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ORGINAL ARTICLE

COMMUNITY POLICING AND CRIME REDUCTION IN AWKA AND AWBA- OFEMILI COMMUNITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract
The prevalence of crime and insecurity in Awka and Awba-Ofemili, despite traditional policing efforts, has raised concerns about the need for alternative approaches. This study investigated community policing and crime reduction in Awka and Awba-Ofemili, Anambra State, Nigeria, from 2010 to 2024. It examined resident's perception of crime dynamics between the two locations and assessed the impact of community policing on crime incidence. Using a mixed research design, the study collected data through questionnaires and key informant interviews with a sample size of 395 and 15 key informants. The findings shows that community policing has more impact in crime reduction in Awka compared to Awba-Ofemili, it also highlights the significance of tailoring policing strategies to the unique needs of each community, with community policing emerging as an effective approach in reducing violent crime in Awka and Awba-Ofemili. Based on these insights, the study recommends implementation of community-specific policing strategy, with institutional support, funding, and training for enhanced effectiveness.

Key Words: Awka, Awba-Ofemili, Community policing, Crime reduction, Insecurity

1.0 Introduction

Crime is a pervasive and debilitating issue that continues to affect many Nigerian communities, making it challenging to ensure safety, promote well-being, and drive socioeconomic development. The 2023 to 2024 report on crime by the National bureau of statistics, shows an estimated 51.89 million household crime incidents. Addressing crime effectively is crucial to creating a secure environment that fosters economic growth, social stability, and improved living standards. Criminality and crime have existed for as long as humans have existence (Ugwuoke, 2010) and it is a characteristic shared by all human cultures (Marshall, 2008). This is because all human cultures—from the most basic hunting and gathering tribes to the most advanced civilized societies—violate standards and principles (Zubair & Ogundele, 2022). Therefore, every civilization is supposed to have "specific mechanisms for the overall interest and wellbeing of the generality of the populace" because of the universal nature of crime.

As Odeyemi and Obiyan (2021) aptly put it, Nigeria's society is drifting towards chaos, with crime and anarchy on the rise, and citizens are forced to live with the constant threat of violence and insecurity. Nigeria is grappling with a disturbing surge in crime, which is having a profound impact on citizens' sense of safety and security. The rise in armed robbery, kidnapping, and financial crimes is creating an environment of fear and uncertainty, where individuals are constantly on edge, wondering when the next crime will occur. This trend is not only alarming but also unsustainable, highlighting the need for effective solutions to address the root causes of crime.

Community policing, a forward-thinking approach to law enforcement, emphasizes the need for collaboration and partnership between the police and the community. According to Otu & Nnamani (2020), this philosophy is built on the principles of shared responsibility, mutual trust, and proactive problem-solving. According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (1994), community poling is, in essence, a synergy between the police and the communities that identifies and solve communities problem. By working together, law enforcement and community members can identify and address the root causes of crime, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education, and develop effective solutions to prevent and resolve issues related to crime and social disorder. This approach requires a shift from traditional policing methods, which often focus on reactive strategies and enforcement. Instead, community policing emphasizes decentralization, allowing local police commands to adapt strategies that suit the specific needs of their communities. Trust-building, transparency, and mutual respect are essential components of this approach, as they enable police and community members to work together effectively. Thus, community policing is characterized by joint neighborhood patrols, proactive strategies, information sharing, problem-solving initiatives, community engagement and outreach, and regular forums to address safety concerns.

Community policing is a philosophy and strategic approach that promotes partnerships between law enforcement and the community to identify and solve problems of crime, disorder, and fear of crime in a collaborative and proactive manner. By shifting from a reactive, force-centered model to a preventive, service-oriented approach, community policing involves citizens as active participants in ensuring their own safety and security. According to Mohammed et al (2023), the core principle of community policing is centered on fostering a strong, collaborative partnership between the police and the community, recognizing that both parties share the responsibility for identifying, preventing, and resolving issues related to crime and social disorder.

