (2020) admitted that politicians, business elite and community leaders are not policed as the poor and underprivileged are being policed; the former group is granted virtual monopoly in crime as they are connected with criminal gangs and syndicates (as well as policymakers themselves). This situation is more pronounced in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State where selective enforcement of law is the norm rather than the exception. Here, the placed public office holders to exploiting the citizenry and undermine their plight at will.

Expectedly, the populace may not be comfortable with the police's unholy alliance and allegiance with community members whose source of affluence is perceived or traceable to crime or other corrupt practises. This unholy alliance is anchored in the philosophy of 'familiarisation', which Olushola, (2020) succinctly defined as a medium through which the police (and disgruntled stakeholders in a society) conceal the amount of money they amassed through illegal means. On that score, the community has negative perception of the police. Boivin, (2018) argued that the negative community perception of police has impacts on their job performances. The community sometimes turns against the police when they (police) use coercion to secure social control. The police may use all the available forces or violence to sustain its political authority. The negative attitudes of the public towards the police tend to clash with the power of the State to maintain peace and order. The community negative perception of police affects their ability to remain focus and maintain professionalism. In community policing, police retain its power to exercise force in any situation. According to a notable Foundation, the Centre for Law Enforcement Education in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State (CLEEN), the police play important roles without which the sustenance of order, legality, development and democracy may be difficult. Understanding the fact that police act as representatives of the State and legitimate users of force whenever it is necessary, helps to explain the corresponding negative character and attitudes of police officers in many situations (Arisukwu, 2017).

Despite the success, police managers still face resistance from some experienced officers who hold traditional law-and-order values and question the utility of community policing model. It is unlikely that this innovative programme can enjoy long-term success unless veteran officers form a commitment to the values of community policing (Chukwuma, 2020). Another significant obstacle to effective community policing is again the public loss of trust and confidence in police work. The community has lost confidence in police due to police brutality, bribery and corruption, coerciveness, and lack of proper channels of communication. As a result, the community no longer sees police as valuable instrument for the maintenance of peace and orders. When the police alienate themselves from the community, the relationship becomes blunt, and this presents police to the community as aliens invading the society. When crime occurs in the community, the community alienate themselves from the police, and it becomes very difficult to locate or identify the perpetrators without the help and cooperation of the community. This situation is pathetic to police operations and capable of infiltrating frustration on police duties. For the police to surmount the identifiable enormous community policing challenges in Nigeria, the system must have sufficient qualified manpower. Unfortunately, inadequate manpower has been a major obstacle confronting effective community policing in the country. Uma & Eboh (2013) stated that inadequate manpower and poor deployment of personnel are the stumbling blocks to effective community policing in Nigeria. The Nigeria police experience endemic problems with recruiting, training, inefficiency and indiscipline, and lack of expertise in specialised fields. Corruption and dishonesty are widespread, thus engendering a low level of public confidence, failure to report crime and tendencies to resort to self-help policing (Uma & Eboh, 2013), rather than true community policing. This problem is compounded as recruitment and promotion of police personnel, and application of law and justice are in the hands of political godfather. While Goldstein (2018) suggested that poorly developed manpower resources and management weaken effective community policing, Uma & Eboh (2013) argued that poor staff promotion, poor incentives and weak operational strategies demoralise the police and weaken their functional capabilities. An organisation such as police need carefully selected personnel for the execution of its critical duties in the community (Olushola and Adeleke, 2020). The police personnel are the bedrock power of the State's political instrument, capable of securing the safety, peace and order in the society. Essentially, where the police system is understaffed, overworked and overstressed, they would eventually appear weak, stressed out, fatigue and sleepy on duty posts or in their patrol vehicles (Adeleke, 2020). Shortage of manpower, inadequate salary structures, irregular payment of salaries and lengthy hours from one duty post to another with stagnant salary payment have significant negative impacts on Nigeria police officers (Dike, 2010). According to the Nigeria Police Annual Report (NPAR), police personnel are unable to meet professional and family commitments owing to poor remuneration, poor working environment and poor accommodation, and many of them seem not to understand their roles and responsibilities as a result of inadequate training (NPAR, 2008). According to this report, when a workforce suffers from lack of funding and poor condition of service,

it will cause personnel to lose motivation and morale support. Poor and meagre salaries destroy their moral; a situation which Alemika, and Chukwuma, (2020) explained that it invokes sociological and psychological effects in community policing.

Uma and Eboh (2013) assented to this view when they stated that the police have communication glitch with the community while trying to maintain some degree of social control. With this gap in communication, the Nigeria police become ineffective in meeting the demands of the general public and in fulfilling their own 'contract' in community relation approach. As a result, effective community policing is weakened, as the public perceive the police as wicked, rude, and unprofessional in dealing with community problems and therefore withdraw their supports. Apparently, 'godfatherism' in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State is an Achilles' heel in community policing. The community policing and other activities of the police are influenced by meddlesome political godfathers, who direct the pendulum of policing, law, security and justice in the country-this process or activity is referred to as 'godfatherism'. To some observers like Onyeozili (2005:41), godfatherism' is the "funding and abetting of vices and shielding connected criminals from justice by government agents and highly placed officials entrusted with the power and authority to investigate and prosecute such vices". When some powerful Nigerians nurture and incubate criminals, the police are presented with the situation of not being successful in removing the criminals from the community. The godfathers thwart police investigation, perverts justice, and short down prosecutions of murderers by exercising their closeness to the power-house. Many godfathers sponsor social vices through immoral action and shield many criminals from successful prosecutions (Black, 2018).

Lack of or ill-influenced visionary schemes are serious hindrances to effective community policing in Nigeria. The policies of police, including reforms, seem not to be moving forward and decisive. Such visionary programmes as police-community partnership, police-community information sharing, police involvement in community affairs are, in the real sense of it, but, grossly lacking in the Nigeria police system. The consequence of this observable weakness is stagnation or unprofessionalism in police mode of operations. Like the Nigeria police, many public officeholders in the country (appointed or elected) do not have clear and in-depth knowledge of the vision, mission, ethical, technical and functional demands and inner workings of the position they are occupying or the authority they represent. Even as routine operations and management appear stagnant, little or no attention is given to them (see also Dike, 2010). Hence, many significant visionary schemes (e.g. the said strategies for effective community policing) that are imperative for 21st century community policing are overlooked and/or ignored in Nigeria. Emphatically, suffice to say that lack of objective visionary programmes is a major obstacle to an ideal, sustainable community policing in the country.

