Community Policing and Crime Prevention in Nigeria: A Study of Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

Nigeria faces persistent security challenges ranging from armed robbery and kidnapping to terrorism, cybercrime, and communal violence. In Akwa Ibom State, these threats undermine public safety, weaken institutions, and disrupt socio-economic development. Conventional policing has proven inadequate, prompting interest in community policing as an alternative. Anchored on strategic policing theory, this study adopts a qualitative, historical–descriptive approach using secondary sources, including academic works, policy documents, and civil society reports. Findings reveal that community policing enhances police–citizen trust, improves intelligence gathering, and fosters proactive crime prevention. However, weak institutional capacity, corruption, inadequate officer training, public distrust, and Nigeria's over-centralised policing structure limit its effectiveness. The study argues that while community policing is not a cure-all, systematic implementation, supported by decentralisation, improved police–community relations, inter-agency collaboration, and modern crime-mapping technologies, can significantly reduce crime and strengthen social stability. Beyond Akwa Ibom, the research contributes to debates on security sector reform in developing democracies, emphasising the need to reframe policing as a shared responsibility between the state and communities to safeguard lives, property, and sustainable development.

Keywords: community policing, crime prevention, security reform, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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International Journal of Finance,
Management and Governance (IJFMG)
Volume 1 Issue 3, Septeber 2025 - ISSN: 3092-9423

Ifiok John Umanah; Dr. Unwana-Abasi S. Udoh & Dr. Imoh Imoh-Ita

1. Introduction

Crime and insecurity remain some of the most critical challenges confronting contemporary Nigerian society. Incidents of armed robbery, kidnapping, political assassinations, cybercrime, and communal violence are frequently reported, underscoring the persistent threats to social stability and national development (Udoh & Obot, 2023). In Akwa Ibom State, these security concerns manifest in forms such as banditry, cultism, and political violence, which not only erode public confidence in state institutions but also disrupt socio-economic activities. The consequences extend beyond the state, negatively impacting the country's overall economic development trajectory (Udoh & Obot, 2023). Moreover, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has struggled to effectively safeguard public safety, raising questions about the limitations of conventional policing methods and reinforcing the urgent need to explore alternative security strategies.

Globally, policing has undergone significant transformations over the last five decades, particularly with the adoption of community policing as a philosophy and practice. Originating in the United States in the 1970s, community policing emerged as a response to rising crime, public distrust in law enforcement, and the limitations of reactive policing models (Trojanowicz, 2009). Its guiding principle is the reorientation of policing from incident-driven enforcement to collaborative, proactive problem-solving between police and citizens (Mastrofski, 2006; Brown, 2008). The approach emphasises prevention, trust-building, and shared responsibility for public safety. Across Europe, North America, and parts of Asia, community policing has been institutionalised as a core component of security governance, with evidence suggesting its positive impact on crime reduction, public trust, and neighbourhood cohesion (Cordner, 2007; Flynn, 2014).

In Africa, and Nigeria in particular, the adoption of community policing has been shaped by unique historical and socio-political contexts. Policing in Nigeria has long been criticised for its colonial legacy, centralised structure, and adversarial relationship with the public (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2009; Rotimi, 2011). The police institution was historically designed to protect state interests rather than serve communities, creating a culture of distrust and hostility between officers and citizens (Chukwuma, 2005). Consequently, the police are often perceived as corrupt, unaccountable, and ineffective in combating rising insecurity (Alemika, 2008). In response, informal community-based security arrangements such as vigilante groups, neighbourhood watches, and local taskforces have proliferated across states, including Akwa Ibom (Kasali & Odetola, 2016).

