

# Effects of Corruption on Implementation of Community Policing as a form of Co-production in Malawi's Lilongwe District

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## Abstract

*Community policing as a form of co-production was introduced in Lilongwe in 1997. It was introduced to bridge the gap between police and citizens, improve citizen trust and confidence in the police, improve citizen participation in delivery of public safety and security services and to improve police legitimacy. Despite more than two decades of community policing in Lilongwe, citizens continue to express dissatisfaction and mistrust in the police. The media remains awash with reports of police corruption and its effects on community policing. The media rate police among the top most corrupt government agencies in Malawi. Yet little has been documented in policy and academic discourse about police and citizens' perceptions of how corruption has affected the implementation of community policing in the country. Using the phenomenological and qualitative approach, this study examined the police and citizens' perception of the effects of corruption on community policing as a co-production in Lilongwe District of Central Malawi. Results revealed that police and citizens perceived corruption as the major contributor towards mistrust in the police, low community participation in community policing, poor police-community relations, mob justice, assault on police officers and damage to police infrastructure. Using the political trust theory, and based on primary qualitative data, the paper explored the implication of corruption on the implementation of community policing as a form of co-production.*

**Key words:** Corruption, Community Policing, Co-production, Trust, Political trust.

## I. Introduction

Community policing has become a focal point of many modern law enforcement strategies across the world (Menon, 2023). The hallmark of community policing is to bring together the community and police to solve neighborhood safety and security problems (Setu and Tekle, 2017: 9). Community policing enables the police to become part of the locality and this assists police get a better sense of community's

needs and helps residents to develop greater trust in the police (Dominique et al, 2007). In Malawi, community policing started in 1997, three years after the change from the one-party political system of government to multiparty in 1994 (Community Policing Manual, 2020). It was first piloted in Lilongwe district. Under the one-party system, the Malawi Police Force (MPF) served dual roles: preventing and responding to crime and maintaining the power of the then ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP) (Mutharika, 2003). The police were mainly used as an oppressive tool to suppress political dissent and people's freedom. During the one-party era, there was no real form of community policing, and the MCP youth wing had organized itself in such a way that it provided a form of self-policing at the local level (Mutharika, 2003). This made the MPF unable to work in a democracy where the police are required to work with people.

Although community policing as a form of co-producing public safety and security is now a major component of crime control in Malawi, it has been heavily affected by corruption. In Malawi, corruption remains deeply entrenched in public institutions (Chunga and Manthalu, 2022). The police ranks among the top most corrupt government agencies in Malawi (Mtuwa and Chiweza 2023; Chunga and Manthalu, 2022). Charges of corruption have on several occasions affected serving police officers of various ranks and positions. Many police officers have been convicted while others are answering charges on suspicion of involvement in corrupt practices Chitete, (2022). Despite that, little has been documented in scholarly and policy discourse about police and citizens' perceptions of how corruption has affected the implementation of community policing as a form of co-production in Lilongwe.

The main aim of this study, therefore, was to analyse police and citizens' perception of the effects of corruption on implementation of community policing as a form of co-production in Lilongwe district in Malawi. Analysing people's perceptions in this study was important because they were first line of witnesses and victims of corruption on implementation of community policing in their areas. Lilongwe district was targeted because it was one of the districts where community policing was first piloted in the country. Findings of the study will contribute towards academic and policy discourse on police reform and how corruption can be dealt with to mitigate its negative impact on implementation of community policing as a form of co-production.

## **2.0. Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, and relied on both primary and secondary sources. The qualitative research approach best suited the study because the study relates to human experiences that cannot just be counted or expressed in numbers (Gephart & Rynes, 2004). Purposive and snowballing sampling was used to identify respondents (Burnham et al., 2008: 108). In-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and observations were used to explore, analyze, observe and interpret personal perceptions, behaviours, narratives and experiences. Respondents included serving and retired police officers, members of the Civil

Society Organizations (CSOs), community policing and neighbourhood watch groups and common citizens. Lilongwe, where the study was conducted, is a Class A police station with the largest population of police officers in the country. There is constant interaction between the police and the people in various ways including on the roads and as they report and follow up on their cases.

