

**INFLUENCE OF POLICE COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN MANAGING ELECTORAL
VIOLENCE IN LILONGWE CITY, MALAWI**

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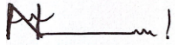
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of Science in Governance, Peace and Security Studies in the Department of Governance, Peace and
Security, School of Humanities and Social Sciences of Africa Nazarene University**

June 2026

DECLARATION

I declare that this document and the research that it describes are my original work and that they have not been presented in any other university for academic work.



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DEDICATION

To my family, whose resolute support and encouragement have been a constant source of inspiration throughout this journey. Your patience, sacrifice, and unwavering belief in me made this work possible. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

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I sincerely thank the Almighty God for His guidance, strength, wisdom, and grace throughout the period of this study. His blessings enabled me to complete this research.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of police-community relations on the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. The study was motivated by recurring electoral conflicts and persistent allegations of police bias during elections, which have undermined public confidence in the police and contributed to electoral instability across multiple electoral cycles. The study was guided by four specific objectives: to establish the nature of police-community relations, analyse the distinct roles of police officers and community members, evaluate existing collaborative strategies, and examine the challenges undermining police-community relations in the management of electoral violence. The study was informed by the Functionalism Theory and the Procedural Justice Theory. Functionalism Theory provided a framework for understanding the role of social institutions, particularly the police and the community, in maintaining social order and stability during electoral processes, while Procedural Justice Theory explained how perceptions of fairness, neutrality, and legitimacy in policing influence public trust, cooperation, and compliance with lawful directives during politically sensitive periods. A mixed method approach was used, enabling the researcher to capture both statistical trends and lived experiences and triangulate findings from multiple sources. The target population comprised 826,522 residents of Lilongwe City, representing economically active individuals aged 21 years and above who were likely to have participated in or been affected by electoral activities. From this population, a sample of 384 respondents was selected. The sample included youths, adults, police officers, clergy, and civil society representatives, drawn using stratified random, purposive, and snowball sampling techniques to ensure representation across different stakeholder groups and geographic areas within the city. Data were collected using semi-structured questionnaires, key informant interviews and focus group discussion guide, achieving a response rate of 91% (n = 348). Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29, while qualitative data were analysed through thematic content analysis. Following data analysis, the findings were presented according to the study objectives. The findings revealed that police-community relations in Lilongwe City were characterized by fragile coexistence rather than genuine partnership, with routine cooperation masking underlying distrust that became dangerously exposed during electoral periods when communities most needed police neutrality. The study further established that communities preferred structured partnerships over unilateral police approaches in managing electoral violence, indicating a desire for collaborative security arrangements rather than top-down enforcement that often alienates citizens. Additionally, police-community relations strategies were found to be effective only when implemented consistently and insulated from political interference, highlighting the importance of timing, regularity, and institutional independence for successful violence prevention. Political interference emerged as the most significant challenge affecting the effectiveness of police-community relations during elections, eroding public trust and undermining police legitimacy, followed by resource constraints. The study concluded that police-community relations contribute to the reduction of electoral violence only when partnerships are founded on mutual trust, strategies are implemented consistently, and police actions remain impartial and professional throughout the electoral cycle. The study recommends that the Malawi Police Service publicly commit to non-partisanship through a binding code of conduct signed by all officers; that Parliament amend the Police Act to establish statutory guarantees of police independence during elections; that communities actively promote transparency and accountability by reporting misconduct to oversight bodies; and that civil society organizations engage police proactively when organizing demonstrations and other electoral activities. The implementation of these recommendations would strengthen police-community relations and contribute to peaceful and violence-free electoral processes in Malawi.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACLED	: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
CBD	: Central Business District
COPS	: Community-Oriented Policing Services
CSOs	: Civil Society Organizations
DFID	: Department for International Development
HRDC	: Human Rights Defenders Coalition
IFIS	: International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IGP	: Inspector General of Police
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
MEC	: Malawi Electoral Commission
MHRC	: Malawi Human Rights Commission
MPS	: Malawi Police Service
NSO	: National Statistics Office (Malawi)
UNDP	: United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	: United Nations Population Fund
UNIPOL	: United Nations International Police
WHO	: World Health Organization

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Electoral Violence: Acts of intimidation, threats, or physical harm aimed at influencing electoral outcomes (Bekoe, 2020). Measured through reported cases of voter intimidation, political clashes, assaults, and property destruction.

Investigation: The process of gathering and analyzing evidence to establish facts relating to a crime (Osterburg & Ward, 2022). Measured through timeliness, effectiveness, and outcomes of electoral violence investigations.

Management of Electoral Violence: Efforts to prevent, control, and respond to election-related violence. Measured through prevention strategies, incident response, conflict resolution mechanisms, and reduction of violent incidents.

Perceived Police Bias: The belief that police favour or discriminate against certain groups (Aning & Danso, 2021). Measured through perceptions of police neutrality, fairness, and impartiality.

Police Community Relations: The level of trust and cooperation between police and community members (Skogan, 2019). Measured through trust, communication, information sharing, and community cooperation.

Police Community Relationship Strategies: Approaches used to promote collaboration between police and communities (Olutola & Bello, 2016). Measured through community policing programs, stakeholder meetings, and joint security initiatives.

Police Culture: The shared values and norms that guide police behavior (Olutola & Bello, 2016). Measured through professionalism, accountability, and ethical conduct.

Political Pressure: Influence exerted by political actors on police operations (Acheampong, 2016). Measured through reported political interference, selective law enforcement, and perceived police independence.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provided the foundation of the study. It presented the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research objectives, and the research questions. The chapter further discussed the significance, scope, and delimitations of the study, as well as its limitations and assumptions. In addition, it presented the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guided the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Electoral violence remains a significant challenge to democratic governance worldwide. Although elections are intended to provide a peaceful mechanism for political competition and leadership selection, they are often accompanied by intimidation, clashes, destruction of property, and loss of life. In many countries, the effectiveness of electoral security largely depends on the quality of relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Police-community relations refer to the level of trust, cooperation, communication, and mutual respect between police officers and community members (Skogan, 2019). Strong police-community relations enhance public confidence in law enforcement and encourage collaboration in maintaining peace and order, while weak relations often result in mistrust, resistance to police authority, and increased conflict, particularly during elections.

Globally, scholars have emphasized that positive police-community relations contribute to electoral stability and democratic legitimacy. Communities are more likely to cooperate with law enforcement agencies and comply with electoral regulations when the police are perceived as fair, accountable, and impartial. Conversely, perceptions of police bias or political influence can undermine public trust and increase the likelihood of electoral disputes and violence (Tankebe, 2013; Tyler, 2006). These observations suggest that effective management of electoral violence requires not only adequate policing capacity but also strong relationships between police and communities.

Experiences from different parts of the world demonstrate the importance of police-community relations in electoral processes. In the United Kingdom, impartial policing during the 2014 Scottish independence

referendum contributed to public confidence in the electoral process and acceptance of the outcome despite intense political competition. In contrast, allegations of police repression during Venezuela's 2018 elections weakened public trust and raised concerns about the credibility of the electoral process (Bekoe, 2020). Similarly, while strained police-community relations in some parts of the United States have been associated with reduced confidence in public institutions, Canada's community-oriented policing model has strengthened trust and promoted civic participation (Lithopoulos, 2018; Weitzer & Tuch, 2006). These contrasting experiences demonstrate that police legitimacy and public trust play a crucial role in shaping electoral outcomes and maintaining peace during elections.

A similar pattern can be observed in Asia. In India, allegations of partisan policing during politically and religiously charged conflicts have weakened public confidence in law enforcement institutions and intensified social tensions (Verma & Subramanian, 2022). In contrast, Singapore's community policing model emphasizes continuous engagement between police and citizens, enabling early identification and resolution of security concerns (Quah, 2022). These experiences highlight the importance of sustained police-community engagement in preventing conflict and promoting peaceful electoral processes.

In Africa, police-community relations have increasingly become a critical component of electoral security. Countries that have invested in strengthening collaboration between police and communities have generally experienced more peaceful elections. For example, regular engagement between police and citizens in Ghana was associated with reduced electoral violence and improved public confidence during the 2016 elections (Tankebe, 2019). However, experiences from Kenya and Zimbabwe indicate that allegations of excessive use of force, political interference, and selective law enforcement can undermine public trust and contribute to electoral unrest (Harris & Mpesi, 2022; Ruteere, 2019). These cases suggest that police effectiveness during elections is closely linked to public perceptions of fairness, impartiality, and accountability.

In Malawi, concerns regarding police-community relations have persisted since the country's transition to multiparty democracy. Historical experiences, perceptions of political interference, and allegations of unequal treatment of political actors have affected public trust in the Malawi Police Service. Research suggests that many citizens perceive the police as being influenced by political interests, particularly during election periods,

thereby weakening cooperation between communities and law enforcement agencies (Chirwa, 2020; Dulani & Mpesi, 2020). Such perceptions may reduce public willingness to report incidents, share information, or collaborate with the police in preventing electoral violence.

The situation is particularly relevant in Lilongwe City, Malawi's political and administrative capital, where electoral activities often attract heightened political attention and public participation. Studies have reported relatively low levels of trust in the police and concerns regarding police impartiality during elections. For instance, the Afrobarometer survey found that only a minority of urban residents expressed confidence in the police, indicating persistent challenges in police-community relations (Afrobarometer, 2023). Furthermore, evidence suggests that public perceptions of police conduct influence citizens' willingness to participate in electoral processes and cooperate with law enforcement agencies during periods of political tension (Rakner & van de Walle, 2020).

Despite growing recognition of the importance of police-community relations in promoting electoral security, limited empirical research has specifically examined how these relationships influence the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City. Most existing studies have focused on electoral violence, democratic governance, or police accountability without adequately exploring the interaction between police-community relations and electoral violence management. This knowledge gap creates uncertainty regarding the extent to which police-community relations contribute to the prevention, control, and resolution of electoral violence. It is against this background that the present study examined the influence of police-community relations on the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Effective management of electoral violence requires strong collaboration between police and communities, characterized by mutual trust, open communication, timely information sharing, and confidence in law enforcement institutions. Where such relationships exist, communities are more willing to cooperate with police, report emerging threats, and participate in conflict prevention initiatives, thereby contributing to peaceful and credible electoral processes (Tankebe, 2013).

However, the situation in Malawi has often fallen short of this ideal. Electoral processes have repeatedly been characterized by violence, intimidation, destruction of property, and confrontations between citizens and security agencies. The 2019 Tripartite Elections and the subsequent 2020 Fresh Presidential Election witnessed widespread unrest, particularly in Lilongwe City. Reports indicate that one police officer was killed, several others were injured, 16 police units were destroyed, eight police officers' houses were burnt, one police armoured vehicle was torched, and police armouries were broken into, resulting in the theft of riot-control equipment (Mpembenji, 2019). Furthermore, the Malawi Human Rights Commission (2019) reported allegations of rape and sexual abuse involving 18 women and girls, as well as assaults and arrests of more than 64 protesters during election-related demonstrations.

These incidents suggest the existence of strained relations between the police and sections of the community during electoral periods. Allegations of police bias, excessive use of force, weak community engagement, and declining public trust have continued to undermine cooperation between citizens and the Malawi Police Service (Chirwa & Kanyongolo, 2020). As a result, opportunities for information sharing, early warning, and collaborative conflict management may be limited, thereby increasing the likelihood of electoral violence. The consequences are far-reaching, including loss of life, destruction of property, violation of human rights, and disruption of economic activities, reduced voter participation, and diminished public confidence in democratic institutions.

If these challenges are not adequately addressed, future elections in Malawi may continue to experience electoral unrest, threatening democratic consolidation, political stability, and national cohesion. Although previous studies have examined electoral violence, police accountability, and democratic governance in Malawi, limited empirical attention has been given to how police-community relations influence the management of electoral violence, particularly in Lilongwe City. Consequently, there remains insufficient evidence on the nature of police-community relations, the effectiveness of existing collaborative strategies, and the challenges affecting such relationships during elections. This study therefore examined the influence of police-community relations on the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. Good

police-community relations turn police from perceived threat into a trusted partner breaking the cycle of fear and retaliation that fuels electoral violence.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of police-community relations on the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi.

To achieve this aim, the study assessed the state of police-community relations, analyzed the distinct roles of police and community members in managing electoral violence, evaluated the effectiveness of existing collaborative strategies, and examined the challenges hampering police-community relations during electoral periods. By investigating these dimensions, the study intended to generate evidence-based findings that could inform policy interventions and strengthen collaborative frameworks for preventing and mitigating electoral violence in Lilongwe City.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

1.5.1 General Objective

The overall objective of this study was to examine the influence of police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

The study specific objectives was as follows:

- i. To establish the nature of police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi
- ii. To analyze the distinct police and community roles in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi.
- iii. To evaluate the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi.
- iv. To examine the challenges hampering police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi.

1.6 Research Questions

- i. What was the nature of police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi?
- ii. How did the distinct roles of police and the community relate in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi?
- iii. How effective were the police-community relations strategies in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi?
- iv. What were the challenges hampering police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study contributed to the existing literature by critically examining police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi, a gap underexplored in prior related research studies by Patino and Velasco (2004) and Dulani & Mpesi (2021). Patino and Velasco (2004), in their study ‘Election Violence in the Philippines’, analysed institutional culpability by examining specific incidents of election violence drawn from news reports and documentation and found that the state, particularly its police and military, were the main culprits for election disorder.

In a nationwide Afrobarometer survey of data on Malawi's 2019–2020 elections, Dulani & Mpesi (2021) found a sharp decline in police neutrality, with public trust dropping from 41% in 2014 to 24% in 2024. The Afrobarometer survey, while useful, did not capture firsthand perspectives from police officers and affected communities, nor did it explore localized police-community relations in urban settings.

This study filled these gaps by conducting in-depth interviews with police officers, community members, and key stakeholders (CSOs, clergy) to assess the state of police-community relations, analyze distinct roles of police and communities, evaluate the effectiveness of existing strategies, and identify challenges hampering police-community relations in the management of election violence.

