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POLICE REFORMATION AND PUBLIC TRUST: A STUDY OF ENUGU STATE POLICE COMMAND

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Abstract

This study examined police reformation and public trust, with particular reference to the Enugu State Police Command, Enugu. The study was motivated by persistent concerns over declining public confidence in the Nigeria Police Force, police misconduct, inadequate operational capacity, and continuing security challenges. Specifically, the study examined the effect of police-community partnership on crime rate reduction and analysed the effect of police response time on security threats in Enugu State. The study was anchored on Procedural Justice Theory, which emphasizes the importance of fairness, respect, legitimacy, and trust in shaping citizens' cooperation with law-enforcement authorities. A survey research design was adopted, while the population comprised 320 officers of the Enugu State Police Command. Due to the relatively manageable population size, the entire 320 officers constituted the sample. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, interviews, personal observation, and relevant secondary sources. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, while simple linear regression was employed to test the hypotheses at the 5% level of significance. Findings revealed that police-community partnership significantly contributed to crime rate reduction in Enugu State, with a moderate positive relationship ($R = 0.539$) and an explanatory power of 29.0% ($F = 130.039$; $p < 0.05$). The study also established that police response time had a statistically significant effect on security threats, although the relationship was relatively weak ($R = 0.188$), explaining 3.5% of the variation in security threats ($F = 11.629$; $p = 0.001$).

The study concludes that police reforms have contributed to improved policing outcomes and public engagement in Enugu State, although sustained improvements require stronger accountability, adequate funding, enhanced operational capacity, timely response mechanisms, and meaningful police-community collaboration. It recommends institutionalising regular community engagement programmes and strengthening police logistics, communication technologies, patrol coverage, and manpower to improve responsiveness and public security.

Introduction

The effectiveness of law enforcement agencies is largely influenced by public trust, institutional capacity, professionalism, and the ability to maintain public security. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF), as the principal agency responsible for maintaining law and order, protecting lives and property, and ensuring internal security, has faced persistent challenges including corruption, inefficiency, human rights violations, brutality, inadequate resources, and weak professionalism. These challenges have contributed to declining public confidence and limited police-community cooperation (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2024).

Police reform has consequently become a significant governance concern in Nigeria. Globally, police reforms are undertaken to improve institutional effectiveness, professionalism, accountability, human rights compliance, and public confidence (Bayley, 2016). In Nigeria, reform measures have included structural reorganisation, community policing, improved training, human-rights programmes, and the strengthening of oversight institutions such as the Police Service Commission (PSC) (Nwankwo, 2020; Ikelegbe, 2023). According to Nanshep, Ojiako, & Nnaji (2025) community policing provides an important reform mechanism for improving police responsiveness and strengthening police–community relations, particularly by bringing security provision closer to citizens and encouraging community participation in crime prevention. The underlying expectation is that improved police accountability and professionalism will enhance public cooperation, strengthen crime control, and improve public security.

Despite these interventions, the outcomes of police reforms remain mixed. Persistent allegations of bribery, extrajudicial killings, unlawful detention, extortion, and other forms of misconduct continue to undermine police legitimacy and public confidence (Amnesty International, 2019; Human Rights Watch,

2020). Goldsmith (2015) argues that police reform can improve security and public confidence when reforms are effectively implemented and supported by institutional accountability. However, weak implementation, inadequate resources, systemic corruption, and political interference can limit their sustainability and effectiveness (Nwankwo, 2020).

Public security encompasses the protection of individuals and communities from crime, violence, and other threats to social order. Effective policing is therefore central to crime prevention, public safety, and social stability (Skogan, 2016). Nigeria continues to experience serious security challenges, including kidnapping, armed robbery, communal violence, and other forms of violent crime. Enugu State is not excluded from these challenges. Inadequate funding, insufficient personnel and equipment, limited training, poor working conditions, and weak community cooperation may constrain the capacity of the Enugu State Police Command to respond effectively to security threats (Nwankwo, 2020). Consequently, some communities have increasingly relied on vigilante and other informal security arrangements, creating additional challenges for coordinated and lawful security provision (Onyeonoru, 2021).