The study deployed phenomenological analysis to collect and analyse data. This method was most appropriate for this study because individuals who were directly involved with community policing spoke about their lived-experiences on the effects of corruption on community policing. Interviews were conducted in the local language, Chichewa, and transcribed to English. Interview transcripts were managed and analyzed using Atlas.Ti8. The researchers developed a codebook using inductive and deductive methods to identify and organize emerging themes. Being qualitative, the study was limited by the sample size which was relatively small (66 respondents). Triangulation through the use of multiple data collection methods and instruments as well as different sources from which the data was collected helped to improve dependability and reliability of the research data. Furthermore, the small sample size was offset by the fact that the study was done in both rural and urban areas of Lilongwe. This approach provided a true picture of people's behaviour in both rural and urban environments.

### **3.0. Literature Review**

#### **3.1. Theoretical Framework**

This study was based on Richard L. Cole's political trust theory. As one of the early advocates of political trust theory, Cole (1973), argued that when politicians and public servants are involved in corruption, the public loses trust in public or political institutions. Distrust, in turn, breeds dissatisfaction among members of the public. Consequently, members of the public avoid partnering with public institutions such as the police in the co-production of public safety and security.

#### **3.2. Community Policing: The Concept, Definition and Goals**

Formal concepts of community policing began in the late 1970s in the United States and the United Kingdom in an attempt to increase the legitimacy of the police in the eyes of citizens (Moore, 1992: 99; Cordner, 2014: 148). It was an intentional re-introduction of the old "beat cop" approach to dealing with crime and disorder, where police officers conducted patrols every day and on foot in neighborhoods, getting to know and becoming respected by the community (Bullock and Johnson, 2016). According to OSCE (2008: 5),

Community policing is defined as a philosophy and organizational strategy that promotes a partnership-based, collaborative effort between the police and the community to more effectively and efficiently identify, prevent and solve problems of crime, the fear of crime, physical and social disorder, and neighbourhood decay in order to improve the quality of life for everyone.

Moore (1992) and Cordner (2014) also define community policing as a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of working partnerships and problem-solving techniques between police and community, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. In Malawi, the *Community Policing Manual* (2020: 1) defines community policing as a strategy of police work, based on the idea that police officers and the community can work together, resolving in various creative ways problems at the level of the local community relating to crime, fear of crime, various forms of social deviance, and several other safety challenges.

### **3.2.1. Goals of Community Policing**

The central goal of community policing is establishing and maintaining successful working relationships between police agencies and the public to reduce crime (Portland State University, 2011). In Malawi, the *Community Policing Manual* postulates that the main goal of community policing was to bridge the gap between the police and the community (2020: 24). According to Part II of *The Police Act* of 2010 section 119, key objectives of community policing include establishing and maintaining partnership between police and the community; promoting communication between the police and the community; promoting cooperation between the police and the community; improving the rendering of police services to the community at national, regional and district levels and promoting joint identification of problems and solving of such problems.

### **3.3. Community Policing and Co-production**

Pestoff (2011: 2) defines co-production as “the potential relationships that could exist between the ‘regular’ producer (street-level police officers, schoolteachers, or health workers) and ‘clients’ who want to be transformed into safer, better educated, educated, or healthier people”. Norman (1984), cited in Loeffler and Watt (2009), defines co-production as working with or in the place of professionals where citizens and users more directly and actively participate in the production or delivery of public service, undertaking some of the activities formerly carried out by professionals.

The introduction of community policing to improve citizenry participation in crime prevention led to the growth of co-production in the area of public safety and security (Moore, 1992; Cordner, 2014). In the co-production discourse, community policing can be described as “the concept where police officers and private citizens and communities work together in creative ways to help solve contemporary community problems” (Trajanowicz, Kappeler, Gaines, & Bucqueroux, 1998: 3). Approaches to co-production of public safety and security include organizing neighborhood watch groups, using CCTV, property marking, having watch dogs, purchasing guns, vigilantism, organizing safe schools’ initiatives and hiring private security guards (Szescilo, 2017: 146; Percy 1987; Eijk, Steen and Verschuere, 2017: 323). Despite some notable successes of community policing as a co-production, studies show that

corruption remains one of the key obstacles affecting its implementation in many jurisdictions such as Nigeria and South Africa (Obeagu, 2014; Mthombothi, 2023).