Recognising these challenges, the Nigeria Police formally adopted community policing in 2004 as part of its reform agenda (Okiro, 2017). This policy shift represented a departure from the reactive, incident-based model toward proactive, problem-solving

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International Journal of Finance,
Management and Governance (IJFMG)
Volume 1 Issue 3, Septeber 2025 - ISSN: 3092-9423

Ifiok John Umanah; Dr. Unwana-Abasi S. Udoh & Dr. Imoh Imoh-Ita

strategies involving communities as co-producers of security (Abdulrahaman, 2014). Community policing in Nigeria is therefore not merely a policing technique but a reformist agenda aimed at rebuilding legitimacy, enhancing accountability, and addressing the structural weaknesses of the NPF. Yet, despite nearly two decades since its adoption, the implementation of community policing has been uneven, poorly coordinated, and under-resourced.

Akwa Ibom State provides a critical case for examining the implications of community policing in Nigeria. While the state has relatively lower levels of terrorism compared to the Northeast, it faces its own security crises, including armed robbery, kidnapping, political violence, and cult-related activities. Informal vigilante groups and neighbourhood associations often play a central role in security provision, sometimes in collaboration with formal police structures, but often operating independently. The absence of coherent state-level integration of these efforts reflects broader national challenges in institutionalising community policing as a viable security strategy.

Scholars emphasise that for community policing to be effective, it must rest on three pillars: community partnerships, organisational transformation, and problem-solving (Aremu, 2012; Schanzer, 2016). In Nigeria, however, these components have been undermined by inadequate training, poor funding, corruption, lack of trust, and over-centralisation of authority (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2009; Arume, 2012). In Akwa Ibom State, distrust of police officers, coupled with the absence of institutionalised collaboration with vigilante groups, further complicates implementation.

Theoretically, this study is anchored on the Strategic Policing Theory proposed by Igbuzor (2012). The framework emphasises proactive, intelligence-led policing, decentralisation, inter-agency collaboration, and the integration of community actors in crime prevention. It underscores the need to move beyond reactionary law enforcement to address the structural and developmental roots of insecurity. In the context of Akwa Ibom State, the theory provides a lens for analysing both the potential and limitations of community policing in addressing persistent crime.

Despite the growing discourse on community policing in Nigeria, critical research gaps remain. Much of the literature focuses on general evaluations of police reforms (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2009; Kasali & Odetola, 2016) or the challenges of policing in Nigeria's federal structure (Rotimi, 2011). Few studies provide an in-depth analysis of how community policing specifically impacts crime prevention in sub-national contexts such as Akwa Ibom. This article seeks to fill this gap by examining the significance, extent, and measures necessary for effective community policing in Akwa Ibom State.

Akwa Ibom State presents a critical case for examining community policing in Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), the state recorded rising cases of kidnapping, armed robbery, and cult-related violence between 2018 and 2021,

Ifiok John Umanah; Dr. Unwana-Abasi S. Udoh & Dr. Imoh Imoh-Ita

with cultism alone accounting for over 35% of violent crime incidents reported to the police. Reports by Udoh and Obot (2023) further highlight that local communities have increasingly relied on vigilante networks and youth associations for surveillance and intelligence gathering, particularly in rural and riverine areas where police presence is limited. While these informal efforts have sometimes curbed violent activities, they remain fragmented and lack integration with formal policing. This context underscores the urgent need for institutionalised community policing that aligns state-level strategies with grassroots participation.

2. Objectives of the Study

Accordingly, the study pursues three core objectives as follows:

i.   To assess the significance of community policing for crime prevention in Akwa Ibom State.
ii.   To examine the extent to which community policing contributes to crime prevention in the state.
iii. To identify measures required to strengthen the effectiveness of community policing in Akwa Ibom State.

By addressing these objectives, this research contributes both to policy debates on security sector reform in Nigeria and to the broader literature on community policing in developing democracies. It argues that while community policing offers significant promise for crime prevention, its success in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria more broadly, depends on structural reforms, decentralisation, and sustained investment in police–community partnerships.

3. Research Questions

The study intends to address the following research questions:

i.   What is the significance of community policing to crime prevention in Akwa Ibom State?
ii.   To what extent will community policing enhance crime prevention in Akwa Ibom State?
iii. What measures can be taken to enhance the effectiveness of community policing in Akwa Ibom State?

