

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature on community policing and crime prevention. It examines theoretical perspectives, empirical studies, and relevant concepts that provide a foundation for understanding how community policing can be strengthened. The review focuses on global, regional, and local contexts, with particular emphasis on Malawi.

2.2 Concept of Community Policing

Community policing refers to a collaborative approach to law enforcement that involves partnerships between the police and the community to identify and solve problems related to crime and disorder. According to Robert Trojanowicz and Bonnie Bucqueroux (1990), community policing emphasizes proactive strategies such as problem-solving, community engagement, and decentralization of police services.

Similarly, Wesley Skogan (2006) defines community policing as a philosophy that promotes organizational transformation and partnerships to address the causes of crime. It shifts policing from a reactive model to a proactive one where communities play a central role in maintaining security.

Community policing is based on the belief that police alone cannot effectively control crime without the support and cooperation of the public. It encourages regular interaction between police officers and community members to build trust, improve communication, and strengthen relationships. Through this cooperation, communities become more willing to report crimes and share important information with law enforcement agencies.

Another important aspect of community policing is problem-solving. Police officers and community members work together to identify the root causes of crime and develop practical solutions. These causes may include poverty, unemployment, drug abuse, lack of education, and

family conflicts. By addressing these underlying issues, community policing aims to prevent crime before it occurs rather than only responding after crimes have been committed.

Community policing also promotes accountability and transparency within the police service. Officers are encouraged to be more responsive to the needs of the people they serve. This helps to reduce mistrust, corruption, and fear among community members, thereby improving public confidence in law enforcement institutions.

In addition, community policing enhances public participation in maintaining peace and security. Citizens are encouraged to take responsibility for the safety of their communities through activities such as neighborhood watch groups, community patrols, public awareness campaigns, and crime prevention meetings. This creates a sense of shared responsibility between the police and the public.

Malawi Police Service has adopted community policing as a key strategy to enhance public safety. This includes the establishment of community policing forums, neighborhood watch committees, and victim support units. Through these structures, communities are encouraged to work closely with the police in reporting crime, sharing information, and promoting peace and security at the local level.

Community policing has become particularly important in rural and semi-urban areas of Malawi where police resources are limited. In areas such as Mtakataka in Dedza District, community participation helps bridge the gap between the police and the public by improving crime detection and response. However, the success of community policing depends on factors such as trust, effective communication, adequate resources, and active community involvement.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Social Disorganization Theory

Social Disorganization Theory was developed by Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay in 1942. The theory explains that crime and delinquency are more likely to occur in communities

where social institutions and social relationships are weak or ineffective. According to the theory, factors such as poverty, unemployment, poor housing conditions, population instability, family breakdown, and limited community participation reduce a community's ability to maintain social order and control criminal behavior.

Shaw and McKay argued that crime is not merely the result of individual behavior but is strongly influenced by the social and environmental conditions within a community. When communities lack strong social networks and effective institutions such as families, schools, religious organizations, and local leadership structures, residents may find it difficult to work together to address social problems. As a result, informal social control weakens, creating opportunities for criminal activities to flourish.

A key concept of Social Disorganization Theory is social cohesion, which refers to the level of trust, unity, and cooperation among community members. Communities with strong social cohesion are better able to regulate behavior, resolve conflicts, and prevent crime because residents share common values and are willing to intervene when problems arise. Conversely, communities characterized by social disorganization often experience low levels of trust, weak community participation, and limited cooperation among residents, making crime prevention more challenging.

The theory also highlights the importance of collective efficacy, which is the willingness of community members to work together for the common good. Communities with high collective efficacy are more likely to organize neighborhood activities, support vulnerable individuals, monitor public spaces, and collaborate with law enforcement agencies. Such actions help reduce opportunities for crime and strengthen public safety.

In the context of Malawi, particularly in Mtakatika, socio-economic challenges such as poverty, youth unemployment, low educational attainment, substance abuse, and limited economic opportunities may contribute to social disorganization. These conditions can weaken traditional community structures and reduce the capacity of residents to effectively prevent and respond to crime. In some cases, individuals may become involved in theft, vandalism, violence, or other criminal activities due to economic hardship and lack of social support.