### **3.4 Corruption: Definitions and Impact on Community Policing**

Studies show that corruption remains a huge problem that affects delivery of public services in Malawi (Mtuwa and Chiweza, 2023; Chunga and Manthalu, 2022). Police and citizens' perceptions of the impact of corruption on community policing from across the globe show that corruption greatly lowers the level of community trust in the police, demotivates the community from participating in co-production of public safety and security, contributes towards poor police-community relations, and damage to police infrastructure thereby making police services not easily accessible and increasing cases of mob justice (Obeagu, 2014; Uhnnoo & Löfstrand, 2018; Divon, 2021).

The word “corruption” has its origins from the Latin term “corruptus” which literary means to disrupt, break, spoil or contaminate (Nicholls et al. 2006: 1, as cited in Singh, 2022: 2). According to Kurer (2015, as cited in Singh, 2022: 2), “corruption simply means the misuse of power and authority for private benefit”. Transparency International (2021) defines corruption as abuse of entrusted power for private gain, even if the returns are not attained. In Malawi, the *Corrupt Practices Act* (1996; Cap 7:04, Section 3, Laws of Malawi) defines corrupt practice as “offering, giving, receiving, obtaining or soliciting of any advantage to influence the action of any public officer or any official or any other person in the discharge of duties of that public officer, official or other persons.”

Regarding police corruption, Bayley and Perito (2011: 3) define it as the “misuse of police authority for personal gain”. For example, demanding money or gratitude for not writing a traffic ticket (extortion) and bribery (which is giving or receiving money or any item of value in exchange for not enforcing the law or even just releasing a criminal suspect on bail) would be taken as corrupt acts. According to the 2013 Global Corruption Report by Transparency International (TI), the police were the most often bribed institution in Malawi, followed by the Malawi Revenue Authority (Chunga and Manthalu, 2022).

### **3.5 Corruption and the Police in Malawi**

In April 2022, Afrobarometer released results of its 2022 survey which revealed that the police were widely viewed as more corrupt than other key state institutions in Malawi. Soon after the Afrobarometer report, the Malawi Police Service (2022) issued a statement acknowledging corruption challenges and indicating that the Service had been working to improve its professionalism and image (Chunga and Manthalu, 2022). According to this Afrobarometer report, many citizens reported having to pay bribes to get police assistance or avoid problems with the police. The report indicated that among citizens who requested help from the police in 2021/22, 62% said it was difficult to get the assistance they needed, and 40% said they had to

pay a bribe. Among those who had other types of encounters with the police, such as during traffic stops or investigations, 43% said they had to pay a bribe to avoid problems. Charges of corruption have on several occasions affected serving police officers of various ranks and positions (Chitete, 2022).

#### **4.0. Effects of Corruption on Community Policing as Co-production**

Studies show that corruption has affected security as well as community policing as a form of co-production in myriad ways including: loss of trust in the police, poor police-community relations, demotivation of the citizens' participation in co-production of safety and security, mob justice, injuries to police officers and damage to police infrastructure (Obeagu, 2014; Uhnnoo & Löfstrand, 2018). For example, Ikuteyij (2008) argues that the citizens' belief that the police are corrupt and cannot be trusted is a threat to the success of community policing. In Nigeria, Obeagu (2014) found that abuse of human rights, including corruption by police and members of community policing and neighbourhood watch groups, greatly affected community participation in the co-production. There is limited literature on effects of corruption on community policing as a form of co-production in Malawi.

