AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CRIME REDUCTION EFFORT THROUGH COMMUNITY POLICING IN AREA 3 COMMUNITY, LILONGWE

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the effectiveness of community policing in reducing crime in Area 3, Lilongwe. Community policing is widely recognized as a proactive policing approach that emphasizes collaboration, trust-building, and shared responsibility between law enforcement agencies and community members in addressing crime and disorder (Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1990; Skogan, 2006). The study was guided by Broken Windows Theory, which posits that visible order maintenance and early intervention in minor disorders can prevent more serious crime (Wilson & Kelling, 1982), and Social Disorganization Theory, which emphasizes the role of social cohesion, trust, and community engagement in crime prevention (Sampson & Groves, 1989). A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys of community members and qualitative interviews with police officers. The study examined three objectives: perceptions of community policing effectiveness, strategies implemented to foster community policing, and challenges hindering its strengthening. Findings indicate that the majority of community members and police officers perceive community policing as effective in reducing crime, improving safety, and enhancing police–community trust, consistent with previous studies that link communityoriented policing to improved public safety outcomes (Rosenbaum, 1994; Mutupha & Zhu, 2022). Key strategies identified include Victim Support Units, awareness campaigns, community meetings, joint patrols, and school outreach initiatives. However, challenges such as corruption, limited resources, insufficient training, strained police–community relations, and resistance to change were found to undermine the full potential of community policing, echoing concerns raised in policing literature in developing country contexts (Kayira & Kayuni, 2024; Kumwenda et al., 2024). Based on these findings, the study recommends strengthening officer training, increasing resource allocation, promoting sustained community participation, enhancing accountability mechanisms, and fostering partnerships with local businesses and non-governmental organizations. The study concludes that while community policing in Area 3 is a valuable tool for crime reduction and community safety, addressing institutional and operational challenges is critical for its effectiveness and long-term sustainability, and further research is recommended on long-term impacts, digital policing tools, and rural–urban comparisons.

INRODUCTION

Introduction

According to the Geographical Information System (GIS)-based application tool for crime monitoring and clustering in Malawi, the study found that Lilongwe in the central region and the capital city registered the highest number of crimes. (Tobias & Mwanza, 2024)

Crime remains a major challenge in many communities, affecting the safety, well-being, and development of the people who live there. In response, community policing has been introduced as a strategy to reduce crime by building trust and cooperation between the police and the community (Skogan, 2006). This approach focuses on partnerships, problem-solving, and community involvement in identifying and addressing crime-related issues.

In many places, including Area 3, traditional policing methods have not always been effective in dealing with crime. Community policing offers a different approach by encouraging residents to work with law enforcement to prevent and respond to crime together (Goldstein, 1990). This study aims to assess the efforts made through community policing in reducing crime in Area 3, focusing on how police and community members interact, and how these efforts impact safety and crime levels.

Problem statement

Community policing aims to reduce crime and enhance public safety in Malawi by fostering collaboration between police and communities. Ideally, this translates to strong partnerships, proactive crime prevention, and community empowerment, leading to measurable crime reduction and increased police legitimacy (Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1990).

However, in Area 3, the reality often falls short. There is a lack of participation in community policing from the community members as the members of the community do not really trust the police (Kayira & Kayuni, 2024), the crime rates in area 3 are still very high, the relationship that the community holds with the police is little as there is poor treatment of community members by the police and a lot of corruption (Kumwenda, Tembo, Mphande, Nundwe, & Chazema, 2024).

With the lack of resources the implementation of community policing and a focus on reactive policing hinder the effectiveness of community policing initiatives (Malawi Police Service, 2023). Consequently, the potential of this strategy to significantly reduce crime and improve safety in Area 3 remains unrealized.

This study sought to assess the effectiveness of crime reduction efforts through community policing in Area 3, Lilongwe. In doing so, the research offered both theoretical and practical insights into the effectiveness of community policing as a crime reduction approach.

Research objectives

Main objective

      To assess the effectiveness of crime reduction effort through community policing.

Specific objectives

1. To examine the perceptions of community members regarding the effectiveness of community policing.
2. To evaluate the strategies implemented by the police to foster community policing.
3. To identify the challenges for strengthening community policing initiatives.
4. To recommend opportunities for strengthening community policing activities.

Research questions

1. Do community members think community policing is effective in crime reduction?
2. Which strategies do the police implement to foster community policing?
3. What challenges do the police incur for strengthening community policing initiatives?
4. What activities to the community members recommend to strengthen community policing?

Theoretical framework

Community policing integrates law enforcement with local community efforts to prevent crime, build trust, and enhance neighborhood safety. This study examines the impact of community

policing on crime reduction in Area 3, Lilongwe. The foundation of this analysis is rooted in several criminological theories that explain how community engagement and proactive law enforcement can deter criminal activity (Crowl, 2017).