The study findings advanced scholarly understanding of electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi, and informed policy interventions. Specifically, study findings offered evidence-based recommendations to the

MPS to improve police-community relations strategies in managing election violence; guided development partners in designing programs that strengthened police-community relations; and assisted election stakeholders in defining their distinct roles in managing election violence. Ultimately, study findings provided policymakers and electoral stakeholders with a deeper understanding of electoral violence dynamics, enabling more effective management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. Failure to undertake this research study would have risked perpetuating electoral violence in Lilongwe through unaddressed police-community tensions, particularly during elections. Further, in the absence of evidence-based insights, policymakers were prone to implementing ineffective, generic security measures that could have adversely affected the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted in Lilongwe City, Malawi. The city was selected because it is the political and administrative capital of the country and has experienced recurrent electoral tensions, protests, and election-related violence, particularly during the 2019 and 2020 electoral periods (Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC), 2020). In addition, Lilongwe hosts major government institutions, political party headquarters, civil society organizations, and security agencies, making it an appropriate setting for examining police-community relations in the management of electoral violence.

The study focused on electoral violence and excluded other forms of violence such as domestic violence, criminal violence, and intercommunal conflicts. Electoral violence was selected because it undermines democratic governance, threatens political participation, erodes public confidence in state institutions, and often results in loss of life and destruction of property (Bekoe, 2020). Furthermore, electoral violence directly involves interactions between police and communities, making it relevant to the study of police-community relations.

The study specifically examined the nature of police-community relations, the roles of police officers and community members, the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies, and the challenges affecting these relationships in the management of electoral violence. These aspects were selected because they are

critical to understanding how collaboration between police and communities contributes to the prevention, control, and resolution of election-related violence (Tankebe, 2013).

The study used a mixed methods approach to allow the researcher to measure both the nature and effectiveness of police-community relations and to capture the lived experiences behind electoral violence. This design enabled triangulation of findings from different sources during the 2019–2020 electoral period in Lilongwe City. Consequently, the mixed methods approach revealed not only what strategies worked or failed but also why they succeeded or broke down under conditions of recurrent electoral tensions.

The study was undertaken within the context of Malawi's electoral experiences, particularly the period surrounding the 2019 Tripartite Elections and the 2020 Fresh Presidential Election, which were characterized by electoral disputes, demonstrations, and security challenges (Chikadza, 2019; MHRC, 2020).

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

This study did not extend beyond Lilongwe City, Malawi's urban epicenter of electoral tensions, as policing dynamics differed fundamentally from other areas' contexts in their patterns of violence and police-community engagement. Lilongwe city was marked by concentrated population, frequent protests, activism, and complex security challenges. Further, the study exclusively concentrated on interaction between the MPS and registered community groups, intentionally excluding political parties and electoral bodies as these fall outside the core police-community relationship that formed this study's central focus.

The study concentrated on the 2019 elections. It did not concentrate on the 2014 elections or any elections before 2014, because Malawi's pre-2014 electoral landscape lacked the institutional reforms and conflict mitigation strategies that were implemented in later years. The period from 2014 to 2020 saw transformative changes, including biometric voter registration, electoral law amendments, and improved policing of elections changes triggered by the violence and fraud allegations that followed the 2014 polls (Patel, 2021). The 2019 post-election violence and protests, the landmark nullification of the 2019 presidential election by the Constitutional Court, and the subsequent peaceful 2020 rerun further highlight this era as a critical turning point in electoral governance (Mpesi, 2021). Consequently, the 2014 elections and those before 2014 could

not provide comparable insights into contemporary police-community relations or the management of electoral violence, as they occurred before these major institutional and legal transformations.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

Malawi conducted its tripartite elections on September 16, 2025, following a campaign period that began in May 2025. Data for this study was therefore collected during an active election campaign, a period marked by heightened political tensions. This environment may have fostered suspicion among potential respondents, potentially reducing participation rates or increasing response bias as individuals aligned their answers with their political affiliations. To mitigate this limitation, the study emphasized its academic neutrality, secured endorsements from trusted community leaders, and avoided politically charged language in the questionnaires.

Another limitation of the study was the anticipation that police officials would decline interviews due to institutional restrictions and confidentiality concerns, which could have limited access to frontline perspectives. To mitigate this, the researcher proactively secured formal approvals from senior police command to give participants the confidence to take part in the study. Additionally, the researcher strategically engaged gatekeepers, such as station officers-in-charge, to establish trust and facilitate participant recruitment. Snowball sampling was further used to identify participants through peer referrals, capitalizing on existing professional networks. Where direct interviews were restricted, anonymous written responses were employed.

1.11 Assumptions of the Study

This study did not rely on untested assumptions. Through a systematic pilot test on 58 respondents (15% of the total sample size of 384), it was empirically verified that participants possessed adequate foundational knowledge to respond to data collection items as per the study objectives, were willing to provide truthful and unbiased information, that the research instruments accurately measured the intended variables, and that the external environment was stable for data collection. The adequacy of the study sample was further ensured through a prior sample size determination and sampling frame verification. Consequently, these elements were treated as confirmed methodological conditions rather than assumptions.

1.12 Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework is a logical structure that integrates relevant theories, concepts, and empirical evidence to give a thorough understanding of a research problem (Okoro, 2012). This study adopted two theories, namely functionalism theory and procedural justice theory.

1.12.1 Functionalism theory

Functionalism Theory, also known as Structural Functionalism, provides a valuable framework for understanding how police-community relations contribute to the maintenance of social order during elections. Developed by Durkheim (1917) and expanded by scholars such as Merton (1968) and Parsons (1979), the theory views society as a complex system composed of interdependent institutions that work together to maintain stability and order. In other words, each institution within this system performs specific functions that contribute to the overall health and equilibrium of society. According to the theory, social stability is achieved through consensus on shared norms, values, and expectations among members of society. Conversely, dysfunction occurs when institutions fail to perform their intended roles, leading to instability and social disruption.

In the context of electoral processes in Lilongwe City, the police and the community represent critical subsystems that must work in harmony to prevent violence and uphold democratic norms. According to functionalism, the police serve as formal agents of social control responsible for maintaining law and order, investigating electoral offences, and ensuring a secure environment for voting. Meanwhile, communities play a complementary role by collaborating with law enforcement, reporting potential threats, and engaging in local conflict resolution mechanisms. When these institutions function effectively, they reinforce social cohesion and minimize electoral disruptions.

However, functionalism acknowledges that dysfunctions can occur. In Malawi, for instance, historical mistrust between the police and communities has sometimes undermined electoral security, as evidenced by the disputes that followed the 2019 elections. Despite its strengths, Functionalism Theory pays limited attention to issues of power imbalance, political interference, legitimacy, and public perceptions. These weaknesses

make it difficult to fully explain why communities may refuse to cooperate with the police even when institutional structures are in place.

Nevertheless, Functionalism Theory remained useful to this study because it explained the roles and interdependence of police officers, communities, and other stakeholders in managing electoral violence. The theory aligned with the study objective of analysing the distinct roles of police and communities in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City. To address its limitations regarding legitimacy and public trust, the study complemented Functionalism Theory with Procedural Justice Theory, which explains how perceptions of fairness and impartiality influence cooperation between police and communities.

1.12.2 Procedural Justice Theory

Procedural Justice Theory, developed by Tyler (2006), posits that public compliance with the law depends more on the perceived fairness of authorities than on fear of punishment. The theory emphasizes that police legitimacy is earned through transparent, impartial, and participatory processes rather than through coercive force (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Its four core principles, voice, neutrality, respect, and trustworthiness, explain why communities cooperate with law enforcement when they perceive procedures as just (Jackson et al., 2012). Unlike deterrence-based approaches, Procedural Justice Theory focuses on legitimacy and trust as the foundation of effective policing.

The theory is particularly relevant to electoral contexts because public perceptions of police fairness can influence willingness to cooperate, share information, comply with lawful directives, and participate peacefully in electoral processes. Studies have shown that when police are perceived as neutral and accountable, communities are more likely to view elections as legitimate and less likely to resort to violence (Jackson et al., 2012). Conversely, perceptions of bias or selective enforcement can erode trust and increase tensions during elections.

Despite its strengths, Procedural Justice Theory has limitations. The theory focuses primarily on the quality of interactions between police and citizens and pays limited attention to broader institutional structures and the distinct roles played by stakeholders in maintaining social order. It does not adequately explain how police, communities, civil society organizations, and political actors interact within the electoral security framework.

Furthermore, in highly polarized political environments, perceptions of fairness alone may not be sufficient to prevent conflict because structural and institutional factors may also influence behavior (Murphy, 2017; Weitzer, 2015).

Nevertheless, Procedural Justice Theory was highly relevant to this study because it provided a framework for understanding trust, legitimacy, and cooperation in police-community relations. The theory aligned with the study objective of evaluating the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City. To overcome its limited focus on institutional roles and structures, the study complemented Procedural Justice Theory with Functionalism Theory, which explains how different institutions and stakeholders interact to maintain social stability. Together, the two theories provided both structural and relational perspectives for understanding police-community relations and the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi.

1.13 Conceptual Framework

Creswell (2014) refers to a conceptual framework as a visual representation of relationships between key variables related to a research study, including independent, dependent, and intervening variables. Fig.1.1 shows how independent variables influence dependent variable. Independent variables for the study were: state of police-community relations in Lilongwe city; distinct roles of police and community in police-community relations; effectiveness of police-community relations strategies, and challenges hampering police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city, while the dependent variable was the management of electoral violence. Intervening variables for the study were socio-economic factors and political context.

When police-community relations are strained, management of electoral violence becomes more challenging, often leading to escalation of violence, distrust in police institutions and long-term instability. When police officers effectively perform their roles during elections, they receive support from communities, and this reduces the likelihood of electoral violence. In the same vein, community members play an important and proactive role in preventing and mitigating electoral violence. Communities understand local tensions, can detect early warning signs, and serve as mediators between conflicting groups. The collaboration between

police and communities leads to reduced violence. Effective police-community relations strategies decrease electoral violence. Challenges such as resource constraints hamper police-community relations from reducing electoral violence.

Intervening variables such as socioeconomic factors affected the effectiveness of police-community relations in managing electoral violence. Economic stability, evidenced by steady employment, income security, and equitable resource distribution, fosters an environment where police are seen as partners rather than adversaries, while socioeconomic disparities, such as poverty, unemployment, and unequal access to services, contribute to distrust between communities and law enforcement, thereby exacerbating tensions during elections. According to Weitzer (2018), marginalized groups often perceive police as instruments of oppression rather than protection, reducing cooperation in the management of electoral violence. High unemployment rates, particularly among youth, increase vulnerability to recruitment by political actors seeking to instigate electoral violence (Urdal, 2012). Lower education levels correlate with reduced awareness of electoral laws and policing roles, leading to higher vulnerability to political manipulation. Communities with higher education levels tend to engage more constructively with police in the management of electoral violence (Finkel, 2015).

Similarly, political context, including election competitiveness, increases the likelihood of violence during elections, putting much pressure on police to maintain public order. Highly competitive and polarized electoral environments strain police-community relations, creating an atmosphere conducive to electoral violence.

Figure 1.13 is a conceptual framework model for the study:

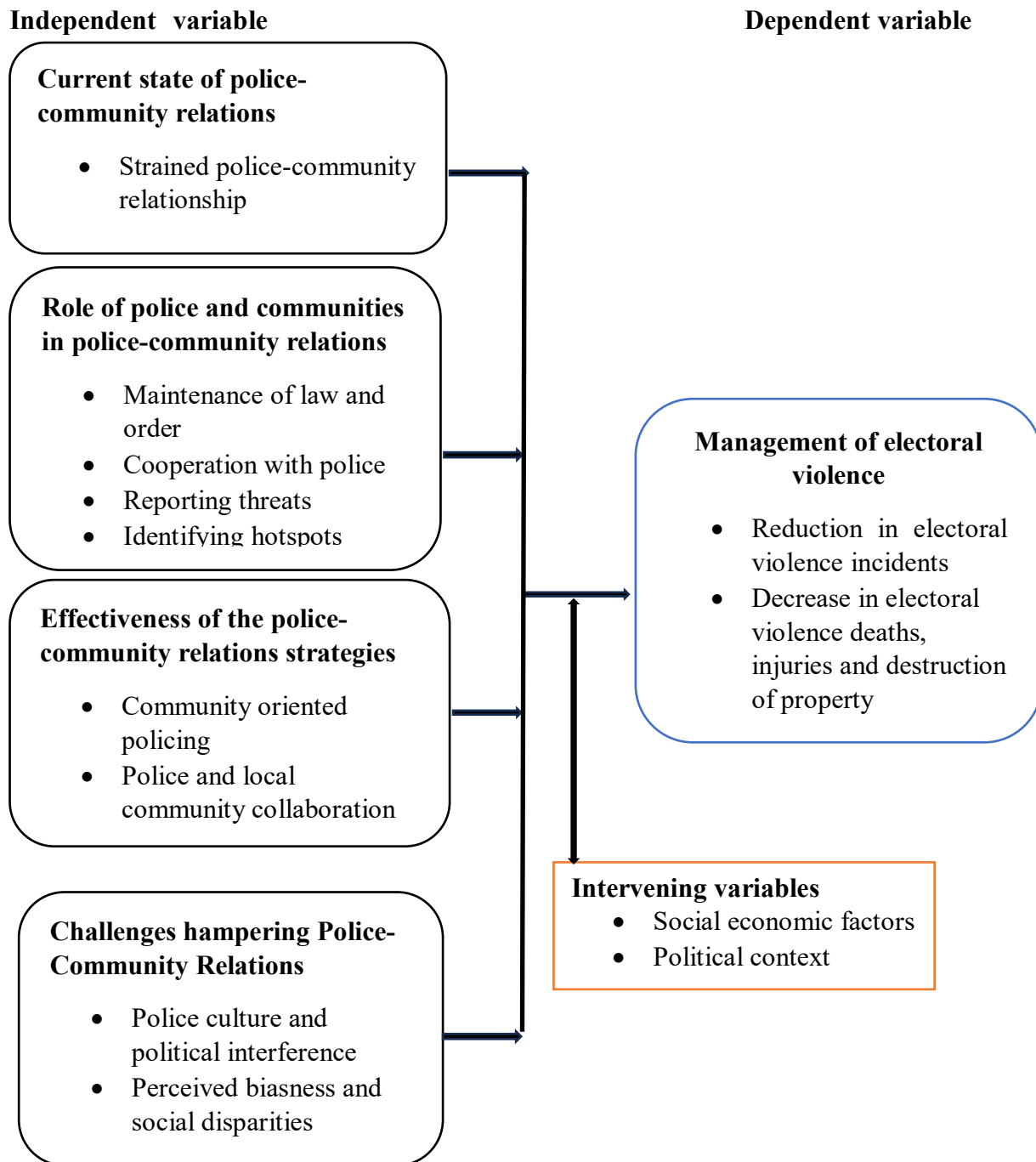


Figure 1.13. Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2026)

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed literature relevant to the study on the influence of police-community relations on the management of electoral violence. The review was organized according to the study objectives and focused on the nature of police-community relations, the roles of police and community members in managing electoral violence, the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies, and the challenges affecting police-community relations in the management of electoral violence. The chapter also identified knowledge gaps that informed the study.

