

## COMMUNITY POLICING AS A STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING PUBLIC SAFETY IN NIGERIA

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17414296>

### Abstract

*Community policing has emerged as a viable approach to addressing the persistent security challenges in Nigeria by fostering collaboration between law enforcement agencies and local communities. Despite various policing reforms, conventional security strategies remain ineffective in mitigating crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and terrorism. This review paper examines the role of community policing in enhancing safety in Nigeria by analyzing its principles, implementation challenges, and effectiveness. Drawing from qualitative research methods, this study synthesizes data from peer-reviewed journals, books, government reports, and policy documents to provide a comprehensive assessment of community policing within the Nigerian security framework. Findings indicate that while community policing has been successfully implemented in various regions globally—such as the United Kingdom, Japan, and Kenya—its application in Nigeria faces significant barriers, including corruption, lack of trust in law enforcement, inadequate funding, and political interference. However, empirical studies suggest that when properly implemented, community policing can significantly reduce crime rates, improve intelligence gathering, and foster public trust. The study further highlights key policy recommendations for enhancing community policing effectiveness in Nigeria, including increased stakeholder engagement, institutional reforms, and capacity-building initiatives for security personnel.*

**Keywords:** Community Policing, Security, Crime Prevention, Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Nigeria

### Introduction

Nigeria has experienced increasing crime rates in recent decades. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023), crime incidents in Nigeria increased by 15.6% between 2019 and 2022, with kidnapping, armed robbery, and banditry ranking among the most reported offenses. Insecurity has had significant socio-economic consequences, including disruptions to business activities, forced migration, and declining investor confidence (Eze & Abubakar, 2022). Efforts to combat crime, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) faces serious structural deficiencies, including understaffed, inadequate training, and poor funding (Adebayo, 2020). With an estimated police-to-citizen ratio of 1:540, Nigeria falls below the United Nations' recommended ratio of 1:450 (UNODC, 2022). The lack of community engagement and distrust between civilians and security agencies have further weakened policing efforts, leading to low crime reporting rates and increased reliance on vigilante groups (Okoli & Orinya, 2021). Therefore, community policing has emerged as a viable alternative to conventional policing models. Community policing operates on the principles of proximity policing, problem-solving, and community partnership to improve trust and enhance local safety (Skogan, 2019). In many countries, it has been effective in reducing crime and fostering cooperation between police and residents (Giwa & Johnson, 2021). Studies have shown that localized

policing strategies— where police officers collaborate with community members to identify and solve security issues—increase crime prevention efficiency and foster social trust (Osayomi, 2022). In Kenya, for example, the introduction of community policing led to a 23% reduction in crime rates over five years (Muthama, 2021). Similarly, in South Africa, community policing forums (CPFs) have improved intelligence gathering and early crime detection (Louw & Shaw, 2019). While in Nigeria, the implementation of community policing has been inconsistent, facing obstacles such as corruption, lack of public trust in law enforcement, and inadequate funding (Olawale, 2021). Nigeria continues to grapple with persistent and evolving security threats. The traditional policing model, characterized by reactive and centralized operations, has proven ineffective in tackling crime at the grassroots level (Onyeabor, 2022). Besides, several issues highlight the urgent need for a localized, community-driven approach to policing: For instance, insecurity in Nigeria has worsened in recent years, with statistics indicating a sharp rise in violent crimes. According to the Nigeria Security Tracker (NST, 2023), over 10,000 deaths were linked to violent attacks in 2022 alone. The Global Peace Index (GPI, 2023) ranks Nigeria among the least peaceful countries, citing Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, and communal conflicts as major security concerns.

Similarly, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is plagued by poor funding, inadequate personnel, and systemic corruption (Agbakwuru, 2021). Many Nigerians perceive the police as inefficient and untrustworthy, leading to low levels of cooperation between law enforcement and communities (Okeke, 2020). As a result, victims of crime are often reluctant to report incidents, further undermining crime prevention efforts. A 2022 survey by Afrobarometer revealed that over 65% of Nigerians distrust the police, citing brutality, extortion, and inefficiency as key concerns. The #EndSARS protests of 2020, which emerged in response to police misconduct, underscored the deep-seated tensions between citizens and law enforcement agencies (Adedeji, 2021). This lack of trust hinders effective policing and crime prevention, making community engagement crucial for security reforms.

Empirical evidence suggests that community policing can improve security outcomes by fostering collaboration between law enforcement and civilians (Brown & Keating, 2020). In countries like Japan, the United Kingdom, and Rwanda, community policing has significantly enhanced crime detection and prevention efforts (Kagame, 2022). Given Nigeria's complex security landscape, adopting a decentralized, localized security approach could help mitigate security challenges and improve public trust. Moreover, community policing initiatives have been piloted in several states, including Lagos, Kano, Ondo, Enugu and Anambra, with mixed results (Akinyele, 2020). While some regions have reported lower crime rates and increased police-community collaboration, others continue to struggle due to poor implementation, lack of trust, and political interference (Nwankwo, 2021). There is limited reports on the effectiveness of localized community policing in different Nigerian regions. Therefore, this review study examines the role of community policing in enhancing safety in Nigeria, exploring its effectiveness, challenges, and prospects. It also evaluates empirical evidence from local and international contexts to determine whether localized security solutions can provide sustainable improvements in public safety.

## **Research Methodology**

The study applied theoretical and qualitative methods. The research design used is content analysis as data was sourced secondarily through scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, newspaper reports and relevant materials downloaded from the internet.

## **Conceptual Clarifications/Literature Review Community Policing**

Community policing or neighbourhood policing or proximity policing has been variously defined, but they are all mainly different ways of saying the same thing. The word "community" add to policing (community policing) definitely is referring to a communityoriented approach of policing to combat crime. Community policing is in essence collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community crime problems. With the police no longer the sole guardians of law and order, all members of the community become active allies in the effort to enhance the safety and quality of neighbourhoods. It entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all in which people take active part in their own affairs (Ikuteyijo & Rotimi, 2012). Community policing involves an interpersonal contract and a management strategy that promotes the joint responsibility of citizens and the police for community safety. It is a philosophy and strategy which is based on a partnership between the community and the police to find creative solutions for contemporary community problems, crime and other related matters (Rooyen, 2001). According to SAPS Police, community policing is a philosophy that guides police community partnerships and a problem-solving approach responsive to the needs of the community (Reyneke, 1997). Community policing means making the police more cooperative with those who are not police (Mastrofski, Worden & Snipes, 1995).