##### **4.1. Corruption, Trust in the Police and Community Policing**

Trust is regarded as a cornerstone for effective community policing. When the public perceive the police as trustworthy, there is effective co-operation with them in the co-production process (Goldsmith, 2005; Pelsner, 1999: 11). Recent studies posit that one aim of community policing is to enhance public trust and legitimacy by making police more present, visible and engaged in local areas and thus strengthening relationships with residents (Skogan, 2019). Unfortunately, studies from many parts of Africa, including South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana and Liberia, show that most people do not trust the police particularly because of their bad behaviour, corruption and ill-treatment of community members (Mthombothi, 2023: 71; Gjelsvic, 2020; Transparency International, 2022). Such behaviour frustrates citizens from collaborating with the police. Similarly, in a recent study by Gyamfi (2022) in Ghana, a majority of the participants indicated that they did not trust the police because the police officers were corrupt. According to the study, when criminals were arrested and sent to the police for court action and justice to prevail, they were soon released after offering bribes to police officers. In his study on "Exploring public trust in policing at a community in Ghana", Gyamfi (2021) finally argued that "fractured relationship between a community and the police breeds social disorderliness". Grace (2022), in her study on challenges affecting implementation of community policing in Liberia, also found that lack of trust in the police was among the reasons why citizens were demotivated to participate in community policing, with sixty (66) percent of respondents responding as such. In Malawi, the Afrobarometer Report of 2022 indicated that fewer than half of Malawians trust the police.

#### ***4.2. Corruption and Community participation***

Once the police become involved in corruption, citizen participation is greatly affected and compromised. In Nigeria, for example, Osayande (2012), at the maiden edition of Etim Inyang International Lecture on Community Policing organised by Police Community Relations Committee at Port Harcourt, admonished Nigerian police officers for their involvement in acts of negligence and collusion to collect monies and gratifications in order to facilitate release and escape of offenders or suspects from custody, leak vital security information, as well as decline arrest of suspected criminals. He lamented that such practices in turn eroded community's trust in the police and ultimately reduced community's motivation to participate in co-production of public safety and security and support the police in various forms. Such practices demotivated well-meaning citizens from sharing vital crime information with the police, thereby making community policing a failure.

#### ***4.3. Corruption, Vandalism of Police Infrastructure and Accessibility of Police Services***

The advent of community policing is expected to facilitate ease in accessing and reaching police services by all the communities. Accessibility means not only availability of police officers, but the ability of the community members to obtain assistance and services in terms of time and costs (Masogo et al 2014,; 116). However, evidence shows that when the police are perceived to be corrupt, the citizens lose trust and confidence in them. Loss of trust in the police has made many police stations to be looted and set ablaze. For example, in 2016, a police unit at Chilomoni in Malawi was set on fire due to the fact that the police stopped the public from killing a murder suspect who was already in police custody (Nzangaya, 2016). The community wanted to take the law in their hands, arguing that the accused would soon be seen amongst the community after being granted bail corruptly by the police. Vandalism and looting of police infrastructure ultimately reduce the number of police facilities, thereby making police services less accessible to the citizens. In turn, crime thrives and fear of crime increases in locations.

#### ***4.4. Corruption and Police-Community Relations***

When the police are corrupt, citizens lose trust in them and the police eventually find themselves isolated (Mutupha and Zhu, 2022). In a free and democratic society, law enforcement agencies are most likely to obtain the citizens' support and cooperation when they display interest to relate with citizens (Cordner, 2014). Studies show that friendliness, willingness to help, fairness, attention when listening to citizens, and willingness to explain to citizens what exactly is going on in their local communities greatly influences citizens' feeling of satisfaction and perception of safety (Borovec, et. al. 2021: 157). However, evidence from recent research shows that the majority of citizens (62%) in Malawi believed that the police were not as friendly as they expected and that for them to obtain assistance or services from the police, they had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a police officer (Chunga and Manthalu, 2022). As

a result of police corruption, it has been difficult for the police to create a friendly environment for citizens.