Social disorganization theory argues that crime is more likely to flourish in communities with weak social structures and limited informal social control (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Improving neighborhood cohesion through community policing could strengthen collective efficacy, thereby reducing crime rates. This fosters trust, which is often severely lacking in disorganized neighborhoods. When residents trust the police, they are more likely to report to the police. Studies from various regions, including Nigeria and Tanzania, have shown positive correlations between the adoption of community policing and reductions in crime rates, along with improved trust and collaboration between law enforcement and local communities (Onyeozili et al., 2021; Samuel, 2022)

Broken Windows Theory (Wilson & Kelling, 1982):

Community policing, especially through its problem-solving component e.g., problem-oriented policing or POP, emphasizes addressing visible signs of disorder and minor offenses. The idea is that these seemingly minor issues, if left unchecked, create an environment that signals a lack of control and can invite more serious criminal activity.

By proactively addressing "broken windows" e.g., graffiti, loitering, petty vandalism, police and community members restore order. This sends a clear message that the community cares about its environment and will not tolerate even minor disorder. This increased order is believed to deter more serious crime. Braga et al. (2024), in their systematic review, found that disorder policing interventions (often a core part of community policing) are indeed associated with significant crime reductions, supporting this theoretical link.

The adoption of these theories provides a robust framework for evaluating the effectiveness of community policing in reducing crime in Area 3, Lilongwe. Each theory contributes unique insights into the dynamics of crime prevention and emphasizes the critical role of community interactions in creating a safer environment (Crowl, 2017). This comprehensive approach ensures that the study addresses both the structural and behavioral aspects of crime control.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework employed to investigate the effectiveness of crime reduction efforts through community policing in Area 3, Lilongwe, Malawi. It details the research design, setting, target population, sampling techniques, sample size, and the instruments used for data collection. Furthermore, the chapter describes the procedures for a pilot study, the methods of data analysis, and the ethical considerations that guided the research process.

Research Design and Methodology

This study adopted a mixed methods research design, strategically combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques. This approach was the most appropriate for addressing the multifaceted nature of the research proble. (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

The qualitative component of the study employed an exploratory and descriptive design. This allowed for an in-depth assessment of the experiences of police officers regarding the implementation and effectiveness of community policing strategies. Qualitative methods are particularly valuable for understanding the nuances of social phenomena, exploring underlying reasons, and generating rich, detailed insights (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Research Setting

This study was conducted in Area 3, Lilongwe, Malawi.

Target Population

The target population for this study comprised two key groups within Area 3, Lilongwe: community members and police officers.

Sampling Technique

To ensure a representative selection of participants from the target populations, the study employed a combination of stratified random sampling, under probability and purposive sampling, under non-probability sampling techniques.

This allowed for the selection of information-rich cases that can provide in-depth insights into the research questions (Patton, 2015).

Sample Size

The total sample size for this mixed methods study was 68 participants. This sample size was determined using the Cochran's formula for an infinite population (Large/Unknown) to balance the need for comprehensive data with the available time and resources for data collection.

$n = [Z^2 * P * (1-P)]/E^2$

Where: n= sample

size Z= z-score

P= population

E= margin of error

For example: in this survey, the population is unknown. And 90% confidence level and a margin of error of 10%. By using the infinite population formula, which Z= 1.645, P=0.5, and a margin of error E=0.1

$N = [1.645\char`\^2 * 0.5 * (1-0.5)]/0.1\char`\^2$

N=67.650625

The sample was divided into two components: 62 participants for the quantitative component and 6 participants for the qualitative component.

Research Instrument

For the quantitative component, a structured questionnaire was the primary research instrument, for the qualitative component and a semi-structured interview guide served as the main instruments.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted prior to the main data collection phase. The primary purpose of this pilot study was to test the feasibility, clarity, and effectiveness of the research instruments (questionnaire, semi-structured interview guides, and focus group discussion guide) and the overall data collection procedures. This preliminary test involved a small, representative group of participants who are not part of the main study sample but share similar characteristics with the target population (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

Data Analysis

The data collected from the mixed methods approach was analyzed using distinct procedures for the quantitative and qualitative components, followed by an integration of the findings.

For the quantitative data collected through the structured questionnaires, descriptive statistics were employed. All quantitative data was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

For the qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews thematic analysis was conducted (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles guided this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The study targeted a sample of 50 community members for the quantitative component and successfully obtained 62 completed questionnaires, representing a 124% response rate. The higherthan-expected number of responses was due to the use of Google Forms, which enabled wider and easier participation among residents of Area 3. The high response rate strengthens the reliability of the quantitative findings, as it exceeds the minimum required sample size.

For the qualitative component, the study aimed to conduct 8 interviews with police officers and key community stakeholders involved in community policing initiatives. All 8 interviews were successfully conducted, achieving a 100% response rate.

Demographic Information

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the 62 community members who participated in the quantitative survey. Demographic information was collected to provide context for interpreting the findings and to understand how attributes such as gender, age, education, and length of residence may influence perceptions of community policing in Area 3.