Community policing is closely linked to Social Disorganization Theory because it seeks to strengthen community structures and promote cooperation between citizens and law enforcement agencies. Through community policing initiatives, residents are encouraged to participate actively in crime prevention efforts, report criminal activities, attend community meetings, and work with police officers to address local security concerns. This collaborative approach helps rebuild trust and social cohesion within communities.

Furthermore, community policing strengthens social institutions by involving traditional leaders, religious leaders, youth groups, women's groups, schools, and other community-based organizations in maintaining peace and security. These stakeholders play a crucial role in promoting positive behavior, resolving conflicts, and encouraging community members to take collective responsibility for public safety.

Regular interaction between police officers and community members also enhances communication and mutual trust. When citizens feel respected and supported by law enforcement agencies, they are more likely to cooperate with the police by sharing information about criminal activities and participating in crime prevention programs. This cooperation contributes to stronger social control and improved community security.

In addition, community policing promotes problem-solving strategies that address the root causes of crime rather than merely responding to criminal incidents after they occur. By identifying underlying social and economic challenges, communities and police officers can develop joint solutions that improve living conditions and reduce factors associated with criminal behavior.

Therefore, Social Disorganization Theory provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between community conditions and crime. The theory supports the view that strengthening social bonds, promoting community participation, and enhancing cooperation between the police and local residents can contribute significantly to crime prevention. In the context of this study, the theory helps explain how effective community policing can improve social cohesion, increase collective responsibility, and strengthen community capacity to prevent crime in Mtakataka, Dedza District.

2.3.2 Routine Activity Theory

Routine Activity Theory was developed by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson in 1979. The theory explains crime as a result of everyday social activities and interactions rather than solely focusing on the characteristics of offenders. According to the theory, a crime is likely to occur when three essential elements come together at the same time and place: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian.

A motivated offender refers to an individual who is willing and able to commit a crime. The theory assumes that there will always be people with criminal intentions in society. A suitable target can be a person, property, or object that appears attractive, accessible, and vulnerable to criminal attack. Examples include unattended property, isolated individuals, or poorly secured homes and businesses. The third element, the absence of a capable guardian, refers to the lack of someone or something that can prevent the crime from occurring. A capable guardian may be a police officer, security guard, community member, neighbor, family member, or even security devices such as alarms and surveillance cameras.

The theory suggests that crime can be reduced by increasing guardianship and reducing opportunities for offenders to access suitable targets. Rather than focusing exclusively on punishing offenders, Routine Activity Theory emphasizes preventive measures that make criminal activities more difficult and risky. For example, improved street lighting, neighborhood watch programs, regular police patrols, and community surveillance can discourage potential offenders and reduce crime opportunities.

Community policing is closely linked to Routine Activity Theory because it strengthens the role of guardianship within communities. Through community policing initiatives, citizens work together with law enforcement agencies to monitor their neighborhoods, identify security concerns, and report suspicious activities. Increased interaction between the police and community members enhances vigilance and creates a greater presence of capable guardians in areas that may be vulnerable to crime.

Community policing programs often encourage residents to participate in neighborhood watch groups, community patrols, and crime prevention meetings. These activities increase surveillance

within the community and make it more difficult for offenders to operate unnoticed. When citizens actively observe and report suspicious behavior, potential criminals may perceive a higher risk of detection and arrest, thereby reducing their willingness to commit crimes.

Furthermore, community policing promotes information sharing between the police and local residents. Community members often possess valuable knowledge about individuals, locations, and activities within their neighborhoods. By sharing this information with law enforcement agencies, they help identify potential threats and prevent criminal incidents before they occur. This collaborative approach strengthens crime prevention efforts and enhances overall community safety.

In the context of Malawi, particularly in areas such as Mtakataka, Routine Activity Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how community participation can contribute to crime prevention. Through community policing structures, local residents can act as capable guardians by monitoring their surroundings, reporting suspicious activities, and working closely with the police. Such cooperation can help reduce opportunities for crime, improve public security, and strengthen trust between law enforcement agencies and the community.

Therefore, Routine Activity Theory supports the idea that effective community policing can reduce crime by increasing guardianship, improving community vigilance, and limiting opportunities for criminal behavior. The theory is particularly relevant to this study because it highlights the importance of active community involvement in maintaining law and order and preventing crime at the local level.

