

Community Policing and Internal Security in Rivers State, 2010 - 2025

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Abstract

Crime Reduction vis-a-vis internal security has drawn the attention of security experts, crime fighters and policy makers in recent times. Particularly, in crime prone societies like Nigeria. This study examined community policing (CP) and internal security in Rivers State between, 2010 – 2025. The study is operationalized within the Democratic Theoretical Perspective. The cross-sectional research design was adopted as the method for generating data. Data was generated from 400 respondents which are constituted as the sample size of the study. Generated data were analyzed using Inferential Statistics and Multivariate Regression models. Hypothesis was tested using chi-square. The study revealed that there is a positive relationship between community policing and internal security in Rivers State, emphasizing the active participation of community members as key to fighting crime within their localities. The study concludes among others; that a key drawback of community policing in Rivers State is that of perception gap between the traditional police officers and the community members, highlighting the need for improved communication and relationship building between both sides. Accordingly, the study recommends amongst others that; as part of administrative and institutional reforms, that administrative and institutional reform of the police operational framework should be redesigned to reflect a community-friendly support and community-oriented service delivery wherein local vigilantes can be incorporated into its operational strategies.

Keywords: *Community Policing, Vigilante, Security, Crime.*

Introduction

The worrisome situation of internal security in Nigeria violates the fundamental responsibility of government: the protection of Nigerian lives and properties, as indicated in the 1999 constitution, section 14(2)(b), which declares “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government.” CFRN as amended, 1999).

The increasing security threats in recent years have called for a more proactive approach to policing, questioning this policing structure. Over the years, the nation has encountered various threats to internal security, including terrorism, ethnic and religious conflicts, armed robbery, kidnapping, and violent extremism (Wodu, 2021, cited in Nsiegbe & Ibezim, 2025). Armed banditry has been a significant threat to the northwest of the country, where bandits abduct people from society and demand huge ransoms, undermining government authority. This has extended to targeting educational institutions, leading to mass kidnappings that further destabilise regions and deter educational engagement (Aftzal, 2020; Wodu, 2021, cited in Nsiegbe & Ibezim, 2025). Besides banditry, Nigeria also confronts the threat of Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) in the Northeast, using the region's geography for cross-border operations and exploiting the military's vulnerabilities, such as untracked stockpile losses (Brechenmacher, 2019; Duerksen, 2021 cited in Nsiegbe & Ibezim, 2025). The crisis is further compounded by farmer-herder conflicts, primarily in the Middle Belt and Northwest, where disputes over land and resources have spurred the formation of ethnic militias and vigilante groups, leading to significant violence and loss of life. These conflicts are exacerbated by environmental changes, land policies, and political manipulation rather than purely ethnic or religious differences (Duerksen, 2021; Okpara, Stringer, Dougill & Bila, 2015). In the south, the situation is complicated by national secession agitations, armed militancy, kidnapping, oil theft, illegal refining, armed robbery, secessionist movements, and the smuggling of contraband in and out of the country, further challenging the stability of the region (Dambazau, 2014; Emegha, 2023; Mou, 2023). These challenges have had far-reaching consequences, impeding economic development and social cohesion and eroding public confidence in the country's security (Olaniyan & Asuelime, 2014).

The Nigerian government at the federal and state level have recognised the importance of community policing in tackling the country's security challenges and has taken steps towards actualising them. One of the significant steps towards adopting community policing was the approval at the Federal level, with N13.3 billion dedicated to the take-off of the Community Policing initiative nationwide (Guardian, 2021). This funding is part of the efforts to consolidate security enhancements across Nigeria and address the country's diverse security challenges (Guardian, 2021). Similarly, in 2020, State Community Policing Advisory Committee (SCPAC) and the State Community Policing Committee (SCPC) have been inaugurated at the state level as a step towards addressing security issues across all communities in Lagos (Oolasunkanmi, 2020; Vanguard, 2020). However, the effectiveness and implementation of community policing initiatives face several factors that have impeded the full realisation of community policing's potential benefits within Nigeria and particularly in Rivers State due to its location in the Niger Delta region.

Rivers State is one of the thirty-six (36) states of Nigeria with its capital in Port-Harcourt and found in the Niger Delta region. The State has a population of approximately 5,184,400 and the landscape is 21,850 square kilometres (km). Rivers State is bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean and North by Abia and Imo States. On the East, Rivers State is bounded by Akwa-Ibom State and West by Bayelsa State. It contains mangrove swamps, tropical rainforest and many rivers. The State has twenty-three (23) Local Government Areas (LGAs) and these include Port-Harcourt, Obio/Akpor, Okrika, Bonny, Degema, and many others. Rivers State has three (3) senatorial districts namely Rivers East, Rivers West, and Rivers South East.

In Rivers State, it can be observed that the lack of trusts between the police and the community, which results from problems such as police misbehaviours, violence, and corruption, as well as insufficient community involvements and resource allocation, has been the issue with

community policing. Also, effective crime prevention, information exchange, and problem-solving are hampered by this breakdown in trust, which eventually affects societal cohesiveness and public safety in Rivers State. The main issue with community policing in Rivers State is a complicated web of interrelated variables that reduce community involvements, undermine trusts, and hence make it more difficult to successfully apply community-based crime prevention tactics.

The objective of this study was to assess the nexus between community policing and internal security in Rivers State, between 2010 – 2025. To achieve the stated objective, the study raised the research question; what is the nexus between community policing and internal security in Rivers State, between 2010 – 2025. Accordingly, the study is guided by the hypothesis that; there is no significant connection between community policing and internal security in Rivers State. The study is patterned in five interrelated sections. Section one is the introduction which we just finished; section two explains the theoretical perspective of the study and some conceptual explanations; section three deals with the method of the study; section is the presentation and analysis of data while section five is the conclusion and some recommendations of the study.