2.2 Empirical Review of Literature

Police-community relations play a significant role in influencing electoral violence, both positively and negatively. Effective police-community relations assist in resolving disputes peacefully, nurture cooperation with communities that provide intelligence on potential violence hotspots, and encourage compliance with electoral laws. Studies suggest that community-oriented policing strategies can reduce electoral violence and improve public safety. Ineffective police-community relations worsen electoral violence mainly when communities perceive police as partial or repressive (Hernan, 2024).

2.2.1 Nature of Police-Community Relations in the Management of Electoral Violence

The nature of police-community relations has received considerable scholarly attention due to its influence on public safety, social order, and democratic governance. During elections, the relationship between police and communities becomes particularly important because it influences the extent to which citizens cooperate with law enforcement agencies in preventing and managing electoral violence. Existing literature generally identifies trust, communication, legitimacy, accountability, and cooperation as the key dimensions of police-community relations. According to Tyler (2006), communities are more likely to cooperate with police when they perceive law enforcement agencies as legitimate and fair. Similarly, Tankebe (2013) established that public trust in police enhances voluntary compliance with the law and promotes community participation in

crime prevention and conflict management. These findings suggest that positive police-community relations contribute significantly to the maintenance of peace and stability during electoral periods.

Studies conducted in different regions have produced evidence on the relationship between police-community relations and electoral security. In Ghana, Tankebe (2019) found that regular engagement between police officers and community members enhanced trust and cooperation, which contributed to peaceful elections and reduced incidents of electoral violence. Likewise, Jefferson and Walker (2015) reported that public confidence in police impartiality during the Scottish Independence Referendum strengthened acceptance of electoral outcomes despite heightened political tensions. These studies converged on the argument that strong police-community relations enhance electoral stability by promoting dialogue, cooperation, and public confidence in security institutions.

In contrast, studies from several developing democracies revealed that weak police-community relations often contribute to electoral instability. Ruteere (2019) found that allegations of excessive use of force and police bias during Kenya's 2017 elections weakened public trust and contributed to post-election tensions. Similarly, Harris and Mpesi (2022) observed that perceptions of partisan policing in Zimbabwe undermined electoral credibility and increased community hostility toward law enforcement agencies. Bekoe (2020) also reported that in several African countries, strained police-community relations reduced citizens' willingness to share information with security agencies, thereby limiting the effectiveness of efforts to prevent electoral violence. These studies collectively suggest that mistrust between police and communities can undermine electoral security and increase the likelihood of violence.

Although these studies provide valuable insights, they reveal several methodological limitations. Most relied heavily on cross-sectional survey designs that collected data at a single point in time. While such designs were useful in identifying associations between police-community relations and electoral outcomes, they provided limited understanding of how these relationships evolved before, during, and after elections. In addition, many studies depended primarily on quantitative approaches and self-reported perceptions, which may have been affected by response bias. Consequently, the studies provided limited insight into the lived experiences and contextual factors shaping police-community relations during electoral periods.

The reviewed studies also revealed conceptual limitations. Many scholars measured police-community relations using a narrow range of indicators such as trust and cooperation while paying limited attention to other dimensions including accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and community participation. This narrow conceptualization may have oversimplified the complex nature of interactions between police and communities. Furthermore, much of the literature examined police-community relations within the broader context of general policing rather than specifically focusing on the management of electoral violence. As a result, important aspects of police-community relations during politically sensitive periods remained insufficiently explored.

A significant contextual gap was also evident in the literature. Most of the reviewed studies were conducted in countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. While these studies provided important comparative perspectives, their findings could not be fully generalized to Malawi due to differences in political environments, policing structures, electoral histories, and community dynamics. In Malawi, available studies largely focused on electoral disputes, democratic governance, or police accountability, with limited attention given to the nature of police-community relations in the management of electoral violence. For example, Dulani and Mpesi (2021) found that public trust in police remained relatively low during election periods, while Afrobarometer (2023) reported persistent concerns regarding police neutrality and responsiveness. However, these studies did not comprehensively examine how the nature of police-community relations influenced the management of electoral violence.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrated that trust, legitimacy, communication, accountability, and cooperation are critical components of effective police-community relations. The studies generally agreed that positive relations between police and communities contribute to peaceful electoral processes, whereas strained relations increase the risk of electoral violence. However, methodological weaknesses, conceptual limitations, and contextual gaps remained evident. In particular, limited empirical evidence existed on the nature of police-community relations in the management of electoral violence within the Malawian context. The present study addressed this gap by examining the nature of police-community relations and their influence on the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi.

2.2.2 Distinct Police and Community Roles in the Management of Electoral Violence

The management of electoral violence requires the active participation of multiple stakeholders, particularly police officers and community members. Existing literature suggests that electoral security is most effective when police and communities perform complementary roles aimed at preventing, mitigating, and resolving election-related conflicts. Police officers are generally responsible for maintaining law and order, enforcing electoral laws, protecting lives and property, and responding to security threats. Communities, on the other hand, contribute through information sharing, early warning mechanisms, peacebuilding initiatives, and cooperation with security agencies. Scholars have argued that neither police nor communities can effectively manage electoral violence in isolation, highlighting the importance of collaborative approaches to electoral security.

Several studies have examined the roles played by police in the management of electoral violence. According to Hills (2009), police agencies serve as the primary institutions responsible for maintaining public order during elections by preventing violence, investigating electoral offences, and ensuring the safety of electoral stakeholders. Similarly, Alemika (2011) found that police effectiveness during elections depends on their ability to act impartially, respond promptly to security threats, and enforce the law without political influence. In a study conducted in Ghana, Tankebe (2019) reported that police officers played a significant role in preventing electoral violence through intelligence gathering, crowd management, and collaboration with local communities. These studies generally agreed that professional policing contributes significantly to peaceful electoral processes.

However, evidence from other African countries revealed challenges associated with the performance of police roles during elections. Ruteere (2011) found that allegations of police bias during Kenya's elections weakened public confidence in law enforcement agencies and reduced community cooperation in maintaining electoral peace. Similarly, Harris and Reilly (1998) observed that in politically polarized societies, security agencies are often perceived as serving political interests rather than acting as neutral guardians of public safety. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of police roles depends not only on institutional mandates but also on public perceptions of fairness, legitimacy, and professionalism.

The role of communities in managing electoral violence has also received increasing scholarly attention. According to United Nations Development Programme (2019), communities play a critical role in identifying emerging security threats, promoting peaceful coexistence, and supporting conflict resolution efforts during elections. Similarly, Fischer (2002) argued that local communities often possess valuable information regarding potential sources of conflict and can therefore contribute significantly to early warning and violence prevention mechanisms. Studies conducted in Nigeria and Ghana found that community participation in electoral security initiatives improved information sharing and enhanced the ability of security agencies to prevent violence before it escalated (Alemika, 2011; Tankebe, 2019). These studies highlighted the importance of citizen involvement in promoting peaceful electoral environments.

Despite the growing recognition of community participation, scholars have reported mixed findings regarding its effectiveness. While some studies found that active community engagement reduced electoral tensions and strengthened public trust in security institutions, others reported that political polarization sometimes limited the effectiveness of community-based interventions. For example, Bekoe (2012) found that in highly contested elections, community members occasionally aligned themselves with political interests, thereby reducing their capacity to serve as neutral actors in conflict prevention. This divergence suggests that the effectiveness of community roles may vary depending on political, social, and institutional contexts.

Although these studies contributed valuable knowledge, they revealed several methodological limitations. Most relied heavily on qualitative case studies and descriptive analyses, which provided rich contextual information but limited opportunities for generalization. Other studies adopted cross-sectional survey designs that captured perceptions at a single point in time, making it difficult to establish how police and community roles evolved throughout the electoral cycle. Furthermore, many studies examined police roles and community roles separately rather than exploring how the two groups interacted and complemented one another in managing electoral violence.

Conceptually, the reviewed literature often treated police and community roles as fixed and independent responsibilities. However, electoral violence management is a dynamic process requiring continuous interaction, cooperation, and mutual trust between stakeholders. The tendency to examine these roles in

isolation limited understanding of how police and communities jointly contribute to electoral security outcomes. Furthermore, some studies focused primarily on security enforcement while giving limited attention to preventive functions such as peacebuilding, mediation, civic education, and conflict resolution.

A contextual gap was also evident in the literature. Most of the reviewed studies were conducted in countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. While these studies provided useful comparative insights, their findings could not be fully generalized to Malawi due to differences in electoral systems, policing structures, political dynamics, and community participation mechanisms. In Malawi, available studies largely focused on electoral disputes, democratic governance, and police accountability, with limited attention given to the specific roles played by police officers and communities in the management of electoral violence. Consequently, empirical evidence explaining how these actors interacted and contributed to electoral security in the Malawian context remained limited.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrated that police officers and community members perform complementary roles in the management of electoral violence. Police contribute through law enforcement, public order maintenance, intelligence gathering, and protection of electoral processes, while communities support violence prevention through information sharing, peacebuilding, and cooperation with security agencies. However, methodological weaknesses, conceptual limitations, and contextual gaps remained evident in existing studies. In particular, limited research had examined the distinct yet interconnected roles of police and communities in the management of electoral violence in Malawi. The present study addressed this gap by examining how police officers and community members contributed to the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City and how their interactions influenced electoral security outcomes.

2.2.3 Effectiveness of Police-Community Relations Strategies in the Management of Electoral Violence

The effectiveness of police-community relations strategies in managing electoral violence has attracted significant scholarly attention due to growing recognition that collaborative security approaches contribute to peaceful electoral processes. Police-community relations strategies are designed to strengthen cooperation, build trust, facilitate information sharing, and promote joint problem-solving between law enforcement agencies and citizens. During elections, such strategies are particularly important because they enable police

and communities to work together in identifying potential threats, preventing violence, and maintaining public order. Existing studies generally suggest that electoral violence is less likely to occur where police-community relations strategies are implemented consistently and perceived as legitimate by the public.

Several studies have reported positive outcomes associated with police-community relations strategies. Skogan (2019) found that community policing initiatives improved trust and communication between police officers and citizens, thereby enhancing public willingness to cooperate in crime prevention efforts. Similarly, Gill et al. (2014), through a systematic review of community policing programs, established that strategies emphasizing community engagement and problem-solving contributed to improved public satisfaction and increased confidence in law enforcement agencies. These findings suggest that police-community relations strategies strengthen the social foundations necessary for effective electoral violence management.

Evidence from electoral contexts further highlights the value of collaborative policing strategies. Tankebe (2019) found that regular consultations between police and community leaders in Ghana contributed to peaceful elections by improving intelligence gathering and reducing tensions between competing political groups. Similarly, United Nations Development Programs (2019) reported that community dialogue forums and stakeholder engagement initiatives enhanced early warning systems and conflict prevention efforts during elections in several African countries. These studies converged on the argument that sustained engagement between police and communities enhances the effectiveness of electoral security interventions.

However, other studies reported mixed outcomes regarding the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies. Ruteere (2011) found that community policing initiatives in Kenya achieved limited success because allegations of police bias undermined public trust and reduced community participation. Likewise, Alemika (2011) observed that police-community relations programs in some African countries often struggled due to inadequate resources, weak institutional support, and political interference. These findings suggest that the success of police-community relations strategies depends not only on their design but also on the broader political and institutional environment within which they are implemented.

Studies conducted outside Africa also demonstrated varying levels of effectiveness. In the United Kingdom, Myhill (2012) found that neighbourhood policing strategies improved public confidence in law enforcement

and reduced fear of crime through regular community engagement. Similarly, Tyler and Fagan (2008) reported that strategies emphasizing procedural justice enhanced police legitimacy and increased public cooperation. In contrast, some studies noted that community engagement programs may produce limited results when police agencies fail to address underlying concerns regarding accountability and impartiality. This divergence indicates that police-community relations strategies are most effective when accompanied by broader institutional reforms that promote public trust.

Despite these contributions, the reviewed studies revealed several methodological limitations. Many relied on cross-sectional survey designs that captured perceptions of effectiveness at a single point in time. While useful for identifying public attitudes, such approaches provided limited understanding of how police-community relations strategies influenced electoral violence throughout the electoral cycle. Other studies employed qualitative case study approaches that offered detailed contextual insights but limited opportunities for generalization. Furthermore, relatively few studies used mixed-methods approaches capable of capturing both measurable outcomes and stakeholder experiences regarding the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies.