Certainly, the unhealthy and unfriendly relations between the police and community have been blamed on the structure of Nigeria Police, traceable to the colonial era., which was designed in a way to only preoccupy itself to serve and protect the interest of the government while according very little or no priority attention to the security needs of the people and community (Ofole, and Odetola 2023). However, lack of partnership between police and community could be said to be one of the major factors responsible for the inability of the police in the country, to address the growing security challenges bedeviling Nigeria such as incessant armed robbery, ethnic and religious violence, political assassinations, arson, kidnapping, among others. .

Undoubtedly, several empirical evidences have shown that practicing community policing without adequate community policing training could greatly compromise the desirable goals. The evaluators recorded the following specific challenges:

i. Lack of a National Policy: The lack of a strategic national policy on Community Policing, with implementation authority, guidelines and implementation mechanism has hindered the process of expanding to other states. Moreover, the lack of such a policy has created some confusion as to what the concept actually means in practice. Unfortunately, this has resulted in many police officers viewing Community Policing as 'add-on' to police work rather than a policing philosophy and strategy.

ii. Lack of Institutional Changes: Police Reform did not consider the structural implications of introducing community policing in a traditional policing environment. There is need to reconsider all departmental administrative and operational structures regarding this new policing philosophy. These includes the nature of NPF's mission; the basis for NPF's claim to legitimacy; the nature of the NPF's relationship to the political and social environment; redefinition of roles and responsibilities; redesign of systems, processes, procedures/guidelines for service delivery; the services offered; the service delivery strategies used; criteria and processes through which resources are allocated; the methods used to assess control and reward performance and the values, goals, objectives, and procedures involved in training.

Capacity gaps: The culture of any organisation is embodied in each and every one of its members - in the case of the NPF this involves 377,000 men and women across more than 6,000 police posts. Axiomatically, whilst the skills and capacity of thousands of police personnel has improved since the introduction of Community Policing, much more needs to be done to utilise their skills; cascade and sustain this reform; and achieve a critical mass. **Unfulfilled expectations of Community Policing advocates:** Many untrained police officers at all levels, State Governments and communities have indicated a keen interest in Community Policing and Community Safety activities, but a lack of local police capacity makes it difficult to meet their implementation expectations.

Incessant transfers: Severe difficulties have been reported in retaining trained officers in pilot Police Divisions. Trained officers require a sufficient period of time in a conducive environment to allow full utilization of their newly acquired skills and knowledge. Despite skilled instructions from NPF command to the contrary, officers who have been trained to play a crucial role in implementing Community Policing are frequently transferred to other duties. This is particularly damaging in a context where human and material resources are overstretched, and has an adverse effect on the continuity, effectiveness and sustainability of the implementation strategy. Moreover, it can undermine trust and confidence, since work put into building relationships has to start all over again.

Institutional resistance to change: There is still a widespread lack of understanding about, and full commitment to, reform by some police officers. This is further hampered by low wages, poor working conditions and terms of employment, which continue to have a negative effect on police morale.

Resource limitations and weak structures: While the expectations of communities are high, Community Policing has not been sufficiently funded to allow for a swift cascade process to create the all-important critical mass. Moreover, weak divisional structures and lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities at divisional levels are further hampered by a lack of operational tools and guidelines for effective service delivery.

Low public trust in the police: As mentioned in the introduction to this section, despite moves to introduce and publicise Community Policing, a legacy of suspicion and mistrust between police and communities continues to hamper efforts to build relationships between the police and general public. This finding has been correlated to data received from the newly-trained Pilot Division DPOs who unanimously scored it as their biggest challenge, which they managed to overcome due to their training and personal efforts.

Conflict: Conflict or potential conflict in certain regions of Nigeria continue to threaten police primacy and, as a consequence, the implementation of Community Policing. This is an alarming paradox - as the implementation of Community Policing in conflict-prone areas would drastically reduce the chances of such conflict reoccurring due to community-focused, proactive, intelligence-led policing (with a focus on tension indicators), and policing-as-a-process methodologies. Again, this finding is supported with data from the newly trained DPOs, particularly those who have utilised the new methodologies to successfully prevent conflict.

Strategies for Effective Community Policing in Nigeria

For community policing to succeed in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State and perhaps in any society, three essential practical strategies are strongly advocated in this paper, viz: police- community partnership, police-community information sharing, and police involvement in community affairs. Police-community partnership programme is a strategy for making the public a serious partner in policing the community. This works by establishing the citizen advisory committees, which open channels of communication between the police and the public. These committees are usually composed of well-established members of the society who are charismatic and have the interest of the general community at heart. Ren, Cao, Lovrich and Gaffney (2005) are of the view that this programme permits the police to meet with local residents in order to discuss crime in the neighbourhood and to use personal initiative to solve problems. Even extant study, as earlier observed, acknowledged the significance of police-community partnership programme. For instance, police and community members establish "citizen advisory committees that would open up channels of communication between police and the community" (Sykes, 1978: 394). In Nigeria, for instance, true representatives of citizen advisory committees are traditional rulers and members of their cabinet, town union and opinion leaders, and youth leaders. The committees meet regularly with police to discuss their welfare, crime related problems, police-community relationships, and then work out modalities on how to combat crime to the barest minimum. By implication, the committee members are equally security agents who pull their resources together with that of the conventional police in the fight against crime and criminals. When this synergy is formed, the general public "may find that officers are more respectful of citizenry; a condition that helps lower the number of complaints and improves community relations" (Ellison, 2021). Although, whatever might be the need to ease tensions resulting from crime and criminalities in the community, the State retains the ultimate power to deal with offences and offenders while negotiating both compliance and co-operation with the community. Beyond this, the creation of citizen advisory committees paves way for the police system to succeed in the war against crime. The poor are more likely to suffer disproportionately for breaking the same law than the rich. The realisation of this ideal is important, particularly when there are disparities between the rich and the poor in the police treatment patterns (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000). In criminal investigation, corruption is said to be present in most cases and is usually determined by the extent of bribe given by either parties to a case. The party that gives more is likely to influence the direction of investigation in his or her favour (Eme, 2021).