Theoretical Perspective

Democratic Policing Theory

Democratic Policing Theory is anchored in the broader ideals of democratic governance, advocating for transparency, accountability, and public participation in the policing process. Key scholars like Bayley and Shearing (1996) have significantly contributed to the theory by emphasising the need for police forces to be responsive and accountable to the communities they serve (Bayley & Shearing, 1996). Jerome Skolnick (1999) and Peter Manning (2010) further developed the concept, highlighting the importance of public discourse and the integration of police forces with the communities from which their authority is derived (Manning, 2010; Skolnick, 1999). Democratic Policing Theory highlights the need for police to be "downwardly accountable," not just to government authorities but to the local communities and the individuals they serve (Skolnick, 1999).

Democratic policing contrasts sharply with regime policing, where the latter is characterised by its function to protect governmental power rather than the citizenry, often remaining insulated from community input and oversight (Manning, 2010; Muntinghet al, 2021). In stark opposition, democratic policing or policing for democracy necessitates a police force that is responsive to both the needs of the government and the public, facilitating a policing practice that is governed democratically (Aydın-Aitchison & Mermutluoğlu, 2020). This theory considers the elements of accountability, rule of law and procedural fairness.

Accountability: As articulated by Skolnick (1999), police accountability extends beyond mere adherence to legal norms, demanding accountability to the communities being policed and the taxpayers who fund these operations (Skolnick, 1999). This principle ensures that police actions are continuously scrutinised and aligned with democratic values (Bayley & Shearing, 1996). In Nigeria, the opacity of police operations, including the lack of public disclosures of police procedures and decisions, has frequently resulted in public distrust and dissatisfaction (Tiwa, 2024). To highlight this, a recent study showed that a majority of respondents believe that police often stop drivers without just cause and even participate in criminal activities. (Kweitsu, 2023). These perceptions suggest the urgent need for greater transparency within the police force.

To implement democratic policing effectively, it is essential to make police procedures and decisions more transparent and understandable to the public. Given that the Nigerian Police Service is charged with addressing these issues while adhering to principles of fairness and accountability (Asanebiet al, 2021), enhancing transparency is not just a strategic improvement but a fundamental necessity to align the police service with democratic values and restore public confidence in law enforcement.

Adherence to the Rule of Law: Democratic policing enshrines the rule of law and human rights at its core, advocating for a policing system that respects human dignity and operates under tightly controlled conditions to prevent abuses of power (Aydın-Aitchison & Mermutluoğlu, 2020). This principle aligns with the Nigerian Constitution, which respects human dignity and human rights. Moreover, the police play a pivotal role in safeguarding these rights, tasked with protecting life and property, preventing and detecting crime, and prosecuting offenders, as outlined in section 4 of the Nigeria Police Act (Nigeria Police Act, 2020). However, there have been significant concerns regarding the Nigeria Police Force's (NPF) adherence to these principles. Some studies have indicated that the NPF has frequently violated fundamental human rights, including the right to life, dignity, liberty, fair hearing, privacy, and family life (Madubuike-Ekwe & Obayemi, 2019; Uguru & Umobong, 2022). These issues of police brutality are pervasive and have sparked significant security challenges throughout the country.

One of the most notable responses to these ongoing issues was the recent "ENDSARS" protests. (Kweitsu, 2023; Oni et al, 2023). This movement, primarily driven by young Nigerians, arose in opposition to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), which was infamous for its arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings. The public outcry during these protests highlighted the deep-seated frustration with the systemic abuse of power by the police, culminating in tragic clashes where some protesters lost their lives (BBC, 2021). Despite the disbandment of the SARS unit following these protests, reports suggest that the issue of police brutality persists, indicating a continuous challenge in aligning the Nigerian police force with the democratic ideals of justice and respect for human rights (Salako, 2022; Uwazuruike, 2021).

Procedural Fairness: The interactions between the police and the public must be conducted with procedural fairness, treating all individuals with respect and equity, irrespective of their background. This fairness is crucial for fostering public trust and cooperation with law enforcement (Manning, 2010). In the context of Nigeria, the importance of procedural fairness becomes even more critical given the country's challenges with politically related terror and violence. According to a ten-year trend analysis from 2009 to 2023, Nigeria ranked 152th among 167 countries for issues such as political terror, extrajudicial killings, use of torture, disappearances, and political imprisonment (Legatum, 2023). Notably, the incidence of political terror, torture, and intentional homicides has been on the rise during this period (U.S. Department of State, 2023). More recently, the militarised approach adopted by the police to enforce COVID-19 measures has exacerbated the divide between the police and the communities (Aborisade, 2021); highlighting a significant deterioration in the relationship that is crucial for maintaining social order and safety.

Democratic Policing Theory advocates for a transformative approach to law enforcement, where police are not isolated enforcers of law but integral members of the communities they serve (Skolnick, 1999). Democratic policing encourages police to view themselves as community advocates and to engage in problem-solving partnerships with local communities. This approach aligns closely with community policing strategies, seeking to transform the

police force into an entity that is not only a law enforcer but also a facilitator of community well-being. Muntingh et al (2021) emphasise that public trust in the police, driven by the police's performance in objectivity, empathy, and responsiveness, is essential for legitimising state power and enhancing the effectiveness of community policing (Muntinghet al, 2021). Applying this theory within the Nigerian context could offer insightful strategies for overcoming historical challenges associated with policing practices, moving towards a more inclusive and responsive model in line with democratic principles.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Crime

The definition of crime varies depending on the disciplinary lens through which it is viewed. Crime as a concept is complex and has been understood differently by various schools of thought. While crime is often seen through a legal lens, it also has moral, social, and cultural dimensions that shape its meaning in society (Isiaka & Okaphor, 2018). At its core, crime represents human behaviour that violates established norms, whether those norms are legal, moral, or social (Isiaka & Okaphor, 2018). Moralists view crime as a deviation from what is considered morally right or good. This perspective emphasises the idea that crime is not just about breaking the law but also about violating the shared values that hold society together. This is emphasised by Durkheim who argued that the collective conscience of a community defines what constitutes a crime. This suggests that morality plays a central role in determining what a society considers unacceptable behaviour (Durkheim, 1982).