In addition, community policing is a proactive policing strategy that emphasizes collaboration between law enforcement agencies and the community to identify and solve security issues. It involves decentralizing police authority, fostering trust, and encouraging citizen participation in crime prevention (Skogan, 2006). According to Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990), community policing aims to create partnerships between police and citizens to reduce crime and enhance public trust.

Adams (1994) defines community policing to mean a shift from a military inspired approach to fighting crime to one that relies on forming partnership with constituents. Consequently, community policing has become a term used by both professionals and scholars alike to replace other terms such as foot patrol, crime prevention, problem-oriented policing, communityoriented policing, police community relations and more (Friedman, 1992). Therefore, community policing is a policing strategy or philosophy based on the notion that community interaction and support can help control crime and reduce fear, with community members helping to identify suspects, detain vandals and bring problems to the attention of police. In other words, community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, which proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder and fear of crime. Perhaps, the inference that can be distilled from these definitions is that community policing, unlike the authoritarian and autocratic character and top-down approach of traditional policing, is democratic,

participatory and consultative, and bottom-top in approach which is why it is referred to as democracy in action. However, no matter how community policing is defined, it represents a paradigm shift away from traditional policing or traditional model of policing. The central theme is the collaboration of efforts between the police and the residence in combating crime and fear of crime. Community policing does not imply that the police are no longer in authority or that the primary duty of preserving law and order is subordinated, rather community policing entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all (Ikuteyijo et al., 2012).

Community policing, just as the name implies, requires a unique partnership with the public and police in crime prevention and control within the community. It is a modern policing strategy which allows the police to proactively act beyond mere crime fighting, but to partner with community members in setting the security priorities in the society and fashioning ways of resolving identified problems in the community (Trojanowicz, Kappeler, Gaines, Bucqueroux & Sluder, 1998). This synergy between the police and the public is anchored on mutual trust and respect between both parties, and could be enhanced through adequate community policing training. This partnership will make both the police and the people “coproducers of safety” in the community (Jerome & David, 1998).

Historically, African societies of old used their various traditional institutions to achieve and maintain maximum level of public safety, orderliness and conformity. Policing in the precolonial era was not uniformed. An organized system was in place within the respective communities in the pre-colonial period. Prior to the advent of the Nigeria Police Force in 1889 by the British colonial administration, there were various groups performing the role of policing the communities in what is today known as Nigeria. In some cases like Igbo precolonial societies, the role of policing or protecting lives and property of the people was the responsibility of the entire community even though it was facilitated by the age grade and masquerade societies. It was this model of community policing that colonial police supplanted with the colonial police in 1889 to provide quasi-military assistance to the British colonial administration in Nigeria (Okeke, 2013). Policing in the Northern part of the pre-colonial Nigeria was through the dogarai (Rotimi, 2003) who were the bodyguards of the Sarki (Emir or King). This group headed by the Sarkin dogarai capture and discipline offenders and guard the community with warders. Community policing is a paradigm shift that seeks to focus on constructive engagement with people who are the end users of the police service and re – negotiate the contract between the people and the police thereby making the community co– producers of justice and a quality police service.

### **Principles and Core Components of Community Policing**

Community policing is based on several key principles that guide its implementation. These include: First, through community-based crime prevention, or what some have called proactive problem-solving, police officers dedicate attention to the roots of perceived problems instead of solely focusing on incidents themselves. Trained to gather pertinent information about criminal events, police seek to find the likely source of social problems to avoid further criminal incidents. In some cases, citizens are also able to participate in problem-solving training to gather information. Community-based crime prevention can also

include program implementation, particularly programs to help educate youth about the risks of drug-use and gangs. Some of the major national police-sponsored crime prevention and educational programs include: Neighborhood Watch; DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education); and GREAT (Gang Resistance Education and Training). These programs also serve to increase police involvement in communities outside of the scope of crime-solving, which leads to the second component of community policing: proactive police participation.

A proactive police participation approach aims to incorporate police into communities beyond responding to criminal complaints, as a means to build relationships with residents and community members. As such, police units have worked to establish partnerships with a variety of actors, including government agencies, residents at neighborhood associations and town hall meetings, nonprofit organizations, and local private businesses. Also, it is not uncommon for local police departments to place uniformed officers on foot, on horses, or on bicycles in an effort to build relationships with residents. Free from the physical barriers present with patrol vehicles, these more accessible means of transport allow the police to get to know residents. While these types of police presence strategies might make some residents feel safer, research finds it can also intimidate community members. For instance, when approached by police, racial minorities, younger community members, and the poor lower income residents are more likely to “feel like a suspect,” regard less of whether or not they are breaking the law (Tyler, Jackson, & Mentovich, 2015). And although police presence aims to deter criminal activity and make residents feel safer, evidence suggests that community members do not feel they are more likely to get caught for breaking the law when there is increased police presence (Tyler et al., 2015), nor does it always make residents feel a greater sense of safety (Hinkle & Weisburd. 2008).