The literature also revealed conceptual limitations. Many studies assessed effectiveness using broad indicators such as public satisfaction, trust, or perceptions of safety without directly measuring the contribution of specific strategies to the prevention or management of electoral violence. Consequently, it was often difficult to determine which particular strategies produced positive outcomes and under what conditions they were most effective. Additionally, some studies treated police-community relations strategies as uniform interventions despite substantial differences in implementation approaches, stakeholder involvement, and local contexts.

A significant contextual gap was evident in the reviewed literature. Most studies examining the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies were conducted in countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Although these studies provided valuable comparative insights, their findings could not be fully generalized to Malawi because of differences in political systems, policing structures, electoral histories, and community dynamics. In Malawi, available studies primarily focused on

electoral governance, police accountability, and democratic participation, with limited attention given to the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies in managing electoral violence. Consequently, evidence regarding the extent to which these strategies contributed to electoral security in Lilongwe City remained limited.

Therefore, the reviewed literature demonstrated that police-community relations strategies such as community policing, stakeholder engagement, dialogue forums, and collaborative problem-solving have the potential to reduce electoral violence by strengthening trust, communication, and cooperation between police and communities. However, the effectiveness of these strategies appeared to vary across contexts due to differences in implementation, institutional capacity, political influence, and public perceptions of police legitimacy. Methodological weaknesses, conceptual limitations, and contextual gaps further constrained understanding of their effectiveness in electoral violence management. The present study addressed these gaps by evaluating the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi.

2.2.4 Challenges Hampering Police-Community Relations in Management of Electoral Violence

The effectiveness of police-community relations in managing electoral violence is often undermined by numerous institutional, political, and social challenges. While positive police-community relations can enhance public trust, facilitate information sharing, and support peaceful elections, various obstacles frequently hinder the development and sustainability of such relationships. Existing literature identifies political interference, perceived police bias, corruption, inadequate resources, weak accountability mechanisms, poor communication, and historical mistrust as some of the major challenges affecting police-community relations during electoral periods. These challenges not only weaken cooperation between police and communities but also compromise the ability of security agencies to effectively prevent and manage electoral violence.

Political interference has consistently emerged as one of the most significant barriers to effective police-community relations. According to Hills (2009), political actors often attempt to influence police operations during elections to advance partisan interests, thereby undermining public confidence in law enforcement

agencies. Similarly, Ruteere (2011) found that allegations of political manipulation of security institutions during elections in Kenya weakened public trust and reduced citizens' willingness to cooperate with police. In Zimbabwe, Harris and Mpesi (2022) reported that perceptions of partisan policing created hostility between communities and law enforcement agencies, contributing to electoral tensions and violence. These studies suggest that political interference undermines police neutrality, which is a critical requirement for effective police-community relations during elections.

Another challenge frequently highlighted in the literature is perceived police bias. Tyler (2006) argued that public cooperation largely depends on perceptions of fairness and impartiality in police actions. When communities perceive police as favouring particular political parties or candidates, trust deteriorates and cooperation declines. Similarly, Tankebe (2013) found that perceptions of procedural unfairness reduced police legitimacy and weakened community support for law enforcement initiatives. In electoral contexts, allegations of selective law enforcement and unequal treatment of political groups have often generated tensions between police and communities, thereby increasing the risk of violence. These findings demonstrate that perceived bias can significantly undermine efforts to establish constructive police-community relations.

Corruption has also been identified as a major impediment to effective police-community relations. According to Alemika (2011), corruption within law enforcement agencies erodes public confidence and discourages citizens from engaging with police in crime prevention and conflict management efforts. Similarly, Transparency International (2022) reported that perceptions of corruption within security institutions weaken institutional legitimacy and reduce public trust. During elections, allegations of bribery, selective enforcement of laws, and political patronage can further damage police-community relations and compromise the credibility of electoral security operations.

Resource constraints constitute another challenge affecting police-community relations. Several studies have reported that inadequate personnel, insufficient funding, limited transport facilities, and inadequate training reduce the capacity of police agencies to effectively engage communities and respond to electoral security threats. For example, United Nations Development Programs (2019) found that resource shortages often limited the implementation of community policing initiatives and electoral security programs in developing

countries. Similarly, Hills (2009) observed that under-resourced police agencies struggled to maintain consistent engagement with communities, thereby weakening trust-building efforts. These findings suggest that effective police-community relations require adequate institutional support and investment.

Poor communication between police and communities has also been identified as a significant obstacle. Skogan (2019) found that ineffective communication channels often create misunderstandings, misinformation, and suspicion between police officers and community members. Likewise, Myhill (2012) reported that limited public engagement and inadequate dissemination of information reduced community participation in policing initiatives. During elections, poor communication can contribute to the spread of rumours, misinformation, and fear, thereby increasing tensions and undermining cooperation between police and communities.

Historical mistrust and negative perceptions of police have further complicated efforts to strengthen police-community relations. In many African countries, policing institutions inherited from colonial administrations have historically been associated with repression rather than public service. According to Chirwa (2020), historical experiences of political repression in Malawi contributed to persistent public skepticism toward police institutions. Similarly, Tankebe (2013) argued that past experiences of police misconduct often shape contemporary perceptions of legitimacy and trustworthiness. As a result, communities may remain reluctant to cooperate with police even when reforms are introduced to improve relationships.

Although these studies provide valuable insights, they reveal several methodological limitations. Most relied heavily on qualitative case studies and perception-based surveys that captured stakeholder views at a particular point in time. While these approaches provided important contextual information, they offered limited understanding of how challenges affecting police-community relations evolve across different electoral cycles. Furthermore, many studies focused on individual challenges such as corruption or political interference without examining how multiple factors interact to influence police-community relations during elections.

The reviewed literature also revealed conceptual limitations. Existing studies often treated challenges affecting police-community relations as isolated factors despite their interconnected nature. For example, political interference may contribute to perceptions of police bias, while corruption can weaken accountability and

public trust. Examining these challenges independently limits understanding of how they collectively influence electoral violence management. Consequently, there remains a need for more comprehensive analyses that capture the complex interactions among these factors.

A contextual gap was equally evident in the literature. Most studies examining challenges affecting police-community relations were conducted in countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana. Although these studies provided valuable comparative perspectives, their findings could not be fully generalized to Malawi due to differences in political environments, policing systems, and electoral experiences. In Malawi, available studies primarily focused on electoral governance, police accountability, and democratic reforms, with limited attention given to the specific challenges undermining police-community relations in the management of electoral violence. As a result, empirical evidence explaining how these challenges affected police-community relations in Lilongwe City remained limited.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrated that political interference, perceived police bias, corruption, resource constraints, poor communication, and historical mistrust constitute major challenges affecting police-community relations during elections. The studies generally agreed that these challenges weaken trust, reduce cooperation, and undermine the effectiveness of electoral violence management initiatives. However, methodological weaknesses, conceptual limitations, and contextual gaps remained evident. In particular, limited empirical evidence existed on the specific challenges hampering police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Malawi. The present study addressed this gap by examining the challenges affecting police-community relations and their influence on the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi.

2.3 Summary of Literature Review and Research Gaps

The reviewed literature demonstrated that police-community relations play a critical role in the management of electoral violence. Studies by Tyler (2006), Tankebe (2013), and Skogan (2019) consistently found that trust, legitimacy, communication, and accountability are essential components of positive police-community relations. Similarly, Jefferson and Walker (2015) observed that public confidence in police impartiality contributed to peaceful electoral processes in the United Kingdom, while Tankebe (2019) reported that regular

engagement between police and communities reduced electoral tensions in Ghana. In contrast, Ruteere (2011), Bekoe (2012), and Harris and Mpesi (2022) found that allegations of police bias, excessive use of force, and partisan policing weakened public trust and contributed to electoral instability in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and other African countries. These studies generally agreed that the nature of police-community relations significantly influences electoral security outcomes.

The literature further revealed that police officers and community members perform complementary roles in managing electoral violence. Hills (2009) and Alemika (2011) argued that police agencies are responsible for maintaining law and order, enforcing electoral laws, and protecting electoral stakeholders. On the other hand, Fischer (2002) and the United Nations Development Programme (2019) emphasized the role of communities in information sharing, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and early warning systems. Although the reviewed studies acknowledged the importance of both actors, most examined police and community roles separately, providing limited understanding of how their interactions collectively influence the management of electoral violence.

Regarding the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies, the literature showed that interventions such as community policing, stakeholder consultations, dialogue forums, and collaborative problem-solving initiatives can contribute to peaceful elections. Gill et al. (2014), Skogan (2019), and Tankebe (2019) found that such strategies enhanced public trust, improved communication, and strengthened cooperation between police and communities. Similarly, Tyler and Fagan (2008) reported that strategies grounded in procedural justice enhanced police legitimacy and public cooperation. However, Alemika (2011) and Ruteere (2011) found that the effectiveness of these strategies was often undermined by inadequate resources, weak institutional support, and political interference. These divergent findings suggested that the success of police-community relations strategies depends on the context in which they are implemented.

The reviewed literature also identified several challenges affecting police-community relations during elections. Hills (2009), Ruteere (2011), and Harris and Mpesi (2022) identified political interference as a major factor undermining police neutrality and public confidence. Tyler (2006) and Tankebe (2013) found that perceived police bias reduced police legitimacy and weakened community cooperation. Similarly, Alemika

(2011), Transparency International (2022), and Skogan (2019) identified corruption, inadequate resources, poor communication, and historical mistrust as persistent barriers to effective police-community relations. Collectively, these studies demonstrated that electoral violence management is often constrained by institutional, political, and social challenges that weaken collaboration between police and communities.

Despite these contributions, several methodological gaps emerged from the reviewed literature. Most studies relied on cross-sectional survey designs and perception-based assessments that captured views at a single point in time (Tankebe, 2013; Tyler, 2006). While these studies identified important relationships, they provided limited understanding of how police-community relations evolve throughout the electoral cycle. Furthermore, many studies employed either quantitative or qualitative methods independently, limiting opportunities for methodological triangulation and a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

The literature also revealed conceptual gaps. Many studies measured police-community relations primarily through indicators such as trust and cooperation while paying limited attention to accountability, responsiveness, transparency, and public participation (Skogan, 2019; Tyler, 2006). Similarly, studies examining police and community roles often treated these actors as independent entities rather than examining how they interact in managing electoral violence. In addition, the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies was frequently assessed using broad indicators of public satisfaction rather than examining their direct contribution to the management of electoral violence.

A significant contextual gap was also evident. Most of the reviewed studies were conducted in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Tankebe, 2019; Ruteere, 2011; Jefferson & Walker, 2015). Although these studies provided valuable insights, their findings could not be fully generalized to Malawi because of differences in political systems, electoral environments, policing structures, and community dynamics. Within Malawi, studies by Dulani and Mpesi (2021) and Afrobarometer (2023) primarily focused on public perceptions of police performance and democratic governance, providing limited empirical evidence on how police-community relations influence the management of electoral violence, particularly in Lilongwe City.

The present study addressed these methodological, conceptual, and contextual gaps by examining the influence of police-community relations on the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. Specifically, the study established the nature of police-community relations, analysed the distinct roles of police officers and community members, evaluated the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies, and examined the challenges affecting police-community relations in the management of electoral violence. In doing so, the study generated context-specific evidence that contributes to the growing body of literature on electoral violence management and police-community relations in Malawi.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the methodology that was used to conduct the study on police-community relations and the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. The chapter described the research design, study site, target population, sample size and sampling procedures, data collection methods and instruments, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations that guided the study. The methodological approaches adopted were intended to generate data that adequately addressed the study objectives and research questions.

3.2 Research Design

This study used a mixed method approach. The design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to systematically describe and examine the nature of police-community relations and their influence on the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. The mixed method approach facilitated the collection of information on existing conditions, practices, perceptions, and experiences relating to police-community relations and electoral violence without manipulating the study environment. The approach was also suitable for generating a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by capturing views from different categories of respondents. Through this approach, the study was able to establish the nature of police-community relations, analyse the distinct roles of the police and community in managing electoral violence, evaluate the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies, and examine the challenges affecting such relations in Lilongwe City, Malawi.

3.3 Research Site

The study was conducted in Lilongwe City, the capital city of Malawi (appendix xi). The selection of Lilongwe City was informed by its relevance to the study objectives and its prominence in Malawi's electoral processes. The city is most information rich and that there had been no studies on influence of police-community relations on electoral violence. As the administrative and political capital, Lilongwe hosts major government institutions, political party headquarters, civil society organizations, and security agencies that play significant roles in electoral governance and security management. Lilongwe City was particularly suitable for this study

because it experienced some of the most intense electoral-related protests and violence following the disputed 2019 general elections and the subsequent 2020 Fresh Presidential Election. Reports by the Malawi Human Rights Commission (2020), the International Crisis Group (2020), and the European Union Election Observation Mission (2021) identified Lilongwe as one of the major centres of post-election demonstrations, confrontations between protesters and security agencies, destruction of property, and incidents that tested police-community relations.

The study specifically focused on Lilongwe Central Business District (CBD), Area 25, and Area 36. These locations were purposively selected because they were among the areas most affected by electoral violence and political demonstrations. Several incidents, including looting of businesses, destruction of public and private property, attacks on police facilities, and confrontations between protesters and law enforcement officers, were reported in these areas during the 2019–2020 electoral period. The areas therefore provided an appropriate context for examining the nature of police-community relations, the roles played by police and community members in managing electoral violence, the effectiveness of existing strategies, and the challenges affecting collaborative efforts in electoral security management. The selection of Lilongwe City enabled the study to generate context-specific insights into police-community relations and electoral violence management within Malawi's most politically significant urban setting.

3.4 Target Population

Population is defined as individuals or cases that a researcher aims to study or generalize findings to (Trochim, 2020). The 2018 National Statistics Office (NSO) population census found that Lilongwe city had a population of 989,318. NSO projected that the City's 2025 population would increase to 1,333,100 people. The 2018 NSO population 2018 census also found that 38% of the city's population was aged 0 to 14, 61% fell within 15 to 64, and the remaining 1% comprised people aged 65 and above. This study targeted 62% of the city's population from the age of 21 who were in the age bracket of 15 to 64 years in 2019 and are likely to have taken part in 2019 post-election violent demonstrations whose motivation was to show their disillusionment, discontent and anger due to socio-economic factors such as unemployment and economic inequality.