This approach promotes proactive problem-solving, addressing the root causes of crime such as poverty, unemployment, drug abuse, and lack of education collectively. Decentralization of police authority is essential, allowing local commands to adapt strategies that suit the specific needs of their communities. Trust-building, transparency, and mutual respect form the bedrock of this approach, with both the police and the public working together to enhance safety, improve quality of life, and restore public confidence in law enforcement (Mohammed et al 2023).

Community policing is also a security system where the general public engages in local policing by providing law enforcement authorities with useful, intelligent information (Eke, 2021). Through volunteer schemes, neighborhood support networks, and augmented police patrol activities, community members take ownership of their security challenges, promoting collaboration, reducing fear, and mitigating mistrust between law enforcement agencies and the public. By empowering communities to resolve conflicts amicably, community policing strengthens social networks and contributes to sustainable peace.

The two communities, Awka and Awba-Ofemili used in the context of this study are distinct and reflective of their unique urban and rural characteristics. Awka and Awba-Ofemili, as an urban rural centers, experiences distinct range of crime, community collaboration can ensure effective policing with residents providing timely and useful information to aid crime prevention and security efforts.
This study therefore contributes to the existing literature on community policing by providing an urban-rural micro level comparison of crime incidents and policing strategy in Awka and Awba-Ofemili, using

a mixed approach that span across 2010-2024, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of crime and the effect community policing in a an urban-rural context while focusing on the highlighted key areas of interest and seeking answers to the following research questions were formulated: why do residents' perceptions of crime dynamics differ between Awka and Awba-Ofemili between 2010 and 2024?; how has the level of community policing affected the incidence of violent crime in Awka compared to Awba-Ofemili?

Review of Related Literature

A widespread assumption among security stakeholders was that traditional policing approaches were insufficient to control the trend of crime and insecurity. In response, the Nigerian Security, Justice, and Growth department, under the supervision of the UK Department for International Development, initiated a police-public partnership program (SJG, 2010). Though this intervention programme which began in 2002 ended in 2010, the programme assisted the Nigeria Police Force and Nigerian communities to introduce community policing. The Nigeria Police Force (2024) claimed significant progress in reforming the police organization along global democratic principles, including the implementation of community policing. This approach balances reactive responses with proactive problem-solving techniques, requiring police and citizens to partner in identifying and addressing crime-related issues. According to Kanu & Okorie (2023), the official adoption of community policing in 2003 aimed to minimize crime and transform the Nigeria Police culture through community-based policing and partnership. The program's goal was to instill a strong sense of accountability and excellence culture in service delivery among officers.

Community policing has been defined in various ways by scholars. According to Brown & White (2022), it involves making the police more cooperative with the public, while Brogden and Nijhar (2005) sees it as a shift from a military-inspired approach to one that relies on forming partnerships with constituents. Eze and Nnamani (2021) defines community policing as a strategy based on community interaction and support to control crime and reduce fear, with community members helping to identify suspects and bring problems to the attention of the police. Olaniyi and Yusuf (2021) notes that community policing is democratic, participatory, and consultative, representing a paradigm shift away from traditional policing. Ikuteyijo (2009) emphasize that community policing entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment, with the police and residents collaborating to combat crime and fear of crime. Upon reviewing the literature, convergent elements emerge, including partnership, problem-solving, collaboration, community engagement and decentralization. These elements reflect a shift from traditional policing approach towards more inclusive and participatory strategies. For this study, community policing is seen as a collaborative approach that fosters partnership between police and community members to identify and address crime-related issues, promote safety and reduce fear. This definition builds on the work of Broghen and Nijhar (2005), Eze and Nnamani (2021) and Ikuteyijo (2009), emphasizing the importance of mutual cooperation and collective problem-solving in achieving community safety.