A third common component of community policing involves shifting command responsibilities to lower ranks of the police force by training officers to be relatively autonomous and to utilize discretion. For instance, in cases of citizen disorderly conduct, officers are taught to make arrests only when all other problem-solving options are exhausted. At the height of community policing efforts, officers were structurally supported by programs like San Francisco Cares, which created systems for officers to refer people who were homeless and people who were inebriated in public to services instead of jail booking stations. These types of system highlight the power officers have in making discretionary decisions that can disproportionately impact the most vulnerable. Conversely, critics have argued that when “legal standards” are blurred– that is, when police officers widely exercise discretion– factors like race, sex, and wealth may play a more significant role in who is and who is not arrested (Mastrofski et al., 1995). The final component of community policing involves public participation in planning and supervising police operations. Ideally, power is delegated to the community to make decisions about police planning and agendas. For instance, police officers can document the needs of particular beat areas based on structured or everyday community feedback, door knocking, and systematic tracking of where crime occurs, through programs such as New York City’s CompStat. These data can be used to inform police work plans. Police are also charged with establishing mechanisms for community members to supervise police operations. This process has

received the most push back from police units across the country. Although community members who participate in advisory boards can view police and crime statistics and offer input about crime prevention, true supervisory and punitive power over the police does not rest with everyday community members.

### **Security**

Security is a fragile and significant issue which conveys different meanings to scholars, analysts, policy makers and organizations across the globe. Fundamentally, security has to do with the presence of peace, safety, gladness and the protection of human and physical resources or absence of crisis or threats to human dignity, all of which facilitate development and progress of any human society. The concept of security has also become a preoccupation for the decades following the end of the Cold War which could also be referred to as landmark for diverse school of thought with security studies. Security, as a concept, has diverse dimensions. It is aptly used in psychology, finance, information access, public safety, defense and military matters. The meaning of security is ambiguous as its scope continues to expand every day. The elastic nature of the concept of security attracts different meanings and different views. Security is an important concept that every human person desires and it has one or two meanings though it defies precise definition. This account for the position of Buzan (1991) who describes security as an ambiguous and multidimensional concept in which military factors have attracted misappropriate attention.

To others, security refers to the protection of individuals, communities, and institutions from threats such as crime, violence, terrorism, and cyber threats (Buzan, 1991). It is a broad concept that encompasses both human and national security. In the Nigerian context, security includes efforts to address insurgency, banditry, and communal conflicts (Akinola & Adepoku, 2021). Again, security has to do with the process connected with assuaging any kind of threat to people and their precious values. This is why Buzan asserts that security is about freedom from threat and ability of states to maintain independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change, which they see as hostile while its bottom line is survival (Bodunde, et.al., 2014). From the foregoing, security is generally agreed to be about feeling of being safe from harm, fear, anxiety, oppression, danger, poverty, defence, protection and preservation of core values and threat to those values. William (2008) equally submits that security is most commonly associated with the alleviation of threats to cherish values, especially those threats which threaten the survival of a particular reference object.

In line with the above, Imobighe states that "security has to do with freedom from danger or threats 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 internal security could be seen as the freedom from or the absence of those tendencies, which could undermine internal cohesion, and the corporate existence of a country and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people (Ogaba. 2010). It could therefore be inferred that security, be it classical, state-centric and traditionalist or non-traditionalist, is all about protection of assets including living and non-living resources against loss or damage. Williams (2013) defines security as widely associated with mitigating the threat to cherished value, particularly if

left unchecked in the near future threatens the existence of a specific referent object. Onifade (2013) Security is seen as a situation that emerges from the establishment of ways of protecting individuals, information, and properties from hostile people, influences, and behavior. It has to do with a situation in which people can travel around within a given natural space or elsewhere without any real and imaginary threats to their lives or properties. A condition where, with their two eyes firmly closed, people will sleep at night. Security of Life and property is really the fundamental reason for a government to exist in the first place, as attested by the various theorists of social contracts (Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu).

### **Dimensions of Security**

Security is characterized by seven dimensions (Afolabi, 2016). These are:

- i. **Economic Security:** This type of security requires an assured basic income for individuals mostly from productive and remunerative work or from a publicly financed safety net. In this sense, only about a quarter of the world's people are presently economically secure and the economic security problem may be more serious in third world countries. Major threats of economic security are poverty, unemployment, indebtedness, lack of income. It germane to state that aforementioned threats constitute pertinent factors causing political tensions and other forms of violence in the developing countries.
- ii. **Food Security:** Food security demands that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food. Major threats to this include hunger, famines and the lack of physical and economic access to basic food. Though United Nations maintain that the overall availability of food is not a problem; rather the problem often is the poor distribution of food and lack of money/purchasing power. In the past, food security problems have been dealt with at both national and global levels. However, their impacts are limited. According to UN, the key is to tackle the problems relating to access to assets, work and assured income (related to economic security).
- iii. **Health Security:** This tends to guarantee a minimum protection from diseases and unhealthy daily life. In less - developed countries, the major causes of death traditionally were infectious and diseases, Inadequate health care, new and recurrent diseases including epidemics and pandemics, poor nutrition and unsafe environment and unsafe lifestyles; whereas in develop countries, the major killers are diseases of the circulatory system. However, lifestyle related chronic diseases are leading killers globally with 80 percent of deaths from chronic diseases occurring in low- and middle-income countries. In both developing and industrial countries, threats to health security are usually greater for poor people in local areas, particularly children. This is as a result of poor or bad nutrition and inadequate access to health services, clean water and other basic necessities.
- iv. **Environmental Security:** The primary goal of this is to protect people from the short and long-term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the natural environment. In the third world countries, lack of access to clean water resources is one of the greatest environmental threats while the major threats in industrial countries are air pollution and global warming which are caused by the emission of greenhouse gases. Again, environmental degradation, natural disasters and resource depletion are general all over the world.

v. **Personal Security:** This is all about the protection of individuals and people from physical violence either from the state or outside the state. It could be from violent individuals, substate actors and from domestic abuse. Hence, the greater and the common threat to personal security from the state (torture), other states (war), groups of people (ethnic tension), individuals or gangs (crime), industrial, workplace or traffic accidents. The security threats and risks on persons and often families are many and vary from place to place and also from time to time. These include: theft, armed robbery, burglary, food poisoning, electrocution, fire outbreak, home accident and host of others.