The persistence of police misconduct and inadequate security outcomes suggests that the introduction of reforms alone may not be sufficient to restore public confidence or improve security. Where citizens perceive the police as corrupt, abusive, ineffective, or unresponsive, cooperation with law enforcement may decline, thereby weakening intelligence gathering, crime reporting, and community-based crime prevention (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Conversely, credible accountability mechanisms, professional conduct, effective oversight, and meaningful community engagement can strengthen police legitimacy and public cooperation.

A major concern, therefore, is the gap between the objectives of police reforms and their actual implementation and outcomes. Nwankwo (2020) notes that weak follow-through, systemic corruption, and political interference can undermine reform initiatives, while Ikelegbe (2023) highlights continuing institutional and operational challenges within the policing system. The persistence of these problems raises questions about whether police reforms have substantially improved public trust and security outcomes.

Accordingly, there is a need for empirical assessment of the relationship between police reform and public trust and its implications for public security, particularly within the Enugu State Police Command.

Objective of the study

The main objective of this study will examine police reformation and public trust with specific reference to Enugu State Police Command, Enugu. The study will examine the following specific objectives:

1. To ascertain the effect of police-community partnership on crime rate reduction in Enugu State, Nigeria.
2. To analyse the effect of police response time to security threats in Enugu State, Nigeria

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Reform

This refers to government-led initiatives, policies, and strategies aimed at improving efficiency, professionalism, accountability, and effectiveness in an organization. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English defines reform as follows; a) Something to improve a system, an organization, a law, etc. by making changes to it. b) To improve your behavior; to make somebody do this c) Change that is made to a social system, an organization etc. to improve or correct it (Hornby, 2010). From the above definitions, one can say that reform is a change that is made to drastically improve and correct an individual, a system, or an organization etc. For a reform to take place there must be system failure, low productivity output or malfunctioning etc. Simply put, such a system or organization may not be working at full capacity either to maximize its potential or laid down objectives.

It will be pointed out here that there are various types of reforms e.g. public and administrative reforms, constitutional reforms, judicial reforms, armed forces reforms and police reforms etc. depending on the area of need at a particular point in time. This implies that reforms in themselves help in shaping the dimension towards having an ideal system or an organization. While expansiating on what administrative reform is, Olaopa (2019) opines; thus, Reform could however be simply a management maintenance intervention or organizational health-check, while it could also be turnaround maintenance to re-engineer the structure, management and

functioning of the administrative system, with improved service delivery as the overall objective

Security

The protection of citizens, communities, and property from threats such as crime, violence, and disorder, ensuring a safe and stable environment. Osahor (2024) sees security as the development of confidence among citizens of a nation that their territorial integrity, sovereignty, national core values and interests would not be attacked by any hostile force, a kind of freedom from fear and belief that one's liberty would not be put in jeopardy by an extraneous force. He also conceives it as protecting the country from internal threats and divisive forces. Buzan (2021) projected the democratic security model which he says is multi-faceted. He contends that the democratic security model goes beyond physical protection to encompass political, economic, environmental, cultural and social security. One cannot but agree with Buzan's submissions which depicts that security must be looked at holistically to involve all spheres of human activities within a society.

Public Security

Public security refers to the state of safety and protection provided by law enforcement agencies to citizens and communities. Public security depends on the effectiveness of the police in preventing crime and ensuring justice (Skogan, 2016). Effective policing is essential for ensuring security, reducing crime rates, and maintaining social order. Public security is a fundamental pillar of national stability and socio-economic development. Skogan, (2016) stated that a well-functioning police force plays a vital role in ensuring the safety of citizens, reducing crime, and fostering a secure environment for economic activities. The security situation in Nigeria has worsened in recent years, with increasing cases of armed robbery, kidnapping, banditry, and communal conflicts (Amnesty International, 2019).

