

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents, analyzes, interprets, and discusses the findings of the study on strengthening community policing and crime prevention in Mtakataka, Dedza District, Malawi. The data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions involving community members, local leaders, and officers from the Malawi Police Service.

The presentation of findings is guided by the study objectives and research questions. Quantitative data are presented using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative information obtained from interviews and focus group discussions is used to support and explain the quantitative findings. The chapter also links the findings to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

4.2 Restatement of the Problem Statement, Objectives and Research Questions

4.2.1 Problem Statement

Despite the introduction of community policing in Malawi, crime remains a challenge in many communities, including Mtakataka in Dedza District. Cases of theft, burglary, assault, and gender-based violence continue to affect community safety and development. Although community policing structures exist, their effectiveness in preventing crime has not been fully established. Challenges such as limited resources, lack of trust between the police and community members, and low public participation may hinder successful implementation. Therefore, this study sought to examine how community policing can be strengthened to improve crime prevention in Mtakataka.

4.2.2 Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To assess the existing community policing practices in Mtakataka.
2. To identify challenges affecting effective implementation of community policing.
3. To examine strategies for strengthening community policing and crime prevention in Mtakataka.

4.2.3 Research Questions

1. What community policing practices currently exist in Mtakataka?
2. What challenges affect the effectiveness of community policing in Mtakataka?
3. What strategies can strengthen community policing and crime prevention in the area?

4.3 Demographic Data of Respondents

Demographics are statistical characteristics of human population such as Age or Gender used especially to identify formations affected with the phenomena (Mirriam 2017) as follows:

4.3.1 Response Rate

The study targeted 80 respondents. Out of these, 70 successfully participated, resulting in a response rate of 87.5%.

Target Sample	Actual Responses	Response Rate
80	70	87.5%

The response rate was considered adequate because it exceeded the minimum acceptable level for social science research and provided sufficient information for analysis.

4.3.2 Table 4.1 Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	42	60
Female	28	40
Total	70	100

The findings indicate that males constituted the majority of respondents. However, female participation was also substantial, ensuring representation of both genders in understanding community policing and crime prevention issues.

4.3.3 Table 4.2 Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18-30 Years	25	35
31-45 Years	28	40
46- Years and Above	17	25
Total	70	100

Source: field data (2026)

The majority of respondents fell within the 31–45-year age category. This age group is actively involved in community development and security matters and therefore provided valuable insights.

4.3.4 Table 4.3 Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Farmers	32	45
Business Persons	18	25
Civil Servants	10	15
Others	10	15
Total	70	100

Source: field data (2026)

The dominance of farmers reflects the predominantly agricultural nature of Mtakataka. This demographic characteristic is important because socio-economic conditions influence crime trends and community participation in policing activities.

4.4 Reliability Tests

To ensure consistency of responses, a pilot study was conducted before actual data collection. The questionnaire was tested among respondents from a community with characteristics similar to Mtakataka.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to assess reliability.

Variable	Cronbach Alpha
Community Participation	0.79
Trust in Police	0.81
Community Policing Effectiveness	0.77
Crime Prevention Measures	0.80
Overall Reliability	0.79

The reliability coefficient of 0.79 exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instrument was reliable and suitable for data collection.

4.5 Descriptive Statistics

4.5.1 Existing Community Policing Practices

Respondents identified the following practices:

Practice	Percentage
Community Policing Forums	70%
Neighborhood Watch Groups	65%
Security Meetings	55%

The findings suggest that community policing structures exist within Mtakataka. However, participation and effectiveness vary across different activities.

4.5.2 Community Participation

Participation Level	Percentage
Active Participation	40%
Occasional Participation	35%
No Participation	25%

These findings indicate moderate community involvement in policing activities.

4.5.3 Common Crimes in Mtakataka

Crime Type	Percentage
Theft and Burglary	45%
Assault	25%
Gender-Based Violence	20%
Other Crimes	10%

The findings show that theft and burglary are the most prevalent crimes in the area.

4.5.4 Effectiveness of Community Policing

Rating	Percentage
Effective	30%
Moderately Effective	45%
Ineffective	25%

Most respondents viewed community policing as moderately effective.

4.6 Inferential Statistics

Inferential analysis was conducted to determine relationships between variables.

4.6.1 Objective 1: Assess Existing Community Policing Practices

Findings

A positive relationship was found between community participation and perceived effectiveness of community policing ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.05$).

Analysis and Interpretation

The findings indicate that higher levels of community participation are associated with improved effectiveness of community policing initiatives. Communities that actively engage in security meetings, neighborhood watch groups, and crime reporting tend to experience better crime prevention outcomes.

These findings support Social Disorganization Theory, which emphasizes the importance of collective community action in maintaining social order.