vi. **Community Security:** Community security aims to protect people from the loss of traditional relationships, values and from sectarian and ethnic violence. Traditional communities, particularly minority ethnic groups are often threatened. About half of the world's states have experienced some inter-ethnic rivalry. Threats to community security are usually from the group (oppressive practices), between groups (ethnic violence), from dominant groups (e.g. indigenous people's vulnerability). In 1993, the United Nations declared the Year of Indigenous People to highlight the continuing vulnerability of about 300 million aboriginal people in seventy countries as they face a widening spiral of violence. In Africa, many nation-states have witnessed ethnic clashes, land and boundary clashes, and intra-religious and inter-religious conflict all of which constitute threats. vii. **Political Security:** This embraces guarantee and protection of fundamental human rights of citizenry. It is concerned with whether people live in a society that honours their basic freedoms. Some of threats attached to these are political or state repression, including torture, disappearance, human rights violations, detention and imprisonment. The assessment of the Amnesty International reveals that, political repression, systematic torture, ill treatment, hostage taken and kidnapping are still being practice in about One Hundred and ten (110) countries. Human rights violations are frequent during periods of political unrest and by security agencies in the third world countries (UNDP, 1994).

### **Safety**

The term "safety" comes from the Latin words "*sine cura*", which in translation means "lack of care", "lack of worries". In a broader sense, it is defined as "certainty of existence and survival, possession, as well as functioning and development of the subject. It is the result of a lack of threats and their proper perception, it also arises as a result of the creative activity of a given entity" (Zajac, 2009). The modern concept of safety has a broader dimension than in the past. It covers political, military, economic and technological, ecological, social and humanitarian factors. It also includes preserving the national identity and respecting fundamental civil rights and freedoms. Most often, safety is defined as an anxiety-free state that creates a sense of confidence (Zieba, 2005).

Safety can be defined as the process of achieving a desired state by specific individuals or the state. It is related to the dynamics of changes in society that are conditioned by a given situation in the country. In addition, safety is also referred to as the need for peace and development opportunities. This is also related to the certainty that the entity is not in danger (Ciekankowski, Nowicka, Wyrebek, 2017). Safety defined in this way means that not only a given country, but also society, which can be perceived both as a given

individual and, contributes to its sense. Abraham Maslow also included a need for safety. Safety occupies the second position in the pyramid, after physiological needs. It follows that, to meet other needs, man must be sure that he is safe. The concept of safety in the pyramid of needs is literally referred to as freedom from fear (Maslow, 2010). "Safety has two main components: a guarantee of the inviolable survival of a given entity and the freedom of its development". According to J. Stanczyk, "the essence of safety based on guarantees of inviolable survival and freedom of development is certainty. Certainty is a condition of both of these components, and it can be objective or subjective. Safety in a synthetic approach can be defined as the objective certainty of guaranteeing inviolable survival and development freedoms" (Stanczyk, 1996).

Safety is the state of being protected from harm, danger, or injury. It is often used interchangeably with security but focuses more on individual well-being and the reduction of risks in various environments (Reynald, 2011). In policing, safety measures include the presence of law enforcement, community involvement, and technological interventions such as CCTV surveillance.

In the literature, safety is also seen as, a guarantee of inviolable survival and free development of the safety subject (Stanczyk, 1996); a state of calmness, confidence, lack of danger and protection against it (Zieba, 2005); maintaining sovereignty and territorial integrity, free choice of the country's development path, achieving individual well-being and social development (Czaputowicz, 2003); appropriate state of organization of defense and protection against military and non-military threats of various areas of state activity (Szubrycht, 2006).

### **Theoretical Framework for Security in Nigeria**

Security in Nigeria is a multidimensional issue that requires various theoretical perspectives to understand its causes, dynamics, and solutions. Several theories can be applied to security studies, including Frustration-Aggression Theory, Social Contract Theory, Broken Windows Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory.

**Frustration-Aggression Theory:** Frustration-Aggression Theory is commonly used in security studies. Dollard, the proponent of the theory states that frustration occurs when pleasure is blocked and aggression is always a consequence or natural response to frustration, which is directed at persons or objects perceived to be the cause of the frustration (Dollard et al., 1939). Therefore, insecurity as an aggressive action occurs as a result of frustration. Frustration emerges when there is a blockage or an impediment to goal accomplishment. This theory is closely linked with Ted Robert Gurr's Relative Deprivation Theory. The theory proposes that when an individual is deprived of his progressive advancement, it leads to frustration and the end result is violence or aggression. Rahmati and Momtaz (2013) define aggression as a physical hostility meant to hurt others (Rahmati et al., 2013). Scholars have also defined aggression in some other ways aside physical aggression which may be verbal. To Coakley, aggression may be verbal directed at inflicting pain. Whichever way, aggression is directed at hurting another. Rahmati et al. (2013) classified aggression into two: effective aggression and instrumental aggression. Geen linked effective aggression to harm, which is precipitated by negative emotional condition. Anderson and Huesmann (2003), further state that reactive aggression occurs as a result of prior provocation, which is accompanied by anger

(Anderson et al., 2003). Galtung opines that there are some conditions that may trigger aggression, when people are in a state of inequality in a socio-political and economic setting and conflict naturally follows. Galtung's position correlates with Davies's proposition on the occurrence of conflict as a result of non-actualization of a person's expectations either politically or economically. Therefore, violence is the natural end product of frustration.

**Social Contract Theory:** The Social Contract Theory originates from the works of philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes (1651), John Locke (1689), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762). The theory suggests that individuals consent to give up some freedoms to a governing authority in exchange for security and social order. Above perspective has used to explain different behaviours in security. For example, in Nigeria, the social contract is crucial as citizens expect the government to provide security in exchange for their obedience to the law. The failure of the government to ensure security has led to insecurity, vigilantism, and rising cases of insurgency (e.g., Boko Haram, banditry, and communal clashes). The breakdown of the social contract due to corruption, weak governance, and lack of trust in law enforcement contributes to high crime rates. More so, various empirical evidence like a study by Adebayo & Ojo (2023) found that 80% of Nigerians feel insecure due to poor law enforcement and governance failures. Transparency International (2022) reported that Nigeria ranked 154 out of 180 in the Corruption Perceptions Index, impacting security and governance. While, Akinyemi (2021) highlighted that the breach of the social contract has increased youth radicalization and organized crime in Nigeria.