To find 62% of 1,333,100.

$$=1,333,100 \times 0.62 = 826,522$$

The target population for the study was therefore **826,522**.

The study targeted police officers, community members, clergy, and civil society members. Community members had varying experiences with police; for example, men were more likely to be stopped or arrested by police during demonstrations, while women were likely to face high levels of gender-based violence, and this worsens during electoral periods. Women's vulnerability provides unique perspectives on police-community relations and electoral violence. Youths, on the other hand, are often used by politicians during elections, leaving them susceptible to electoral violence and are likely to be arrested by police during elections (Newell, 2018). Further, youths are always active on social media, which can influence their perceptions of police-community relations and electoral violence. Police officers offered their own perspectives and experiences on their role in maintaining order during elections. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) members, such as activists and advocates, shared their observations on how police handled the 2014 and 2019 electoral violence. Clergy had a noteworthy influence within their communities; they are trusted, respected, and have moral authority. Their inclusion in the research provided a credible source for understanding community perspectives on police-community relations and electoral violence. The number of each group of the targeted population is discussed in the sample proportion in Table 3.1 and section 3.5.2.1 Sample proportion.

3.5 Study Sample

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), a study sample is a subset of individuals or cases selected from the general population representing the population's characteristics. The study sampled Lilongwe city's target population because it assumed they were either involved in or affected by the 2014 and 2019 post-election violent demonstrations, making them the most relevant population for this study.

3.5.1 Sampling Procedure

Sampling procedure refers to the systematic method used to select participants, cases, or units from a target population for inclusion in a research study (Etikan et al., 2016). Sampling techniques provide a range of methods that reduce the amount of data needed by considering data from a subgroup only (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). The study used three sampling techniques: stratified random sampling, purposive sampling, and snowballing. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across different

stakeholder groups in Lilongwe City. The population was divided into subgroups (strata) and randomly selected participants from each group as guided by Bryman (2016). The researcher defined the target population, for example, police officers from various stations in the city, members of the community and clergy from areas with a history of electoral violence, party representatives and activists. The researcher then conducted a geographical stratification based on past electoral violence reports. For example, the city was divided into townships such as Areas 18, 25, Lilongwe city CBD, and Kawale. The researcher then stratified participants into separate sampling frames for police, community members, clergy, and members of CSOs.

Each group in the strata had its own sampling technique. For example, to select police officers, purposive sampling was used to select key informants who were involved in election security operations. The researcher then conducted a snowball sampling in which the initial key informants referred the researcher to police officers they knew who took part in the 2019 electoral violence operations.

In the community, leaders, clergy, and members from CSOs were purposively selected for an in-depth interview. The researcher then clustered members of the community into categories. In the geographically stratified units selected earlier, the researcher randomly selected a subset of these areas (wards) and then surveyed households or centres within them. This technique reduced logistical challenges and costs by concentrating data collection in specific geographic areas while still capturing neighborhood-level dynamics of police-community relations. To minimize potential bias, wards or centres were further stratified by violence risk levels (high, medium, low) before random selection.

3.5.2 Sample Size

Sample size refers to the number of participants, cases, or observations included in a research study (Lachin, 2021). The study adopted Fisher's formula to determine the sample size for the study. Fisher's formula provides accurate results, especially when dealing with small sample sizes or sparse data. Again, unlike other formulae, Fisher's formula does not require any assumptions about the distribution of the data, making it a non-parametric test. The formula provides an estimate of the required sample size and detects statistically significant differences or relationships (Okeke, 2010).

Fisher's formula: $n = \frac{Z^2 * p * (1-p)}{}$

$$E^2$$

Where: n = sample size

Z = Z-score corresponding to the desired confidence level

p = proportion or prevalence of the population (0.5 for maximum variability)

E = margin of error

Assuming:

1. Confidence level: 95% (Z = 1.96)
2. Margin of error: 5% (E = 0.05)
3. Proportion (p): 0.5 (maximum variability)

$$\text{Calculation: } n = \frac{((1.96)^2 * 0.5 * (1-0.5))}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{(3.8416 * 0.25)}{0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

$$n = 384.16$$

$$n=384$$

3.5.2.1 Sample proportion

Respondents for the study were purposively sampled across two strata: demographic groups to assess age-based perceptions of police-community relations, and institutional actors to evaluate systemic roles in the management of electoral violence. Demographics were aimed at finding how different generations perceive police legitimacy, electoral violence, and community trust. Institutional actors such as police, clergy and CSOs, on the other hand, were expected to provide expert or frontline insights on conflict resolution strategies, challenges, and policy gaps. This dual approach captured both grassroots experiences and institutional perspectives, enabling a holistic analysis of conflict drivers and resolution pathways in Lilongwe city.

The Malawi National Youth Policy (2024) defines youths as people between the ages of 15 and 35, irrespective of their sex. In this context, adults are people aged 36 and over. According to the Population Reference Bureau Malawi (2024), youths accounted for 39% of the Malawi population during the time of the study. Nevertheless,

in Lilongwe, youths account for 43% of the city's population, surpassing the national average. People aged 36 and over account for 21%, and children aged 0 -14 account for 36%. However, in the sample, children were excluded because they did not take part in the demonstrations. Other demographic parameters like sex for each category of respondents were not readily available since they are institutions. Sex based segmentation to identify potential trends across varying population sex parameters was therefore considered during analysis of demographic data.

The researcher also calculated the police officers' sample using their proportion of the population. According to MPS Establishment (2024), 6,900 police officers were serving a population of 1,333,100 in Lilongwe City, representing 0.52% of the total population or a police-to-population ratio of 1:193. To find the number of police officers, the sample size was multiplied by the police proportion of the population.

Number of Police Officers = Sample Size x Police proportion in population

$$= 384 * 0.0052$$

$$\approx 2$$

So, based on the population proportion of police officers and sample size, the number of police officers in the sample was two. However, police officers were key informants in the study, and the researcher wanted a more nuanced understanding of their experiences, perceptions, and behaviors, or their attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to police-community relations and electoral violence, which could not be obtained from only two officers. The researcher therefore intentionally over-sampled police officers using Cochran's Formula to ensure their voices were well represented. Cochran's Formula is useful in studies where certain demographics are critical but small.

Cochran's Formula: $n = \frac{(Z^2 * p * (1-p))}{E^2}$

Given: $Z = 3.29$ (corresponding to a 99.9% confidence level for oversampling)

$p = 0.0052$ (proportion of police officers in the population)

$E = 0.001$ (small margin of error for oversampling)

$$n = \frac{(3.29)^2 * 0.0052 * (1-0.0052))}{0.001^2}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 & (0.001)^2 \\
 & = \frac{(10.856 * 0.0052 * 0.9948)}{0.000001} \\
 & \approx 57.42 \qquad n = 58
 \end{aligned}$$

The study therefore selected 58 police officers for the study, representing 15% of the sample size. The study considered 43% of youths and 21% of adults. The remaining 21% was shared equally among clergy and CSOs. Both clergy and CSOs play critical but distinct roles in electoral integrity through monitoring and conflict mediation. Allocating them a combined 21% ensured that their voices were captured without oversaturating the sample with a single group. The study therefore sampled 58 police officers and 326 community members, including youths, adults, and members of the clergy from Pentecostals, Protestants, and Muslim communities who took an active role in mediating the 2019 conflict and CSOs that took part in both the organization of 2019 demonstrations and mediating the conflict. As guided by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Palinkas et al. (2015), 15% of participants, particularly heads of institutions and community leaders, were interviewed, while 75% filled out questionnaires. Table 3.1 below is the study sample percentage and size per respondent category.

Table 3.1 Sample size per Respondent Category

Respondents (Age Groups/Institutional Actors)	Percentage (%)	Sample size (number)
Age Groups		
18-35 years	43	165
36 years and over	21	81
Institutional Actors		
Police	15	58
Clergy	10.5	40
Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	10.5	40
Total	100	384

Source: Researcher (2026)

3.6 Data Collection

Data collection is the process of gathering and recording information from study participants, documents, or other sources for purposes of analysis, answering research questions, and testing of hypotheses (Neuman, 2014). This section was organized under the following subsections: data collection instruments, pilot testing of research instruments, instrument reliability and instrument validity, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

3.6.1 Data collection instruments

Data collection instruments are tools used to gather data from respondents or other sources, such as documents (Owuamalam, 2014). This study used four data collection instruments: a structured questionnaire, an interview guide, focus group discussion guide and a document analysis guide.

Questionnaire: It is an organized set of questions intended to collect data from study respondents, usually using standardized response categories (Sifuna, 2016). In this study, a structured questionnaire was administered to police officers and community members to gather data on the influence of police-community relations on electoral violence. A structured questionnaire was chosen because it is easy to administer and analyze. The questionnaire had open-ended questions, closed-ended questions, and multiple-choice options. Open-ended questions were used to obtain in-depth information on the greater understanding of the role of police-community relations in reducing electoral violence. The questionnaire also used a 5-point Likert scale to measure respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with the statements presented. The scale ranged from Strongly Agree (5) to Not Applicable / Don't Know (1).

Interview Guide: It is a structured document that outlines the topics, questions, and areas of discussion to be covered during an interview (Mwamwenda, 2010). The study used it to guide conversations to ensure that all relevant information was gathered during the discussion. An interview guide was used to gather information on participants' experiences, insights, and observations into police-community relations and their influence on the management of electoral violence. The interview guide was structured to obtain open-ended responses from study participants. It assisted the researcher in validating information received from the questionnaires in relation to strategies aimed at reducing electoral violence.

Focus Group Discussion Guide: The study conducted one focus group discussion (FGD) using a semi-structured topic guide. The source of information was 12 community members purposively selected from Lilongwe market, a venue patronized by people from across the city and one of the areas most affected by electoral violence during the 2019–2020 period. The information sought included: community perspectives on the nature of police-community interactions during electoral violence, shared experiences regarding the effectiveness of existing police-community strategies, and collective views on the challenges affecting collaboration between police and community members. The FGD data were thematically analysed alongside interview data to triangulate findings and capture shared community experiences not easily obtained through individual interviews alone.

Document Analysis Guide: It is a systematic framework or checklist used to examine written, visual, or digital materials. In this study, a document analysis guide was used to collect secondary data from relevant documents, reports, policy papers, and other records relating to police-community relations and electoral violence in Malawi. The source of information included reports from the Malawi Human Rights Commission (2020), the International Crisis Group (2020), and the European Union Election Observation Mission (2021). The information sought included documented incidents of electoral violence, official accounts of police-community interactions, and policy recommendations for managing election-related security challenges.

Guided by Creswell and Creswell (2018), the study administered questionnaires to 288 (75%) respondents to statistically assess the influence of police-community relations on the management of electoral violence across Lilongwe City and conducted qualitative interviews with 95 individuals and one focus group discussion (making 25%) to gain in-depth, context-specific, and nuanced insights that questionnaires could not capture. Interviews were necessary for this study as they provided human stories behind police-community relations and the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City. Table 3.2 shows the number of respondents who were targeted for interviews and questionnaire administration.

Table 3.2: Data Collection (Surveys and Interviews)

Respondents (Age Groups/Institutional Actors)	Questionnaire (75%)	Interviews (25%)	Total	Source: Researcher (2026)
Age Groups				3.6.1.3
18-35 years	124	41	165	Document analysis guide
36 years and over	61	20	81	
Institutional Actors				Document analysis
Police	44	15	58	Document analysis
Clergy	30	10	40	
Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	30	10	40	Document analysis
Total	288	96	384	

guide is a systematic approach to reviewing, analyzing, and interpreting documents to extract relevant information, themes, or meanings (Creswell, 2014). The document guide assisted the researcher to get numbers on reported cases of electoral violence, deaths, injuries, and properties destroyed from police records. The researcher got this information from police ‘occurrence book’ and police daily situation reports.

3.6.2 Pilot Testing of the Research Instrument

Bryman (2016) describes pilot testing as the process of evaluating a research instrument before it is administered to the actual study sample. Pilot testing helps identify potential biases and allows researchers to refine the instruments, research design, and methods before large-scale data collection. In this study, the research instruments were pre-tested on 58 respondents (15% of the total sample size of 384) to assess their appropriateness, feasibility, and clarity. This sample size for pilot testing was in line with the recommendation by Hulley et al. (2013), who proposed that a pilot test should include a group equal to 15% of the eventual full sample.

Pilot testing was conducted in Area 2 within Lilongwe City. The area was selected because it shared similar socio-demographic and political characteristics with the actual study sites, including a diverse population and exposure to electoral activities. Additionally, Area 2 experienced severe electoral violence during the 2019–2020 period, including the torching of a police office, eight police officers' houses, and one police armoured vehicle, as well as the breaking into of a police armoury and the theft of six riot guns. These characteristics

made Area 2 an appropriate location for piloting instruments intended to measure police-community relations in the context of electoral violence. However, Area 2 was not included in the final study sites, which comprised the Lilongwe Central Business District (CBD), Area 25, and Area 36. Excluding the pilot site from the main study minimized the likelihood of response bias arising from prior exposure to the research instruments. Based on the pilot test results, modifications were made to the research instruments, including adjustments to question wording, sequencing, and layout, to improve clarity and ensure alignment with the study objectives. Respondents who participated in the pilot study were excluded from the final study.

3.6.3 Instrument of Reliability

Instrument reliability refers to the consistency with which a measure produces the same results under repeated conditions (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). To assess reliability, the study employed both the test-retest method and Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The test-retest procedure involved administering the research instruments twice to the same group of respondents during the pilot study, with a two-week interval between the first and second administrations. The scores obtained from the two administrations were compared to determine the stability of the instruments over time. The analysis yielded a test-retest reliability coefficient of $r = 0.91$, indicating excellent stability and consistency of the instruments.