4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide practical experience and direction in combating crime through community policing at both the community and state levels. By achieving its objectives, the study may prove valuable to implementers within the police and community policing sectors. It emphasises the importance of building and sustaining mutual trust between citizens and the police, which forms the foundation of effective community policing. Traditionally, the police have

Ifiok John Umanah; Dr. Unwana-Abasi S. Udoh & Dr. Imoh Imoh-Ita

acknowledged the necessity of community cooperation, encouraging residents to share information relevant to crime prevention. The study's outcomes are expected to promote genuine partnerships in which police officers, residents, and business owners collectively identify core problems, propose solutions, and take joint action. This approach ensures that the concerns most threatening to community safety and well-being become priorities for intervention. To support this collaborative process, police must devote time and attention to understanding community concerns and recognising their legitimacy. The research, therefore, aims to strengthen community–police partnerships and foster problem-solving strategies that may require new responsibilities and flexible management styles. Furthermore, the study will provide a basis for recommendations to stakeholders such as the Nigeria Police Force, security experts, public analysts, and the wider public, with the ultimate goal of influencing the implementation of community policing across Nigerian communities. Finally, it will enrich the existing body of knowledge on community policing and serve as a useful resource for both law enforcement practitioners and future researchers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualising Community Policing

Community policing has been defined and applied in multiple ways across jurisdictions, reflecting its evolving nature as both a philosophy and a strategy. Mastrofski (2006) frames community policing as an attempt to link the police more closely to the public through partnerships, joint problem-solving, and co-production of safety outcomes. Trojanowicz (2009) provides a philosophical lens, describing community policing as a "new way of thinking about policing" that emphasises creativity in police–citizen partnerships for addressing crime, fear of crime, and neighbourhood disorder. Similarly, Brown (2008) situates community policing within broader approaches to security governance, stressing citizen involvement in decision-making processes that directly affect neighbourhood safety and quality of life.

Despite the definitional diversity, scholars converge on the view that community policing shifts the police mandate from reactive enforcement to proactive problem-solving. Its effectiveness depends on trust, collaboration, and mutual accountability between police officers and citizens (Herman, 2011; Farrell, 2008; Flynn, 2014).

2.2 Core Elements of Community Policing

Cordner (2007, 2009) identifies organisational structure, training, supervision, information sharing, and decentralisation as critical elements for successful community policing. These features ensure that community policing is not reduced to a slogan but embedded in daily policing practice. Training is particularly significant: Kratcoski and Noonan (2005) demonstrate that without adequate community policing training, officers tend to misunderstand or resist its objectives.

Problem-solving is another cornerstone. Wong (2009) argues that community policing should be seen primarily as a problem-solving process in which police and citizens jointly diagnose the causes of crime and disorder and craft solutions. Bucqueroux (2007) underscores this by suggesting that effectiveness should be measured by whether community problems are solved, rather than by traditional metrics such as number of arrests.

2.3 Community Policing in Global Perspective

In advanced democracies, community policing has become integral to law enforcement. In the United States, its institutionalisation was accelerated in the 1990s through federal funding and the creation of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) (Skogan & Hartnett, 2008). Empirical evaluations in American cities suggest that community policing reduces fear of crime, enhances neighbourhood satisfaction, and improves police legitimacy, although its impact on crime rates remains mixed (MacDonald, 2012; Fielding & Innes, 2006).

In the United Kingdom, the model has been embedded in the "reassurance policing" framework, emphasising visibility, accessibility, and local accountability (Fielding & Innes, 2006). In Australia, Segrave and Ratcliff (2011) note similar patterns, although they highlight difficulties in measuring effectiveness due to the diverse forms community policing can take.

Across contexts, trust emerges as a central determinant of success. Lyons (2008) and Grinc (2004) warn that many community policing programmes falter when they operate as isolated police initiatives without meaningful collaboration with civil society or other agencies.