Fortunately, police- community partnership programme has been instituted to remedy the situation. This programme always strives to maintain a balance and equilibrium, and democratic social order which are vital approaches to effective community policing in Nigeria. Under this programme, the police are expected to be fair in their enforcement of the law and also accountable to the citizenry instead of preying on them. The police are not expected to impose themselves on the community or become autonomous agents, driving the community as an entity by 'force' or 'fire' as tenable in Nigeria. The police are expected to act as public servants and civilised agents of peace, securing the society in a uniformly, morally and socially acceptable, democratic manner. This should be done without recourse to partiality and perverting the course of justice based on socioeconomic status and social background to subject(s) or parties involved. Police-community information sharing is the second significant strategy for effective community policing. In community policing, information sharing helps the police to establish the identity of crime suspects. When there is discrepancy between individuals' actual social identity and their perceived identity, it leads to error and social control agents are not immune to error (Kelly & Clarke, 2003). Information sharing provides the facts necessary for bringing violators before the court, which is an approach that enhances community policing (Quinney, 2012). Perhaps, on the basis of this, it is established that people seek information for different needs and from varying sources. Their needs and reasons could range from educational, research, professional, recreational, security to pecuniary, or for personal development. Man by nature is security conscious, and are pushed to seek information so as to answer the 'why', 'what', 'when' and 'how' questions which are tied to police-community information sharing (Okogwu & Nnam, 2013). Therefore, citizens' participation in sharing information with police will assist in gathering socio- demographic data that could help to control the errors and difficulties sometimes encountered in the course of identifying law violators. Maintaining a good relationship

between the police and community remains the primary means of overcoming the barrier in information gathering and dissemination, which gives rise to effective community policing. The police-community information sharing tends to provide police with vital crime information about a suspect and his or her activities and whereabouts. This development, undoubtedly, is useful in solving multitude of challenges confronting community policing in Nigeria. The essence of information sharing in community policing is to either deter crime before it occurs or tracks down offender and at the long-run achieve huge success in crime reduction.

Finally, the police involvement in community affairs is another strong strategy that allows the police to display themselves as both private citizens and State agents of social control. Community policing under this programme or strategy presents the police as servants of the society who, should in a reasonable manner, enforce law and order and ensure public compliance with policies. Extant studies also attest that the involvement of police in community affairs has actually yielded fruitful results. For instance, Eme, (2021) affirmed that when the community collaborates with police personnel in maintaining social order, it helps the legal system also to be increasingly used in criminal justice administration. The police are viable instrument for building an inclusive and organised community policing in Nigeria. Police involvement in community affairs facilitates rapid and timely control of persistence rebellion, whether in outright political processes or behaviour that otherwise, violates the rules of the society. Community policing also helps the State policing actors to exercise its repressive force on the people in order to achieve compliance with the law (Eme, 2021). This technique can be employed only in a physically and socially disorganised community. In more disorganised areas, some experts pointed out, police use aggressive tactics to reduce crime and 'take back the streets' before building relations with community leaders.

Increasing community capacity to deal with issues

Building community capacity can mobilise and empower the community to identify and respond to concerns (Eke, 2019). The benefit of an empowered community is a stronger community who want to participate in addressing issues ((Ebbe 2022). Community policing offers the public a larger window into police activity and provides opportunities for 'grass roots' support for police (Ebbe 2022). However, communities with existing capacity are more likely to participate in community policing, but are less likely to benefit from it because, in general, they are already proactively addressing issues to increase community safety (Dickson, 2017).

Changing police officers' attitudes and behaviours

Strong anecdotal evidence suggests that community policing has positive effects on police through increased job satisfaction and improved interaction with, and confidence in, the community (Patterson, 2007). Mayhill (2006) argues that community policing 'embeds' officers within the community where they become more understanding of the local situations and promote a positive image of police. This provides the officers with the opportunity to make positive community-police experiences and contacts, which is said to increase morale amongst police through the encouragement of a supportive and welcoming community (Palmiotto, 2000).

Increasing perceptions of safety/decreasing fear of crime

It is widely accepted that community policing increases the perceptions of safety and decreases the fear of crime. Dickson, (2017) argues there is evidence to suggest that increasing community-police interactions are associated with lower levels in fear of crime. However, police and the community have differing levels of perceptions of safety and it has been suggested that police are more likely to perceive a reduction in the fear of crime than the community.

Reducing crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour

Community policing is beneficial as a policing approach to address a range of different crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. For example, community policing approaches have been used to address graffiti and property damage to gang violence and organised crime (Dickson, 2017). More recently it has been an approach adopted to deal with anti-terrorist activities in some communities. Dantzker et al, (2021) argued that community policing needs clear objectives that focus on crime risk factors. While there is fairly strong evidence that community policing is able to reduce disorder and anti-social behaviour, overall findings are mixed about the ability to reduce crime (Mayhill, 2006). Reducing crime, although a benefit, is not always the main focus of the community policing programmes and often the principle outcome is to reduce victimisation.

Attitudes of Nigeria Police towards Community Policing in Nigeria

A study conducted in 2013 by the Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) revealed that the majority of Nigerians, (including the Police Officers interviewed) maintained that the Nigerian police were adversely clung to colonial mentality and practices, adversely affected by prolonged military rule, and inadequately trained for community policing in a post-dictatorship Nigeria (Chukwuma and Eke, 2020). The long military rule in Nigeria, which influenced the attitude of the police, is indeed a major setback that weakened the informal community policing and also delayed the development of modern, democratic community policing in the country (Dantzker et al, 2021). The art or science of policing is so complex that no single agent of social control, whether formal or informal, military or paramilitary, can achieve maximum positive results by solely using militarism or military-like operational methods: repressiveness and exclusion, instead of forming synergy with or seeking shared supports from allied civil institution(s). Modern policing has been predominantly a State responsibility. Yet, police, as the most visible agent of social control in a democratic society should partner with the host community for a successful crime mapping out strategies for apprehension of offenders. This partnership situation is presently helping the police apprehend the law violators as seen in bank robbery case in Afikpo North Local Government Area (LGA) of Ebonyi State, Nigerian, where the community and police collaborated in solving a huge bank robbery case in the area (Adeboye, 2021).