The core components of community policing include community partnerships, organizational transformation, and problem-solving. Community partnership involves collaborative efforts between law enforcement agencies and the individuals and organizations they serve, developing solutions to problems and increasing trust in the police (Ikuteyijo, 2009). This partnership-building process involves confidence-building measures, capacity building, and forging partnerships with government agencies, community members, human and social service providers, private businesses, and the media. Community policing officers may establish ad hoc community liaison to identify responsive individuals who can serve as police informants.

Conceptually, community policing can be understood as a complex system comprising several interconnected elements, including:

1. Community partnerships: Building trust, fostering collaboration, and developing solutions to problems through partnerships between law enforcement agencies and community members.

2. Organizational transformation: Changing the culture and structure of law enforcement agencies to prioritize community policing principles and practices.
3. Problem-solving: Identifying and addressing the root causes of crime and disorder through proactive and collaborative approaches.

In retrospect, empirical studies have consistently shown that socio-economic factors play a significant role in shaping crime rates in Anambra State and Southeast Nigeria. Looking back, research by Eze (2020) and Okoye and Nwankwo (2019) highlighted the impact of unemployment, poverty, and urbanization on crime prevalence. These studies demonstrated that addressing these underlying issues is crucial to reducing crime rates and improving public safety. Reflecting on the findings of these studies, it's clear that targeted interventions aimed at addressing socio-economic challenges could have mitigated the rise in crime rates. The strong correlation between economic hardship and crime prevalence, as well as the disproportionate involvement of youths in crime, underscores the need for proactive strategies to address these issues.

A study by Ekere and Iroegbu (2018) examined the impact of community policing on crime prevention in Anambra State, Nigeria. Using a mixed-methods approach, the researchers found that community policing significantly reduced crimes like robbery, theft, and vandalism by promoting collaboration between law enforcement and residents. However, the study also identified challenges, including poor funding and inadequate training for community policing officers, which hindered its effective implementation. To improve community policing, the study recommended increased government investment and stronger partnerships between law enforcement agencies and local vigilante groups.

Subsequently, Nduka and Chidiebere (2020) explored public perceptions of police effectiveness in crime control and peace promotion in Anambra State. Through surveys and focus group discussions, the study found that while community policing had the potential to reduce crime and promote peace, many residents viewed the police with suspicion due to past incidents of corruption and brutality. The study recommended policy reforms to enhance police transparency, accountability, and community engagement as key factors in improving the effectiveness of community policing in crime prevention. When law enforcement agencies prioritize these, they foster an environment where residents feel comfortable approaching them with concerns and suspicions.

Chike and Adebayo's (2017) study on local policing strategies highlighted the critical role of community policing in crime reduction. By engaging local residents, community policing effectively addressed security challenges. However, the lack of formal coordination between community policing units and the Nigerian Police Force led to jurisdictional conflicts and inefficiencies. Looking back, integrating local policing initiatives with the national security framework would have enhanced sustainability and effectiveness. This integration would have streamlined efforts, minimized conflicts, and maximized impact.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in residents' perception of the types of crime between Awka and Awba-Ofemili from 2010 to 2024.

H_{11}: There is a significant difference in residents' perception of the types of crime between Awka and Awba-Ofemili from 2010 to 2024.

Hypothesis 2:

H_{02}: Community policing has not significantly reduced the incidence of violent crime in Awka compared to Awba-Ofemili.

H_{12}: Community policing has significantly reduced the incidence of violent crime in Awka compared to Awba-Ofemili.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining structured surveys and semi-structured interviews to gather data. This methodology enabled triangulation, by using the qualitative data to

compliment the quantitative data, thereby providing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic. The data from surveys and interview were compared and cross-referenced to validate findings and identify recurring themes. This ensured the reliability and depth of the study's conclusions. The study concentrated on two Anambra State communities: Awka and Awba-Ofemili, situated in Awka South and Awka North Local Government Areas. The urban-rural dichotomy between these areas offered a compelling context to investigate crime dynamics and assess the efficacy of community policing initiatives.