**Broken Windows Theory:** The broken windows theory, introduced by social scientists James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in their seminal 1982 article "Broken Windows," posits that visible signs of disorder and neglect—such as broken windows, graffiti, and litter—can lead to an increase in serious crime. The theory suggests that addressing minor disorders promptly helps prevent more significant criminal activity by maintaining an environment of order and lawfulness. The theory has significantly influenced policing strategies, particularly in urban settings. One notable implementation occurred in New York City during the 1990s under Police Commissioner William Bratton. The New York Police Department (NYPD) adopted a zerotolerance approach toward minor offenses, such as vandalism and fare evasion, based on the principles of the broken windows theory. This strategy coincided with a substantial decrease in crime rates; for instance, felonies like assault and burglary fell by more than 40% during that period. Empirical studies on the broken windows theory have yielded mixed results. A 2015 meta-analysis found that disorder policing strategies, such as "hot spots policing" or problemoriented policing, resulted in consistent crime reduction across various offense types. However, the analysis noted that aggressive order-maintenance strategies targeting individual disorderly behaviors did not generate significant crime reductions. The authors recommended that police develop "community co-production" policing strategies instead of merely increasing misdemeanor arrests. Further research by Ling Ren and colleagues examined the theory's impact on citizen engagement in crime prevention. Their study indicated that perceptions of disorder increased fear for personal safety, which in turn reduced collective efficacy—the community's ability to maintain social order. This diminished collective efficacy was associated with lower levels of

citizen participation in crime prevention efforts. Applying the broken windows theory to Nigeria requires consideration of the country's unique socioeconomic and cultural context. Nigeria faces challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and infrastructural deficits, which contribute to both physical and social disorder. Visible signs of neglect, like dilapidated buildings and uncollected waste, are common in many urban areas. These theories provide a solid foundation for understanding and addressing security challenges in Nigeria: Social Contract Theory explains the role of governance and public trust in security. Broken Windows Theory highlights the importance of crime prevention through urban maintenance.

**Relative Deprivation Theory:** According to Ted Robert Gurr, this theory provides a gap between expected and achieved welfare, rather than an absolute standard of deprivation, which creates collective discontent. It also hinges on inferiority on the path of individuals who find other people's welfare superior to them (Gurr, 2011). This simply means that there is a difference between what ought to be and what actually is; the haves and the have not. Gurr further posits that collective discontent caused by a sense of relative deprivation results in political violence. This collective discontent spurs men to violence (Richardson, 2011). When the progress of an individual or a group is frustrated and runs contrary to the expectation, the individual or group may result to violence to achieve their aim. Although Gurr popularised the theory, relative deprivation can actually be traced to ancient Greece, where Aristotle posited that revolution is orchestrated by a relative sense of inequality; the quest for a political or economic equality on the path of those who feel deprived and the quest more political and economic power, which results in inequality on the part of the elites. According to Richardson, it was an era when Aristotle justified revolution. Morrison (1971) posited that this theory had long existed and it is existed in socio-political and economic context because it focuses on feelings and actions (Morrison, 1971), situating this theory within the context of terrorism connotes that the feeling of deprivation or neglect; the sense of inequality by an individual or a group of people as compared with others may trigger terrorism in order to achieve the initial objective. Gurr categorized deprivation into three:

- 1) *Aspirational deprivation:* This is a situation whereby the value expectations rise but capabilities remain the same. This occurs in situation of civil rights movements, where a class of people demands rights already available to another class of people. This results to frustration among the class of people.
- 2) *Decremental deprivation:* The value expectations of a class of people do not change but decrease over time. This situation happens in times of war or natural disaster.
- 3) *Progressive deprivation:* This is an interplay of the above two categorization. Value expectation cannot keep up with value capabilities. This occurs when a hitherto booming economy suddenly declines. This will cause discontent among the people. A typical example in this present day is the fall of crude oil in the global market. For nations like Nigeria, whose economy is largely dependent on crude oil, the Government's capabilities to deliver economic goods to the people has declined while the people's expectations are on the increase. Thus, the people feel deprived and neglected.

## **State of Security and Safety in Nigeria**

Security and safety are essential for national stability, economic growth, and social development. However, Nigeria faces persistent and complex security challenges, ranges from terrorism/insurgency, armed banditry, militancy, cultism and ethnic agitations to religious fundamentalism, herder-farmer clashes, and inter-communal clashes. Also, cases of armed robbery, various forms of transnational crimes, gangsterism, and periodic electoral violence pervade the country's landscape, with

Given the above, Nigeria's security landscape has deteriorated in recent years, with increasing cases of violent crime, terrorism, and organized criminal activities. According to the Global Peace Index (2023), Nigeria ranks among the least peaceful nations, with over 50,000 people killed due to insecurity in the past decade (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023). More importantly, Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have been responsible for over 40,000 deaths since 2009 (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023), while more than 2 million people are internally displaced in the Northeast due to insurgency (UNHCR, 2022). The group has evolved into factions, including the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), intensifying attacks in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states.

Kidnapping for ransom has become widespread, particularly in the Northwest and NorthCentral regions. Between 2021 and 2023, over 10,000 kidnappings were recorded (Nigeria Security Tracker, 2023). Bandit groups attack villages, rob travelers, and raid schools. Additionally, clashes between Fulani herders and farming communities have led to thousands of deaths in Benue, Plateau, and Kaduna states (International Crisis Group, 2022). Competition for land and water resources has fueled these violent conflicts. Similarly, climate change and desertification have worsened competition for land and water, fueling conflicts. Of course, Nigeria has become a hub for cybercrime, commonly known as "Yahoo Yahoo" fraud. According to Interpol (2022), Nigeria loses about \$1.8 billion annually to cybercrime. Election periods are often marked by violence, with incidents of thuggery, ballot box snatching, and assassinations, and attacks on political opponents. Reports from CLEEN Foundation (2023) show that Nigeria recorded over 200 election-related deaths during the 2023 elections. Oil theft is another criminal activity that has been plaguing the Niger Delta region, with farreaching impact on the national economy. Oil theft in the oil-producing region of Nigeria has increased significantly, despite the presence and counter-theft operations of security agencies including the Armed Forces and the National Security and Civil Defence Corps. According to a report by the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), about \$42 billion was lost to oil theft and sabotage over a ten-year period. Given Nigeria's huge reliance on oil, the scale of theft of the commodity and loss in potential revenue is clearly an economic sabotage. Indeed, a picture of the revenue the country has lost to oil theft can be gleaned from the many discoveries lately of hidden pipelines, with an outlet in the sea, that siphon oil from major supply lines. One of these was described as being over four-kilometre long and believed to have existed for years.