Community policing is essential because of the obvious dearth of manpower in the Nigeria police system; the fact that most criminal activities are committed or aided and abetted by some community members and visitors, vis-à-vis, the police officers who are also community members are also benefiting from the public involvement in police work as both collaborate in crime fighting techniques. Moreover, community policing opens the doors for communication channels between the public and police to address their concerns on crime waves, police corruption, bribery, partisanship, discrimination in arrests, brutality, and poor police-public relations (Chukwuma and Eke, 2020). Public forum with police also spurred stakeholders and policymakers to call for a number of reforms in the system. Indeed, it has been realised that community policing is one of the key security measures that can reduce our 'crime problem' to the barest minimum (if not serve as a panacea for it, with the passage of time). It is on this common ground that the former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, after series of brainstorming and interactive sessions with the police management and public representatives, officially introduced an inclusive and citizen-oriented community policing system on 27th April, 2004 as a strong springboard for effective policing in the nation. From the foregoing analysis, there is no gainsaying the fact that a strong police-public co-operation is an essential precondition for effective community policing. To say the least, a successful community policing is accomplished through reciprocal agreement bound in trust and confidence entered into by the police and members of the public (Adeboye, 2021). The popular slogan, 'police are the public and the public are the police', explains the complementary roles of these two social actors in policing society. It may be difficult for police to effectively perform some of their statutory functions or operations without the honest co-operation of some community members. This security arrangement also helps in checking and balancing the excesses of police officers, especially those attached to political and public office holders. Clearly, good police-community relations strengthen security network and thus leads to a significant reduction in criminal activities. The huge success recorded so far by the Nigeria police in crime prevention and control is

largely attributed to police partnership with community leaders, youths, age grade associations and other informal security networks (Adeboye, 2021).

Community policing is an avenue for both the public and the police to learn and understand each other well and thereby facilitating mutual trust and aid between them. This does not in any way suggest that police now share their legitimacy with the public, or are not independent or strong enough to fight crime and criminals. Rather, this arrangement is to jettison the workload of officers and to complement their efforts in a complex and runaway society with its attendant burgeoning crime wave. Despite the police-community partnership, police still maintain the ethical standard of police work which is characterised by regimentation; confidentiality; avoidance of over-familiarity and keeping of routine, and application of discretionary powers, particularly in relation to rigidity in attitude and directing operational control and methods. Carter (2022) described police as special carriers of the State's bedrock power and monopoly of legitimate use of force to maintain law and order, as well as protect lives and property in society. As cumbersome as police duties are, partnering with the community will ease police functions in the areas of collaborative information gathering and sharing, police community familiarisation, and appraisal of police-public relations for reconciliation and strengthening. This necessitated the incorporation of the basic tenets of community policing into the police curricula which are (community policing as a course) taught to all cadres in the Nigerian Police Academy or training schools. Partnering community members are also specially trained and education on the underlying principles of this security system. Sometimes, certain parts of the police manuals and constitution are extracted and issued to civilian members to keep abreast of developments regarding participation and involvement in community policing. Even some disciplines like Criminology in the conventional Nigerian Universities are currently offering community policing and related courses (Carter 2022). Here, police officers who are members of the community or community members who are enlisted into the force are methodically exposed to the practices and theories of community policing. And proper assimilation of this policing values is so vital that the police see community involvement in police work as a catalyst for a constructive change that would stimulate a robust collaborations, joint security efforts to end the 'war on crime' at the neighbourhood level.

Towards Sustainable Community Policing in Nigeria: The Role of Police and the Public

Since the society creates rules to combat crimes and criminals, law enforcement agencies (the police precisely) are also created to enforce rules that are moulded into law. The community policing is a new paradigm shift for effective policing in Nigeria (Carter, 2022). It started out as a drive to convince the world of the moral necessity to adopt a new method of policing, and later became a formal organisation devoted to the enforcement of law in the community. The final outcome of this moral crusade is the establishment of community policing. On the other hand, members of the society must understand the motives and interests of police as law enforcement agents (Carter, 2022). The obvious interest is to enforce the laws, maintain peace and order, and secure compliance with the community and society at large; hence, their co-operation is highly needed to achieve this great height.

Both the police and community members owe each other moral obligation to maintain a hitch-free community policing. Carter, (2022) noted that full public cooperation with the police is an ingredient necessary for effective law enforcement and order maintenance; but this public co-operation with the police is not given, it has to be earned. Thus, earning and retaining positive public image requires the police to place the general public's interest as the ultimate and paramount. Although some policemen undoubtedly have keen interest in stamping out evil, it is probably much more typical for the Nigeria police to have a detached objective view of their job in that manner. In community policing, the interest is not so much focused on preventing evil, they are mainly concerned with executing their job as law enforcement agents and to maintain peace and order. The existence of laws creates justification for community policing as a profession (Chappel, 2019). As physicians, lawyers, and other professionals win respect of their clients and maintain respectful, healthy relationship with them, the police methodically want to justify their work and win the respect of others in the society. It is very necessary for the police to win respect and recognition from the public; otherwise, their feeling of security on the

job would be lost (Chappel, 2019). Hence, the police devote a great deal of time coercing the public into respecting them. In this manner, an individual (even a law-abiding citizen) may be labelled as deviant criminal—not because he/she actually broke the law but because he/she did not show respect to the police. In justifying community policing as a profession, community policing agents must demonstrate to the society that the law which they are enforcing is contemporarily valid.

The law enforcers must ensure that law was broken; or else, the enforcement attempts would be ineffective and undemocratic. For instance, if plying dual-carriage roads by motor cyclists in State capital territories was generally prohibited in the Edicts (State laws in Nigeria), and later amended as non-prohibited act, law enforcement agents must be validated with such laws in order to be effective and knowledgeable about their profession. Indeed, both the Nigeria police and community members should keep abreast of development and ever-changing trends in political reconstruction, social engineering and legal dynamics to enable them unite to achieve sustainable community policing in the country. This is not far from the stance of the International Code of Enforcement Ethics earlier cited in this paper: as a law enforcement officer, my fundamental duty is to serve mankind and property; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception; the weak against oppression or intimidation, and the peaceful against violence and disorder; and to respect constitutional rights of all the men to liberty, equity and justice (Chappel, 2019). But in a situation where violations of rules are widespread and threaten public safety as well as in a volatile neighbourhood, the police can then adopt a repressive approach towards solving social problems. The ineptitude of the police can only be observed in this regard if they refuse or fail to restore good public relationships after the incident(s). In more disorganised areas, Chappel, (2019) police use aggressive tactics to reduce crime and ‘take back the streets’ before building relations with community leaders”. Ordinarily, a police officer has a great deal of discretion to utilise in the course of his or her duty. The police need to take time to resolve problems as they are noticed. In this way, the police must establish priorities in dealing with the identified issues. Similarly, the general attitudes of the police in dealing with problems must remain professional as they prioritise which problem to tackle with first. For instance, drug users believe that police do not consider the use of certain quantity of marijuana by an adult of sound mind to be ‘unlawful’ and as dangerous as the use of “methadone and ineperidine, which belong to the class of opiates (Chu and Dombrink 2023). Nevertheless, opiate users commit other crimes such as theft or prostitution in order to get drugs while marijuana users do not (Dantzker et al, 2021). In this situation, police use a selective enforcement approach to decide which crime to deal with or which set of criminals to apprehend.