The study's population consisted of adult residents (18 years and above) of Awka and Awba-Ofemili in Anambra State's Awka South and Awka North Local Government Areas. With a combined estimated population of 430,100 residents (Citypopulation, 2022), the study focused on literate adults who could respond to questionnaires. The essence of adopting this set of people for the study is because they are the people assumed to have come to the age of criminal responsibility in Nigeria and are also assumed to have observed and understood the community policing as a crime control strategy used in controlling crime, as well as the reason why the strategy has or has not succeeded in controlling crime in this Local Government Area.

The sampling techniques applied in this study were Taro Yamane and proportionate random sampling techniques. First Taro Yamane was used to determine the statistical sample size through the following calculation;

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

Where

e = 0.05 level of significance

N = Total population

n = Desired sample

Substituting n =?

N = 430,100

e = 0.05

1 = Constant

$$n = \frac{430,100}{1 + 430,100\,(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{430,100}{1 + 430,100\,(0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{430,100}{1 + 1075.25}$$

$$= \frac{430,100}{1076.25}$$

$$= 400$$

There, our sample size is 400

Allocation of the sample size to the two town/local government was done by using simple percentage.

Table 1: Sample Size Allocation

Respondents	Population Size/percentage	Sample size
Awka (Awka South L.G.A)	270,300 (62.8%)	251
Awba-Ofemili (Awka North L.G.A)	159,900 (37.2%)	149
Total	**430,100**	**400**

$$\text{Awka (Awka South L.G.A)} = \frac{270,300}{430,100} \times \frac{100}{1} = 62.8\%$$

$$\text{Allocated sample} = \frac{62.8}{100} \times \frac{400}{1} = 251 \text{ (sample size for Awka)}$$

$$\text{Oba-Ofemili (Awka North L.G.A)} = \frac{159,900}{430,100} \times \frac{100}{1} = 37.2\%$$

$$\text{Allocated sample} = \frac{37.2}{100} \times \frac{400}{1} = 149 \text{ (sample size for Awba-Ofemili)}$$

From the above, sample size for Awka residents was 251 while the sample size for Awba-Ofemili *was 149, both totaling 400 sample size for the entire population. These 400 copies of the questionnaire were produced and administered to the sample respondents with the help of two research assistants.*

The Proportionate Random Sampling Technique was also adopted for this work to help ensure greater representation of the sample relative to the population and guarantees that minority constituents of the population are represented in the sample (Nworgu, 2006). The population was stratified into subgroups based on their neighbourhood, and participants were randomly selected from each stratum using a random number generator.

This study used a dual-method approach to collect data, combining structured questionnaires for quantitative insights and semi-structured interviews for qualitative depth. The questionnaire featured closed-ended and Likert-scale items to gauge residents' perceptions on crime dynamics, community policing, and crime reduction. Meanwhile, an interview guide facilitated in-depth discussions with key stakeholders, including community leaders, vigilante members, and police officials. This mixed-methods approach enabled the capture of both statistical trends and nuanced contextual insights.

Test of Reliability

The reliability of the instrument was done by the researcher through the test-retest method. That is to say, the instrument was pre-tested twice before proceeding to administer the instrument to the respondents.

Table 2: Reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha on Standardized item	N of items
0.821	0.755	5

Source: field survey 2025

The table 3.7 above presents the reliability and validity of the instrument that was used.

Quantitative data from structured questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Independent Samples t-test via SPSS version 26) was used to test hypotheses and compare perceptions between Awka and Awba-Ofemili. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews was transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically using narrative analysis. The findings from both methods were triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of community policing and crime reduction in the study areas.