In addition, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of a group of test or survey items. It measured how closely related a set of questions were as a group, indicating whether they reliably measured the same underlying characteristic or concept such as intelligence, anxiety, or customer satisfaction. The analysis produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.86$, which exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating that the questionnaire items were highly reliable and suitable for data collection. The results confirmed that the instruments consistently measured the variables under investigation.

3.6.4 Instruments of Validity

Okeke (2019) refers to instrument validity as the degree to which a research instrument accurately captures the intended construct or phenomenon. In other words, a research instrument is considered valid if it measures what it is intended to measure in relation to the study objectives. To establish validity, the researcher assessed the content validity of the instruments. The questionnaire, interview guide, and document analysis guide were

presented to the supervisors and faculty members from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Africa Nazarene University for expert review. The reviewers examined the relevance, clarity, adequacy, and appropriateness of the items in relation to the study objectives and variables. Faculty members evaluated the instruments using a rating scale and provided comments and recommendations for improvement. The feedback received from the experts was incorporated into the final versions of the instruments through revisions to item wording, structure, and content coverage. These modifications enhanced the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the instruments, thereby ensuring that they adequately measured the concepts of police-community relations and management of electoral violence as intended by the study objectives.

3.6.5 Data Collection Procedures

According to Kinyanjui (2018), data collection procedures refer to the systematic steps followed by a researcher in gathering information from study participants and other relevant sources. In this study, data were collected using structured questionnaires, key informant interviews, and document analysis. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the relevant university authorities and permission from the appropriate authorities in Lilongwe City. Research assistants were recruited and trained on the objectives of the study, ethical considerations, and administration of the research instruments. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to community members. The questionnaires were administered through self-completion and, where necessary, with assistance from trained research assistants. To enhance coverage and response rates, some questionnaires were also administered electronically through Google Forms, particularly to respondents with internet access such as members of civil society organizations and other stakeholders.

Qualitative data were collected through key informant interviews using an interview guide. The interviews were conducted with selected police officers, community leaders, clergy, and civil society representatives to obtain in-depth information on their experiences and perspectives regarding police-community relations and the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City. Secondary data were collected through document analysis using a document analysis guide. Relevant documents reviewed included government reports, police reports, electoral reports, publications from civil society organizations, policy documents, and scholarly literature related to police-community relations and electoral violence. Information obtained from these

sources was used to complement and triangulate the primary data. All completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency before data entry and analysis, while interview responses and documentary data were organized, coded, and prepared for subsequent analysis.

3.7 Data Processing and Analysis

According to Ogunyemi (2019), data processing refers to the application of different statistical and computational methods to transform data into useful information. Primary data collected through interviews and questionnaires were coded, edited, and cleaned to remove errors, duplicates, inconsistencies, and misplaced values. Data was then converted to a format that was suitable for analysis.

The study used a blend of quantitative and qualitative approaches for analysing data. Data collected through online survey and all numerical data were quantitatively analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 30. This version offers advanced statistical and text analysis and supports a wide range of statistical techniques such as linear and logistic regression compared to previous versions (IBM,2024). Descriptive statistics were analysed to enable the researcher to meaningfully describe the distribution of scores of measurements using measures of central tendency (mean and percentages).

Inferential statistics were used to make conclusions or predictions about a target population based on a sample of data. A *t-test* was employed to compare the means of police officers and community members. Non-numerical (qualitative) data were analysed using content and narrative analysis. Verbatim reporting was used to present qualitative data such as participants' responses, quotes, or excerpts in their exact words and without paraphrasing. This provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives. The study categorized verbal data to identify themes, meanings and patterns through coding. The study further conducted a narrative analysis of people's experiences and meanings given by participants and this was done through revision of primary qualitative data by the researcher. The study used tables and charts to present data, histograms and bar graphs to visualize data distribution, and scatter plots to explore relationships between variables.

Table 3.3 shows how data were collected for each study objective and analyzed. It links the research objectives with the variables studied, sources of data, methods of analysis, and the way findings were presented. The

matrix helps ensure that every study objective is addressed systematically and demonstrates consistency between the research questions, data collected, and analytical procedures. It also provides a clear roadmap for how the researcher transformed raw data into meaningful findings and conclusions.

Table 3.3: Data Analysis Matrix

Electoral Violence Management Analysis Matrix (Lilongwe City)						
Source ID	Research Participant / Source Type	Objective 1: Nature of Relations (Trust, hostility, cooperation)	Objective 2: Distinct Roles (Police duties vs. community duties)	Objective 3: Strategy Effectiveness (What works/fails & why)	Objective 4: Challenges Hampering Relations (Political interference, resource gaps, bias)	Key Quotes / Specific Evidentiary Data
KII-01	Senior Police Officer, Lilongwe Headquarters	Coordinated but strained by political suspicion.	Police: Law enforcement, patrols.	Community Policing Forums (CPFs) are highly effective in early warning but lack funding.	Political interference from party youths; inadequate riot gear and vehicles.	"We want to work together, but politicians weaponize local youths, making trust difficult."
KII-02	Community Leader, Mtandire	Good working relationship through neighbourhood watch initiative	Have specific roles in police-community initiatives as leaders Community: Intelligence sharing, peace committees.	Community policing initiatives are very effective mainly when there is consistent engagement with both parties	Police-community initiatives are mostly under-resourced hence progress is always slow	"When police officers visit communities before elections and engage residents openly, people become willing to report potential violence and cooperate with security agencies"
KII-03	Clergy	Generally good as residents reports security concerns to police	People have a duty to assist police in managing violence	It is effective especially dialogue as faith representatives form membership in the security committee	Political interference in the management of violence	"Communities cooperate when they believe laws are applied equally to everyone."
FGD	Community Members, Lilongwe Market	High mistrust; police viewed as partisan during campaigns.	Police: Arresting suspects. Community: Identifying local instigators, keeping peace.	Dialogue sessions are rare; rapid response teams are too aggressive, failing to build trust.	Police bias toward the ruling party; fear of community retaliation if citizens report thugs.	"When violence starts, the police only protect certain factions. We feel abandoned."

DOC-01	Afrobarometer Survey Report (2023)	Fractured relationship	Police: Protection of life and property Communities: Coordinate with police	Effective when excessive force is not used	Political interference	<i>"Police conduct influence citizens' willingness to participate in electoral processes and cooperate with law enforcement agencies during periods of political tension"</i> <i>"Lilongwe urban centers show a 40% drop in trust toward local police units during election weeks."</i>
DOC-02	MHRC (Malawi Human Rights Commission) Report	Documented institutional gap; structural breakdown in communication.	State: Human rights protection. Civil Society: Mediation, civic education.	Joint patrols during elections show short-term success but lack sustainable, long-term follow-up.	Lack of formalized legal frameworks governing police-community partnerships.	

Source: Researcher (2026)

3.8 Legal and Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are important in ensuring that research is conducted responsibly and in a manner that protects the rights, dignity, safety, and welfare of participants. Before commencing data collection, the researcher obtained a letter of introduction from Africa Nazarene University (ANU). The researcher subsequently sought and obtained ethical clearance and research authorization from the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) of Malawi; the statutory body mandated to regulate and oversee research activities in the country. Additional permissions to conduct the study were obtained from Lilongwe City Assembly and the Inspector General of Police. Upon completion of the study, the findings were shared with relevant electoral stakeholders in Malawi to contribute to policy formulation and the improvement of strategies for managing electoral violence.

The study adhered to the ethical principles of informed consent, non-maleficence, anonymity, confidentiality, and respect for privacy, as outlined in the American Psychological Association (APA) Code of Ethics (2020). Prior to participation, respondents were provided with adequate information regarding the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and the intended use of the data collected. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences.

To uphold the principle of non-maleficence, the researcher ensured that the study did not expose participants to physical, psychological, social, or emotional harm. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by replacing participants' names and other identifying information with codes or pseudonyms and restricting access to research data to authorized personnel only, as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). Furthermore, the researcher respected participants' privacy by avoiding intrusive questions, collecting only information relevant to the study objectives, and ensuring that all information obtained was used strictly for academic purposes. These measures safeguarded the autonomy, dignity, and rights of all participants throughout the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings and data analysis based on the collected data, utilizing descriptive statistical methods such as frequency distribution tables, bar graphs, and summary tables for clear interpretation. The primary purpose of this research was to examine how police-community relations influence the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. The findings presented in the chapter were derived from questionnaire responses, key informant interviews, and document analysis. Quantitative findings are presented using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative findings from interviews, observations, and documentary sources are used to contextualize, explain, and triangulate the survey findings. The integration of multiple sources of evidence enhanced the credibility and validity of the study findings.

4.2 Characteristics of Respondents

This section describes the demographic profile of respondents, including their age, gender, occupation, and other relevant characteristics that contextualize the findings presented in subsequent sections.

The demographic characteristics presented were important in establishing the suitability of respondents for the study. Youths constituted the largest proportion of respondents and represented the group most actively involved in electoral activities and demonstrations. Adults provided broader community perspectives, while police officers, clergy, and civil society representatives contributed institutional and professional insights regarding electoral violence management. The diversity of respondents enhanced the credibility and comprehensiveness of the findings presented in subsequent thematic sections.

4.2.1 Response rate

To achieve the study's objectives, a sample size of 384 respondents was selected from various locations within Lilongwe City, including Area 23, Kawale, Area 18, Area 25, and the Lilongwe Central Business District. Questionnaires were administered to 75% (288) respondents to statistically assess how police-community relations influence the management of electoral violence across the city. The 36 non-participating respondents were excluded due to unavailability, refusal to participate and failure to complete the data collection

instruments. In addition, key informant interviews were conducted with 96 (25%) respondents to gain in-depth, contextual, and nuanced insights that questionnaires could not capture. The response rate achieved is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Response rate

Tool	Submitted/Targeted	Responded/Interviewed	Response rate (%)
1. Questionnaires	288	262	91
2. Interviews	96	86	90
Total	384	348	91

Source: Field Data (2026)

To achieve the study objectives, a sample of 384 respondents was selected from various locations within Lilongwe City. Of these, 288 respondents were targeted through questionnaires, while 96 were targeted for key informant interviews. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a response rate of 60% or higher is considered adequate for research studies. As shown in Table 4.1, 262 out of 288 questionnaires (91%) were completed and returned, while 86 out of 96 targeted respondents (90%) were successfully interviewed. This resulted in 348 valid responses, representing an overall response rate of 91%. The high response rate exceeded the recommended threshold and was therefore considered adequate for analysis.

4.2.2 Respondents Gender

Gender was considered important in this study because participation in electoral processes and interactions with law enforcement may differ between men and women. According to Cuomo and Massaro (2016), politics and policing are often viewed as male-dominated spheres, which can limit women's participation and representation. The distribution of respondents by gender is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Respondents Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	160	46
Male	188	54

Total	348	100
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Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 4.2 shows that of the 348 respondents, 188 (54%) were male and 160 (46%) were female. The relatively balanced gender representation ensured that the study captured perspectives from both men and women regarding police-community relations and electoral violence. This was important because electoral violence affects men and women differently. Men are often directly involved in demonstrations, political mobilization, and confrontations with law enforcement agencies, while women frequently experience indirect effects such as insecurity, displacement, and gender-based violence during electoral conflicts. The inclusion of both genders therefore enhanced the credibility of the findings presented in subsequent sections by ensuring that diverse experiences and perceptions of police-community relations were adequately represented.

Furthermore, data obtained from interviews with community leaders and clergy revealed that women often played peacebuilding and mediation roles within communities during periods of electoral tension, while men were more likely to participate in political demonstrations. This diversity of experiences enriched the study's understanding of police-community relations and electoral violence management.

4.2.3 Respondents Age Distribution

Respondents were requested to indicate their age range at the time of the study. Capturing the age of respondents ensured that the study accounted for generational perspectives on police-community relations during electoral periods. The age distribution of respondents is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Respondents' age distribution

Age range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<20 years	10	3
21-40 years	150	43
41-60 years	122	35
60 years+ >	66	19
Total	348	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 4.3 indicates that 272 (78%) of respondents were aged between 21 and 60 years. This age group constituted the most active segment of the population in political, social, and economic activities and was therefore well positioned to provide informed perspectives on police-community relations during elections. Since the 2019 and 2020 electoral events largely involved economically active adults, respondents within this age category were likely to have directly witnessed or experienced interactions between police and communities.

Additionally, key informant interviews revealed that older respondents were able to compare recent electoral experiences with previous elections, thereby providing historical perspectives on changes in police-community relations over time. Although respondents below 20 years constituted only 3% of the sample, their inclusion was important because young people are frequently involved in political mobilization and demonstrations. The age composition therefore strengthened the reliability of subsequent findings by ensuring that respondents possessed relevant experiences regarding electoral violence and policing.

4.2.4 Level of Education of Respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate their highest academic achievement. Educational attainment was captured because it influenced individuals' understanding of policing policies, electoral processes, and their rights, which in turn shaped how they engaged with the police during elections. The level of education of respondents is presented in Figure 4.1.