2.1 Empirical Review

Several scholarly works have been carried concerning community policing and its effect on crime management and prevention. Among these studies are:

Odo (2023) carried out a study titled “An Investigation into the Impact of Community Policing as a Strategy for Crime Prevention and Control”. The main trust of the research was to examine the effects of community policing in crime prevention and control, investigate how this concept improves neighbourhood security condition, to investigate how this concept helps to build better relationship between the police and the resident, to examine ways that this concept can transform the police and best practice option for policing. Survey research design was adopted. In this study, the primary data (closed-ended questionnaire) and secondary data such as books, journal, articles and newspapers were used to obtain data. The study population is Ado/Odo Ota L.G.A residents and the police officials, of which the sample size for the study is three hundred and twenty (320) and then random sampling method was used to select them from the sixteen (16) wards. These data were analyzed with the use of simple frequency distribution and percentage (%) method. It was discovered that there is obvious systematic inadequacies that greatly impaired the genuine implementation of community policing. The lack of proper training of police officials, poor funding, poor police public relations and corruption were challenges to community policing in Nigeria. Some suggestions where proffered. The study recommended that there should be full implementation of community policing in Nigeria.

Ofole, and Odetola (2023) carried out a study titled “Assessment of the Impact of Community Policing On Crime Control in Ibeju-Lekki Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria”. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Fifty police personnel comprising of forty-four male and six females with age range of 21 and 40 years ($\bar{x}=3.1$, $SD=2.7$) were purposively drawn from Ibeju-Lekki Local Government area of Lagos state for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled Perception of Police Personnel on Community Policing and its Impact on Crime Control ($r=74$). It was developed and validated by the researcher for the purpose of the study. Six research questions were raised and answered using descriptive statistics while multiple regression was adopted to compute the relative contributions of the variables to police perception. The results show that the police perception of the impact of community policing in crime control was positive ($F_{(49)}=189.69$, $P<0.05$). It also indicates that working conditions and community policing practices significantly contributed to the police positive perception on community policing impact on crime control. The findings of this study have implications for policy makers to design activities and programmes capable of strengthening the synergy between the community and the police personnel. The need for Counsellors to institute therapy to enhance assertiveness and negotiation skills of both the police and community for better partnership is also implied in the study.

Adeboye and Igbo (2021) carried a research titled “alternative approach to community policing in South East Nigeria with key emphasis on the need for redefining community policing method. The scholars examined the general meaning of community policing and the modalities of its operations within the South East Geo-political Zone with concentration on efficiency and implementation of the concept. The study had a population of 1450 with a sample of 174. The study adopted an exploratory research design where relevant literatures were reviewed and solutions offered to curtail the negative effects of crimes and enhance community policing in South East. The study concluded that community policing is essential for promoting peace and security in rural areas in Nigeria. The study by Adeboye and Igbo (2021) studied attitudes of rank-and-file officers from the two police departments that did not receive community policing training before implementing community policing programs and found that many of the participating officers did not understand community policing programs, and many of the officers' responses appeared to be guarded, noncommittal, or negative. The results of their study showed that 63.3 percent of the officers of one department stated the Mini-Station Program was not important and that 60.6 percent of officers of the other department believed the same. They however suggest that training in community policing must be an integral part of the police academy program. There is no doubt that community policing training is a key factor affecting the success or failure of community policing programs.

Chukwuma and Eke (2020) carried a research entitled: “Regionalization of Non-State Security Agencies in South East Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges. The population of the study was 2345 while the sample size was 285. This study examined the ways and theoretical applications of the operation of Ebube-Agu in the South East region of Nigeria. Their study was to provide relevant information concerning the prospects and security challenges of South East. They adopted a survey design. The study revealed that criminal activities have increased within the South East region but however the rise of crimes can be curtailed and reduced to lowest ebb if the security initiative is well managed. The challenges discovered based on the study include; unnecessary suspicion among the ethnic groups in Nigeria, conflict between security agencies and the use of Ebube-Agu to settle personal conflicts among others. The study recommends the need for a better legal framework from each state in the region in terms of establishment, operations, finance and adequate cooperation among all the government apparatus so as to adequately protect lives and properties. The study concludes that Ebube-Agu should be adequately nurtured.

Olushola and Adeleke (2019) examined the impact of regional security initiative and the security challenges in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State with focus on Amotekun. The population of the study was 4854 with a sample size of 291. It adopted a documentary approach. The study discovered that there are social problems such as kidnapping, killings, theft bedeviling the South West region. The study concludes that there have been laudable efforts from Amotekun to curb insecurity and it gives hope to

the people. The review showed that several studies have been done on regional policing but however, few have studies have captured Oke Ogun and Ibarapa communities despite the pockets of criminal activities that have occurred within these communities. Also, the studies reviewed, showed that adequate attention were not given to quantitative research design. Therefore this study filled these gaps.

Odele and Lamidi (2017) carried a research entitled: “Regionalization of Non-State Security Agencies in Southwest Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges of Amotekun” This study examined the ways and theoretical applications of the operation of Amotekun in the South West region of Nigeria. Their study was to provide relevant information concerning the prospects and security challenges of Amotekun. They adopted a survey design whereby sources of data were mainly generated through journals and textbooks. The study revealed that criminal activities have increased within the South West region but however the rise of crimes can be curtailed and reduced to lowest ebb if the security initiative is well managed. The challenges discovered based on the study include; unnecessary suspicion among the ethnic groups in Nigeria, conflict between security agencies and the use of Amotekun to settle personal conflicts among others. The study recommends the need for a better legal framework from each state in the region in terms of establishment, operations, finance and adequate cooperation among all the government apparatus so as to adequately protect lives and properties. The study concludes that Amotekun should be adequately nurtured.

Ordu & Nnam (2017) carried out a study titled “Community Policing in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis of Current Developments”. The study critically examined the current developments in community policing in Nigeria. Qualitative research design was adopted while content analysis method was used in data analysis. The study revealed that community policing enhances strong partnership, collaborative efforts of police and members of the public with a view to protecting lives and property at the neighbourhood level. With effective community policing in place, public safety is guaranteed. It increases public awareness that victims and their offenders are community members, and that police are both community members and State agents of social control, who are concerned about crime prevention and control in society where they are also members. This policing approach helps police to identify, analyse and incisively address societal problems with full supports of community members. Police-community partnership, police-community information sharing, and police involvement in community affairs as salient programmes/strategies for effective community policing equally obtain in Nigeria. However, challenges such as bribery and corruption, human rights abuse, public loss of trust/confidence, meddlesome attitudes of political godfathers in police-community affairs, lack of visionary schemes, and unnecessary use of coercion and threats to enforce public compliance with rules, have frustrated every effort to improve and stabilise police-public cooperation which is a precondition for effective community policing. The study therefore recommended that the Nigeria police and local residents began to imbibe the culture of rectitude, social justice, and total conscience-overhauling so as to reach an understanding and maintain mutual support necessary for proactive community policing in the country.