Gender of Respondents

The sample comprised both male and female participants from Area 3. The study included both male and female participants. As shown in the table below, the sample consisted of 33 males (53%) and 29 females (47%). This distribution indicates that both genders were well represented in the study, allowing for a balanced understanding of community policing experiences among residents. **Gender**

Age of Respondents

Respondents represented a wide range of age groups, as summarized in the table below. The findings show that the majority were adults aged 46-55 years (n = 23; 37.1%), followed by those aged 36-45 years (n = 12; 19.4%) and over 55 years (n = 11; 17.7%). Younger adults aged 18-25 years and 26-35 years accounted for 10 (16.1%) and 6 (9.7%) respondents respectively. This suggests that most participants were mature adults who may have long-term experience with crime trends and policing practices in Area 3.

Length of Residence in Area 3

Length of stay in the community is a key factor in understanding respondents' familiarity with local crime patterns and community policing initiatives. As presented in the table below, most respondents had lived in Area 3 for more than 7 years (n = 27; 41.9%), indicating strong familiarity with changes in safety and policing over time. This was followed by residents who had lived in the area for 4-6 years (n = 15; 25.8%), 1-3 years (n = 11; 17.7%), and less than 1 year (n = 9;

14.5%).

Presentation of Findings

This section presents the research findings based on both the quantitative and qualitative data collected in Area 3, Lilongwe. The results are organized according to the study's specific objectives in order to assess:

Community perceptions of the effectiveness of community policing; Strategies

implemented by the police to foster community policing; and

Challenges that hinder the strengthening of community policing initiatives.

Presentation of Quantitative Results

Perceptions of Community Members Regarding the Effectiveness of Community Policing

To assess community perceptions, respondents rated several statements on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). The table below summarizes the distribution of responses.

Effectiveness in Reducing Crime

A1: Effectiveness in reducing crime					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	11.3	11.3	11.3
	2	10	16.1	16.1	27.4
	3	7	11.3	11.3	38.7
	4	22	35.5	35.5	74.2
	5	16	25.8	25.8	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.9: Effectiveness in reducing crime

A large proportion of respondents agreed that community policing is effective in reducing crime.

22 respondents (35%) agreed

16 respondents (26%) strongly agreed

Together, 51% viewed community policing as effective.

However, 27% disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that not all residents experience the benefits equally.

The majority perception that community policing reduces crime aligns with Broken Windows Theory, which argues that visible police presence and proactive engagement help prevent crime by signalling order and discouraging law-breaking behavior. Community policing in Area 3 appears to create this "order maintenance" effect, leading many residents to perceive crime as reduced.

This finding is consistent with studies by Mutupha & Zhu (2022) and Skogan (2006), which found that community policing often leads to reductions in crime due to increased collaboration between police and residents. However, the 27% who disagreed reflect the persistent gaps noted in Kayira & Kayuni (2024), who observed that uneven implementation and inconsistent police visibility weaken the perceived impact of community policing in Malawi.

Satisfaction with Police Protection

A2: Satisfaction with police protection					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	8	12.9	12.9	12.9
	2	12	19.4	19.4	32.3

	3	8	12.9	12.9	45.2
	4	27	43.5	43.5	88.7
	5	7	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.10: Satisfaction with Police Protection

Most respondents expressed satisfaction:

27 (44%) agreed

7 (11%) strongly agreed

However, 20 (32%) disagreed, showing mixed experiences with police protection.

The mixed levels of satisfaction reflect a partially functioning policing environment. According to social Disorganization Theory, communities with weak institutional presence or inconsistent response patterns tend to have lower satisfaction levels. The 32% who expressed dissatisfaction may be living in parts of Area 3 with fewer patrols, weaker police response, or less community engagement.

This pattern has been observed by Adzido & Danso (2024) and Kumwenda et al. (2024), who argue that satisfaction with police protection largely depends on perceived responsiveness and fairness. The positive ratings from the majority show that community policing has improved visibility and reassurance in certain zones, but the disagreement highlights that police presence is not uniformly distributed.

Improvement of Police-Community Trust

A3: Improvement of police-community trust

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	11.3	11.3	11.3
	2	12	19.4	19.4	30.6
	3	9	14.5	14.5	45.2
	4	26	41.9	41.9	87.1
	5	8	12.9	12.9	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.11: Improvement of Police-Community Trust

Trust indicators followed a similar trend:

26 (42%) agreed

8 (13%) strongly agreed

Yet 19 respondents (31%) disagreed, indicating that trust remains an ongoing challenge.

Trust is central to community policing. The majority who reported improved trust demonstrate that police-community engagement activities are beginning to strengthen relationships. This finding aligns with Broken Windows Theory, which emphasizes that police visibility and communication reduce fear, increase willingness to cooperate, and build trust.