Presentation, Interpretation and Analysis of Data

A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, 395 were adequately filled and returned while 5 copies were not returned. Therefore, the final analysis for the study was done using 395 (251 from Awka and 144 from Awba-Ofemili) returned copies which represents 98.8% and dimmed fit for the study. Also, for the Key Informant Interview (KII), five police officers (two inspectors, two DSP, and one SP), two community leaders (from the two communities), six vigilante heads and two youth leaders were interviewed making a total of 15 key persons interviewed for the work. The selection criteria were based on participants' expertise, their position in the communities, and their willingness to participate. The researcher notified and booked appointment with the personnel selected for the interview before going to their preferred location for the interview. The researcher conducted the interviews with the aid of the research assistants and the interviews were tape recorded and later transcribe it. Also, the researcher and research assistants took notes during the interview.

It is therefore pertinent to examine views of the respondents' population on the items of the hypothetical assumptions to test their validity.

Research Question 1: Why do residents' perception of crime dynamics differ between Awka and Awba-Ofemili between 2010 and 2024?
N = 251 (Awka), 144 (Awba-Ofemili)

Table 1: Mean response to research question I

S/No	Items	Mean (Awka)	S.D (Awka)	Mean (Awba-Ofemili)	S.D (Awba-Ofemili)	Decision
1	The types of crimes common in this community have changed over the years.	4.25	0.66	3.10	0.85	Awka residents strongly perceive shifts in crime patterns; less perceived in Awba-Ofemili.
2	Petty crimes such as theft are more prevalent here than violent crimes	2.85	0.72	4.20	0.60	Awka perceives more violent crimes; Awba-Ofemili sees petty crimes as dominant
3	Cultism and gang-related violence are more common in Awka than in Oba-Ofemili.	4.50	0.59	3. 05	0.74	Urban Awka faces more cult-related crime than rural Awba-Ofemili.
4	Land disputes and boundary clashes are more common in Oba-Ofemili than in Awka.	2.90	0.72	4.40	0.57	Rural land-related disputes dominate Awba-Ofemili than Awka.

5	The differences in crime types are influenced by urbanization and population size.	4.35	0.63	3.80	0.71	Both agree, but urban factors weigh more in Awka's crime profile.
6	The presence of institutions (e.g., schools, markets, government offices) affects crime types.	4.15	0.67	3.60	0.82	Stronger influence of institutions in Awka than Awba-Ofemili
7	Social and economic differences contribute to the variation in crime between the two communities.	4.20	0.69	3.75	0.76	Economic differences are acknowledged by both, more so in Awka.
Grand Mean (x)				3.82		Accept

Computation of weighted grand mean

Awka: (4.25+2.85+4.50+2.90+4.35+4.15+4.20) = 27.20 / 7 = 3.89

Awba-Ofemili: (4.25+2.85+4.50+2.90+4.35+4.15+4.20) = 27.20 / 7 = 3.70

The Grand mean = (3.89+3.70) ÷ 2 = 3.795 ≈3.80

Weighted grand mean based on sample sizes ($N_1 = 251$, $N_2 = 144$):

$$\frac{(3.89\times251)+(3.70\times144)}{251+144} = \frac{(976.39+532.8)}{395} = 1509.19 \div 395 = 3.82$$

So, the weighted grand mean = 3.82

In summary of Table 1 above, the Weighted Grand Mean (3.82) indicates that, on average, respondents agree that the crime dynamics differ between the two communities. The slightly higher average score in Awka (3.89) compared to Awba-Ofemili (3.70) implies that respondents in the urban area tend to perceive greater variation or change in crime patterns, due to factors such as urbanization, socio-economic conditions, institutional presence, and crime types. Respondents in Awka, being in an urban setting, tend to view crime as more varied and linked to high population pressures (4.35) and institutional activities (4.15) enabling crimes such as cultism and gang-related violence (4.50) in the area, while those in Awba-Ofemili, a rural area, tend to highlight land-related (4.40) and petty crimes (4.20) as more common concerns.

Research Questions 2: How has the level of community policing affected the incidence of violent crime in Awka compared to Awba-Ofemili?