Libertarians, on the other hand, define crime through the lens of individual freedom. From their perspective, an act becomes a crime if it infringes on the liberty of others. They argue that the law should intervene only when an individual's actions harm others or threaten public order (Isiaka & Okaphor, 2018). For libertarians, private behaviour, even if morally questionable, should not be criminalised unless it has a direct impact on society. This viewpoint emphasises the importance of protecting personal freedom and autonomy, reflecting a utilitarian approach that dominated Western legal traditions (Isiaka & Okaphor, 2018). Positivists offer a more pragmatic view, asserting that crime is whatever act or omission is prohibited by the authorities, accompanied by the threat of punishment. This definition aligns closely with modern legal systems, where laws are enacted by governments to regulate behaviour and maintain social order. Under this framework, the definition of crime is dynamic and subject to change as societal values and government priorities evolve (Jefferson, 2007).

In Nigeria, the concept of crime is shaped by its diverse legal systems, which include the Criminal Code, the Penal Code, and the Sharia Penal Code (Isiaka & Okaphor, 2018). Each of these systems reflects different cultural and religious influences. For example, under Sharia law, crimes are categorised into three types: hudud, which are offenses with fixed punishments prescribed by religious texts; qisas, which involve retributive justice or compensation for harm; and ta'azir, which are offenses punishable at the discretion of a judge or legislator (Anwarullah, 2006). These classifications highlight the interplay between moral, legal, and religious dimensions in defining crime. Despite these differing perspectives, one common feature of crime is its public nature.

Concept of Police

The concept of police entails both a universal understanding of law enforcement and specific historical contexts that shape police organisations in different countries. Generally, police agencies are formal institutions tasked with enforcing laws, maintaining public order, and

offering protection to citizens (Haggerty, 2011). Their multifaceted functions and services include deterring and investigating crime, peacekeeping, enforcing laws, and providing emergency services (Tönnies, 1957 p.240). The role of the police is often viewed through various lenses: as law enforcers, community protectors, and public service providers (Cortright, McCann, Willits, Hemmens, & Stohr, 2020; Mercer, 2017).

In the role of law enforcers, police are seen as the primary agents for implementing governmental law and authority (Cortright, McCann, Willits, Hemmens, & Stohr, 2020). This function is the most traditional and visible aspect of policing, involving activities such as patrolling, surveillance, issuing fines, making arrests, and conducting criminal investigations (Skogan, 2012). The effectiveness of police in this role is often measured by crime rates, arrest records, and the successful prosecution of offenders, metrics that are straightforward yet critical for assessing the overall impact of law enforcement on public safety (Baughman, 2020; Faull, 2010). However, this role as law enforcement is also shaped by the police culture. According to Paoline et al. (2000), the police culture consists of a set of values, attitudes, and norms that are widely shared among officers, who find in the culture a way to cope with the strains of their working environment (Paoline, Myers, & Worden, 2000). This is an essential consideration as the culture within an agency significantly influences its effectiveness and accountability, as well as the well-being of both its officers and the communities they serve. While aspects of police culture can strengthen solidarity and morale within the force, they can also lead to challenges, such as resistance to reform or biases against certain groups (Chan, 1997).

As community protectors, police take on a more proactive role in safeguarding the human rights of individuals and communities from crime and insecurity (Faull, 2010). This role extends beyond mere law enforcement to include building solid relationships with community members, understanding their concerns, and working collaboratively to solve local problems (Madubuike-Ekwe & Obayemi, 2019). This aspect of policing is closely aligned with the principles of community policing, which emphasises prevention over punishment and seeks to cultivate a trusting relationship between the police and the community (Lanni, 2022). To assess the effectiveness of their efforts, police agencies utilise a range of performance metrics, including crime rates, response times, and case closure rates. Among these, levels of community satisfaction are considered paramount. This metric serves as a key indicator of how well the police are meeting the needs and expectations of the communities they serve, highlighting the importance of public trust and confidence in the police force.

The Police, as public service providers, are involved in various activities that may not directly relate to crime but are essential for maintaining public welfare. These services include responding to non-criminal emergencies, helping in disaster management, and participating in educational programmes aimed at public safety (Sommer, Nja, & Lussand, 2016). This role highlights the service-oriented aspect of policing, demonstrating the importance of a police force that is accessible, responsive, and committed to the welfare of its community (Chun & Kim, 2015).

The dynamic and sometimes conflicting nature of these roles necessitates that police agencies continually adapt and respond to the changing needs of the communities they serve. Even so, as society evolves, the expectations and demands placed on the police force also change.

Nigerian Police

The development of the police force in Nigeria provides a specific example of how the concept of police evolves within a particular socio-political context:

Structure of Nigeria Police: The NPF serves as the principal law enforcement agency in Nigeria, operating under a hierarchical structure designed to maintain law and order across the nation's diverse regions. This structure is established by the Nigerian Constitution and detailed in the Police Act of 2020. The force operates under the authority of the Nigerian Constitution (1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended) and the Police Act (Police Act, 2020), with its organisational structure reflecting both operational and administrative requirements.

At the apex of the NPF hierarchy is the Inspector General of Police (IGP), appointed by the President and subject to confirmation by the Senate (Police Act, 2020, Section 7). The IGP serves as the operational and administrative head of the force, responsible for policy 34 formation, strategic direction, and overall leadership of the organisation. Working directly under the IGP are Deputy Inspectors-General (DIGs) who oversee specific directorates, including Operations, Training and Development, Logistics and Supply, Investigation and Intelligence, and Research and Planning (Nigeria Police Force, 2024b).