Police-Community Partnership and Crime Rate Reduction

Police-community partnership refers to a collaborative approach to policing in which the police work jointly with residents, traditional institutions, community associations, youth groups, religious organisations, neighbourhood-watch groups and other local stakeholders to identify

security problems, share information and develop appropriate responses to crime. Unlike conventional policing, which tends to emphasise reactive enforcement, police-community partnership promotes communication, mutual trust, shared responsibility, community intelligence and problem-solving. Odo, Ugwuonu, Iloh, Eze and Nwagbara (2025) explain community policing in terms of decentralised and personalised police services, citizen empowerment, proactive collaboration and problem-solving. These features are particularly relevant to Nigeria, where local knowledge can provide information about criminal networks, suspicious movements and emerging security threats that may not be readily available to formal police structures.

The theoretical justification for police-community partnership is closely associated with the proposition that effective crime control depends not only on police capacity but also on police legitimacy and citizens' willingness to cooperate with law-enforcement institutions. Ikuteyijo and Rotimi (2012), in their study of community partnership in Nigerian policing, observed that cooperation between communities and the police is vital to the success of policing. However, they also identified historical distrust between the Nigerian Police Force and communities as an important obstacle to effective cooperation. Where citizens perceive the police as corrupt, abusive or unresponsive, they may be unwilling to provide information or assist investigations. Nwafor, Ojiako, Okonkwo, & Onyeulo (2023) argued that institutional weaknesses and inappropriate administrative practices can undermine the effectiveness of public organisations, suggesting that meaningful police reform must address not only operational procedures but also the administrative structures and human-resource practices that influence police performance. Conversely, when police-community relationships are characterised by trust, accessibility and mutual respect, citizens are more likely to report crimes and provide intelligence.

Empirical evidence generally supports the argument that constructive police-community interaction can improve crime control, although the magnitude of its effect varies considerably across contexts. Onyenwasia (2023), in a study of Awka metropolis, Anambra State, found a significant predictive relationship between police-community interaction and crime control. Police-community interaction significantly predicted crime control, with the study reporting $\beta = .59$,

$t = 7.39$, $p < .01$. The combined influence of police-community interaction and police functioning effectiveness also produced a significant relationship with crime control. The study therefore concluded that security and crime control should be understood as a joint responsibility of the police and the community. Although the study was conducted in neighbouring Anambra State rather than Enugu State, its findings provide useful South-East Nigerian evidence because of the similarities in social structure, community organisation and security challenges.

Similarly, Ugwu (2020) examined community policing through neighbourhood watch as a strategic security-development mechanism in Enugu State. The study specifically considered the Enugu experience and highlighted the role of neighbourhood-watch structures within the state's wider security architecture. It argued that community-based security mechanisms can complement formal security agencies by extending surveillance and security awareness into local communities. The study is particularly relevant to the present research because it demonstrates that community participation has already been incorporated into Enugu State's security arrangements. However, its conceptual and descriptive orientation leaves room for more rigorous empirical examination of whether police-community partnership actually produces measurable reductions in crime rates.

More recent scholarship reinforces the importance of community-oriented approaches but also cautions against assuming that all forms of community policing automatically reduce crime. Ekici, Akdogan, Kelly and Gultekin (2022), in a meta-analysis of community-policing studies, found mixed effects across different crime categories. Their findings indicated that community policing did not consistently reduce disorder, drug sales or property crime, although significant effects were observed for burglary, gun-related crime, drug use, Part I crimes and robbery. This suggests that the effectiveness of police-community partnership depends partly on the specific form of partnership adopted, the crime problem being addressed and the manner in which police and community actors cooperate.

The evidence from more recent meta-analytic research is similarly nuanced. Braga, Schnell and Welsh (2024), in an updated systematic review and meta-analysis, found that community problem-solving approaches

directed at social and physical disorder produced substantial crime-reduction effects, whereas aggressive order-maintenance strategies did not produce significant crime-control gains. Their findings are important because they distinguish genuine community problem-solving from purely enforcement-oriented approaches. The evidence suggests that police-community partnership is more likely to reduce crime when communities are involved in identifying local problems, prioritising interventions and developing solutions rather than simply being used as sources of information for conventional police enforcement.