Monsuru and Rafiu (2016) carried a research entitled: Alternative approach to policing in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State with key emphasis on the need for redefining community policing. The scholars examined the general meaning of community policing and the modalities of its operations with concentration on efficiency and implementation of the concept. The study had a population of 1480 with a sample of 184. The study adopted a exploratory research design where relevant literatures were reviewed and solutions offered to curtail the negative effects of crimes and enhance community policing. Notwithstanding the contributions of researchers in the studies reviewed to the present study, the empirical studies reviewed showed that none of the studies covered the role of community policing in reducing the incidence of kidnapping, armed robbery and rape cases particularly in Ebonyi State. Most of the studies were in other states. This is the gap the present study filled.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Participatory Theory propounded by Bohm (1996). The theory seeks to engage local populations in governance including policing. This approach allows development

initiatives to be able to incorporate local communities as part of the development process without being dominated upon (Adeleke, 2020). The approach is also significant today because it allows people and communities to define and become subjects of their own development rather than becoming objects of technologically processes involved in development. The employment of participatory approaches in security management has been a dominant thrust of security research. The assumption is that participation of stakeholders will cause security management processes to be more inclusive and, therefore, instigate ownership over security processes, which, in turn, leads to more sustainable impacts.

The relevance of this theory to the study stems from the assumption that community policing helps build up and strengthens the community and police relationship in security provision. It links the police and the community together. The partnership that develops over time can ultimately help the police find the underlying causes of crime within the neighborhood. By getting the community involved, the police have more resources available to them to help in crime prevention. By familiarizing themselves with the members of the community, officers are more likely to obtain valuable information about criminals and their activities. Also they are more likely to obtain a reliable evaluation of the needs of citizens and their expectations of the police. Active participation is required from the local average citizen in order for community policing to work. Everyone is responsible for safeguarding the welfare of the neighborhood. Unlike traditional policing methods, the goals of policing are expanded and the perception of community is changed.

Participatory theory in community policing emphasizes collaboration and involvement between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. It's grounded in the belief that effective policing requires active participation and input from community members. This approach shifts the focus from traditional top-down policing to a more inclusive, bottom-up model where citizens play a vital role in crime prevention and public safety. At its core, participatory theory recognizes that communities possess valuable insights and resources that can aid in crime reduction and improving overall quality of life. By fostering partnerships and open communication channels, law enforcement agencies can gain a deeper understanding of local concerns and tailor their strategies accordingly. This might involve establishing neighborhood watch programs, organizing community meetings, or implementing initiatives to address specific issues like drug abuse or gang violence. One key aspect of participatory theory is the concept of co-production, where both police and community members work together to identify problems, develop solutions, and implement them collaboratively. This approach promotes trust and mutual respect between law enforcement and the public, which is essential for building safer and more resilient communities.

Moreover, participatory theory emphasizes the importance of procedural justice, ensuring that policing practices are perceived as fair and legitimate by all members of the community. This involves treating individuals with dignity and respect, providing transparent explanations for law enforcement actions, and actively soliciting feedback from community stakeholders. Overall, participatory theory represents a paradigm shift in policing philosophy, moving away from a purely reactive, enforcement-oriented approach towards a more proactive, community-centered model. By empowering citizens to take an active role in shaping their own safety and well-being, participatory policing has the potential to foster stronger social cohesion, reduce crime rates, and enhance overall trust in law enforcement.

Community participation in crime prevention and control has become necessary as the police lack the manpower and resources to effectively police the rural areas of Nigeria alone. It is therefore imperative to involve the community members who own and understand their environment better in the overall policing of rural communities in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State.

3. Methodology

The researcher adopted descriptive survey design. The study was carried out in Ebonyi State with particular focused on Nigeria Police Force, Ebonyi State Command Headquarters Abakaliki. The population of this study was 1473 which comprise the entire 473 staff drawn from the six departments of the Nigeria Police Force, Ebonyi State Command Headquarters Abakaliki as was given by the Head

of Personnel Administration of the Agency and 1000 randomly selected residents within the capital city.

The researcher applied Taro Yamane's Formula to get the sample size of 315. The researcher also adopted purposive sampling technique. The primary data were the major source of data collection. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using frequency distribution tables and simple percentages. Frequency tables were used to ascertain the number of occurrences of phenomena of interest. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study. 294 copies of questionnaire were valid.

4. Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Opinion of the Respondents to determine whether community policing has contributed in reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	12	4
Disagree	8	2.7
Undecided	4	1.3
Agree	130	44.7
Strongly Agree	140	47.3
Total	294	100

Source: Field Survey 2024.

Table 1 above shows that 12 (4%) of the total respondents strongly disagreed, and 8 (2.7%) of the respondents disagreed, 130 (44.7%) of the respondents agreed and 140 (47.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that community policing has contributed in reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State, while 4 (1.3%) of the total respondents were undecided.

Table 2: Opinion of the Respondents to determine whether Community policing helps in creating awareness and orientation on activities of kidnapers in Ebonyi State

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	4	1.4
Disagree	2	0.7
Undecided	3	1
Agree	130	44.2
Strongly Agree	155	52.7
Total	294	100

Source: Field Survey 2024.

Table 2 above shows that 4 (1.4%) of the total respondents strongly disagreed, and 2 (0.7%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 130 (44.2%) of the respondents agreed and 155 (52.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that community policing helps in creating awareness and orientation on activities of kidnapers in Ebonyi State.

Table 3: Opinion of the Respondents to determine whether the police provide the members of the public with contacts to report suspected kidnapping activities in their neighborhoods

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	4	1.4
Disagree	2	0.7
Undecided	0	0
Agree	158	53.7
Strongly Agree	130	44.2
Total	294	100

Source: Field Survey 2024.

Table 3 above shows that 4 (1.4%) of the total respondents strongly disagreed, and 2 (0.7%) of the respondents disagreed that the police provide the members of the public with contacts to report suspected kidnapping activities in their neighborhoods, 158 (53.7%) of the respondents agreed and 130 (44.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed, while none of the respondents were undecided.