N = 251 (Awka), 144 (Awba-Ofemili)

Table 4: Mean response to research question 2

S/No	Items	Mean (Awka)	S.D (Awka)	Mean (Awba-Ofemili)	S.D (Awba-Ofemili)	Decision
1	Community policing is active and well-coordinated in this community.	3.00	1.11	2.97	1.09	Neutral (Awka); Neutral (Awba-Ofemili)
2	Community policing has led to a significant reduction in violent crimes.	4.05	0.94	3.12	1.00	Agree (Awka); Agree (Awba-Ofemili)
3	Local vigilante groups or community security have complemented police efforts effectively.	3.68	0.92	3.41	1.05	Agree (Awka); Agree (Awba-Ofemili)
4	Residents are willing to cooperate with local security groups.	3.01	1.01	3.00	0.97	Neutral (Awka); Neutral (Awba-Ofemili)
5	In recent years, violent crimes such as armed robbery or assault have reduced due to community policing.	3.65	0.90	3.58	1.02	Agree (Awka); Agree (Awba-Ofemili)
6	Community policing is more effective in Awka than in Oba-Ofemili.	3.70	0.96	3.21	1.11	Agree (Awka); Neutral (Awba-Ofemili)
7	Poor funding and training limit the effectiveness of community policing in your community.	3.91	0.88	3.95	0.84	Agree (Awka); Agree (Awba-Ofemili)
8	The presence of community policing has increased public trust in local security.	2.05	0.93	3.01	1.00	Disagree (Awka); Neutral (Awba-Ofemili)

Result of response to research question 2 shows that respondents report an association between community policing and reduction in violent crimes in Awka and Awba-Ofemili, with local vigilante groups playing a supportive role. However, poor funding, inadequate training and public trust issues remain the challenges. While Awka residents see community policing as effective, Awba-Ofemili residents are more neutral. Overall, community policing show promises but improvements is needed.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

H_0: There is no significant difference in in residents' perception of the types of crime between Awka and Awba-Ofemili from 2010 to 2024.

H_1: There is a significant difference in in residents' perception of the types of crime between Awka and Awba-Ofemili from 2010 to 2024.

Statistical Test Used: Independent Samples t-test

Variables involved:

Independent variable: Location (Awka = 1, Awba-Ofemili = 2)

Dependent variable: Types of crime (as measured by survey items)

Table 3: Statistical Package for Social Science Result for Hypothesis 1

GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Awka	251	3.85	0.42
Awba-Ofemili	144	3.12	0.58

Test	Statistic	df	*p* - value	Assumption
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	$F(1, 393) = 2.38$	–	.12	Equal variances assumed
Independent Samples *t*-Test	$t(393) = 11.26$	393	< .001	–

Effect Size (Cohen's *d*): 1.44 (large effect)

Decision Rule:

a. If p-value < 0.05 → reject H_0.
b. If p-value ≥ 0.05 → fail to reject H_0.

Because $p < .05$, the null hypothesis (**H_0**) is **rejected**. The analysis indicates a **statistically significant difference** in residents' perceptions of crime types between Awka and Awba-Ofemili, $t(393) = 11.26$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.44$.

Levene's test showed no significant difference in variance between groups ($F(1, 393) = 2.38$, $p = .12$); therefore, equal variances were assumed in the *t*-test.

The large effect size ($d = 1.44$) suggests that the difference in mean perception scores is not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful. Respondents from Awka tended to rate their community as having greater variability in crime types, whereas those from Awba-Ofemili perceived crime as more localized and less diverse.

Hypothesis 2:

H_{02}: Community policing has not significantly reduced the incidence of violent crime in Awka compared to Awba-Ofemili.

H_{12}: Community policing has significantly reduced the incidence of violent crime in Awka compared to Awba-Ofemili.

To test this hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was conducted comparing the mean responses of residents in Awka and Awba-Ofemili to items related to the reduction of violent crime due to community policing.

Table 4: Statistical Package for Social Science Result for Hypothesis 2

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Awka	251	4.05	0.95
Awba-Ofemili	144	3.12	0.91

T-test Results:

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Decision
Equal variances assumed	2.812	298	0.005	0.34	Reject H_{02}

Decision rule: If the p-value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), reject the null hypothesis (H_0); otherwise, do not reject H_0.