#### **4.5. Corruption, Mob Justice and Community Policing**

Reports of mob justice are no longer a strange phenomenon in Malawi (Mkupasha, 2022). Crime statistics from the National Police Headquarters indicate that the Malawi Police Service (MPS) registered an increase in mob justice cases from 42 to 62 in the first eight months of 2022, representing eight cases every month (Mkupasha, 2022). Evidence showed that incidences of mob justice were mainly influenced by the community's lack of trust and confidence in the police, among other reasons, due to corruption. Due to loss of trust and confidence in the police, citizens have resorted to mob justice as a way of dealing with criminals. Commenting on the relationship between police corruption and the apparent increase in cases of mob justice, the Catholic Bishops in Malawi, in March 2022 issued a Pastoral Letter in which they lamented that "loss of public trust in law enforcement agencies and the Judiciary fueled mob justice, public anger and was a recipe for civil disorder" (Kahiu, 2022). When people perceive the police to be corrupt, they doubt the capacity of the institution to uphold justice.

### **5. Findings**

#### **5.1. Demographic Data of Respondents**

Fifty (n=50) respondents participated in the KII, and these were: 17 active police officers of various ranks, four (4) retired police officers, all of senior ranks, seven (7) members of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), twelve (12) members of community police forums/crime prevention panels (CPFs/CPPs), five (5) members of neighbourhood watch groups (NHW), and five (5) ordinary members of the community who were beneficiaries of co-production in the area of public safety and security. Three (3) FGDs (n=16) were conducted with active police officers, CPF members and NHW group members respectively. The total number of respondents for the study was 66, of which 16 were females (24.2%) and 50 were males (75.7%).

#### **5.2. Corruption**

In this study area, participants were asked to share their views, experiences and perceptions on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that corruption negatively impacted on community policing as a co-production tool. Options used to rate the participants' opinions included *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neutral*, *disagree* and *strongly disagree*. Results revealed that all retired police officers (n=4) strongly felt that corruption negatively impacted community policing. The majority of active police officers (n=8/17) strongly agreed while 7 active police officers agreed that corruption negatively affected community policing, and 2 officers remained neutral. A majority of CSO members (n=6/7); CPF members (n=10/12); community members/citizens (n=5) and NHW members (n=4/5) strongly agreed that corruption negatively impacted community policing. A majority of participants from three FGDs strongly



agreed that corruption was a major issue that needed attention. For example, a retired police officer from Lilongwe urban said that when people see every police officer, they just see a cruel person or a thief or someone who is just corrupt. He indicated that this view is exacerbated by announcements on TV which show that the police is number one of all departments in terms of corruption. As such, when police officers move in the streets, especially when they board a minibus, people just relate them with corruption or regard them as people who cannot survive without corruption. In agreement with a retired police officer from Lilongwe urban, a member of a CPF from Lilongwe rural said that people view police as cruel, and not as people to whom they can relate. He further pointed out that sometimes common citizens stone the police when they have come to arrest their relative. He gave an example whereby someone was arrested and police demanded K50,000 from that person for him to be released. After releasing him, the police claimed that the released suspect was mentally sick. He stated that the police demand money from suspects, or else the suspect will receive bad treatment at the station. The findings revealed that a majority of respondents agreed that corruption had a negative effect on the provision of public safety and security to the communities.

### **5.3. Corruption, Citizen Trust in the Police and Community Policing**

In this study area, respondents were asked to share their opinions and perceptions on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that corruption affected citizen trust in the police or not, and if in turn this affected citizens' participation in the co-production of public safety and security or community policing. The options of *strongly trusted*, *satisfactorily trusted*, *neither trusted nor trusted*, *not trusted* and *strongly not trusted* were used to assess participants' responses. Responses were disaggregated according to low density, high density and rural areas as follows:

#### **5.3.1. Trust in the Police (Low-density)**

In this study area, respondents were asked to share their opinions and perceptions on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that citizens in low-density areas of Lilongwe trusted the police or not. A majority of police participants (n=18/21) felt citizens residing in low-density areas had a satisfactory level of trust in the police. A majority of members of the public (n=20/29) who participated in the survey felt that citizens living in low-density areas had a satisfactory level of trust in the police. For example, a police officer from the rural location said that in town, people with money and status trust the police, since they are able to call the police for help and trust that they will be assisted. A citizen from Lilongwe urban also said that in urban areas residents from low and medium density areas trust the police, while residents from high-density areas have no trust in the police. "In high density areas that is where the problem is," he said. He also indicated that in rural areas people who have money trust the police, while people who do not have money do not trust the police. He added that, "for those that have money the cases will just go through without any trouble. The poor are able to see those things happening".