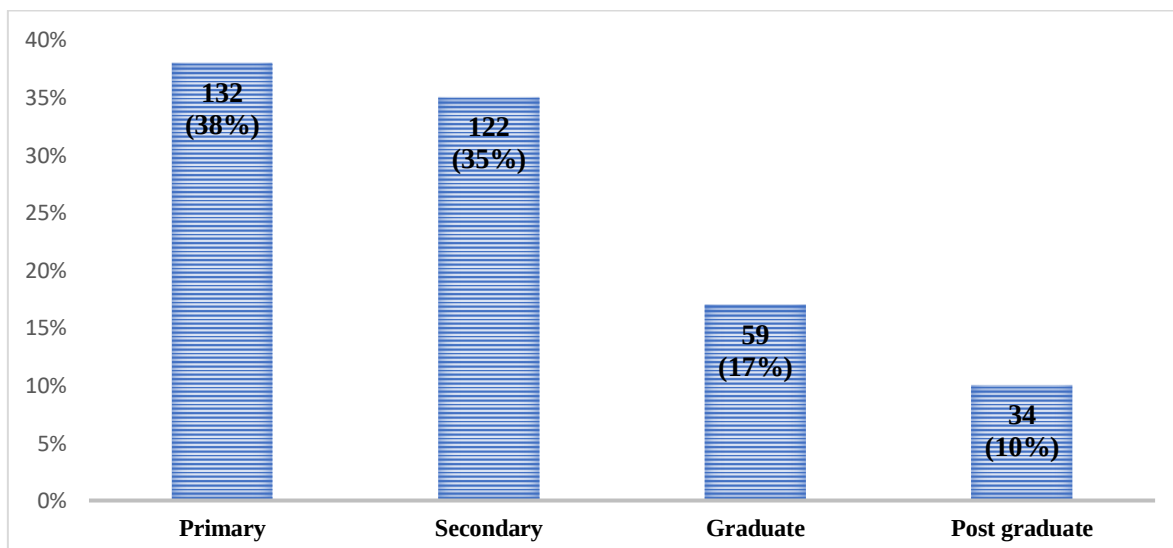


Figure 4.1: Respondents' level of education

Figure 4.1 shows that respondents possessed varying levels of education, ranging from primary education to postgraduate qualifications. This educational diversity was important because it enabled the study to capture views from individuals with different levels of understanding of electoral processes, governance, and policing practices.

Respondents with secondary and tertiary education were particularly useful in providing informed opinions regarding police accountability, electoral governance, and conflict management strategies. At the same time, respondents with primary education represented a significant segment of the community directly affected by electoral violence and policing interventions. During interviews, several community members indicated that their interactions with police were shaped by their understanding of legal rights and electoral procedures. Consequently, the educational diversity of respondents enhanced the comprehensiveness and credibility of the findings presented in the thematic sections.

4.2.5 Employment status

Respondents were asked to indicate their employment status which was considered relevant because it influences economic stability, which affects individuals' vulnerability to coercion or manipulation during electoral violence. Capturing employment status enabled the study to consider how economic circumstances influences respondents' experiences of police-community relations during electoral periods. Figure 4.2 presents respondents' employment status.

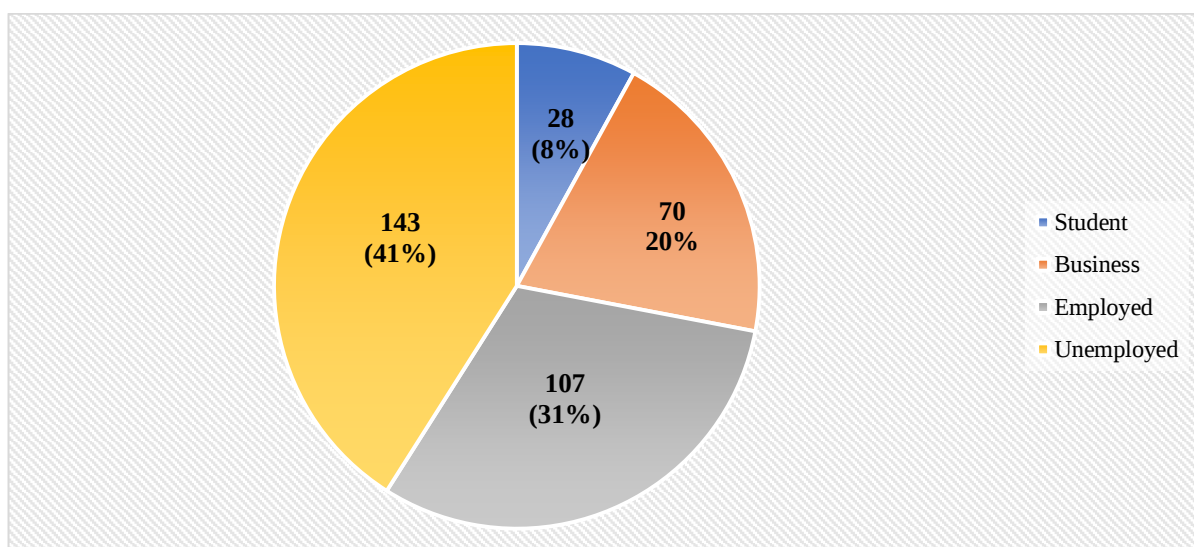


Figure 4.2: Respondents' employment status

4.3 Presentation of Research Analysis, Findings, and Interpretation

This section presents the analysis, findings, and interpretation of the data collected in relation to the study's research objectives.

Figure 4.2 indicates that 143 (41%) respondents were unemployed, while 107 (31%) were employed, 70 (20%) were engaged in business activities, and 28 (8%) were students. The employment profile was relevant because socio-economic conditions are often associated with political participation and vulnerability to electoral violence.

Interview findings revealed that unemployment was frequently cited as a factor contributing to the mobilization of youths during political demonstrations. Community leaders observed that economically vulnerable individuals were more susceptible to recruitment into election-related protests and violence. Business owners also reported experiencing disruptions and property losses during periods of electoral unrest. The inclusion of respondents from different employment categories therefore ensured that the study captured the varied socio-economic experiences influencing police-community relations and electoral violence management.

4.3.1 Presentation of results based on objective ONE

The first objective of the study was to establish the nature of police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. The nature of police-community relations served as a baseline for understanding these relations within the context of electoral violence. Establishing this baseline was essential for diagnosing underlying tensions, identifying gaps in trust and cooperation, and informing targeted interventions to improve police-community partnerships during elections. The presentation of findings is organized under several subsections.

4.3.1.1 Frequency of police-community interactions in Lilongwe city

Respondents were asked to describe the frequency of their interactions with police in their area. Establishing this frequency was important because regular interaction indicated the nature and quality of the police-community relationship. High-frequency interaction reflects active community engagement, whereas

infrequent interaction means detachment or ineffective policing structures. In the context of electoral violence, understanding interaction frequency helped determine whether police and communities had established a good working relationship before tensions escalated and was critical for assessing collaborative violence prevention and response. Figure 4.3 illustrates the study findings.

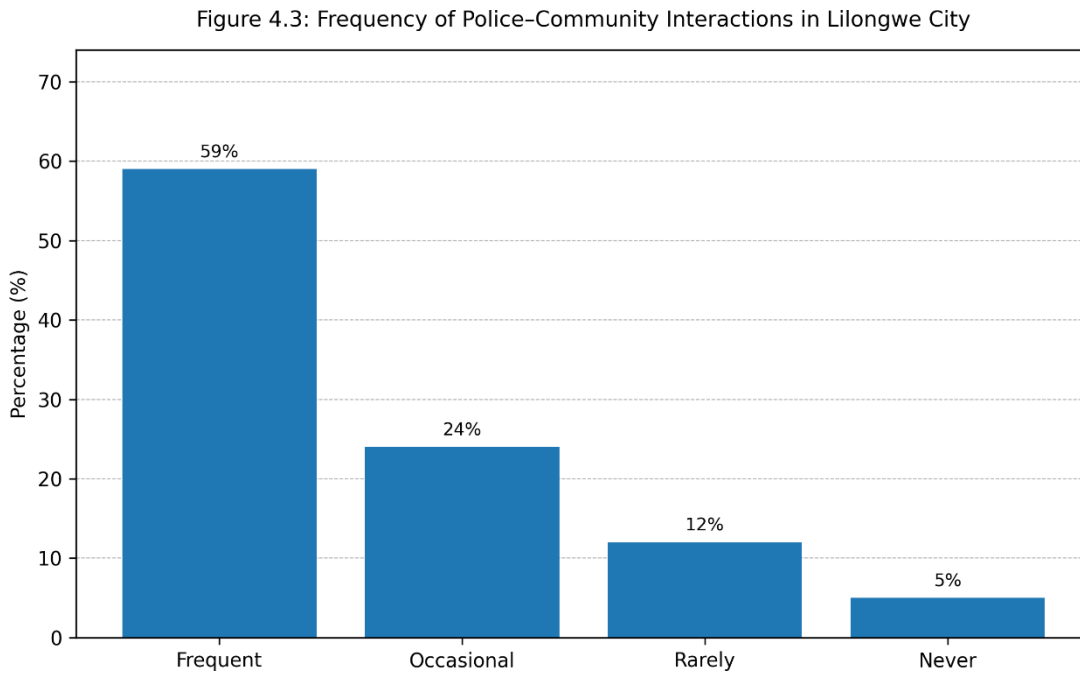


Figure 4.3: Frequency of police-community interactions in Lilongwe city

The findings indicated that the majority of respondents, 205 (59%), reported that police-community interactions occurred frequently. A further 84 (24%) stated that interactions occurred occasionally, while 42 (12%) indicated that interactions rarely occurred. Only 17 (5%) of the respondents reported that police-community interactions never occurred. These findings suggest that police and community members maintained relatively regular engagement in Lilongwe City. Frequent interactions may have enhanced communication, cooperation, and information sharing between the police and community members, which are important in managing electoral violence and promoting public security.

Key informant interview participants generally agreed that police-community relations in Lilongwe City were characterized by cooperation during normal periods but became strained during election periods. Most participants indicated that trust between police officers and community members determined the success of violence prevention initiatives.

One community leader stated: “When police officers visit communities before elections and engage residents openly, people become more willing to report potential violence and cooperate with security agencies.” A clergy representative similarly observed: “Trust between the police and the community determines whether early warnings about violence are acted upon.” These views suggest that positive police-community relations contribute significantly to information sharing and conflict prevention.

Review of police records revealed the existence of community policing forums and neighbourhood security committees in some parts of Lilongwe City. These structures facilitated communication between police officers and community members. However, participation levels varied considerably across communities, with some forums appearing active while others were largely dormant.

Document analysis of reports from the Malawi Human Rights Commission (2020), the International Crisis Group (2020), and the European Union Election Observation Mission (2021) indicated that tensions during the 2019–2020 electoral period were partly associated with declining trust between police officers and community members. These documentary findings corroborated both the survey and interview findings.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether perceptions regarding police-community relations differed significantly between police officers and community members. The results showed a statistically significant difference between police officers ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.62$) and community members ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.71$), $t(346) = 4.82$, $p < .05$. The findings indicate that police officers generally perceived police-community relations more positively than community members. This suggests that the two groups experience and interpret police-community relations differently, particularly during electoral periods.

The findings support the assumptions of Procedural Justice Theory, which argues that citizens are more likely to cooperate with law enforcement agencies when police actions are perceived as fair, impartial, and legitimate. The positive relationship observed between trust, communication, and community cooperation demonstrates that procedural fairness strengthens police legitimacy and enhances electoral violence management. The findings therefore validate the applicability of the theory within the Malawian electoral context. While Tyler (2006) emphasized trust as the dominant determinant of police legitimacy, the present

study found that communication and continuous engagement were equally important predictors of positive police-community relations. This suggests that trust alone may be insufficient without sustained interaction between police and communities. The finding therefore extends existing knowledge by highlighting the importance of regular engagement in electoral violence management.

4.3.1.2 Rating police-community relations in Lilongwe city

Respondents were asked to rate their relationship with police. Rating this relationship was important because it captured how citizens subjectively experienced their engagement with police, an important measure of trust. As Tyler (2006) noted, perceived quality of police-citizen interactions is a strong predictor of cooperation. In the context of electoral violence, understanding this rating helped determine whether existing trust could support collaborative conflict prevention or whether mistrust posed a significant barrier. Figure 4.4 presents the rating of the current police-community relations in Lilongwe city.

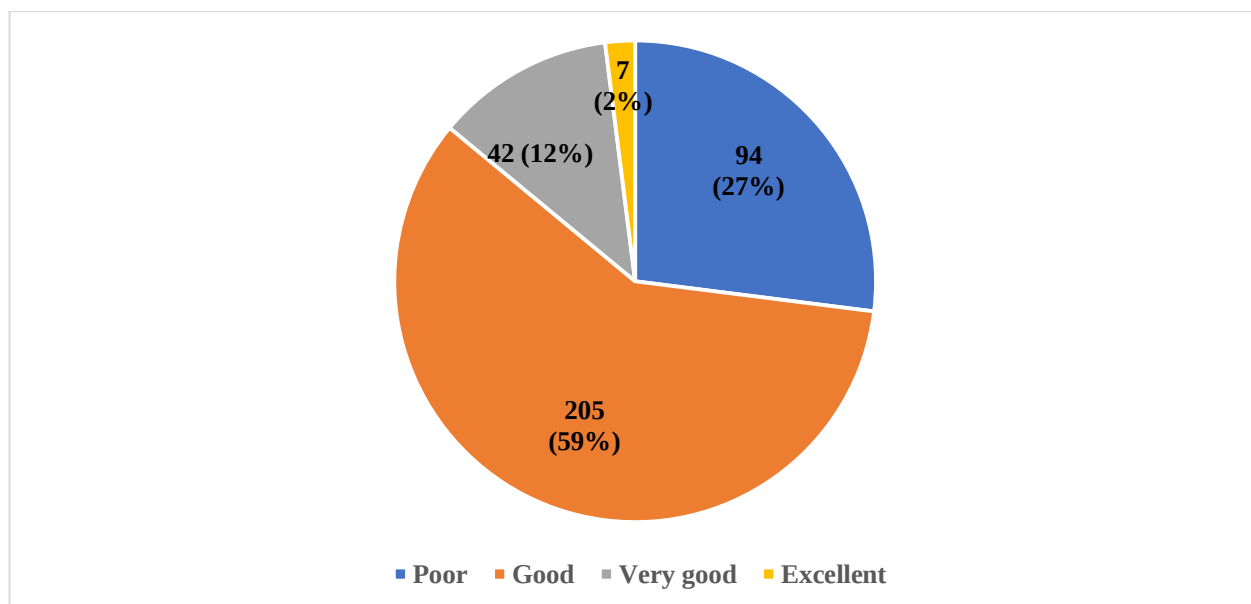


Figure 4.4: Rating police-community relations in Lilongwe city

Figure 4.4, shows that 254 (73%) respondents gave positive ratings signaling a prevailing atmosphere of moderate, conditional acceptance of the police. However, 94 (27%) respondents who rated the relationship as poor, suggest that police lack unreserved community legitimacy needed for effective conflict mediation and violence prevention. This finding reflects an inconsistent relationship, where police are seen as partially effective but not community-embedded. Baker (2008) found in Uganda that such "good enough" ratings often mask underlying grievances and a readiness to bypass police during political crises. Similarly, Ruteere and

Pommerolle (2003) observed in Kenya that modest satisfaction of the community in their police is often fragile and easily fractured by partisan policing during elections, where lost neutrality transforms into passive acceptance and active opposition, escalating the risk of electoral violence.