2.4 The Nigerian Experience

In Nigeria, the adoption of community policing has frequently intersected with the proliferation of informal security arrangements such as vigilante groups, neighbourhood watches, and local taskforces. While these initiatives play a visible role in filling security gaps, they should not be equated with community policing. Vigilantism is largely ad hoc, voluntary, and often operates outside formal legal frameworks, whereas community policing is a state-driven strategy rooted in institutional reforms, accountability, and partnership with citizens. The frequent conflation of the two has generated conceptual ambiguities in Nigerian security discourse (Kasali & Odetola, 2016). This study therefore distinguishes between community policing as an official reform agenda and vigilantism as an informal response to insecurity, while also acknowledging their occasional points of interaction.

2.5 Challenges of Implementation in Nigeria

Several structural and institutional barriers limit the effectiveness of community policing in Nigeria:

i. **Corruption and Abuse of Power** – The police have frequently been accused of extortion, arbitrary arrests, human rights violations, and complicity with criminals (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2009). Such practices erode trust and discourage citizens from cooperating with police.

ii. **Lack of Trust and Legitimacy** – Public perceptions of the police as corrupt and unprofessional hinder community engagement. Citizens are often reluctant to provide information to officers for fear of reprisal or misuse of intelligence (Chukwuma, 2005).

iii. **Over-Centralisation** – Nigeria's highly centralised policing structure constrains local adaptability. Commands in Abuja often dictate policing strategies with little sensitivity to local contexts (Rotimi, 2011).

iv. **Inadequate Training and Resources** – Many officers lack proper training in community engagement, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence (Onoja, 2007). Limited logistics, such as patrol vehicles, communication equipment, and crime-mapping technologies, further undermine operational effectiveness.

v. **Political Interference** – The politicisation of security undermines neutrality. Local elites may use vigilante groups or even police officers to advance political interests, eroding community trust (Abiri, 2011).

2.6 Measuring Effectiveness of Community Policing

Evaluating community policing remains challenging due to its diversity in intention and practice (Cordner, 2007). Skogan (2006), Ferreira (2009), and Segrave and Ratcliff (2011) argue that success cannot be measured solely by crime statistics, since the objectives include reducing fear, building trust, and improving neighbourhood quality of life. Friedmann (2007) adds that evidence of effectiveness is often anecdotal, with rigorous evaluations limited.

Nevertheless, Cordner and Perkins (2005) propose a dual framework:

• **Process Indicators** – meetings, citizen participation, problem-solving initiatives.
• **Impact Indicators** – levels of public fear, satisfaction, and perceived safety.

In the Nigerian context, systematic evaluations are scarce, further complicating policy learning and reform.

2.7 The Role of Community Policing in Crime Prevention

The preventive dimension of community policing is central to its rationale. Kelling (2008) and Greene (2014) argue that its ultimate goal is not simply to respond to crime

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International Journal of Finance,
Management and Governance (IJFMG)
Volume 1 Issue 3, Septeber 2025 - ISSN: 3092-9423

Ifiok John Umanah; Dr. Unwana-Abasi S. Udoh & Dr. Imoh Imoh-Ita

but to reduce the conditions that foster it, including fear, disorder, and weak social cohesion. By increasing police visibility, enhancing neighbourhood surveillance, and empowering local actors, community policing addresses both the symptoms and underlying drivers of insecurity.

In Akwa Ibom State, informal community policing structures such as vigilante groups have played a role in reducing crime, particularly in rural areas. However, their ad hoc nature and weak integration with formal policing limit sustainability (Udoh & Obot, 2023).

The reviewed literature establishes that community policing has evolved as a dominant paradigm in global policing reform. Its emphasis on trust, partnership, and problem-solving resonates strongly in contexts of declining legitimacy of state institutions. In Nigeria, however, the translation of this philosophy into practice has been fraught with challenges of corruption, centralisation, poor training, and weak institutionalisation.