The force maintains a zonal command structure, dividing the country into 17 zones, each headed by an Assistant Inspector-General of Police (AIG). These zones typically encompass several states and coordinate police activities within their geographical jurisdictions. This zonal arrangement facilitates better resource allocation and operational coordination across state boundaries. At the state level, each of Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) has a Police Command headed by a Commissioner of Police (CP). The state commands are further divided into Area Commands, led by Assistant Commissioners of Police (ACP). These area commands supervise several divisional police stations, each headed by a Divisional Police Officer (DPO), typically of a Superintendent rank (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000).

The divisional structure represents the operational base of the NPF, where most direct police public interactions occur. Police divisions are further subdivided into police stations and police posts, ensuring police presence at the grassroots level. The NPF encompasses several specialised units within its structure. These include the Criminal Investigation Department, the Mobile Police Force, the Counter-Terrorism Unit, the Special Protection Unit, the Border Patrol Unit, Marine Police, and Railway Police. Each of these units serves specific law enforcement functions while operating within the broader NPF command structure (Nigeria Police Force, 2024b).

Informal Vigilante Policing Structures: Often in Nigeria, informal policing structures have complemented the formal police system in ensuring law and order, especially in areas where the state police have limited reach. Among the most prominent informal policing structures are vigilante groups, which play significant roles in crime prevention and conflict resolution at the community level. These groups often operate outside formal law enforcement structures but are deeply rooted in local traditions and communal practices (Ogbozor, 2016). Vigilante groups in Nigeria are community-based initiatives formed to combat crime, ensure safety, and address security issues where the state's policing efforts are insufficient. These groups have become especially significant in rural and semi-urban areas, where the limited presence of the Nigeria Police Force leaves many communities vulnerable.

Vigilantes are typically composed of volunteers or selected individuals who take on the responsibility of protecting lives and property. Their approach is often informed by local customs and practices, and they rely on both traditional and improvised tools, such as sticks,

machetes, and in some cases, firearms, to enforce community security (Ogbozor, 2016; Osakwe & Nom Audu, 2019). The reliance on vigilante groups can be attributed to several factors. The inadequacy of the formal police system is one of the primary reasons for their prominence. Vigilante groups step in to address this gap, providing a much-needed sense of safety and order for communities that would otherwise be left unprotected.

Another reason for the patronage of vigilantes is their deep integration within the communities they serve. Unlike formal police officers who may be transferred frequently and have limited local knowledge, vigilantes are typically drawn from the community itself. This familiarity with the cultural, social, and geographical dynamics of their locality allows them to act with greater precision and responsiveness. Their close ties with the community also foster trust, as residents feel more comfortable collaborating with individuals they know personally (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2004).

Vigilante groups in Nigeria are categorised by their focus and operational style. Community-based vigilantes, such as traditional hunter associations and neighbourhood watch groups, secure local neighbourhoods or villages. Vigilante groups in Nigeria are categorised by their focus and operational style. Community-based vigilantes, such as traditional hunter associations and neighbourhood watch groups, secure local neighbourhoods or villages. Ethnic or regional groups, like the Bakassi Boys in the southeast and the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) in the southwest, focus on protecting cultural and ethnic interests (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2004). Recently, regional outfits such as the Amotekun Corps in the southwest and EbubeAgu in the southeast have emerged to address broader security challenges (Iwuamadi et al., 2021).

In Rivers State, the Onelga Security Peace and Advisory Council (OSPAC) has become a notable vigilante group. Established to combat rising crime, including kidnapping and cultism, OSPAC has been credited with restoring relative peace in affected areas (Hanachor & Wordu, 2021). It operates as a community-backed initiative, using local knowledge and swift action to address security issues. Similarly, conflict-specific vigilantes like the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in the northeast focus on insurgencies, collaborating with the military to counter Boko Haram (Alozieuwa, 2021), while groups like Yan Sakai in the northwest tackle banditry and cattle rustling (Okoli, 2024). These evolving vigilante structures, including OSPAC, reflect Nigeria's localised responses to its diverse security challenges, with need for oversight to prevent abuse.

Concept of Community Policing

Community policing is founded on the idea of "Communities," defined as groups of people in social interactions within a defined geographic area, sharing one or more additional ties. It is a broad philosophy that drives organisational strategy, promoting a partnership-based, collaborative effort between the police and the community they serve (Murphy & Muir, 1985; Seagrave, 1996). It promotes a partnership-based, collaborative effort between the police and the community they serve, recognising and accepting of the community in delivering policing services (Murphy & Muir, 1985). This policing approach challenges the conventional reactive model of policing, in which officers primarily respond to calls for service. Instead, it is focused on addressing the root causes of crime and disorder focused on community needs and opinions (Goldstein, 1990).

Community policing is defined by the 2008 Nigerian Presidential Community on Police Reform as a simple idea of shared responsibility between the police and the community, with an emphasis on providing efficient and effective services. The idea involves establishing mutual trust between the police and the community, involving the diverse policed community in identifying and prioritising threats, developing strategies for crime control and community safety, and working together to implement and reevaluate those strategies. In other words, community policing is based on mutual trust between the police and the community, socialisation between the police and the community towards threat assessment, and collaboration between the community and the police to achieve the shared goal of community safety (Arase, 2019).