2.3.3 Broken Windows Theory

The Broken Windows Theory was developed by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in 1982. The theory argues that visible signs of disorder and neglect within a community, such as broken windows, graffiti, vandalism, littering, public drunkenness, abandoned buildings, and loitering, create an environment that encourages criminal behavior. According to the theory,

when minor disorders are ignored, they signal that nobody cares about the area, thereby reducing social control and increasing the likelihood of more serious crimes occurring.

Wilson and Kelling (1982) believed that disorder and crime are closely linked. For example, a broken window left unrepaired in a neighborhood may communicate that there is a lack of authority or community concern. As a result, individuals may become more willing to commit acts of vandalism, theft, assault, or other serious offenses because they perceive the environment as permissive to crime. In this way, small problems gradually develop into larger security challenges if they are not addressed early.

Community policing is closely connected to the Broken Windows Theory because it emphasizes proactive crime prevention and strong cooperation between the police and community members. Through community policing, law enforcement officers work together with residents to identify and address minor offenses and social disorders before they escalate into serious criminal activities. Police officers regularly patrol communities, engage with residents, respond quickly to complaints, and encourage citizens to report suspicious activities. This helps maintain public order and promotes a sense of safety within the community.

Furthermore, community policing strengthens informal social control by encouraging community participation in maintaining order. Residents become more willing to protect public property, report criminal behavior, and cooperate with the police when trust and communication are established. The approach also promotes cleanliness, discipline, and responsibility within neighborhoods, which discourages criminal activity.

In the context of Malawi, particularly in areas such as Mtakataka, the Broken Windows Theory can help explain the importance of addressing minor community problems such as vandalism, alcohol abuse, public disorder, and youth delinquency. When community policing structures are effective, local communities and the police can jointly address these issues at an early stage, thereby reducing the likelihood of serious crimes and improving public security.

2.4 Community Policing and Crime Prevention

Community policing plays a vital role in crime prevention by promoting trust, information sharing, and joint problem-solving. According to Sherman and Eck (2002), community-based approaches can significantly reduce crime when properly implemented.

Key components include:

- **Community Engagement:** Active participation of residents in identifying and solving problems.
- **Partnerships:** Collaboration between police, local leaders, and other stakeholders.
- **Problem-Solving:** Addressing root causes of crime rather than symptoms.

In Malawi, community policing initiatives have contributed to improved reporting of crimes and increased awareness of safety issues, although challenges remain.

2.5 Empirical Literature Review

This section reviews empirical studies related to community policing and crime prevention from global, African, and Malawian perspectives. The review is guided by the study objectives and research questions, particularly focusing on the effectiveness of community policing, the relationship between the police and the community, challenges affecting implementation, and strategies for improving crime prevention.

2.5.1 Global Perspective

Globally, community policing has been widely adopted as a strategy for improving public safety, reducing crime, and strengthening relationships between law enforcement agencies and citizens. Studies conducted in developed countries indicate that community policing contributes positively to crime prevention through increased cooperation between the police and the public.

A study conducted in the United States by Wesley G. Skogan and Susan M. Hartnett (1997) examined the implementation of community policing in Chicago. The researchers found that community policing increased citizen participation in crime prevention activities and improved public trust in the police. Residents reported feeling safer due to increased police visibility and regular interaction between officers and community members. The study also established that community meetings and neighborhood patrols contributed to reducing fear of crime and improving communication between citizens and law enforcement officers.

Similarly, research conducted in the United Kingdom by Karen Bullock and Nick Tilley (2003) found that neighborhood policing enhanced police visibility and strengthened police-community relationships. Their study revealed that frequent engagement between police officers and local residents improved information sharing and encouraged citizens to report criminal activities. The researchers further noted that community policing increased public confidence in the criminal justice system because people felt that their concerns were being taken seriously.

Another study in Canada by Curt T. Griffiths (2013) showed that community policing improved collaboration between law enforcement agencies and local communities in addressing social problems such as drug abuse, youth violence, and vandalism. The study emphasized that proactive policing strategies were more effective than reactive approaches because they focused on preventing crime before it occurred.

In Australia, research by Janet Chan (2001) found that community policing promoted problem-solving partnerships between the police and communities. However, the study also revealed that the success of community policing depended heavily on adequate training, community support, and institutional commitment from police authorities.