While existing studies provide valuable insights into the challenges of policing in Nigeria, few have examined the dynamics of community policing in sub-national contexts like Akwa Ibom State. This study addresses this gap by exploring the significance, extent, and measures of community policing for crime prevention in Akwa Ibom, situating it within the broader discourse of security sector reform in Nigeria.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Strategic Policing Theory

This study is anchored on the Strategic Policing Theory, as articulated by Igbuzor (2012). The theory advocates a proactive and holistic approach to security, shifting from reactive crime control to preventive, intelligence-led, and community-oriented strategies. It emphasises that effective policing requires:

i.   Decentralisation of police structures to enable responsiveness to local contexts.
ii.   Integration of community actors as partners in crime prevention.
iii.   Use of technology and intelligence systems (e.g., crime mapping, GIS, early warning).
iv.   Focus on developmental dimensions of security, recognising that crime is shaped by socio-economic conditions.

Unlike traditional "law and order" policing, strategic policing theory recognises that insecurity is often systemic and multi-dimensional. For Igbuzor (2012), sustainable security requires both organisational reforms and partnerships that extend beyond the police to include communities, civil society, and other security agencies.

Applied to Akwa Ibom State, the theory highlights the importance of adapting policing to local realities such as cultism, kidnapping, and political violence, while simultaneously strengthening trust between police and communities. It provides a

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framework for understanding why community policing must go beyond ad hoc neighbourhood watches and be institutionalised as part of Nigeria's broader security governance architecture.

3.2 Application to Community Policing in Akwa Ibom State

In applying this framework, three insights are particularly relevant:

- **Community as Co-Producers of Security** – Strategic policing insists that communities are not passive recipients of policing but active co-producers of safety. This resonates with the existing role of vigilante groups and neighbourhood watches in Akwa Ibom.
- **Early Warning and Prevention** – By advocating early detection of threats, the theory aligns with community policing's goal of preventing crimes before they occur, rather than reacting after damage has been done.
- **Institutional Reform and Accountability** – Strategic policing highlights that community policing cannot succeed in Akwa Ibom without structural reforms within the NPF, including training, decentralisation, and improved accountability mechanisms.

3.3 Limitations of Strategic Policing Theory

While offering a robust framework, strategic policing theory is not without limitations. Critics may argue that:

- It is ambitious and idealistic, requiring resources and political will that are often lacking in developing countries.
- It risks overburdening communities, expecting them to play roles for which they may lack capacity or resources.
- Like many reformist theories, it may underestimate entrenched issues of corruption and political interference in Nigeria's policing system.

Nonetheless, these limitations do not diminish its relevance. Instead, they highlight the importance of contextual adaptation and incremental reforms when applying strategic policing in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria more broadly.

4. Methodology

This study employed a historical–descriptive research design, which was appropriate for interrogating the evolution and application of community policing in Akwa Ibom State within Nigeria's broader security framework. Data were generated exclusively from secondary sources, including scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government policy documents, civil society reports, and reputable media publications.

To ensure rigour, sources were selected based on three inclusion criteria: (i) direct relevance to policing, crime prevention, or security governance in Nigeria; (ii) publication within the last twenty years, with preference for more recent studies to

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Volume 1 Issue 3, Septeber 2025 - ISSN: 3092-9423

reflect current realities; and (iii) credibility, verified through peer review, institutional authorship, or wide scholarly recognition. Sources that were outdated, anecdotal, or lacking in scholarly reliability were excluded.

The data analysis followed a qualitative content analysis approach. Documents were read multiple times to identify recurring themes related to the three research objectives: the significance, extent, and measures of community policing in Akwa Ibom State. Thematic coding was applied to organise data into categories "trust-building", "decentralisation", "vigilantism", "training", and "corruption". These themes were then interpreted through the lens of strategic policing theory, which provided a conceptual guide for connecting empirical evidence to theoretical insights.