However, the substantial minority (31%) who disagreed reveal that trust remains fragile. Literature such as Kayira & Kayuni (2024) and Maliyili (2023) highlights that corruption, slow response, and occasional abuses of power continue to erode trust in Malawi's policing system. This inconsistency reflects the fragmented social environment described in Social

Disorganization Theory, where communities with weaker cohesion experience lower trust in authorities.

Improvement of Safety in the Community

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A4: Improvement of safety in the community					
Valid	1	9	14.5	14.5	14.5
	2	6	9.7	9.7	24.2
	3	8	12.9	12.9	37.1
	4	30	48.4	48.4	85.5
	5	9	14.5	14.5	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.12: Improvement of Safety in the Community This

was the strongest positive item:

30 respondents (48%) agreed

9 (15%) strongly agreed

Only 15% disagreed.

The strong perception of improved safety shows that community policing is achieving one of its primary aims. Broken Windows Theory provides a strong explanation: when disorder is addressed and police engage proactively, residents interpret their environment as safer, even before crime statistics change. The high agreement correlates with studies such as Rosenbaum (1994) and Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux (1990), which found that community policing increases feelings of safety by promoting collective responsibility and police visibility.

The very low percentage of disagreement suggests that even residents who are critical of other aspects still acknowledge some improvement in safety.

Improvement of Police Treatment of Community Members

A5: Improvement of Police Treatment of Community Members				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	8	12.9	12.9	12.9
	2	13	21.0	21.0	33.9
	3	6	9.7	9.7	43.5
	4	24	38.7	38.7	82.3
	5	11	17.7	17.7	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.13: Improvement of Police Treatment of Community Members

24 (39%) agreed

11 (18%) strongly agreed

But 21% disagreed, showing that some residents still perceive poor treatment.

Positive perceptions of police treatment indicate progress in community relations, which is a central pillar of community policing. As Social Disorganization Theory emphasizes, improved interaction between residents and the police strengthens informal social control and enhances social cohesion.

However, the 21% who disagreed suggest that some residents continue to experience or perceive unfair treatment. This is consistent with findings by Mutupha & Zhu (2022) and Kayira & Kayuni (2024), who noted that although community policing improves relations, issues such as corruption and occasional unprofessional conduct still damage public perceptions.

Summary of Objective One

Overall, the majority of respondents had positive perceptions of community policing. Most agreed that it improves safety, reduces crime, builds trust, and enhances police-community relations. These trends are strongly supported by Broken Windows Theory, which explains why proactive engagement increases feelings of order and safety, and by Social Disorganization Theory, which highlights how strengthened relationships contribute to social stability.

However, the presence of a substantial minority who consistently disagreed aligns with literature noting uneven implementation, inconsistent police behavior, and mistrust within certain subcommunities.

Strategies Implemented by the Police to Foster Community Policing

Respondents were asked to select strategies they had observed or participated in. The results are displayed in the table below.

Most Observed Strategies
The most commonly observed police strategies were:

Awareness campaigns: 13 respondents

Community meetings: 10 respondents

Victim Support Units (VSUs): 10 respondents

Community-based complaints mechanisms: 9 respondents

These strategies indicate that police efforts are largely centered on information sharing, public engagement, and support services.

Moderately Observed Strategies

Use of digital platforms (SMS, online reporting): 7 respondents

One School One Police Officer initiative: 6 respondents

These strategies indicate that police efforts are largely centered on information sharing, public engagement, and support services.
Interpretation, Theory & Literature Integration: The visibility of these strategies corresponds with the principles of Broken Windows Theory, which emphasizes proactive engagement as a way to maintain community order. Awareness campaigns and community meetings are activities that reduce fear, enhance communication, and signal the presence of active policing.

VSUs and complaints mechanisms reflect efforts to strengthen trust and accountability, consistent with findings by UNICEF Malawi (2018) and Kumwenda et al. (2024), who highlight them as key pillars of community policing in Malawi. These strategies also align with Social Disorganization Theory because they reinforce community cohesion by encouraging collective problem-solving and reporting of crime.

Figure 4.1: Frequency of Observed/Participated in Community Policing Strategies

Moderate awareness of digital platforms reflects limited technological integration in Malawi's policing, as reported in AJERNET (2025). This suggests that while modern strategies exist,

implementation remains weak due to resource and training limitations issues frequently noted in community policing literature.

The school-police initiative aligns with Broken Windows Theory's focus on preventing disorder early by targeting risk environments such as schools. However, the low visibility indicates challenges in outreach and coordination.

Least Observed Strategy

None of the above: 7 respondents

This means that over 10% of respondents reported seeing no community policing activity at all, which may reflect weak outreach in certain parts of Area 3.

That over 10% of respondents observed no community policing activities indicates inconsistent implementation a pattern highlighted in Kayira & Kayuni (2024). Social Disorganization Theory helps explain this: communities with weaker social structures or poor institutional presence often experience lower engagement and fewer policing resources.