Despite these positive findings, some studies indicate that community policing does not always produce the expected outcomes. For example, a study by David H. Bayley (1994) argued that community policing programs sometimes fail due to insufficient resources, poor coordination, and lack of community trust. The study emphasized that effective implementation requires long-term commitment, proper funding, and strong accountability mechanisms.

Overall, empirical evidence from developed countries demonstrates that community policing can improve public trust, reduce fear of crime, and encourage citizen participation in crime prevention. However, the effectiveness of such programs depends on cooperation, adequate resources, and mutual trust between the police and the community.

2.5.2 African Context

In Africa, community policing has been adopted as a strategy for addressing rising crime rates, improving police-community relations, and enhancing public participation in security matters. However, empirical studies indicate that implementation has faced several social, political, and institutional challenges.

In Kenya, a study by Mutuma Ruteere and Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle (2003) examined the effectiveness of community policing initiatives in Nairobi and other urban areas. The study found that community policing improved cooperation between citizens and the police by encouraging local participation in crime prevention. Community members became more willing to share information with law enforcement officers regarding criminal activities. However, the study also identified major challenges such as police corruption, mistrust, political interference, and inadequate public awareness. Many citizens feared retaliation from criminals and lacked confidence in the police due to previous experiences of abuse and corruption.

In South Africa, community policing forums were introduced to strengthen communication between communities and the police following the end of apartheid. A study by Monique Marks and Jennifer Wood (2010) found that these forums promoted dialogue and cooperation between citizens and law enforcement agencies. The researchers observed that community policing contributed to improved information sharing and public participation in local security initiatives. However, persistent problems such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, and high crime rates limited the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Research conducted in Nigeria by Etannibi Alemika (2013) showed that community policing helped improve intelligence gathering and strengthened local participation in crime prevention. Nevertheless, the study found that poor police-community relations, inadequate funding, and lack of professionalism among some police officers negatively affected implementation. The

study further revealed that many citizens remained reluctant to cooperate with law enforcement agencies due to fear, mistrust, and concerns about corruption.

In Uganda, a study by Moses Twinomugisha (2014) found that community policing programs increased community awareness about crime prevention and public security. However, the study indicated that limited logistical support and insufficient police training reduced the effectiveness of community policing activities in rural areas.

Similarly, studies in Ghana have shown that community policing contributes to reducing petty crimes and strengthening social cohesion. However, lack of transportation, inadequate staffing, and weak institutional support continue to affect implementation.

Overall, empirical evidence from Africa suggests that community policing has the potential to improve cooperation between citizens and law enforcement agencies. However, the success of these initiatives is often constrained by corruption, mistrust, inadequate resources, political interference, and low public participation.

2.5.3 Malawi Context

In Malawi, community policing was introduced by the Malawi Police Service as a strategy for promoting public participation in crime prevention and improving relationships between the police and communities. The approach emphasizes collaboration between law enforcement officers, local leaders, and community members in maintaining peace and security.

According to Chimwala (2015), community policing in Malawi has improved communication and interaction between the police and local communities. The study found that regular meetings, awareness campaigns, and neighborhood patrols helped strengthen trust between citizens and law enforcement agencies. Community members became more willing to report criminal activities and participate in local security initiatives. However, the study also identified several challenges affecting implementation, including limited financial resources, inadequate

transport, shortage of police officers, and insufficient public awareness regarding the objectives of community policing.

Research by Kainja (2016) revealed that although community policing structures exist in many districts of Malawi, their effectiveness remains limited. The study established that many community policing forums lack proper training and operational support. As a result, some community members do not fully understand their roles and responsibilities in crime prevention activities. The research further noted that weak community participation and low levels of trust continue to affect cooperation between citizens and the police.

A study conducted in Blantyre by Mphande (2018) found that community policing contributed to reducing cases of theft, vandalism, and youth-related violence in some urban communities. The study highlighted the importance of regular police patrols, public awareness campaigns, and collaboration with local leaders. However, residents complained about delayed police response, inadequate resources, and limited police presence in some areas.

In rural districts such as Dedza District, studies have shown that traditional leaders play an important role in supporting community policing initiatives. Research by Phiri (2019) established that cooperation between village leaders, community policing forums, and the police contributed to resolving local disputes and reducing criminal activities. Nevertheless, the study noted that poverty, illiteracy, and lack of transportation negatively affected the implementation of community policing activities in remote areas.