"Community policing is based on the fact that the ability of the police to control crime through law enforcement based exclusively on their own resources is limited," according to Bayley (2005). Therefore, funding offers a practical and convincing justification for pursuing a community policing approach. In general, the government may not be able to cover all of the needs of its security services on its own due to conflicting demands on public funding for things like roads, health, defence, energy, schools, and drinkable water, among other things. For this reason, community policing emphasises the importance of partnerships. It was also noted that in order to prevent crime, police or security organisations require information from the community. Therefore, the police or security agency cannot take action against crime if the public does not report it. In order for the police to concentrate their efforts on preventing crime on specific individuals, locations, and circumstances, the public can also supply information on the circumstances that contribute to crimes in their areas. (Arase, 2019)

According to the International Criminal Police Organisation (ICPO), community policing is the establishment of a favourable environment where law enforcement and law-abiding citizens can collaborate to solve issues, exchange resources, encourage inter-agency cooperation, prevent crime, lessen conflict, bring offenders to justice, and improve the general quality of community life. Chutter, on the other hand, sees community policing as a cooperative effort between law enforcement and law-abiding citizens to prevent crime, arrest offenders, and improve the quality of life. Both perspectives are broad and cover crucial requirements of the community policing framework, such as the necessity of a cooperative relationship between the police and law-abiding citizens in the community, as well as the improvement of citizens' well-being, which is linked to human security and development (Burutai, 2019).

Method

This study employed a cross-sectional research design. The cross-sectional design as a methodology is adopted for this study because it helps in generating data across various subjects, allowing the researchers to capture a "snapshot" of respondents' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours at a single point in time. This is useful to draw conclusions that can be generalised from the sample to the population (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Based on the 2022 population projections, the total population for this study was estimated at 1,793,500 (Table 1). This figure was derived from the sum of the projected populations of Ahoada West and East (597,600), Port Harcourt (774,600), and Khana (421,300) LGAs (City Population, 2022). Additionally, the study population includes approximately 32,300 police officers in the Rivers State Police Command (Nte, 2011).

Table 1: Population Projection in three LGAs in Rivers State, Nigeria

LGA Name	Area (km ²)	Population Projection 2022
Ahoada West and East	844.6 km ²	597,600
Port Harcourt	98.49 km ²	774,600
Khana	523.9 km ²	421, 300
Total:		1,739,500

Source (City Population, 2022)

For this study, the sampling technique was convenience sampling, an appropriate approach to select participants that fit the study criteria (Emerson, 2015). Therefore, the population was drawn from the participants who are readily available and willing to participate in the study area, both law enforcement agents and community members. This approach was particularly suitable given the practical considerations of accessibility to participants, cost-effectiveness, and time constraints

The sample size for the study was determined using the Taro Yamane formula for calculating sample sizes in research studies (Yamane, 1973). This formula is given by:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Given that:

Given that: N = 1,793,500 (total population of Ahoada West and East, Port Harcourt, and Khana LGAs) = 1,793,500

e = 0.05

substituting N = 1,793,500; e = 0.05 in the formula above:

$$n = \frac{1,793,500}{(1 + 1,793,500 (0.05)^2)}$$

$$n = 399.9$$

The data used in the study is more primary, meaning it was directly collected from sources specifically for this study. Primary data collection is essential when addressing specific research questions that require current and direct responses from participants involved in or affected by the phenomena under study.

The primary data collection tool used for this study was a 4-point Likert scaled questionnaire. The study used the questionnaire titled Questionnaire on Community Policing and Internal Security (QCPSIN). The structured questionnaire was developed to sample community members' awareness, perceptions, and experiences regarding community policing practices and internal security measures.

The data collected through the structured questionnaire were analysed using quantitative statistical methods to achieve the study's objectives. The data were compiled and coded using item coding in Microsoft Excel and analysed using STATA 18.0 statistical software package. Responses were assigned numerical codes to each option for multiple-choice 98 questions and to each scale point for Likert scale questions. That is: Strongly Agree(SA) = 4; Agree(A) = 3; Disagree(D) = 2; Strongly Disagree(SD) = 1.

While multivariate regression was used to investigate differences between groups, identify relationships between variables and chi square used to test hypotheses. These statistical tools explored the differences between groups' responses, examine relationships among variables (such as the relationship between demographic information and knowledge, perception and participation in community policing, and test hypotheses (whether there is a significant relationship between stakeholders' knowledge of community policing and their beliefs/attitudes and perceptions about its effectiveness). The discussion section interpreted the findings concerning the research objectives, theoretical framework, and existing literature.

Presentation of Response Rate

For the community members, a total of 370 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 45 questionnaire were not returned, while 25 were returned but excluded due to issues such as missing demographic information and invalid responses, due to instances were respondents selected all options for questions that required only one answer. As a result, only 300 questionnaire were deemed valid and eligible for analysis from the community group.

For the police officers, 107 questionnaire were distributed. Out of these, 5 questionnaire were not retrieved, while 2 were returned but excluded due to issues such as missing demographic information and invalid responses, due to instances were respondents selected all options for questions that required only one answer. As a result, only 100 questionnaires were deemed valid and eligible for analysis from the Police Officers.

Table 1: Community Members Questionnaire Distribution

Questionnaire	Frequency
Distribution	370
Not retrieved	45
Discarded	25
Useful Response	300

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 2: Police Officers Questionnaire Distribution

Questionnaire	Frequency
Distribution	107
Not retrieved	5
Discarded	2
Useful Response	100

Source: Field Survey 2025

Presentation of Questionnaire Items

What is the nexus between community policing and internal security in Rivers State. The suggested improvements to facilitate the implementation and success of community policing were also drawn from responses by both community members and police officers.

Table 3: Suggested Improvements - Community Members

Improvement	Frequency (%)	Rank
More openness and accountability	180(60)	1
More training for police and community	170(56.7)	2
Better community engagement	160(53.3)	3
Support from policies and laws	150(50)	4

Source: Field Work (2025)

Table 3 summarises the key suggestions for improvement identified by community members to facilitate the success of community policing. The top-ranked improvement is the need for more openness and accountability in community policing initiatives, cited by 60% of respondents. This emphasises the importance of building trust through transparency and ethical practices. The second-ranked suggestion, identified by 56.7% of respondents, is the need for more training for both police officers and community members, which would enhance mutual understanding and effectiveness in implementing community policing strategies. Better community engagement ranks third, suggested by 53.3% of respondents, indicating the need for stronger collaboration and communication between police and the community.