The study found a significant difference in perceptions of community policing's effectiveness in reducing violent crime between Awka and Awba-Ofemili ($t = 2.812$, $p = 0.005$). Awka residents perceived community policing as more effective (mean = 4.05), likely due to better coordination and security presence. In contrast, Awba-Ofemili residents had a lower perception of effectiveness (mean = 3.12), possibly due to weaker enforcement and reliance on informal security arrangements.

Key Informant Interviews (KII)

4.3.1 Analysis of Crime Dynamics in Awka and Oba-Ofemili (2010–2024)
Theme 1: Prevalent Crime Types
a. Awka: Internet fraud, armed robbery, car theft, cult-related violence.
b. Oba-Ofemili: Burglary, land disputes, petty theft, communal clashes.

Theme 2: Changes Over Time
a. Awka: Increase in cybercrime and organized gang operations.
b. Oba-Ofemili: Subtle changes, with outsiders committing crimes during festive periods.

Theme 3: Contributing Factors to Crime Differences
a. Urban-rural differences, population density, unemployment, and policing infrastructure contribute to varying crime types.

Theme 4: Urban-Rural Influence
a. Urbanization (Awka) breeds anonymity and complex crimes, while rural areas (Oba-Ofemili) experience more localized, survival-driven crimes.

Theme 5: Demographic Associations with Crime
a. Young people are predominantly involved in crimes, often driven by peer influence and lack of opportunities.

Community Policing and the Incidence of Violent Crime in Awka Compared to Awba-Ofemili: An Analysis

Theme 1: Presence and Structure of Community Policing Initiatives
a. Awka: Formal community policing structure with neighborhood watch groups and vigilante teams, coordinated with the police.
b. Awba-Ofemili: Informal and loosely organized community policing, relying on local youths and elders without formal training.

Theme 2: Community Participation and Engagement
a. Awka: Residents engage through meetings, intelligence sharing, and financial contributions, but enthusiasm is waning due to lack of progress.
b. Awba-Ofemili: Informal engagement through mutual self-help, with inconsistent participation and frustration among community members.

Theme 3: Perceived Impact on Violent Crime Reduction
a. Awka: Community policing has reduced armed robbery and cult-related clashes, but new crimes like cybercrime are emerging.
b. Awba-Ofemili: Community policing has discouraged burglary and physical assault, but limited data to track crime reduction.

Theme 4: Major Challenges Facing Community Policing
a. Common challenges include lack of funding, poor training, limited police cooperation, and political interference.

Theme 5: Comparative Effectiveness (Awka vs Awba-Ofemili)
a. Awka: Community policing is perceived as more effective due to better organization, infrastructure, and police presence.
b. Awba-Ofemili: Limited effectiveness due to isolation, resource scarcity, and lack of formal structures.

Theme 6: Public Trust in Security Agencies
a. Awka: Fragile trust due to past experiences of harassment, extortion, or delayed police response.
b. Awba-Ofemili: Low trust in formal police, but stronger trust in local elders and vigilante groups.

Discussion of Findings
Research question 1 & hypothesis 1, which focus on crime dynamics in Awka (urban) and Awba-Ofemili (rural) revealed distinct pattern; While Awka is plagued more by cybercrime, cult violence, robbery, kidnapping, Awba-Ofemili faces crime such as petty theft, burglary, land disputes, minor assaults. Factors contributing to these differences include urbanization, unemployment, social disorganization, and inadequate policing. The findings support the Broken Windows Theory, which suggests neglect and disorder can lead to more serious crimes. When situated within the Broken Windows Theory which served as the theoretical framework for this study, these findings become even more illuminating. The theory posits that visible signs of disorder and neglect such as broken windows, unkempt streets, and lack of enforcement of minor offenses can encourage more serious crimes. This theory finds strong support in Awka's case, where neglected urban areas, poor enforcement of minor laws, and increasing visible social disorder appear to have created a breeding ground for more serious criminal activities like cultism and cybercrime.