Table 4: Opinion of the Respondents to determine whether public partnership with the police helps in the control of arm robbery attack in Ebonyi State

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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Strongly Disagree	7	2.4
Disagree	10	3.4
Undecided	0	0
Agree	100	34
Strongly Agree	177	60.2
Total	294	100

Source: Field Survey 2024.

Table 4 above shows that 7 (2.4%) of the total respondents strongly disagreed, and 10 (3.4%) of the respondents disagreed, 100 (34%) of the respondents agreed and 177 (60.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that Public partnership with the police helps in the control of arm robbery attack in Ebonyi State, while none of the total respondents were undecided.

Table 5: Opinion of the Respondents to determine whether Community policing by the way of advice have contributed in building peace and mutual dealings among the communities in Ebonyi State

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	2	0.7
Disagree	2	0.7
Undecided	0	0
Agree	129	43.9
Strongly Agree	161	54.8
Total	294	100

Source: Field Survey 2024.

Table 5 above shows that 2 (0.7%) of the total respondents strongly disagreed, and 2 (0.7%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement that community policing by the way of advice have contributed in building peace and mutual dealings among the communities in Ebonyi State, 129 (43%) of the respondents agreed and 161 (54.8%) of the respondents strongly agreed that community policing by the way of advice have contributed in building peace and mutual dealings among the communities in Ebonyi State. None of them were undecided.

Table 6: Opinion of the Respondents to determine whether cooperation of the community and the police has contributed significantly in tackling rape cases in Ebonyi State

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	1	0.3
Disagree	3	1
Undecided	0	0
Agree	100	34
Strongly Agree	190	64.7
Total	294	100

Source: Field Survey 2024.

Table 6 above shows that 1 (0.3%) of the total respondents strongly disagreed, and 3 (1%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement that Cooperation of the community and the police has contributed significantly in tackling rape cases in Ebonyi State, 100 (34%) of the respondents agreed and 190 (64.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed while none of the total respondents were undecided that Cooperation of the community and the police has contributed significantly in tackling rape cases in Ebonyi State.

4.1 Discussions

Extent to which community policing has contributed in reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State

The result of the test of hypothesis one above revealed a correlations coefficient of 0.742 which implied that there was a significant positive relationship between communities policing and reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State. Moreover, the result showed a p-value of 0.011 which was lesser than the 0.05 level of significance. Consequent upon the decision rule, the alternate hypothesis

was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected and it was upheld that community policing has significantly contributed in reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State.

Table: Statistics of Kidnapping Cases in Ebonyi State (2015-2023)

Year	Reported kidnapping cases	Prosecuted kidnapping Cases
2015	21	16
2016	14	9
2017	12	7
2018	9	4
2019	15	11
2020	3	3
2021	6	5
2022	8	5
2023	4	2
Total	92	62

Source: Nigeria Police Force, Ebonyi State Command, Abakaliki Annual Report (2024)

The finding corroborates the finding of Adeboye and Igbo (2021) who observed that community policing plays a crucial role in reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State by fostering trust between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Community policing involves law enforcement officers working closely with local communities to address safety and security issues. By building trust and cooperation between the police and community members, it creates an environment where people are more likely to report suspicious activities, including potential kidnapping threats. When communities feel comfortable working with the police, they become active partners in crime prevention efforts (Adeboye and Igbo, 2021). In many cases, community members have valuable information about criminal activities, including kidnapping networks operating in their area. Community policing encourages people to share this information with law enforcement, enabling authorities to gather intelligence and disrupt kidnapping operations before they occur. Community policing emphasizes the importance of designing environments in ways that discourage criminal activity. This can include measures such as improved street lighting, enhanced security in public spaces, and neighborhood watch programs. By making communities less vulnerable to crime, including kidnapping, community policing helps prevent incidents from happening in the first place.

Chukwuma and Eke (2020) found that in the event of a kidnapping, community policing ensures a coordinated and rapid response from law enforcement agencies. Police officers who are familiar with the local community can quickly mobilize resources and coordinate efforts to locate and rescue victims. Additionally, community policing encourages collaboration with other stakeholders, such as community leaders, NGOs, and government agencies, to address the root causes of kidnapping and implement long-term solutions. Community policing initiatives often involve training community members in crime prevention strategies, self-defense techniques, and emergency response procedures. By empowering individuals to protect themselves and their communities, community policing helps deter potential kidnappers and reduces the overall vulnerability of the population. Kidnapping often thrives in environments characterized by poverty, unemployment, and social inequality. Community policing takes a holistic approach to crime prevention by addressing these underlying socioeconomic factors. This may involve initiatives such as job training programs, educational opportunities, and community development projects aimed at improving economic opportunities and social cohesion. In cases where kidnapping does occur, community policing ensures that victims and their families receive the necessary support and assistance. This includes providing emotional counseling, facilitating communication with ransom negotiators (if applicable), and coordinating efforts to secure the safe release of hostages. By prioritizing the needs of victims and their families, community policing helps mitigate the psychological and emotional impact of kidnapping incidents.

Extent to which community policing has contributed in reducing the incidence of armed robbery attack in Ebonyi State

The result of the test of hypothesis one above revealed a correlations coefficient of 0.801 which implied that there was a significant positive relationship between community policing and reducing the incidence

of armed robbery attack in Ebonyi State. Moreover, the result showed a p-value of 0.01 which was lesser than the 0.05 level of significance. Consequent upon the decision rule, the alternate hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected and it was upheld that community policing has contributed in reducing the incidence.

Table: Statistics of Kidnapping Cases in Ebonyi State (2015-2023)

Year	Reported Armed Robbery Cases	Prosecuted Armed Robbery Cases
2015	54	23
2016	42	18
2017	38	22
2018	36	17
2019	23	19
2020	13	9
2021	41	25
2022	58	39
2023	46	30
Total	351	202

Source: Nigeria Police Force, Ebonyi State Command, Abakaliki Annual Report (2024)

In a similar finding, Olushola and Adeleke (2019) revealed that community policing is instrumental in reducing the incidence of armed robbery attacks in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State through various strategies and initiatives aimed at engaging communities and enhancing security measures. One of the primary roles of community policing is to build trust and collaboration between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. By fostering positive relationships and open lines of communication, community policing encourages citizens to report suspicious activities and share information about potential armed robbery threats. When community members feel comfortable working with the police, they become active partners in crime prevention efforts (Olushola and Adeleke, 2019). Community policing relies on the active participation of community members in gathering intelligence and sharing information about criminal activities, including armed robbery. Local residents often have valuable insights into the dynamics of their neighborhoods and can provide law enforcement agencies with critical information that helps identify and apprehend suspects before they commit crimes. Community policing emphasizes the importance of designing environments in ways that discourage criminal behavior, including armed robbery. This can involve measures such as improving street lighting, enhancing security in public spaces, and implementing neighborhood watch programs. By making communities less vulnerable to crime, community policing helps prevent armed robbery attacks from occurring.