### **5.3.2. Trust in the Police (High-density)**

In this study area, respondents were asked to share their opinions and perceptions on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that citizens in high-density areas of Lilongwe trusted the police or not. Results revealed that the majority of police respondents (n=19/21) felt that the citizens habiting in high-density areas did not trust the police. Results also revealed that all members of the public (n=29) who participated in the study felt that citizens living in high-density areas did not trust the police. For example, a member of a CPF from the urban area lamented that people in high-density areas of Lilongwe do not trust police that much. He observed that there are some areas where criminal activities take place, and at one point you would see a police officer visiting such places thinking that they will arrest the culprits without knowing that he only went there to collect money from them. This removes trust from the people, and a member of community policing cannot apprehend those people. Another citizen from the urban location also indicated that in high-density areas people do not trust the police.

### **5.3.3. Trust in the Police (Rural Areas)**

In this study area, respondents were asked to share their opinions and perceptions on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that citizens in the rural areas of Lilongwe trusted the police or not. Results revealed that a majority of police respondents (n=17/21) were undecided on whether citizens living in rural areas trusted the police or not. A majority of members of the public (n=16/29) felt that people living in rural areas did not trust the police. For example, a member of a CPF from the rural area said that most police officers are corrupt: they personalize their work, they take sides and forget that police officers are not supposed to receive bribes, but are employed by government and they are paid to serve the people professionally. Because of bribes, most people do not trust them. Another member of a CPF from the rural area said that nowadays, people know that, it was not the role of the police to give judgment but only to write a statement when there was a complaint and bring a suspect before the court of law. He lamented that this does not happen. Frequently, cases were dealt with at the police station and suspects are released right there at the police station, a practice that brought doubt to the public, and eventually people take the law into their hands. Overall, a majority of police respondents felt that citizens from low-density areas demonstrated satisfactory to strongly satisfactory levels of trust in the police. On the other hand, results revealed that a majority of respondents felt that citizens from high-density and rural areas of Lilongwe did not trust the police. On average it was revealed that respondents from Lilongwe have low trust in the police.

### **5.4. Assault on Police Officers and Damage to Police Infrastructure**

In this study area, respondents were asked to share their experiences, opinions and perceptions on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that corrupt practices by police officers result in citizens taking the law into their hands, resulting in assault to police officers and damage to police infrastructure. Results indicated that all active

and retired police officers (n=21) who participated in the KII lamented that police officers suffered assaults while on duty. Seven (n=7/12) participants drawn from CPFs and 4 (n=4/5) members of NHWs also indicated that the police were often attacked, assaulted, injured and police infrastructure often damaged in the course of duty. Three (n=3/5) of members of the community and four (n=4/7) members of CSO equally indicated that the police suffer lots of assaults from members of the community. Sometimes their properties have been damaged by members of the community simply for simply doing their job. For example, a police officer from Lilongwe urban indicated that police officers were often verbally insulted by people who do not understand police work. He also indicated that police officers were sometimes stoned, other people snatched suspects from the police simply because they believed the police would release them on bail after receiving bribes. A senior police officer from the urban area also said that trust in the police has been lost due to bribes. He indicated that people do not like the presence of police. He further indicated that he had seen people attacking traffic police officers, which indicated that there was a problem and possibly underscored the loss of trust in the police. Results indicated that a majority of respondents agreed that police officers were often attacked, assaulted and sometimes police infrastructure destroyed in the process.