However, critics argue it can lead to potential bias such as; targeting certain groups when applied unevenly, over-policing in minority communities thereby exacerbating tension and mistrust, and it can have a negative impact on the relationship of law enforcement agencies and the community due to it aggressive policing strategy.
For research question 2 & hypothesis 2, which examined the impact of community policing on violent crime reduction in Awka (urban) and Awba-Ofemili (rural), key findings included;
a. Community policing had a stronger impact on reducing violent crimes in Awka compared to Awba-Ofemili.
b. Awka's visible patrols, timely responses, and community engagement initiatives contributed to reduced violent incidents.
c. Awba-Ofemili's limited formal police presence and reliance on informal structures made community policing's impact negligible.

The study confirms that community policing is more effective in urban areas with institutional support and structured frameworks, while rural areas face challenges due to limited resources and infrastructure. The findings support the Broken Windows Theory and highlight the need for nuanced approaches to community policing in different contexts. The study's findings aligns with previous research, such as Weisburd and Eck (2004), who found that community policing initiatives can lead to significant reductions in crime rates in urban settings. Similarly, a study by Gill te al. (2014) highlighted the importance of visible patrols and community engagement in reducing crime. However, the study's finding on the limited impact of community policing in rural areas contrast with some studies, such as the study by Donnelly (2017), which found that community policing can be effective in rural areas with strong social cohesion and informal networks. This discrepancy may be attributed to differences in context, such as the availability of resources and infrastructure, as well as the specific community policing strategies employed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study highlights a stark contrast in crime dynamics between Awka and Awba-Ofemili, reflecting their distinct urban and rural characteristics. Awka, with its higher population density and socio-economic pressures, experiences more frequent and violent crimes, such as cult-related violence and armed robbery, often perpetrated by organized gangs. In contrast, Awba-Ofemili, a rural community, faces more localized and less sophisticated crimes like petty theft and land disputes, relying heavily on traditional conflict resolution and local vigilante systems due to limited formal police presence.

The research also reveals that community policing has been more effective in reducing violent crime in Awka, where structured strategies like neighborhood patrols and surveillance tools have contributed to a notable decline in crime rates. Conversely, Awba-Ofemili's informal community policing efforts, lacking formal support and resources, have yielded less pronounced results. This underscores the importance of formalized and well-supported community policing mechanisms in addressing violent crime effectively.

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

i. To address crime pattern differences, government and security agencies should adopt community-specific policing strategies that reflect the distinct crime dynamics of each area. In Awka, efforts should focus on tackling cultism, kidnapping, and organized crimes using intelligence-led policing and youth engagement programs. In Awba-Ofemili, targeted interventions should be developed to address land disputes, petty theft, and domestic violence through legal reforms, rural mediation centers, and better access to justice mechanisms.

ii. To improve the effectiveness of community policing in both urban and rural settings, especially in Awba-Ofemili, there is need to institutionalize, fund, and train community policing units, including local vigilante groups. This should involve structured collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force, regular capacity-building, and provision of communication equipment. In Awka, existing frameworks should be sustained and expanded to enhance preventive surveillance and community confidence.

These recommendations can be actualized with the collaboration of government security agencies, Nigeria Police Force, local community leaders and groups and civil society organizations. The implementation roadmap can vary from a short term plan (0-6months) of establishing community policing units, conducting training and capacity-building programmes; a medium-term plan (6-12 months) of implementing targeted interventions, enhancing surveillance and monitoring systems; and a long-term plan (1-2 years) of evaluating effectiveness, expanding successful initiatives and sustain community engagement efforts. The key performance indicators can be;

a. Reduction in crime rate and trends
b. community satisfaction and trust in law enforcement.
c. Number of community policing initiatives implemented over time
d. Number of training and capacity-building programmes conducted

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