While reliance on secondary data imposes limitations, such as the absence of first-hand accounts from police officers or community members, these limitations were mitigated through triangulation of diverse sources and critical comparison of differing perspectives. This process enhanced the validity of findings and ensured a balanced interpretation of community policing in the Nigerian context.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Significance of Community Policing in Crime Prevention

In Akwa Ibom, community policing initiatives have demonstrated potential in addressing crimes such as kidnapping along the East–West Road, cult clashes in Uyo and Ikot Ekpene, and politically motivated violence during elections. For example, collaborative patrols involving police officers and community-based groups in Itu Local Government Area were reported to have reduced incidents of highway robbery in 2021 (Udoh & Obot, 2023). Similarly, neighbourhood watches in Oron have supported intelligence gathering against maritime-related crimes, including smuggling and piracy. These examples illustrate that community policing is not merely theoretical but has already contributed to tangible improvements in public safety when local actors are empowered to work alongside formal law enforcement. Community policing creates collaborative channels that reduce the psychological distance between police and citizens, thereby fostering co-production of safety (Mastrofski, 2006; Trojanowicz, 2009).

5.2 Extent of Community Policing in Enhancing Crime Prevention

In Akwa Ibom State, vigilante groups and neighbourhood associations have played important roles in reducing crime, particularly in rural areas. However, their contributions represent complementary (but not equivalent) forms of community-based security. Unlike institutionalised community policing, these groups lack formal training, legal authority, and consistent accountability mechanisms. Their operations are often fragmented and vulnerable to political manipulation. For community policing to be effective, such groups must be integrated into formal security frameworks under

Ifiok John Umanah; Dr. Unwana-Abasi S. Udoh & Dr. Imoh Imoh-Ita

clear legal guidelines, ensuring alignment with the principles of transparency, accountability, and partnership central to the philosophy of community policing.

5.3 Measures to Enhance Effectiveness

The study identifies several measures needed to strengthen community policing in Akwa Ibom State:

i. **Institutionalisation and Legal Backing** – Community policing initiatives require formal recognition, training, and integration into state-level security frameworks. Without legal authority and resources, vigilante groups risk being ad hoc and vulnerable to politicisation (Abiri, 2011).

ii. **Decentralisation of Policing** – Nigeria's highly centralised police structure undermines responsiveness to local security dynamics. Decentralisation would allow state and local commands to better align policing strategies with community-specific concerns (Igbuzor, 2012).

iii. **Capacity Building and Training** – Effective community policing depends on training officers in conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and cultural competence (Onoja, 2007). In Akwa Ibom, officers must be equipped to work collaboratively with local communities rather than adopting adversarial approaches.

iv. **Trust-Building and Legitimacy** – Given historical tensions, deliberate efforts are required to rebuild public confidence. This includes transparent policing, respect for human rights, and accountability for misconduct (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2009; Arume, 2012).

v. **Technology and Intelligence Systems** – Incorporating tools such as crime mapping and early warning systems would enhance the predictive and preventive capacity of community policing (Cordner, 2007).

vi. **Inter-Agency Collaboration** – Community policing cannot succeed in isolation. Partnerships with civil society, religious institutions, traditional rulers, and private security providers are critical to achieving holistic crime prevention (Kasali & Odetola, 2016).

5.4 Broader Implications

The findings suggest that community policing in Akwa Ibom State reflects the broader challenges of security governance in Nigeria: weak institutions, lack of trust, and over-centralisation. Yet, they also highlight the transformative potential of community-oriented policing when embedded within **strategic policing theory**. By combining intelligence-led approaches, decentralisation, and genuine community partnership, Akwa Ibom could model more effective security governance for other Nigerian states.

This discussion reinforces Greene's (2014) argument that community policing represents "democracy in action", requiring shared responsibility among government,

police, civil society, and citizens. For Nigeria, where the monopoly of the state in providing security has proven inadequate, community policing offers not just a strategy for crime prevention but also a framework for reimagining the relationship between citizens and the state.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

This study has examined the prospects and challenges of community policing as a strategy for crime prevention in Akwa Ibom State, situating the analysis within Nigeria's broader security sector reform agenda. Anchored on Strategic Policing Theory (Igbuzor, 2012), the findings demonstrate that community policing holds significant promise for enhancing public safety by fostering collaboration between police and citizens, promoting proactive prevention, and strengthening neighbourhood trust.