### **5.5. *Corruption and Mob Justice***

In this study area, participants were asked to share their views, opinions and experiences on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that police, CPF and NHW members' corruption influenced citizens to commit mob justice. A majority of active and retired police officers (n=16/21) agreed that police corruption was one the major reasons citizens felt dissatisfied and resorted to mob justice. A majority of CSO leaders (5/7) strongly agreed that police corruption was a major contributor of mob justice. A majority of members of the community (n=3/5) agreed that police corruption was a main cause of citizens' dissatisfaction with the police, resulting in many cases of mob justice. All five (5) members of the NHW group from Area 49 agreed that the police were largely corrupt, resulting in citizens' dissatisfaction with the police. FGDs also agreed that police officers were corrupt. A police officer from the urban location narrated that many people felt that mob justice was increasing because citizens thought the police often granted bail to criminals after getting bribes, and these criminals went back and terrorized them. He added that this was an indicator that there was loss of trust in the police. Additionally, a member of a CSO from the urban location said that loss of trust in the police was the major contributor to mob justice. He said that citizens know that if they apprehend a criminal and send him to the police, he will be out in a few days. That is why there are a lot of incidents of mob justice. A majority of respondents felt that police corruption resulted in loss of trust in the police. People were dissatisfied with the police. As a result, justice according to law has been lost to mob justice.

### **5.6. *Corruption and Community Participation in Co-production***

In this study area, participants were asked to share their views, opinions and experiences on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that police corruption affected the level of community policing in co-production of public safety and security. A majority of active and retired police officers (n=12/21) agreed that corruption by police officers greatly demotivated members of the community from participating in community safety and security activities in their areas. A majority of CSO leaders (6/7) strongly agreed that police corruption contributed to poor community participation in co-production. All members of the community (n=5) agreed that corruption greatly demotivated members of the community from fully participating in co-production. All twelve (12) and five (5) members of CPFs and NHWs agreed that corruption was a major contributor to poor community participation in community policing activities. An FGD member from Lilongwe rural said that when the police take crime suspects from them, in a few days the suspects are released. He further narrated that police officers even ask for bribes from the suspects to be released, a practice which he said compromised citizens' trust in the police and demotivated the community from working with police. A member of a CPF from Lilongwe rural also narrated that sometimes there were good relations between citizens and the police, but they did not last. He lamented the police practice of releasing crime suspects after getting bribes. He expressed concern that sometimes they would apprehend suspects at night for cases of breaking and entering or theft, and take them to police, but unfortunately early in the morning even before the complainants had given their statements the suspects would already be out of police custody. He added that sometimes police officers released crime suspects under the pretext that the suspect was insane. Such challenges demotivated the citizens from participating in co-production. A majority of respondents felt that police misbehaviour and involvement in corrupt practices demotivated citizens from participating in co-production.

### **5.7. *Corruption and Police-Community Relations***

In this study area, participants were asked to share their views, opinions and experiences on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that police corruption affected the good relations between the police and the community. The majority of active and retired police officers (n=13/21) agreed that corruption by police officers negatively affected police relations with the public. The majority of CSO (5/7) leaders strongly agreed that police corruption contributed to strained relations between the police and the community. The majority of members of the community (n=4/5) agreed that corruption was one of the main factors leading to bad blood between the police and the community. All twelve (12) and five (5) members of CPFs and NHWs agreed that corruption was a major contributor to antagonism between the police and the citizens. FGDs also agreed that the police were involved in corruption and extortion, and this contributed to poor relations between the police and the community. A member of a CPF from Lilongwe rural said that incidences of releasing crime suspects

before taking them to court have worsened the relationship between the community members and police. People assume police receives bribes from the offenders for them to be released. A retired officer from Lilongwe urban also stated that he has seen on TV police stations being torched. That shows that there was no friendship between the community and police. He added that he also had heard that a police officer had intentionally been run over by a car. According to him, these were serious indicators that when people see a police officer, they just think the police officer was a thief. These results revealed that the relationship between the police and citizens was not good.

## **6.0. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **6.1 *Corruption, Citizen Trust in Police and Participation in Community Policing***

Findings from the study revealed that a majority of participants, both police officers and members of the public, strongly agreed that corruption was among the major contributors towards low citizen trust in the police, increased cases of assault on police officers and damage to police infrastructure, mob justice, demotivation of the community to participate in co-production and poor police-community relations. These findings were similar to findings from recent studies in Malawi done by Mtuwa and Chiweza (2023); Chunga and Manthalu (2022) and Mtupha and Yapeng Zhu (2022). Literature from other countries such as Nigeria, Liberia and South Africa also shows that corruption had a significant negative impact on citizens' trust in the police (Govender and Pillay, 2022; Uhnoo & Löfstrand, 2018 and Obeagu, 2014). Sabet (2014) also found that corruption reduces the incentive for citizens to report crime to police. From the study findings as well as from literature that was reviewed, it is clear that once the police indulge in corruption, extortion and bribes, citizens lose trust in them.