Lastly, 50% of respondents highlighted the need for greater support from policies and laws to institutionalise community policing practices and ensure sustained commitment to its implementation.

Table 4: Suggested Improvements - Police Officers

Improvement	Frequency (%)	Rank
Increased funding and resources	80(80)	1
Policy reforms to support CP	70(70)	2
Enhanced training programmes	60(60)	3
Better administrative support	55(55)	4

Source: Field Work (2025)

Table 4 outlines the key suggestions for improving community policing initiatives, as reported by police officers. The most frequently suggested improvement, cited by 80% of respondents, is increased funding and resources, highlighting the need for adequate financial and logistical support to enhance the effectiveness of community policing. Policy reforms to support community policing were ranked second, with 70% of officers emphasising the importance of establishing clear and supportive legislative frameworks to guide community policing practices. Enhanced training programmes for police officers ranked third, reported by 60% of respondents, the need for more comprehensive and practical training in community policing principles. Better administrative support was cited by 55% of respondents, ranking fourth, reflecting the need for improved internal structures and leadership to facilitate the implementation and sustainability of community policing initiatives.

On the facilitators, the results offer critical insights into the mechanisms that can enhance the

effectiveness and sustainability of community policing initiatives. Community members emphasise the need for greater openness and accountability as the top priority for improving community policing, cited by 60% of respondents. This finding aligns with studies such as Ordu and Nnam (2017) which emphasise the importance of transparency and ethical behaviour in building trust and legitimacy between law enforcement and communities.

Openness in communication and accountability for police actions are critical to addressing the distrust that often hinders collaboration. The second-ranked facilitator, suggested by 56.7% of respondents, is more training for both police officers and community members. This reflects the need for capacity-building initiatives to foster mutual understanding and cooperation in implementing community policing strategies. Similar findings are reported in Olusegun (2016) and Maidawa (2022), which highlight that insufficient training undermines the ability of both groups to collaborate effectively.

Better community engagement ranks third, identified by 53.3% of respondents. This finding shows the importance of fostering stronger relationships and communication between police officers and community members. Ordu and Nnam (2017), similarly stress that meaningful community participation in decision-making and implementation is essential for successful community policing. Support from policies and laws, suggested by 50% of respondents, highlights the need for institutional frameworks that reinforce community policing initiatives. Similarly, policy reforms to support community policing rank second, identified by 70% of police officers. This emphasis on the need for institutional frameworks aligns with the observations made by Onyeozili et al. (2021). According to Onyeozili et al (2021, p.131), a national policy on CP is needed for successful implementation. Their research found that the lack of a strategic national policy on community policing in Nigeria, with clear guidelines, plans, and implementation mechanisms, constitutes a significant challenge. With a cohesive national-level policy, the risk of confusion and inconsistency in how community policing is interpreted and applied in practice will be greatly reduced.

Also, police officers prioritise increased funding and resources as the most critical improvement, with 80% of respondents citing this need. This reflects the resource constraints that have been consistently reported in studies such as Maidawa (2022), which emphasise that limited financial and logistical support severely hampers the implementation of community policing. This aligns with the observations made by (Fomnya et al., 2024), who found that residents of Yola North LGA believed proper funding of security agencies (18.7%) was an important strategy for creating a crime-free society.

Enhanced training programmes for police officers rank third, identified by 60% of respondents. This emphasis on the need for more comprehensive and effective training for law enforcement personnel aligns with the observations made by Onyeozili et al. (2021). Their research highlighted that the successful implementation of community policing reforms requires significant resources, not just for training, but also for the provision of new equipment and other necessary support. Also, better administrative support, cited by 55% of officers, reflects the need for improved organisational structures and leadership to facilitate the implementation of community policing. As noted by Onyeozili et al. (2021), one practical way to address this need for better administrative support is through the redesign of police stations to make them more accessible and welcoming to the public. This physical transformation of police facilities can serve as a tangible demonstration of the force's commitment to community engagement and collaboration.

Both community members and police officers recognise the need for structural and relational improvements to facilitate community policing. Training emerges as a common priority, reflecting shared concerns about the capacity and preparedness of both groups to effectively implement community policing strategies. However, while community members emphasise trust-building mechanisms such as openness, accountability, and engagement, police officers focus more on operational and institutional factors, such as funding, policy reforms, and administrative support.

The Nexus Between Community Policing (CP) of Internal Security in Rivers State

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between community policing and internal security in Rivers State.

Table 5: Cross-tabulation of CP Activities

Respondent	Community Policing Activity	Strongly Agree(4) (n, %)	Agree(3) (n, %)	Disagree(2) (n, %)	Strongly Disagree(1) (n, %)	X ² Statistic (p-value)
Community Members	Attending Community Meetings	25 (8.3)	50 (16.7)	15 (5.0)	5 (1.7)	12.45 (0.014)
	Patrol Participation	10 (3.3)	25 (8.3)	10 (3.3)	5 (1.7)	8.23 (0.042)
	Community Watch Volunteering	10 (3.3)	25 (8.3)	5 (1.7)	5 (1.7)	9.12 (0.038)
	Decision Involvement	5 (1.7)	15 (5.0)	10 (3.3)	5 (1.7)	6.89 (0.055)
Police Officers	Coordinating Neighbourhood Watch	40 (40)	25 (25)	5 (5)	0 (0)	14.56 (0.005)
	Facilitating Community Meetings	35 (35)	20 (20)	10 (10)	0 (0)	11.23 (0.017)
	Organising Outreach Projects	30 (30)	20 (20)	10 (10)	5 (5)	9.67 (0.033)
	Training Community Volunteers	25 (25)	15 (15)	10 (10)	5 (5)	8.12 (0.041)