The nature and trend of cultist activities in Nigeria have gone beyond being a social menace to posing a threat to national security considering the worrisome spate of cult-related crimes recorded in different parts of the country. Cultism started as confraternities confined within university campuses to maintain

law and order, as well as support social justice and human rights in Nigeria. Its activities were non-violent dispute resolution and fighting against elitist tendencies. However, over the years, cults have evolved into gangs that conduct attacks within communities, directly threatening the security of life and property. Cultism is fuelled by unemployment, youth bulge, inconsistencies in the university system, proliferation of illicit arms, a breakdown of moral codes and values as well as other socio-cultural inadequacies manifesting in the country in recent times. Some of the known cult groups in Nigeria are Black Axe, Vikings, Eiye and Aiye confraternities. Cultism as a social menace does not exist in isolation; crimes such as extortion, intimidation, armed robbery, assassinations, targeted killings, drug abuse, sexual assault, murder, and bullying are associated with it directly or indirectly. Cult groups also serve as a pool for thugs employed by politicians to disrupt the safe conduct of free and fair elections. Despite the efforts of security agencies to curtail cultism, the menace remains a threat to national security because it constitutes a major source of recruitment for other criminal networks in the country.

Inter-communal clashes are a recurring security challenge in Nigeria and the dynamics differ from one clash to the other. But they are mostly occasioned by boundary/land disputes, tussles over traditional leadership and titles, settler-indigene animosity, struggle over natural resources and religious intolerance. Other causes of inter-communal clashes are perceived dominance/marginalisation in governance, nepotism, corruption, inequalities, and injustice. There is a high incidence of inter communal clashes across the country, with the most recurring ones being farmer-herder clash in Benue State, indigene-settler clashes in Zango-Kataf and other parts of Kaduna State as well as Jos, Mangu and other parts of Plateau State and TivJukun crisis in Taraba State, as well as the Itsekiri-Urhobo crisis in Delta State. There are also occasional clashes between Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba in some parts of the South West, particularly in Sagamu, Ogun State, with the most recent incident in Shasha, Ibadan in Oyo State. In sum, Nigeria's security situation is marked by various forms of violence and crime. According to the Global Peace Index (2023), Nigeria ranks among the most insecure countries, largely due to terrorism, armed banditry, and violent crime.

### **Factors Contributing to Insecurity in Nigeria**

Some of the factors contributing to insecurity in Nigeria include but are not limited to:

#### **1. Ineffective Criminal Justice System**

Efficient criminal justice administration is key to curbing crimes in the society and ensuring long-term solutions to security challenges. Unfortunately, there are existing inadequacies and human indiscretions that make the system unable to fully rise to the challenge. Corruption in the law enforcement and justice sector aids escape of criminals from the law, which emboldens and imbues them with a sense of impunity and makes the wronged persons take the laws into their own hands for vengeance. Extortion and torture in the hands of security agents have been cited by many high-profile criminals as a reason for their indulgence in criminal activities or their extreme show of sadism. There is also insufficient capacity and lack of deliberate effort to take apprehended high-profile criminals through the justice dispensation process. For example, the trial of Boko Haram suspects in Kainji, Niger State, which began in 2017, drew a

lot of criticism for lacking sufficient transparency and rigour, and for the fact it had yet to cover a lot of suspects, relative to the number of persons in custody.

## **2. Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons**

Arms proliferation is a driver of insecurity in Nigeria. Arms proliferation has been defined as the “excessive accumulation and illegal spread of weapons which could have a destabilizing effect on national security). The point to note here is that the illegal movement of arms from one place to another denotes illicit arms availability for illegal use and by illegal persons or groups of persons. There is a high flow of illegal arms in different parts of the country. The availability of these arms to criminal elements poses a danger for the country as criminals have access to automatic weapons, which in some cases are more sophisticated than those used by security agents. Readily available arms are often incentives for people and groups with ill motives to conduct attacks, further exacerbating insecurity. Arms proliferation is a recipe for disaster, which further highlights the connecting line between the proliferation of arms and insecurity, as without access to arms, it will be difficult, for criminal elements to operate. The implication for Nigeria is the high level of insecurity currently manifesting across the country.

## **3. High Incidence of Poverty and Unemployment**

Nigeria was once described as the poverty capital of the world, by the World Poverty Clock, an online real time aggregator. It is argued that four in every 10 Nigerians are living in poverty, with just 17% of Nigerian workers having the wage jobs able to lift people out of poverty. As of the fourth quarter of 2020, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics reported that the unemployment rate had risen to 33%, making it the second highest on the global list (Bloomberg 2021). According to the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, 39.1 percent of Nigerians lived below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per person per day (2011 PPP) in 2018/19. Yet a further 31.9 percent of Nigerians had consumption levels between \$1.90 and \$3.20 per person per day, making them vulnerable to falling into extreme poverty when shocks occur. In addition, a high population growth rate, limited job opportunities, and the low value of the naira in the exchange/capital market have further pushed many Nigerians below the poverty line. High incidence of poverty and unemployment expands the pool of possible recruits for criminal activities.