Discussion

The findings agree with studies reviewed in Chapter Two, which showed that active citizen participation enhances crime prevention. Similar findings were reported in Malawi and other African countries where communities that cooperate with law enforcement agencies experience lower crime rates.

4.6.2 Objective 2: Identify Challenges Affecting Community Policing

Findings

Respondents identified the following challenges:

Challenge	Percentage
Lack of Trust	30%
Fear of Victimization	25%
Lack of Awareness	20%
Lack of Time	15%
Other Factors	10%

Police officers additionally cited inadequate transport, personnel shortages, and insufficient funding.

Analysis and Interpretation

The results suggest that trust remains the most critical challenge affecting effective implementation of community policing. When community members lack confidence in police officers, they are less likely to report crimes or participate in security initiatives.

Discussion

These findings support literature reviewed in Chapter Two, which identified trust as a fundamental requirement for successful community policing. According to the Community Policing Theory, strong partnerships between police and citizens enhance information sharing and crime prevention efforts.

4.6.3 Objective 3: Strategies for Strengthening Community Policing

Findings

Respondents proposed the following strategies:

Strategy	Percentage
Community Awareness Campaigns	70%
Improved Police-Community Relations	65%
Increased Police Resources	60%
Increased Community Participation	55%
Additional Police Training	50%

Analysis and Interpretation

The findings indicate that awareness creation is viewed as the most important intervention. Increased awareness can improve understanding of community policing roles and responsibilities.

Discussion

The findings are consistent with previous studies reviewed in Chapter Two, which emphasized public education, police professionalism, adequate resources, and collaboration as key pillars of effective community policing.

4.7 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1

H0: There is no significant relationship between community participation and effectiveness of community policing.

H1: There is a significant relationship between community participation and effectiveness of community policing.

The Pearson correlation coefficient showed:

$$r = 0.62$$

$$p = 0.003$$

Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Interpretation:

There is a statistically significant positive relationship between community participation and effectiveness of community policing in Mtakataka.

Hypothesis 2

H0: Trust in the police does not significantly influence crime prevention.

H1: Trust in the police significantly influences crime prevention.

Results showed:

$p = 0.001$

Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Interpretation:

Trust in the police significantly influences successful crime prevention initiatives.

4.8 Discussion of the Findings

4.8.1 Demographic Characteristics

4.8.1.1 Gender

The study found that males constituted 60% of respondents while females represented 40%. The relatively balanced representation suggests that both men and women have important roles in community policing. This finding agrees with literature emphasizing inclusive participation in crime prevention initiatives.

4.8.1.2 Age

Most respondents were between 31 and 45 years of age. This group is actively involved in economic and community activities and therefore has considerable experience regarding local security concerns.

4.8.2 Objective 1: Existing Community Policing Practices

4.8.2.1 Community Policing Forums

The majority of respondents confirmed the existence of community policing forums. This suggests that structures for community participation already exist. Similar findings were reported in previous studies reviewed in Chapter Two.

4.8.2.2 Neighborhood Watch Groups

The presence of neighborhood watch groups demonstrates community commitment to crime prevention. According to Routine Activity Theory, capable guardianship reduces opportunities for crime.

4.8.2.3 Community Security Meetings

Security meetings facilitate information sharing between police and residents. The findings support literature emphasizing communication as an essential component of community policing.

4.8.3 Objective 2: Challenges Affecting Community Policing

4.8.3.1 Lack of Trust

Trust emerged as the major challenge affecting community policing. This finding is consistent with studies showing that distrust reduces cooperation between police and community members.

4.8.3.2 Resource Constraints

Insufficient transport, personnel, and funding limit police effectiveness. Similar resource challenges have been documented in many developing countries.

4.8.3.3 Lack of Awareness

Many respondents lacked adequate knowledge about community policing responsibilities. This finding highlights the need for continuous public education.

4.8.4 Objective 3: Strategies for Strengthening Community Policing

4.8.4.1 Awareness Campaigns

The high support for awareness campaigns demonstrates the need for increased public education regarding crime reporting and participation in community policing.

4.8.4.2 Improved Police-Community Relations

Respondents emphasized the importance of building trust and mutual respect between the police and community members.

4.8.4.3 Increased Resources and Training

Provision of adequate resources and regular training would enhance police responsiveness and improve service delivery.

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented, analyzed, interpreted, and discussed the findings of the study. The findings revealed that community policing structures such as forums, neighborhood watch groups, and security meetings exist in Mtakataka. However, their effectiveness is constrained by lack of trust, inadequate resources, poor coordination, and limited awareness among community members.

The study further established that community participation and trust in the police significantly influence the success of community policing initiatives. Respondents recommended awareness campaigns, improved police-community relations, increased resources, enhanced training, and greater community participation as key strategies for strengthening community policing and crime prevention.

The next chapter presents the conclusions, recommendations, and areas for further research based on these findings.