Source: Field work, 2024

Table 5 examines the relationship between specific community policing activities and respondents' perceptions of crime reduction, with significant relationships evident for several activities as indicated by the chi-square statistics and p-values. Among community members, activities such as attending community meetings ($X^2 = 12.45$, $p = 0.014$), patrol participation ($X^2 = 8.23$, $p = 0.042$), and community watch volunteering ($X^2 = 9.12$, $p = 0.038$) show significant associations with perceptions of crime reduction, while decision involvement, although weaker ($X^2 = 6.89$, $p = 0.055$), approaches significance. For police officers, coordinating neighbourhood watch programme ($X^2 = 14.56$, $p = 0.005$), facilitating community meetings ($X^2 = 11.23$, $p = 0.017$), organising outreach projects ($X^2 = 9.67$, $p = 0.033$), and

training community volunteers ($X^2 = 8.12$, $p = 0.041$) are significantly associated with perceptions of crime reduction. These findings suggest that participation in specific community policing activities positively influences perceptions of crime reduction among both groups, emphasising the importance of active engagement in these initiatives for enhancing perceptions of internal security.

Table 6: Cross-tabulation of CP Activities and Perception of Police-Community Relations

Respondent	Community Policing Activity	Strongly Agree (n, %)	Agree (%)	(n, Disagree %)	Strongly Disagree (n, %)	X^2 Statistic (p-value)
Community Members	Attending Community Meetings	20 (6.7)	60 (20)	10 (3.3)	5 (1.7)	10.89 (0.029)
	Patrol Participation	15 (5.0)	25 (8.3)	5 (1.7)	5 (1.7)	8.45 (0.038)
	Community Watch Volunteering	10 (3.3)	20 (6.7)	10 (3.3)	5 (1.7)	7.56 (0.047)
	Decision Involvement	10 (3.3)	10 (3.3)	5 (1.7)	10 (3.3)	6.45 (0.061)
Police Officers	Coordinating Neighbourhood Watch	45 (45)	20 (20)	5 (5)	0 (0)	13.67 (0.009)
	Facilitating Community Meetings	40 (40)	15 (15)	5 (5)	0 (0)	10.23 (0.025)
	Organising Outreach Projects	30 (30)	20 (20)	10 (10)	5 (5)	8.78 (0.031)
	Training Community Volunteers	25 (25)	20 (20)	5 (5)	5 (5)	7.45 (0.048)

Source: Field work, 2025

The Table 6 illustrates the relationship between various community policing activities and respondents' perceptions of police-community relations, with significant associations indicated by the chi-square statistics and p-values. Among community members, attending community meetings is significantly associated with perceptions of police-community relations ($X^2 = 10.89$, $p = 0.029$), while patrol participation ($X^2 = 8.45$, $p = 0.038$) and community watch volunteering ($X^2 = 7.56$, $p = 0.047$) also show significant relationships. Decision involvement demonstrates a weaker relationship ($X^2 = 6.45$, $p = 0.061$), falling just outside the threshold for statistical significance. For police officers, coordinating neighbourhood watch programmes shows the strongest relationship with perceptions of police-community relations ($X^2 = 13.67$, $p = 0.009$). Facilitating community meetings ($X^2 = 10.23$, $p = 0.025$), organising outreach projects ($X^2 = 8.78$, $p = 0.031$), and training community volunteers ($X^2 = 7.45$, $p = 0.048$) are all significantly associated with positive perceptions of police-community relations. These findings suggest that active engagement in community policing activities is critical for fostering better relationships between police officers and the communities they serve.

Table 7: Multivariate Regression Model of the impact of specific activities on perceptions of internal security and police-community relations

Outcomes	Activities	β	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Perception of Crime Reduction	Community Meetings	0.28	0.07	4.00	< 0.001
	Patrol Participation	0.25	0.06	4.17	< 0.001
	Community Watch Volunteering	0.18	0.05	3.60	0.001
	Decision Involvement	0.12	0.08	1.50	0.134
Perception of Police-Community Relations	Community Meetings	0.35	0.06	5.83	< 0.001
	Patrol Participation	0.30	0.07	4.29	< 0.001
	Community Watch Volunteering	0.20	0.06	3.33	0.002
	Decision Involvement	0.15	0.07	2.14	0.045

Source: Field work, 2025

Table 7 presents the results of a multivariate regression model that examines the impact of specific community policing activities on perceptions of internal security (measured through crime reduction) and police-community relations. For the perception of crime reduction, community meetings ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$), patrol participation ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$), and community watch volunteering ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.001$) show statistically significant positive effects, indicating that participation in these activities strongly enhances perceptions of crime reduction. Decision involvement, while positively associated ($\beta = 0.12$), does not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.134$). Regarding perceptions of police-community relations, community meetings ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$) and patrol participation ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$) again demonstrate the strongest positive impacts. Community watch volunteering ($\beta = 0.20$, $p = 0.002$) and decision involvement ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = 0.045$) also contribute significantly, with the latter showing a weaker but still significant association.

These findings highlight the critical role of active participation in community policing initiatives, particularly community meetings and patrol activities, in fostering both enhanced perceptions of safety and improved relations between police and community members.

The results presented in Tables 5, 6 and 7 rejects the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between community policing and internal security in Rivers State. It reinforces findings from other scholarly works on community policing, emphasising the importance of active participation in these activities. Notably, among community members, attending community meetings ($p = 0.014$), patrol participation ($p = 0.042$), and community watch volunteering ($p = 0.038$) show strong positive relationships with the perception that these activities help reduce crime. This suggests that active engagement in these initiatives contributes to the community's belief that community policing can positively impact internal security. Similarly, for police officers, the coordination of neighbourhood watches programmes ($p = 0.005$), facilitation of community meetings ($p = 0.017$), organisation of outreach projects ($p = 0.033$), and training of community volunteers ($p = 0.041$) are all significantly associated with the perception that these activities help reduce crime. Similarly, studies from other Nigerian regions provide similar insights. Research in Adelani et al. (2023), found that a 1% increase in community policing activities corresponds to a 0.101% improvement in security management. Similarly, in Oyibokure et al. (2023), their study on impact of community policing in internal security in Delta and Edo States of Nigeria indicate a significant positive effect, with community policing contributing to the reduction of internal insecurity ($p < 0.05$).