Intriguingly, the study found that a majority of police officers and members of the community perceived citizens residing in low-density areas as having a satisfactory level of trust in the police. This finding was particularly unique and needs further enquiry. On the other hand, the majority of respondents felt that citizens living in high-density as well as rural areas did not trust the police. Results also revealed that the majority of members of the public (n=16/29) felt that people living in rural areas did not trust the police. On average, results indicated that that a majority of respondents perceive that citizens from Lilongwe have a low level of trust in the police. Respondents lamented that corruption as seen in traffic, police bail and the way police prosecuted cases largely contributed to citizens' loss of trust in the police. These findings are similar to what Gyamfi (2022) found in a study carried out in Ghana.

Further results indicated that the majority respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that police corruption contributed to poor citizen participation in co-production. Respondents argued that once citizens perceive the police to be corrupt, the level of

motivation to participate in safety and security issues goes down. These findings agree with Osayande's (2012) admonishment to Nigerian police officers for corrupt practices, which lead to the failure of community policing.

### **6.2. *Corruption, Police-Community Relations, Assault on Police Officers and Vandalism of Police Infrastructure***

A majority of respondents agreed that corruption, bribes and extortion by police officers negatively affected relations between the police and citizens. An Afrobarometer study also found that the majority of Malawians believed that the police were not as friendly as they expected and that for citizens to obtain assistance or services from the police, they had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour to a police officer (Chunga and Manthalu, 2022). Mutupha and Zhu (2022) also suggested that when the police are perceived to be corrupt, citizens lose trust in them and the police find themselves isolated. Strained relations between the police and the community defeat one of the key tenets of community policing as a co-production, which is to improve police-community relations. Corruption breeds citizen dissatisfaction in the police and makes it difficult for the police to create a friendly environment with citizens. Once citizens are unfriendly to police, they cannot work together or share vital information with them. Sour relations between the police and citizens make crime thrive in the community. As a result, citizens tend to attack police officers and damage police infrastructure. Damage to police infrastructure renders police services inaccessible to the community, thereby defeating the very tenet of community policing which is to bring the police close to the people (Masogo et al 2014, p. 116). Poor citizen-police relations, attack on police officers and vandalism and looting of police infrastructure affects implementation of community policing in local areas since the community lacks proper infrastructure where they can report cases, access police service or work together in partnership. In turn, crime thrives and fear of crime increases in locations.

### **6.3. *Corruption and Mob Justice***

Results from the study indicated that a majority of respondents agreed that corrupt conduct by some police officers has brought about citizen dissatisfaction with police services. As a result of dissatisfaction in the way police handle issues such as bail, traffic ticketing and investigations and well as bringing offenders to justice, citizens prefer taking the law into their hands. This finding agrees with the Catholic Bishops' lamentation on the loss of public trust in the police (Kahiu, 2022). Community policing promotes justice according to law and not mob justice. When citizens are dissatisfied with police way of service delivery, they lose trust and confidence in the police. In turn, justice according to law is lost and justice according to the mob thrives, defeating the very essence of community policing.

## 7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study has established that the majority of respondents perceive corruption as among the major contributors to loss of trust in the police which ultimately breeds citizens' dissatisfaction with the police. Dissatisfaction demotivates citizens from actively associating with the police and fully participating in co-production of safety and security services. Mistrust and dissatisfaction force citizens to take the law into their own hands, looting and damaging police infrastructure. Demolishing and torching of police infrastructure affects accessibility of police services by the communities. This defeats the very tenet of community policing which is to have police services close to the people. Respondents also indicated that police officers are assaulted because citizens are frustrated with police culture of corruption, bribes and extortion. The major implication for the study is that for community policing as a co-production to achieve meaningful results, there is need improve people's trust in the police by addressing corruption among the ranks and file in the police service.

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