However, an important counterpoint comes from Blair, Christia, Nadeem and Weinstein (2024). Their cross-country meta-analysis of six community-policing experiments found that increasing locally appropriate community-policing practices did not produce improvements in citizen-police trust, citizen cooperation or crime reduction. The authors attributed part of this outcome to uneven and incomplete implementation by police organisations. This finding is significant for the Nigerian context because the existence of community-policing structures does not necessarily mean that genuine partnership exists. Partnership must be supported by institutional commitment, adequate resources, police responsiveness, community participation and mechanisms for accountability.

Recent Nigerian scholarship also demonstrates the continuing relevance of community policing. Fajemirokun (2025), in an evidence-based assessment of community policing in Nigeria, reviewed empirical evidence from Lagos, Bauchi and Jimeta in Adamawa State. The study reported generally positive evidence concerning the contribution of community policing to crime prevention and emphasised the importance of cooperation between communities and law-enforcement agencies. At the same time, the study identified institutional and operational constraints that can prevent community policing from achieving its intended outcomes.

The relevance of community participation is especially apparent in Enugu State's current security arrangements. In 2026, Enugu State security authorities continued to emphasise community intelligence and stakeholder engagement. The Enugu State Police Command conducted statewide town-hall meetings involving traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth and women's groups, transport unions, traders, students and other

stakeholders. These engagements provided opportunities for citizens to communicate security concerns and provide feedback to police authorities. Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation reported in 2026 that the Enugu Police Command's approach included proactive and people-friendly policing and credited this approach with contributing to a reduction in violent crime.

Police Response Time and Security Threats

Police response time refers to the period between the receipt or reporting of a security incident and the arrival or intervention of police personnel at the scene. It is generally regarded as an important indicator of operational effectiveness because delayed intervention can provide offenders with opportunities to escape, destroy evidence, harm victims or escalate an incident. Verlaan and Ruiter (2023) identify three major components of police response time: reporting time, dispatch time and travel time. Their scoping review of 39 studies identified 122 different predictor variables associated with response time, demonstrating that response time is influenced by a combination of incident characteristics, organisational factors, geographical conditions and operational arrangements.

The importance of rapid police response is grounded in the assumption that timely intervention can increase the probability of apprehending offenders and protecting victims. Verlaan and Ruiter (2023) note that faster responses have been associated in previous research with witness availability, on-scene arrests, crime clearance, deterrence, victim satisfaction and citizen satisfaction. However, their review also cautions that the determinants of response time are complex and that researchers need to distinguish reporting, dispatch and travel components when assessing police responsiveness. This distinction is particularly important in Nigeria, where delays may occur before a police unit is dispatched, as well as after dispatch because of traffic congestion, poor roads, inadequate vehicles, communication problems or the geographical distance between police stations and incident locations. Ojiako, Umeasiegbu, Onyeulo, & Okoye (2024) maintain that public confidence in state institutions is closely associated with the quality of democratic governance and the extent to which public institutions respond to citizens' expectations.

Empirical evidence concerning the relationship between response time and policing outcomes is not entirely consistent. Rief and Huff (2023), analysing 1,266,299 incidents involving 810 police officers, found that response time significantly predicted arrest, although the effect was relatively small compared with other factors such as call type, call priority, officer characteristics and precinct assignment. Interestingly, the study found that longer response times were associated with a higher likelihood of arrest in the overall dataset, contrary to the conventional expectation. The authors nevertheless found that the relationship varied according to crime type and that faster responses could be particularly important for certain offences such as robbery. This finding demonstrates that the effect of response time should not be treated as universally linear across all categories of security threats.

In contrast, Vidal and Kirchmaier (2018) found a strong relationship between police response time and crime clearance. Using data from Greater Manchester Police, the study reported that a 10% increase in response time was associated with a 4.7-percentage-point reduction in the probability of clearing a crime. The authors identified immediate arrest and identification of suspects by victims or witnesses as possible mechanisms through which faster police responses improve clearance. Although the study was conducted outside Nigeria, its findings provide an important empirical basis for investigating whether timely police intervention improves security outcomes in Enugu State.