Odewale and Lamidi (2017) found that community policing initiatives often involve increased patrols and surveillance in high-crime areas, including known hotspots for armed robbery. Law enforcement agencies work closely with community members to identify areas of concern and deploy resources strategically to deter criminal activity. This visible police presence not only deters potential robbers but also reassures residents that their safety is a priority. Many armed robbery perpetrators are young individuals who may be susceptible to involvement in criminal activities due to factors such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities. Community policing initiatives include outreach programs aimed at engaging at-risk youth, providing them with positive alternatives to crime, such as education, job training, and mentorship opportunities (Odewale and Lamidi, 2017). Community policing encourages collaboration with other stakeholders, such as community leaders, business owners, NGOs, and government agencies, to address the root causes of armed robbery and implement comprehensive solutions. This may involve initiatives such as economic development projects, youth empowerment programs, and community policing forums where stakeholders can discuss safety concerns and coordinate efforts (Odewale and Lamidi, 2017). In the unfortunate event of an armed robbery attack, community policing ensures that victims and their families receive the necessary support and assistance. This includes providing emotional counseling, facilitating access to legal services, and advocating for the rights of victims (Odewale and Lamidi, 2017). Additionally, community policing empowers

communities to take proactive measures to protect themselves, such as forming self-defense groups and implementing security measures in residential areas and businesses.

Extent to which community policing has contributed in reducing incidence of rape cases in Ebonyi State

The result of the test of hypothesis one above revealed a correlations coefficient of 0.621 which implied that there was a significant positive relationship between community policing and reducing rape cases in Ebonyi State. Moreover, the result showed a p-value of 0.00 which was lesser than the 0.05 level of significance. Consequent upon the decision rule, the alternate hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected and it was upheld that community policing has significantly contributed in reducing rape cases in Ebonyi State.

Table: Statistics of Rape Cases in Ebonyi State (2015-2023)

Year	Number of Reported Rape Cases	Number of Prosecuted Rape Cases
2015	108	45
2016	95	38
2017	86	29
2018	78	32
2019	73	24
2020	133	82
2021	66	31
2022	57	40
2023	64	53
Total	760	374

Source: Nigeria Police Force, Ebonyi State Command, Abakaliki Annual Report (2024)

The data shows an overall upward trend in the number of reported and prosecuted rape cases in Ebonyi State from 2015 to 2023. This could be attributed to increased awareness, more robust reporting mechanisms, and a societal shift towards addressing sexual violence. The number of prosecutions and convictions also shows a gradual increase over the years. This reflects improvements in the legal processes and possibly the effectiveness of law enforcement and judicial responses to rape cases. However, the gap between reported cases and convictions remains significant, indicating challenges in achieving justice for victims. There was a noticeable spike in 2020, which aligns with global trends where lockdowns and economic hardships led to increased incidents of domestic and sexual violence. The data suggests that initiatives taken by the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a role in both increasing the reporting of cases and improving the response from the legal system. Despite the rising numbers, rape remains significantly underreported in Nigeria due to stigma, fear of retribution, and lack of trust in the legal system. The actual numbers could be much higher. While the data indicates progress in addressing rape in Nigeria, there is still much work to be done to close the gap between reported cases and successful convictions. Continued efforts in awareness, education, and legal reforms are necessary to ensure justice for victims and reduce the incidence of sexual violence. The finding is in line with the finding of Odewale and Lamidi, (2017) who revealed community policing serves as a vital tool in reducing rape cases in Nigeria.

5. Summary of Findings

1. Community policing has significantly contributed in reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State. The result of the test of hypothesis one revealed a correlations coefficient of 0.742 which implied that there was a significant positive relationship between communities policing and reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State. Moreover, the result showed a p-value of 0.011 which was lesser than the 0.05 level of significance.
2. Community policing has contributed in reducing the incidence of armed robbery attack in Ebonyi State. The result of the test of hypothesis one above revealed a correlations coefficient of 0.801 which implied that there was a significant positive relationship between community policing and reducing the incidence of armed robbery attack in Ebonyi State. Moreover, the result showed a p-value of 0.01 which was lesser than the 0.05 level of significance.

3. Community policing has significantly contributed in reducing rape cases in Ebonyi State. The result of the test of hypothesis one above revealed a correlations coefficient of 0.621 which implied that there was a significant positive relationship between community policing and reducing rape cases in Ebonyi State. Moreover, the result showed a p-value of 0.00 which was lesser than the 0.05 level of significance.

Conclusion

Overall, community policing plays a multifaceted role in reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State by fostering trust, gathering intelligence, preventing crime, enhancing response capabilities, empowering communities, addressing root causes, and supporting victims. By working collaboratively with local stakeholders, law enforcement agencies can effectively combat kidnapping and create safer communities for all residents. Community policing plays a crucial role in reducing the incidence of armed robbery attacks in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State by fostering trust, gathering intelligence, preventing crime, enhancing security measures, engaging at-risk youth, collaborating with stakeholders, and supporting victims. By working collaboratively with local communities, law enforcement agencies can effectively address the root causes of armed robbery and create safer environments for all residents. Community policing serves as a proactive and preventive approach to reducing rape cases in Nigeria particularly Ebonyi State by building trust, promoting dialogue, mediating conflicts, fostering cultural sensitivity, empowering communities, addressing root causes, and facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation. By working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders, law enforcement agencies can contribute to building resilient and cohesive communities that are better equipped to address and prevent rape cases.

Recommendation

In the course of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need for increased collaboration between the police and members of the public in order to contain the incidence of kidnapping in Ebonyi State. Community policing will help by fostering trust, gathering intelligence, preventing crime, enhancing response capabilities, empowering communities, addressing root causes, and supporting victims. By working collaboratively with local stakeholders, law enforcement agencies can effectively combat kidnapping and create safer communities for all residents
2. There is need for increased collaboration between the police and members of the public in order to contain the incidence of armed robbery attack in Ebonyi State. By working collaboratively with local communities, law enforcement agencies can effectively address the root causes of armed robbery and create safer environments for all residents.
3. There is need for increased collaboration between the police and members of the public in order to contain the incidence of rape cases in Ebonyi State. By working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders, law enforcement agencies can gather information and evidence on rape cases in Ebonyi State.

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