## **4. Climate Change**

Climate change, emanating from global warming, orchestrated by human activities in the environment, has led to depletion of the ozone layer. Scientists have reached a consensus that global warming is real and that human activities are causing the warming trend. Increasing global temperatures are having serious consequences on human lives with the world witnessing rising sea levels, changes in climate patterns, changes in the amount and pattern of precipitation, and more severe weather, including stronger tropical storms, droughts, and heat waves, floods, among others. The effects of climate change are being felt across the globe, but in Nigeria, it has had a significant impact in increasing conflict and insecurity. Coastal erosion and flooding are now frequently experienced in Lagos, Kogi, and Benue states, among others, due to high precipitation. Drought and desertification have increased in recent years, negatively impacting the arid northern states. The Lake Chad, for example, has shrunk by 90 percent since 1960s. Elsewhere, overflowing

rivers and torrential rains have led to displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and destruction of large expanse of farmlands. These changes in climate have led to population displacement and increased migration to safer and more prosperous locations.

### **5. Quest for Resource Control**

Nigeria is rich in various natural solid and liquid mineral deposits. There is no region that lacks an important resource. Section 1(1) of the Nigerian Minerals and Mining Act of 2007 gives the Federal Government ownership, control, and the right to mining of all mineral resources in the country. Nevertheless, resource control has been the cause of insecurity in different parts of the country, including the Niger Delta, which is rich in crude oil. The Niger Delta militants, for instance, argued that their cause was a form of reaction to the government's neglect of oil spillage as well as the ravaging activities of oil exploration in the Niger Delta. Despite their argument, the activities of militants threaten national security because they are a form of economic sabotage. According to reports, an estimated 80% of mining in the northern region, particularly gold mining in Zamfara, is carried out illegally with militia support (bandits). In Zamfara State, for example, the suspension and subsequent FG ban on all mining activities had no deterrent effect on illegal mining operations or crimes of banditry. Rather, it merely shifted the focus of attacks to vulnerable civilian communities and commuters, as well as movement to other state mines, most notably Katsina and Kano.

### **6. Socio-Political Imbalances**

Distribution of government's resources, employment, and appointments in Nigeria has always been a source of controversy among the many regional and ethnic groups in Nigeria. The cry of marginalization and perceived favouring of some groups against others come up every now and then. This gave rise to the concept of Federal Character enshrined in the working laws of Nigeria. It is, therefore, both a reaction as well as a system. The principle is supposedly a positive reaction to correct the wrongs of the past in the conduct of public service and to exploit the great diversities of the country. Despite the principle in place, the practical implementation and interpretation of this policy have not sufficiently addressed the intended of its framers. Inequalities serve as the tinder for agitations by ethnic, regional, or religious groups.

### **7. Porous Border**

The country's unstable frontiers, where human movements are essentially untracked, have led to Nigeria's level of insecurity. There is an unregulated inflow of Small Arms and Light Weapons into the country as a result of the porous borders which has enabled militancy and crime in Nigeria. Edeko (2011) has reported that Nigeria hosts over 70% of about 8million illegal weapons that have been used to create a security crisis. In addition, the porous condition of both the Nigerian borders has contributed the uncontrollable influx of migrants, predominantly young people, from nearby countries such as the Republic of Niger, Chad and the Republic of Benin accountable for some of the insecurity promoting criminal activities in Nigeria, (Adeola & Olayemi, 2012).

## **8. Ineffective Security Architecture**

There are similarities in the statutory roles of the various security services and agencies in Nigeria. It therefore makes it difficult for them to demarcate their constitutional responsibilities, which often culminates in clashes between different personnel on various security matters rather than a joined-up approach to fighting crime in a joint security environment. To achieve overall national security, cooperative and team operations are necessary between or among these agencies. It is not an exaggeration to assert that the fight against insurgency and banditry in the country is unsuccessful, partly because of the disharmonious disposition of the security agencies. The Nigerian government should, therefore, develop a mechanism capable of harmonising the various agencies and, as well, enlighten them on the need to place national security above everything else. One other factor that has worsened insecurity in the country is the inadequacies within the production of credible intelligence, including the lack of synergy and poor usage of intelligence products, which has allowed the threat elements to persist and fester. Where there is sufficient information on the threats, the process of collection and analysis of same is stifled by service bureaucracy. In addition, the decision maker's reaction to available intelligence is often slow and sometimes uncoordinated. Intelligence operations need to be better coordinated, more robust and where possible, decentralized to identify threats within localities. Additionally, despite provisions within the Intelligence Services Act 2001, the government is yet to appoint an ombudsman and standards unit for the intelligence community, which will ensure it remains in compliance with Nigeria's democratic tenets.

### **Benefits of Community Policing in Enhancing Public Safety**

Community policing has been shown to significantly improve public safety by fostering cooperation and reducing crime. Some of the notable benefits include:

- 1) **Reduction in Crime Rates:** Studies indicate that community policing can lead to a 1520% decrease in crime rates over a five-year period when implemented effectively (Gill et al., 2020). This is achieved through improved intelligence gathering, citizen participation, and targeted interventions. The United States has adopted the CompStat model, which integrates crime data analysis with community engagement. This model has led to a 2030% reduction in violent crime in major cities like New York and Chicago (Weisburd & Braga, 2021). Nigeria can adopt data-driven strategies to improve law enforcement efficiency.
- 2) **Improved Police-Community Relations:** By involving community members in safety initiatives, community policing builds trust and reduces hostility between law enforcement and the public. Research in Nigeria suggests that 73% of citizens feel safer when police officers engage in community-based initiatives (Alemika, 2021). South Africa has implemented Community Safety Forums (CSFs) that involve civilians in policy discussions and crime prevention initiatives. Research shows that areas with active CSFs experience a 25% decline in crime rates (Alemika, 2021). Nigeria can adopt similar forums to encourage citizen participation.
- 3) **Enhanced Public Cooperation and Intelligence Gathering:** When community members trust law enforcement agencies, they are more likely to report crimes, provide information, and participate in neighborhood watch programs (Skogan, 2022).