Summary of Objective Two

Community members most observed awareness campaigns, community meetings, and VSUs, reflecting traditional community policing approaches emphasizing visibility and engagement. These practices are strongly supported by Broken Windows Theory, which argues that such activities promote order and safety. However, the low visibility of digital strategies and schoolbased initiatives, alongside the "none observed" responses, confirms the literature's observations that community policing in Malawi is unevenly implemented and resource-constrained, as shown in studies by Kumwenda et al. (2024) and AJERNET (2025).

Objective Three: Challenges Hindering the Strengthening of Community Policing Initiatives

Respondents rated five key challenges on a Likert scale.
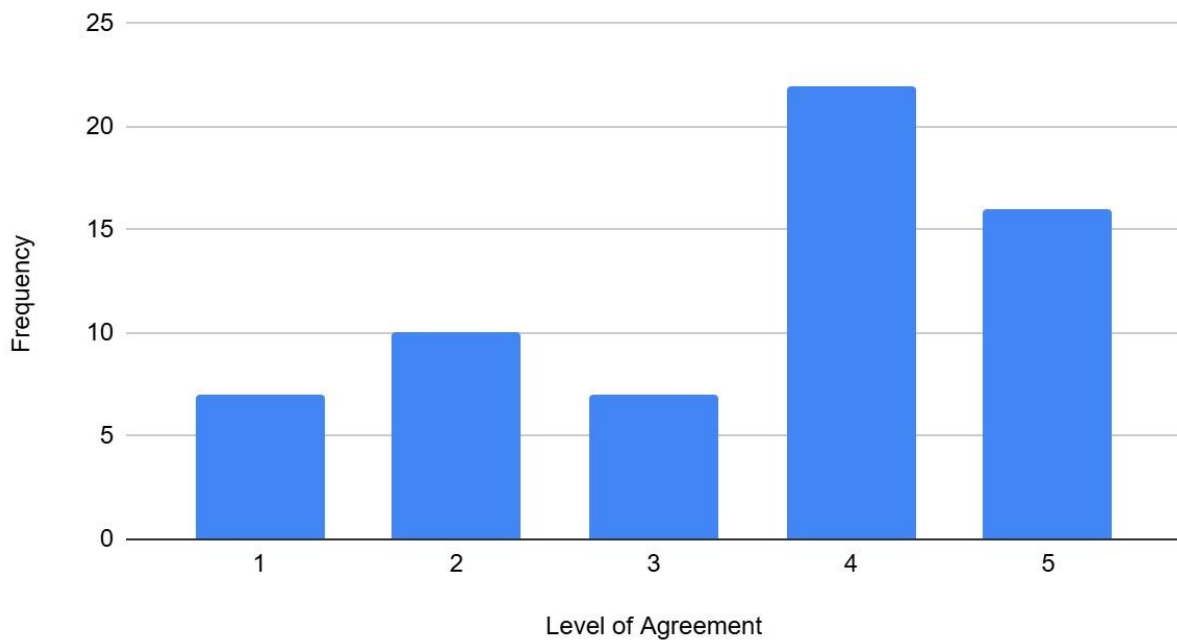
Corruption as a Challenge

Figure 4.2: Level of agreement on corruption as a challenge

Corruption was strongly recognized as a major hindrance:

29 respondents (47%) agreed

9 (15%) strongly agreed

Only 16% disagreed.

The strong agreement mirrors literature identifying corruption as one of the biggest barriers to effective policing in Malawi (Kayira & Kayuni, 2024; Maliyili, 2023). Corruption undermines both Broken Windows Theory by signalling disorder and Social Disorganization Theory by weakening trust and social cohesion. When police are perceived as corrupt, communities withdraw cooperation, weakening the effectiveness of community policing.
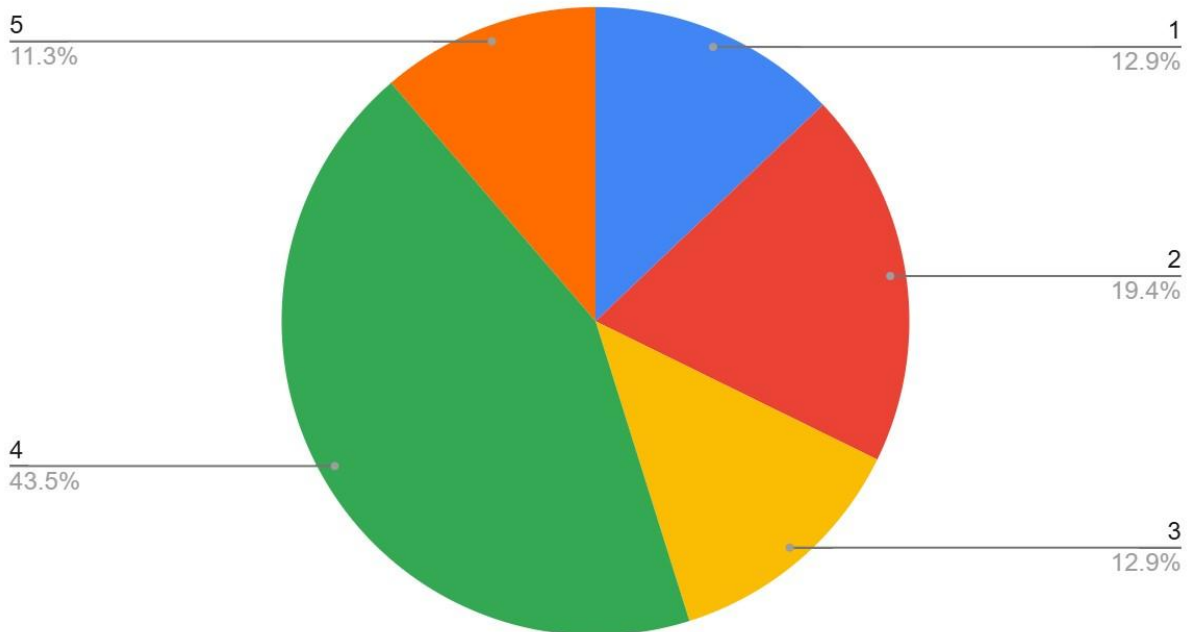
4.4.1.3.2 Lack of Resources