Additionally, the study reveals that the current security challenges in Nigeria have significantly increased the demand for a community policing system ($p < 0.05$). This is supported by Mackintosh and Mackintosh (2014) which highlight a strong correlation between police-community collaboration and effective crime prevention, suggesting that increased cooperation leads to more result-oriented policing. These significant associations between community policing initiatives (e.g., attending or facilitating community meetings, patrol participation, community watch volunteering, training community volunteers) and respondents' perception of crime reduction is aligned with the studies of Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1994), who argue that when community members and police officers share responsibility for local security concerns, the perceived and actual rates of crime are likely to decline.

On the other hand, among community members, attending community meetings ($p=0.029$), patrol participation ($p=0.038$), and community watch volunteering ($p=0.047$) were significantly associated with perceptions of improved police-community relations. For police officers, coordinating neighbourhood watch programmes ($p=0.009$), facilitating community meetings ($p=0.025$), organising outreach projects ($p=0.031$), and training community volunteers ($p=0.048$) were significantly associated with the perception that these activities enhance police-community relations. The moderate to high chi-square values for activities like coordinating neighbourhood watch, facilitating community meetings, and organising outreach projects confirm assertions by Cordner (2014) that problem-solving, partnership building, and organisational transformation (central components of community policing) are crucial for strengthening police-community ties. Similarly, Girei and Mohammed's (2016) discussion of the promise of community policing for improving national security through better public perception of the police aligns with this study's results. This study reveals that participation in activities such as organising outreach projects and training community volunteers for police officers and, attending community meetings, patrol participation, and community watch volunteering for community members, significantly contribute to positive perceptions of police-community relations. This improvement in perception, as highlighted by Girei and Mohammed, forms the foundation for more effective security systems and public trust in law enforcement. Also, Oyibokure et al. (2023), found that community policing has a direct and significant positive impact on police-community partnerships, which subsequently improve internal security. This is consistent with this current finding, where activities like patrol participation and community watch volunteering not only enhance perceptions of internal security (measured through perception of crime reduction) but also strengthen police-community ties. The overlap between these findings and Oyibokure et al.'s work reinforces the argument that engaging the community in policing activities is a powerful tool for addressing security challenges.

Conclusion/Recommendations

This study concludes that community policing in Rivers State faces significant challenges, including disparities in knowledge, perceptions, and participation between community members and police officers. These disparities hinder the effectiveness of community policing initiatives, particularly in fostering trust, collaboration, and shared responsibility for local security concerns.

The findings reveal that while police officers possess higher knowledge and engagement levels, community members often lack sufficient awareness and opportunities for meaningful participation. Perception gaps between the two groups further highlight the need for improved communication and relationship-building. While police officers generally view community

policing as effective, community members express scepticism, particularly regarding officers' understanding of local issues. The study also demonstrates the importance of addressing barriers to community policing, such as resource constraints, training deficiencies, and political interference. These challenges reflect broader structural and institutional limitations that impede the successful implementation of community policing.

Overcoming these barriers requires coordinated efforts at multiple levels, including policy reforms, administrative support, and increased funding. Facilitators identified in this study provide a roadmap for enhancing community policing. Increased openness and accountability, enhanced training programmes, better community engagement, and robust policy reforms emerge as critical enablers. In conclusion, community policing holds significant potential for improving internal security and police-community relations in Rivers State.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the implementation and effectiveness of community policing in Rivers State:

The implementation of targeted sensitisation campaigns through local media, social platforms, community forums, and traditional channels is essential to educate the public about community policing principles and benefits. These campaigns should be tailored to the specific contexts of the local communities, acknowledging their unique security challenges and cultural dynamics. The campaigns should focus on educating community members about the principles, goals, and benefits of community policing. Through these sensitisation campaigns, inclusive communication could be fostered to showcase measurable impacts of community policing initiatives to overcome skepticism and encourage broader participation.

Incentive-based participation initiatives should be developed to encourage focus involvement. This includes establishing recognition programs and community benefits tied to participation, in hands-on roles like patrols and neighbourhood watch, while actively showcasing success stories and measurable impacts from different communities. Incentives can motivate active community engagement in policing initiatives.

Systemic barriers require robust interventions through comprehensive resource mobilization strategies. The government should prioritise increased budgetary allocations specifically earmarked for community policing initiatives, ensuring 163 sustainable funding for essential infrastructure, equipment, and personnel needs. Strategic partnerships should be developed with non-governmental organisations, private sector entities, and international development partners to create additional funding streams that can supplement government allocations. This multi-stakeholder funding approach would help address critical resource gaps in infrastructure development, equipment procurement, and recruitment of qualified personnel. Furthermore, the effectiveness of these resource allocations should be protected through strengthened legal frameworks that safeguard against political interference, while simultaneously streamlining administrative processes to ensure efficient resource utilisation. The implementation of these resource-focused interventions should be geographically inclusive, ensuring equitable access to community policing programs across all communities, regardless of their location or terrain challenges.

Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems should be established to regularly assess program effectiveness, ensure transparent communication of impact, and maintain feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement. This system should track both quantitative and qualitative indicators of success in enhancing internal security.

As part of the administrative and institutional reforms, police operational frameworks should be redesigned. This includes redesigning police stations to reflect a community-friendly approach and streamline operational processes to develop clear operational guidelines, to support and community-oriented service delivery. This redesign should consider the specific security challenges and needs of different communities within Rivers State.

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