4) **Strengthening Social Cohesion:** Community policing fosters stronger community ties, promoting collective efforts in crime prevention and neighborhood safety (Cordner, 2020). The Neighbourhood Policing Model in the UK prioritizes visible policing and regular engagement with communities. Reports indicate a 35% improvement in public trust and cooperation (Gill et al., 2020). Nigeria can implement neighborhood policing initiatives to enhance law enforcement credibility.

5) **Effective Use of Resources:** Traditional policing methods often rely on large budgets for response-oriented operations. Community policing helps reduce policing costs by up to 30% by shifting focus from reactive measures to proactive engagement (Bayley, 2020). Japan's Koban system involves small neighborhood police stations staffed with officers who interact closely with residents. This model has contributed to Japan having one of the lowest crime rates globally (Bayley, 2020). Nigeria can implement localized policing outposts to enhance police presence in communities. Community policing offers a localized, cost-effective, and sustainable approach to enhancing public safety in Nigeria. By learning from global best practices, Nigeria can build a more inclusive and accountable policing system. With proper implementation, community policing has the potential to significantly reduce crime rates, improve trust in law enforcement, and promote safer communities.

### **Challenges and Limitations of Community Policing in Nigeria**

Community policing in Nigeria has been introduced as a strategy to improve security and foster police-community collaboration. However, its implementation faces numerous challenges that hinder its effectiveness. These challenges stem from structural, socio-political, economic, and institutional factors that limit the full realization of community policing objectives (Alemika, 2021).

★ **Weak Institutional Framework and Lack of Legal Backing:** One of the primary challenges of community policing in Nigeria is the absence of a strong legal and institutional framework to guide its implementation. While policies have been developed, there is no comprehensive legal backing to ensure nationwide enforcement and sustainability (Ogundiya, 2022). This results in inconsistent implementation across different states and local government areas.

★ **Corruption and Lack of Accountability:** Corruption within the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) remains a significant obstacle to the effectiveness of community policing. Reports indicate that bribery, extortion, and favoritism among law enforcement officers undermine public trust and discourage citizen participation (Transparency International, 2021). This erodes the credibility of the police and hinders community-police collaboration.

★ **Inadequate Funding and Resource Constraints:** Community policing requires substantial financial investment for training, equipment, logistics, and community engagement programs. However, the Nigerian government has not allocated sufficient funding to support the effective operation of community policing initiatives (Adebayo, 2020). The lack of resources limits mobility, communication, and the overall effectiveness of community police officers.

★ **Public Distrust and Fear of Police Brutality:** Decades of human rights violations, extrajudicial killings, and police brutality have led to deep-seated mistrust between the police and the Nigerian public

(Human Rights Watch, 2022). Many citizens are reluctant to engage with law enforcement due to fear of victimization or harassment, which weakens the effectiveness of community policing.

★ ***Ethnic, Religious, and Political Influences:*** Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious landscape creates additional complexities in community policing. In some regions, community policing structures have been hijacked by ethnic or political groups, leading to bias and discrimination in security enforcement (Ojo, 2021). Political interference also affects the impartiality of community policing initiatives, limiting their effectiveness.

★ ***Poor Training and Lack of Skilled Personnel:*** Many officers assigned to community policing roles lack the necessary training in conflict resolution, intelligence gathering, and community engagement. The absence of standardized training programs reduces their effectiveness in handling security challenges (Nwankwo, 2023).

★ ***Resistance from Traditional Police Officers:*** There is often resistance from conventional police officers who view community policing as a threat to their authority and job security. This has led to conflicts between community police officers and traditional law enforcement personnel, hindering collaboration and effectiveness (Eze, 2021).

★ ***Lack of Public Awareness and Participation:*** Many Nigerians remain unaware of the objectives and importance of community policing. A study by Adeyemi (2022) found that over 60% of Nigerians have little or no knowledge of community policing initiatives in their local areas, leading to low public participation.

## **Conclusion**

Community policing holds significant potential in enhancing security and fostering policecommunity collaboration in Nigeria. However, its implementation has been hindered by various challenges, including weak institutional frameworks, corruption, inadequate funding, public distrust, political interference, and poor training of personnel. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that prioritizes legal backing, resource allocation, public engagement, and professionalization of the police force. By implementing strategic reforms and fostering greater collaboration between the police and local communities, community policing can be an effective localized security strategy that enhances safety and strengthens public trust in law enforcement.

## **Recommendations**

To strengthen the effectiveness of community policing in Nigeria and enhance localized security, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. The Nigerian government should pass a dedicated law that institutionalizes community policing nationwide, defining its structure, roles, and responsibilities to ensure consistency in implementation.
- ii. Adequate financial resources should be allocated at federal, state, and local levels to support the training, equipment, and operational needs of community policing initiatives.
- iii. Community police officers should undergo comprehensive training programs covering conflict resolution, intelligence gathering, human rights protection, and community engagement.

- iv. Partnerships should be established with international security agencies and civil society organizations to provide specialized training and knowledge exchange programs.
- v. Regular town hall meetings and community dialogues should be organized to improve police-community relations and address security concerns collaboratively.
- vi. The government should invest in surveillance technologies such as CCTV cameras, drones, and data analytics to enhance proactive policing efforts.
- vii. There should be stronger coordination between community policing units, traditional security agencies, and local vigilante groups to enhance intelligence sharing and operational efficiency.
- viii. Nationwide sensitization campaigns should be implemented to educate the public on the benefits of community policing and encourage citizen participation.

### **Policy Implications**

In the light of the above discussions, some suggestions are hereby made for policy implications: The findings of this paper would hopefully be useful in fostering the activities of the Nigerian police, the operational and administrative issues, and the maintenance of peace and order in the society. In addition, the outcome of the findings will be useful for government to develop a legal framework that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of community policing.

Increase funding for community policing initiatives at both federal and state levels. Strengthen anti-corruption policies within the police force to enhance public trust. Ensure that recruitment and training of community police officers align with global best practices. Promote interagency collaboration between community police units and conventional law enforcement agencies. Establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of community policing strategies.

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