Figure 4.3: Level of Agreement on Lack of Resources as a Challenge

Most respondents agreed that inadequate resources undermine community policing:

28 (45%) agreed 6

(10%) strongly agreed

Only 18% disagreed.

This suggests critical shortages in staff, transport, equipment, and funding.

Lack of transport, equipment, and personnel directly limits the ability of police to conduct community policing activities. Studies such as Mutupha & Zhu (2022) show that resource scarcity weakens visibility and responsiveness, contradicting the proactive engagement emphasized in

Broken Windows Theory. Resource shortages also disrupt the collective action necessary for Social Disorganization Theory's cooperative model of crime control.

Poor Police-Community Relations
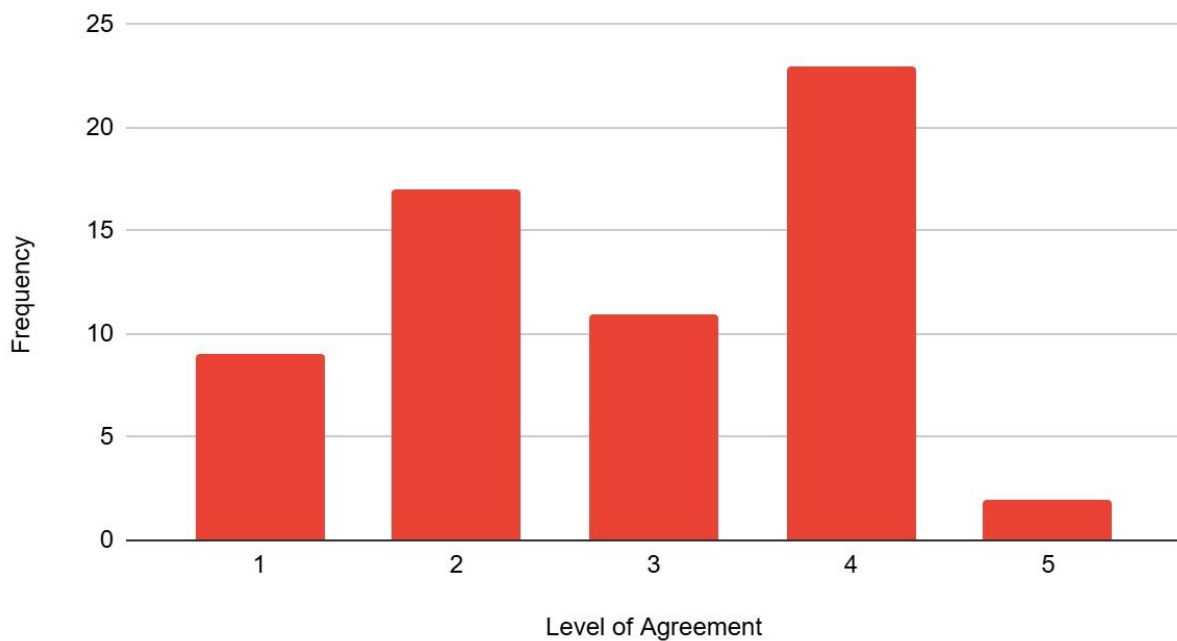
Poor Police-Community Relations

Figure 4.4: Level of Agreement on Poor Community-Police Relations as a Challenge of Community Policing A

majority indicated that strained relationships hinder community policing:

31 respondents (50%) agreed

6 (10%) strongly agreed

Only 16% disagreed.

This challenge highlights persistent mistrust and communication gaps. As literature shows (Skogan, 2006; Kayira & Kayuni, 2024), strained relations reduce participation in community

policing and discourage crime reporting. Social Disorganization Theory identifies these weak social bonds as a major predictor of poor community engagement and higher crime rates.