Another study by Banda (2020) found that fear of victimization and lack of confidentiality discouraged some citizens from reporting crimes to the police. Community members expressed concerns that criminals could retaliate against those who provided information to law enforcement agencies. The study recommended strengthening witness protection measures and improving police accountability to enhance public trust.

Empirical evidence from Malawi therefore suggests that community policing has contributed positively to crime prevention and police-community relations. However, challenges such as inadequate resources, weak public participation, lack of training, mistrust, and logistical

constraints continue to limit its effectiveness. These findings justify the need for further research on strengthening community policing and crime prevention in areas such as Mtakataka.

2.6 Challenges of Community Policing

Despite its benefits, community policing faces several challenges:

- **Lack of Trust:** Communities may distrust the police due to past experiences.
- **Resource Constraints:** Limited funding and personnel affect implementation.
- **Low Community Participation:** Some citizens are reluctant to engage.
- **Corruption and Misconduct:** These undermine credibility of the police.
- **Inadequate Training:** Police officers may lack skills in community engagement.

These challenges are evident in many parts of Malawi, including Mtakataka.

2.7 Strategies for Strengthening Community Policing

Literature suggests several strategies to improve community policing:

- **Capacity Building:** Training police officers in communication and community engagement.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Educating communities about their role in policing.
- **Resource Allocation:** Providing adequate funding and equipment.
- **Community participation:** Involving local leaders, NGOs, and other stakeholders.
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Promoting transparency and trust.

According to Goldstein (1990), problem-oriented policing can enhance effectiveness by focusing on underlying causes of crime.

2.8 Research Gap

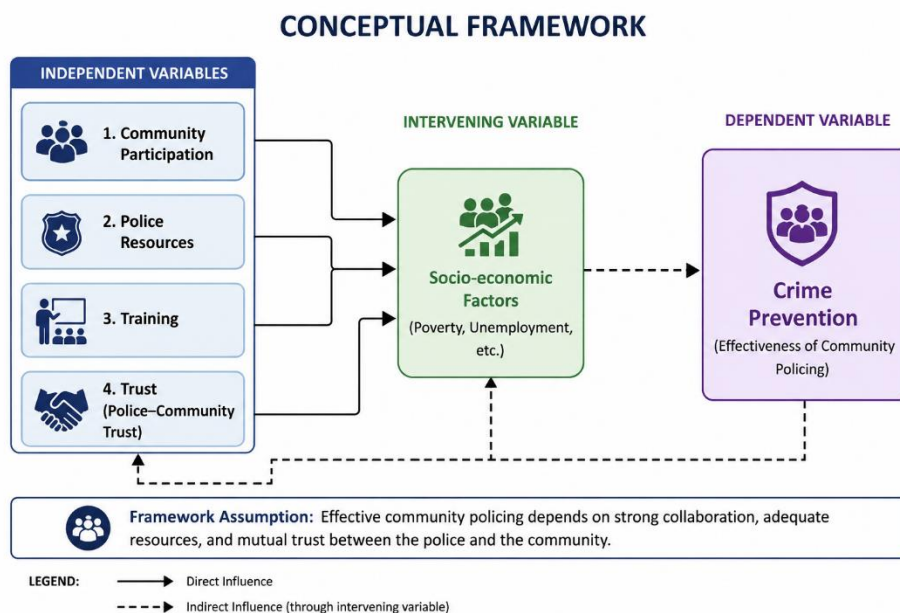
Although several studies have examined community policing in Malawi, there is limited research focusing specifically on Mtakataka in Dedza District. Existing studies tend to be general and do not address localized challenges and opportunities.

This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by providing context-specific insights and recommendations for strengthening community policing in Mtakataka.

2.9 Conceptual Framework

The study is guided by a conceptual framework where:

- Independent Variables: Community participation, police resources, training, trust
- Dependent Variable: Crime prevention
- Intervening Variables: Socio-economic factors (poverty, unemployment)



Conceptual framework for crime prevention

The framework assumes that effective community policing depends on strong collaboration, adequate resources, and mutual trust between the police and the community.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature on community policing and crime prevention, highlighting key theories, empirical findings, and challenges. While community policing is widely recognized as an effective strategy, its success depends on proper implementation, community involvement, and institutional support. The next chapter will discuss the research methodology used in this study.