More recent Nigerian evidence provides particularly useful contextual support. Akintola (2026) examined police response time and crime deterrence in Lagos State using survey data from 387 police officers across 15 area commands and secondary crime records covering January 2023 to December 2025. The study directly investigated the relationship between response time and crime deterrence within a Nigerian policing environment and therefore provides a useful basis for assessing response-time effectiveness under Nigerian institutional conditions. The study is especially relevant because it addresses the methodological problem of transferring findings from Western policing systems to Nigeria, where police resources, communications infrastructure, traffic conditions, policing arrangements and patterns of insecurity are different.

The relationship between response time and security effectiveness is also becoming increasingly relevant to the security architecture of Enugu State. The state has introduced a Command and Control Centre linked to surveillance infrastructure and a Distress Response Squad (DRS). In 2026, the Inspector-General of Police commended the system and reported that DRS personnel were able to reach a designated location within approximately two to four minutes during an operational demonstration. The system reportedly combines surveillance, communications and mobile response capabilities, thereby attempting to reduce the time between identification of a threat and deployment of security personnel.

The development is significant because it represents a movement from predominantly reactive policing towards technology-supported rapid intervention. Enugu State Government reports that the Command and Control Centre integrates security agencies and that the DRS is equipped with more than 150 security vehicles fitted with AI-enabled cameras. The state government has associated these investments with a substantial reduction in violent crime, although such official claims should be distinguished from independently evaluated causal evidence. Thus, while current institutional developments provide a strong practical justification for examining police response time, there remains a need for independent empirical research to determine whether reductions in response time are statistically associated with improved security outcomes.

Furthermore, rapid response is not simply a function of having more police vehicles. Organisational capacity, communication systems, geographic accessibility, road infrastructure, availability of patrol units, quality of intelligence, dispatch procedures, command-and-control systems and the priority assigned to particular incidents can all influence the time taken to respond. Salimbene and Zhang's research on organisational and community effects on police response time similarly found that incident-level and police-department characteristics significantly influence response time. Verlaan and Ruiter (2023) therefore argue for greater attention to the separate components of response time rather than treating it as a single undifferentiated measure.

For Enugu State, this issue is particularly important because security threats include kidnapping, armed robbery, cult-related

violence, communal insecurity and other forms of violent crime. In such circumstances, the effectiveness of police intervention may depend heavily on how quickly threats are detected, communicated and attended to. Recent operations by the Enugu Police Command demonstrate the growing use of intelligence, surveillance and rapid-response mechanisms. The Command has also encouraged residents to provide timely and credible information to support police operations, indicating that response effectiveness depends partly on the quality and speed of information received from the public.

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on Procedural Justice Theory by Tom R. Tyler (1990s). Procedural Justice Theory is a concept from social psychology and criminology that emphasizes the importance of the fairness of the *processes* through which decisions are made, and authority is exercised. It asserts that people are more likely to obey laws and cooperate with authorities when they perceive the processes as just, even if the outcomes are not in their favour. Procedural justice theory argues that the fairness of the processes used by police influences public perceptions of legitimacy and trust more than outcomes alone. When citizens feel they are treated with respect, dignity, and fairness during encounters with the police, they are more likely to see the police as legitimate and trustworthy, even if the outcomes are unfavorable to them.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Survey design was adopted because it was considered appropriate in gathering the necessary data for the completion of this study.

Area of Study

The study area is Enugu State Police Command. Being the topmost command and state headquarters of Police, it is well situated, with different offices dealing with different issues. They are charged with the responsibility for maintaining peace and order and reports ultimately to the Inspector General of the Police at the Force-headquarters, Abuja. Enugu State Police Command is located at Abakiliki Street, along the state secretariate, G.R.A, Enugu. The command is chaired by the Commissioner of Police and assisted by the Deputy Commissioner of Police and many Assistant

Commissioners who oversee the various departments in the state.