Lack of Training among Officers
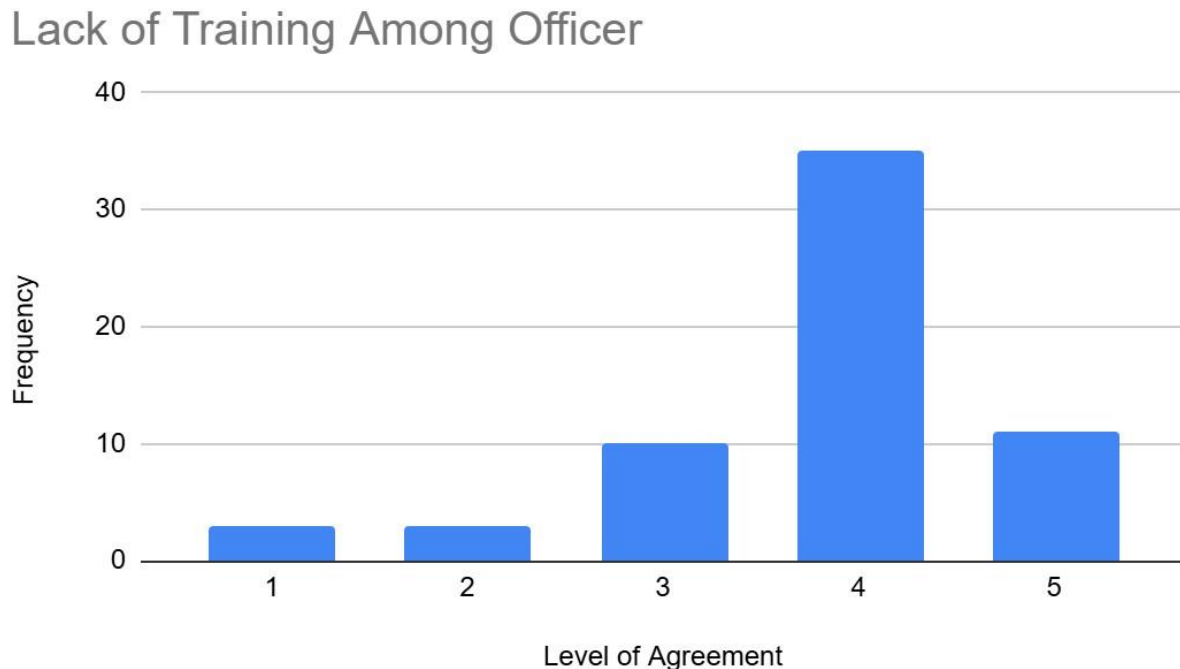
Lack of Training Among Officer

Figure 4.5: Level of Agreement on Lack of Training among Officers as a Challenge of Community Policing

This was the most strongly affirmed challenge:

35 respondents (56%) agreed

10 (16%) strongly agreed

 Very few (10%) disagreed.

This highlights a key capacity challenge in Area 3 policing.

Training is crucial for community policing, as it requires officers to manage conflict, engage respectfully, and collaborate with residents. Peak & Glensor (2008) emphasize that without

adequate training, officer's default to traditional, reactive policing. This undermines the preventive orientation in Broken Windows Theory and weakens the collaborative foundation of Social Disorganization Theory.

Resistance to Change

Resistance to Change
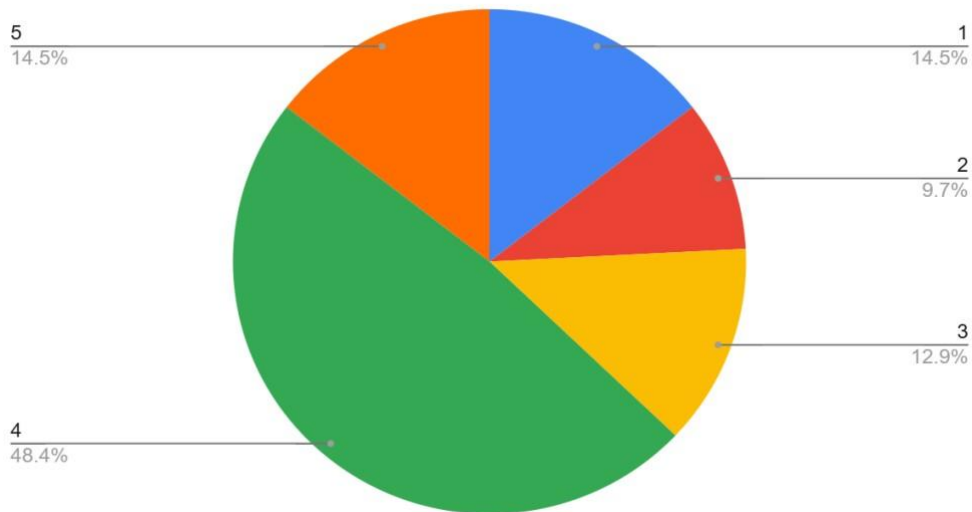
1 14.5%
2 9.7%
3 12.9%
4 48.4%
5 14.5%

Figure 4.6: Level of Agreement on Resistance to change as a Challenge of Community Policing

The chart above shows resistance within the police system was also widely acknowledged:

30 (48%) agreed 9

(15%) strongly agreed

Only 16% disagreed.