The study revealed three critical insights. First, community policing is significant for reducing crime because it addresses both the immediate symptoms of insecurity and the underlying causes, including fear, disorder, and weak community–police relations. Second, community policing in Akwa Ibom has had a measurable impact, particularly in reducing burglary, armed robbery, kidnapping, and cult-related violence. These successes stem largely from the involvement of local actors such as vigilante groups and youth organisations, which provide intelligence and support to formal policing structures. Third, the sustainability of these initiatives depends on addressing persistent barriers—corruption, weak institutional capacity, over-centralisation, and public distrust.

Theoretically, the study validates the assumptions of strategic policing theory, highlighting the need for decentralisation, intelligence-led operations, and inter-agency collaboration in fragile security environments. Empirically, it contributes to the limited body of knowledge on sub-national dynamics of community policing in Nigeria, offering a contextual analysis of Akwa Ibom State. Policy-wise, it underscores that community policing should not be treated as a cosmetic reform or donor-driven experiment but as a long-term strategy embedded in Nigeria's security governance framework.

In all, community policing is not a panacea. However, when effectively implemented, it can transform security provision in Akwa Ibom and beyond by redefining policing as a shared responsibility between state institutions and communities.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are advanced:

1.   **Strengthen Police–Community Trust**
   - Police officers must prioritise respectful, transparent, and accountable engagement with citizens.
   - Regular community forums, town hall meetings, and neighbourhood patrols should be institutionalised to rebuild trust.

2.   **Decentralise the Nigeria Police Force**
   - Policymakers should consider reforms that devolve policing powers to states or local government levels, enabling context-specific security responses.
   - Akwa Ibom State should establish legal frameworks to integrate vigilante groups into official policing structures under clear guidelines.

3.   **Improve Training and Capacity-Building**
   - Police training curricula should include modules on emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, community relations, and human rights.
   - Continuous professional development should be mandated for officers deployed to community policing roles.

4.   **Enhance Resources and Technology Adoption**
   - Investment in patrol vehicles, communication equipment, and surveillance technology (e.g., CCTV, crime-mapping, GIS) is essential.
   - Community-based data systems should be developed to identify hotspots, monitor crime trends, and guide preventive strategies.

5.   **Promote Inter-Agency and Multi-Sectoral Collaboration**
   - Effective community policing requires coordination among police, civil society, traditional institutions, and private security actors.
   - State governments should establish multi-stakeholder security councils to oversee joint initiatives and monitor performance.

6.   **Safeguard Political Neutrality and Accountability**
   - Community policing programmes must be insulated from political manipulation to retain legitimacy.
   - Independent oversight mechanisms, including civil society watchdogs, should monitor police conduct and hold officers accountable for misconduct.

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International Journal of Finance,
Management and Governance (IJFMG)
Volume 1 Issue 3, Septeber 2025 - ISSN: 3092-9423

Ifiok John Umanah; Dr. Unwana-Abasi S. Udoh & Dr. Imoh Imoh-Ita

7.   **Sustain Community Participation**
- Grassroots mobilisation should be encouraged, with communities actively engaged in identifying security priorities and co-designing solutions.
- Awareness campaigns can help educate citizens about their role as co-producers of security, not passive beneficiaries.

6.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to scholarship by extending debates on community policing to the sub-national level in Nigeria, using Akwa Ibom State as a case study. It also integrates strategic policing theory into the African security context, showing how decentralisation, intelligence-led prevention, and partnerships can reshape fragile policing systems. For policy, it offers a framework for redesigning community policing initiatives as sustainable, participatory, and accountable mechanisms for crime prevention

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