Population of Study

According to the information from the personnel department Enugu State Police Command (2025), the command has a total number of 320 officers including the management, senior and junior officers working at the secretariate. This formed the population of the study.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

In determining the sample size for this study, the researcher will draw the population from the staff of the Enugu State Police Command. Simple random sampling techniques will be used in this study, which follows randomization principle. This is to allow every member of the population equal chance of being selected.

Due to the relative size of the population, the entire population will be used as the sample size. Therefore, the sample size is 320.

Ranks	Population	Percentages
Chief Superintendents (CSP)	22	6.7
Superintendents (SP)	20	6
Deputy Superintendents (DSP)	56	18
Assistant Superintendents (ASP)	62	20
Inspector	30	9.3
Sergeant Major	32	9.7
Sergeant	34	10.3
Corporal	29	9
Constable	35	11
Total	320	100

Instrument for Data Collection

The sources of data for this work consist of two sources, namely, primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data consists of questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and personal observation of the researcher, while the secondary sources of data collection were documentation such as textbooks, journals, reports, internet publication and unpublished materials.

Method of Data Analysis

The data that will be generated from the administered and returned 5-point Likert scale questionnaires will be collated, presented, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential

statistical tools, such as mean and standard deviations. Data will be analyzed using tables of descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentages, mean, and standard deviations through the aid of the 5- point Likert scale in analyzing both the demographic data and the responses to the research objectives.

The mean will be calculated in this manner:

$$(5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1) \ / \ 5 = \quad (15)/5 = 3.0$$

Hypotheses one to four will be tested through the use of simple linear regression analysis.

Summary of Findings

This study examined Police Reformation and Public Trust in Enugu State Police Command. The study was necessitated by the increasing concerns over insecurity, declining public confidence in the Nigeria Police Force, and the need to assess the effectiveness of police reform initiatives in improving security outcomes and fostering trust between the police and the public in Enugu State. The study adopted the survey research design, while a structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. A total of 320 respondents participated in the study. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to answer the research questions, while simple linear regression was employed to test the hypotheses at a 5% level of significance using SPSS.

The findings of the study revealed the following:

1. The findings showed that police-community partnership significantly contributes to crime rate reduction in Enugu State. The regression analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship ($R = 0.539$), with police-community partnership explaining **29.0%** of the variation in crime rate reduction. The hypothesis was statistically significant ($F = 130.039$; $p < 0.05$).
2. The study also found that police response time has a statistically significant effect on security threats in Enugu State. Although the relationship was relatively weak ($R = 0.188$), prompt police response significantly contributed to addressing security threats ($F = 11.629$; $p = 0.001$). Police response time explained **3.5%** of the variation in security threats, indicating that several other factors also influence security outcomes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that police reform initiatives have significantly contributed to improving public trust and policing outcomes in Enugu State, although the magnitude of their effects varies across different dimensions. The establishment of the Enugu State Security Trust Fund has enhanced the operational effectiveness of law enforcement agencies through improved funding, logistics, and operational support. Likewise, police-community partnership has proven to be an effective strategy for crime reduction by encouraging cooperation, intelligence sharing, and active community participation in policing activities. Furthermore, public engagement strategies such as community policing have significantly improved relationships between the police and residents, though additional reforms are needed to strengthen public confidence and trust. The study also concludes that timely police response remains a critical component of effective policing, as prompt responses help to mitigate security threats and improve public safety. The study affirms that sustainable police reform requires adequate funding, effective community engagement, improved accountability, enhanced operational capacity, and stronger partnerships between the police, government, and the public. Addressing these areas will further improve public trust and security outcomes in Enugu State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Police authorities should institutionalize public engagement programmes, including regular town hall meetings, public sensitization campaigns, complaint resolution mechanisms, and community outreach activities to foster stronger relationships between the police and residents.
2. The Nigeria Police Force should improve police response time by increasing operational logistics, deploying modern communication and emergency response technologies, expanding patrol coverage, and ensuring adequate manpower across divisions and area commands in Enugu State.

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