Resistance reflects institutional culture and lack of willingness to adopt new policing models. This challenge is widely noted in literature, including Kumwenda et al. (2024), who argue that community policing in Malawi often struggles because officers remain attached to command-

andcontrol policing styles. This resistance disrupts police visibility and cooperation, which limits the positive effects predicted by both theoretical frameworks.

Summary of Objective Three

These challenges confirm findings in previous studies and align with the theoretical understanding that the success of community policing depends on trust, resources, proactive engagement, and institutional support. When these conditions are weak as predicted by Social Disorganization Theory community policing becomes less effective. Likewise, without visible, proactive policing as emphasized in Broken Windows Theory the community struggles to perceive improvements in safety and order.

Qualitative Findings

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative information was obtained from eight police officers working within Area 3. The interviews explored their perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to the implementation of community policing. The results are organized according to the study's objectives.

Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Community Policing

Police officers consistently described community policing as effective in reducing crime. All officers stated that strategies such as Victim Support Units (VSUs), crime prevention activities, and awareness campaigns had contributed to improved safety. One officer noted that these strategies have been *"very effective"* in handling cases, including *"reducing cases of suicide."* Officers also confirmed that community policing has been effective in reducing crime, with responses such as *"Yes it has, very effective"* and *"Super effective as it is a tool that helps efficiently."*

Regarding trust, all officers agreed that community policing has increased community confidence in reporting crime. Officers indicated that *"more people are comfortable now in reporting crimes,"* showing an improvement in police-community relations.

Strategies Implemented to Foster Community Policing

Police officers reported using a wide range of community policing strategies. These include:

1. Victim Support Units
2. Crime prevention outreach
3. Child protection initiatives
4. Community meetings and neighborhood watch
5. Awareness campaigns
6. School outreach programs
7. Community-based forums
8. Joint patrols
9. Proactive policing
10. Fast running of cases and facilitating bail where appropriate

The frequency of these strategies varied depending on monthly work plans. Officers stated that some activities occur *"once a week," "twice a week,"* or fluctuate based on operational needs. Strategies were implemented through meetings, sensitization campaigns, neighborhood patrols, school visits, and direct interaction with community members.

Measures reported as successful in building trust included joint patrols, awareness campaigns, sensitization, and prompt handling of cases. According to one officer, the fast processing of cases *"helps build trust and confidence."*

Challenges Faced in Implementing Community Policing

Officers identified several key challenges affecting community policing efforts in Area 3. These include:

1. Corruption
2. Lack of resources, including insufficient funding and operational materials
3. Lack of training and knowledge among officers
4. Resistance to change within the police system

All officers mentioned these challenges consistently. One respondent stated that *"corruption, lack of resources, and lack of training"* were major obstacles. Officers also reported that

community participation is often limited, describing it as *"50/50"* and noting that participation weakens when the police are not actively initiating activities.

When asked about the support needed, officers highlighted funding, monetary support, partnerships, and greater involvement from business communities as essential for strengthening community policing.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion of the Study

The study firmly concludes that community policing in Area 3 has been a powerful force for good, demonstrably contributing to crime reduction, improved community safety, and vital trust-building efforts. However, this success is fragile. Its full potential is currently being stifled by inadequate institutional support, chronic resource limitations, inconsistent implementation, and internal systemic challenges within the police service.

While the dedication and strategies of engaged police officers have significantly improved public perceptions of safety and facilitated greater crime reporting, persistent issues like corruption, insufficient specialized training, and a reluctance to fully embrace reform continue to erode the very legitimacy community policing seeks to build.

In sum, this research affirms that community policing is not merely a beneficial strategy it is an indispensable approach for enhancing public safety and security. But it's enduring success demands more than just effort; it requires unwavering institutional commitment, the provision of adequate resources, and sustained, authentic active participation from the entire community.

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DMI-ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

PHILLIPA BANDE, 22321252021

This is to certify that the above captioned is a student of DMI ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST UNIVERSITY, LILONGWE CAMPUS, MALAWI pursuing a 4-year Bachelor of Social Work Degree

As part of his/ her studies, she/he is required to carry out research work on a chosen topic in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Bachelor's Degree. Her/ His proposed study is entitled: *An assessment on the effectiveness of crime reduction efforts through community policing in area 3, Lilongwe, Malawi*

Any help rendered in the fulfillment of this part of the Degree will be highly appreciated by our institution.

Thanking you in advance for your attention.

Regards

Head of Social Work Department- Lilongwe Campus

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