4.3.1.3 Characterizing police-community relations in Lilongwe city

Respondents were requested to describe their police-community relations during elections. This was important because electoral periods tend to alter ordinary police-community relations dynamics, introducing heightened political tensions that could strain trust and cooperation. Table 4.4 presents the findings.

Table 4.4: Characteristics of police-community relations in Lilongwe city

Characteristic	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Highly collaborative and trusting	17	5
Generally cooperative with some tension	209	60
Tense and distrustful	94	27
Openly hostile and confrontational	28	8
Total	348	100

Source: Field Data 2026

Table 4.4 reveals a delicate police-community relationship during elections in Lilongwe City. Although the majority of respondents, 209 (60%), describe the relationship as generally cooperative despite some tension, this points to conditional acceptance rather than deep-rooted trust. Equally, 28 (8%) of respondents viewed the relationship as openly hostile and confrontational, representing a minority flashpoint. More concerning is that only 17 (5%) of respondents categorize the relationship as highly collaborative and trusting, indicating a genuine police-community partnership. The majority, 187 (89%) respondents who described police and community relationship as generally cooperative despite some tension, indicated in open-ended questions and during oral interviews that police have never acted to the full satisfaction of the public, even before elections. They believe this is inherent because people have lost trust in their police. Overall, these findings suggest that while most citizens cooperate with the police, this cooperation remains superficial and vulnerable to breakage

under political stress. As O'Neill and Singh (2020) observed in Nigeria, pre-existing public dissatisfaction in their police often escalates into serious political distrust during elections.

4.3.1.4 Common forms of police-community conflict during elections in Lilongwe city

Respondents were asked to identify the most common forms of police-community conflict during elections in Lilongwe City. Identifying these forms enabled the study to identify specific triggers of tension, allowing for targeted interventions to address root causes of electoral violence rather than merely responding to symptoms.

Findings are presented in Figure 4.5.

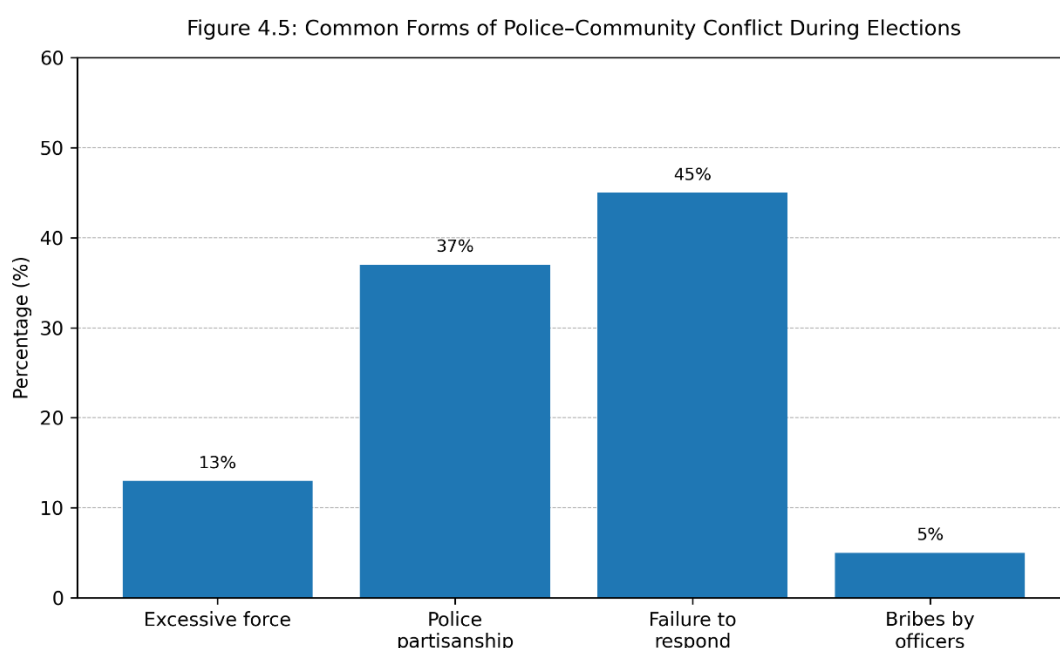


Figure 4.5: Common forms of police-community conflict during elections in Lilongwe city

The findings revealed that failure by police to respond to violent reports was identified as the most common source of conflict, cited by 157 (45%) of the respondents. Allegations of police partisanship were reported by 129 (37%) of the respondents, while 45 (13%) cited the use of excessive force. Demands for bribes by police officers were reported by only 17 (5%) of the respondents. The findings imply that concerns regarding police responsiveness and perceived political bias were the major factors contributing to tensions between police and communities during electoral periods.

4.3.1.5 Factors undermining police legitimacy during elections

Study respondents were asked to identify factors that undermine police legitimacy during elections. According to Tyler (2006), legitimacy is the belief that authorities are entitled to be obeyed because they are viewed as morally appropriate. In this context, legitimacy refers to the public's perception that police have rightful authority and act fairly, making voluntary compliance possible. Understanding factors that undermine police legitimacy during elections was important because legitimacy is important in police and community cooperation and the maintenance of order during volatile electoral periods. Figure 4.6 illustrates the findings.

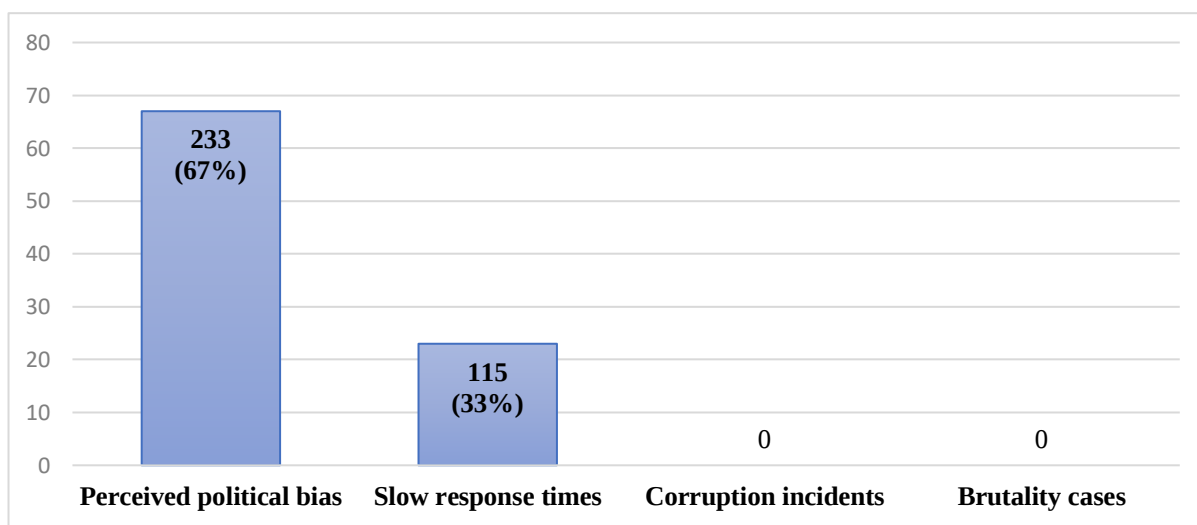


Figure 4.6: Factors that Undermine Police Legitimacy during elections in Lilongwe city

From Figure 4.6, a majority, 233 (67%), of respondents perceived political bias as the primary issue undermining police-community relations during elections, while 115 (33%) respondents cited slow response times. Notably, no respondent mention incidents of corruption or police brutality. These findings show that political bias is a dominant factor eroding police legitimacy in the electoral context, overshadowing even corruption and brutality. It reveals that the community views police not primarily as corrupt or abusive individuals, but as a politicized institution whose actions are perceived to serve partisan interests. This is in tandem with findings from Cheeseman and Peiffer's (2022) empirical research across Africa that police partisanship is the single greatest barrier to police legitimacy during elections.

4.3.1.6 Incidents that significantly damaged trust between police and the community during elections

Study respondents were asked to describe specific incidents that significantly damaged trust between police and the community during elections. Understanding these incidents helped identify event-specific triggers that fractured police-community relations, informing targeted interventions to prevent recurrence and rebuild confidence in future electoral periods. Findings are presented in Table 4.5

Table 4.5: Incidents that damaged trust between the police and the community

Incident	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Failure to prevent or investigate electoral violence	97	28
Using excessive force	93	27
Ignored or delayed responses to violence	85	24
Biased enforcement	73	21
Total	348	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

In Table 4.5, a slight majority of 97 (28%) respondents identify failure to prevent or investigate violence as the most damaging police action, followed by excessive force as stated by 93 (27%) respondents. These results indicate that communities perceive police inaction, excessive force, and biased enforcement and, often, a combination of all three, as key incidents that erode trust between police and the community. According to Boas and Utas (2020), police inaction is frequently part of deliberately planned electoral violence strategies. Iwilade (2018) similarly argues that police actions are shaped by political dynamics and are never neutral. He suggested that during elections, these embedded biases become overt and highly charged. The 73 respondents (21%) who cited biased enforcement therefore accurately reflect how deeply police are embedded in local political structures.

In open-ended questions of the questionnaire and oral interviews, 193 (55%) respondents recounted several incidents that damaged trust between police and community during elections in Lilongwe city. They state that police only dealt with protestors believed to be supporting opposition parties, while leaving ruling party thugs unpunished. Participant 5, a community member, state that during a series of protests in the run up to 2019

elections, police were arresting and teargassing innocent citizens. Teachers who were demanding a pay rise were arrested, leaving ruling party thugs wielding knives (pangas) untouched. This account highlights perceived partisanship in police operations, where policing appears selectively applied based on political affiliation. A significant minority, 157 (45%) respondents, cited the police's failure to act on the practice of distributing handouts, reportedly carried out by ruling party officials in the run-up to the 2019 elections. Respondents argue that this practice undermines the principles of free and fair elections and was only allowed to occur without police intervention because it was the ruling party that was doing this, confirming selective enforcement based on political convenience rather than universal application.

4.3.2 Presentation of results based on objective TWO

The findings presented in this section were derived from questionnaire responses, key informant interviews, and document analysis. Quantitative findings are presented using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative findings from interviews, observations, and documentary sources are used to provide contextual explanations and triangulate the survey results. The demographic profile presented earlier indicated that the majority of respondents were youths aged 15–35 years, who constituted 43% of the sample. This category was particularly important because youths were the group most actively involved in electoral demonstrations and interactions with police during the 2019 electoral period. Similarly, police officers, clergy, and civil society representatives provided institutional perspectives that enriched understanding of role performance and collaboration during electoral violence management.

4.3.2.1 Who should take the lead role in the management of electoral violence?

Respondents were asked to identify which stakeholder, police or community, should take the lead in managing electoral violence in Lilongwe City. This question was significant because it revealed expectations regarding responsibility and accountability in violence prevention, which is essential for aligning roles and designing interventions that reflect both institutional capacity and public preference. Table 4.6 shows distinct roles of police and communities in the management of electoral violence.

Table 4:6: Roles of police and communities in the management of electoral violence

Stakeholder	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Primarily the police through patrols, arrests, and enforcement	52	15
2. Primarily community leaders through mediation and early warnings	31	9
3. An equal partnership between police and communities with clearly divided responsibilities	213	61
4. Other actors such as election officials, political parties, etc.	52	15
Total	348	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 4.6 shows an overwhelming majority of 213 (61%) respondents reject the idea that either police or the community should bear sole responsibility for managing electoral violence; instead, they recommend an official partnership. Low support for a police-led approach or a community-led approach, proposed by 83 (24%) respondents, reflects a lack of trust in police legitimacy and an understanding that local groups alone are ill-equipped to stop large-scale political violence. This strong public preference for a structured partnership aligned with Baker (2022), who advocated for a hybrid security model that blends state and community efforts.

In a related finding of this study, a police officer acknowledged that police alone could not manage electoral violence. He suggested that all election stakeholders should play their part, emphasizing that the police should serve not only as enforcers of law and order but also as facilitators of community safety by building trust, engaging in dialogue with residents, and responding impartially to threats. The community, he noted, could complement this role by acting as peace advocates, establishing early warning systems, rejecting manipulation by politicians, and participating in multi-stakeholder dialogue to address grievances peacefully.

The findings support Community Policing Theory, which emphasizes shared responsibility between police officers and citizens in maintaining public safety. The complementary roles performed by police officers, community leaders, clergy, and civil society organizations illustrate the collaborative approach advocated by the theory. Unlike Bekoe (2012), who found that communities often become politically polarized and ineffective during elections, respondents in Lilongwe indicated that community leaders, clergy, and civil

society organizations remained active contributors to electoral peacebuilding. This finding highlights contextual differences in community resilience and contributes to academic debate on community participation during elections.

4.3.2.2 Specific police action escalating violence in Lilongwe city

Respondents were asked to mention specific police actions during elections that escalate rather than reduce violence. This question sought to isolate specific actions that turned manageable tensions into violent confrontations. Understanding these triggers was essential for developing targeted reforms by identifying what police should avoid doing to prevent escalation. Figure 4.7 describes specific police actions that tend to escalate violence during elections.

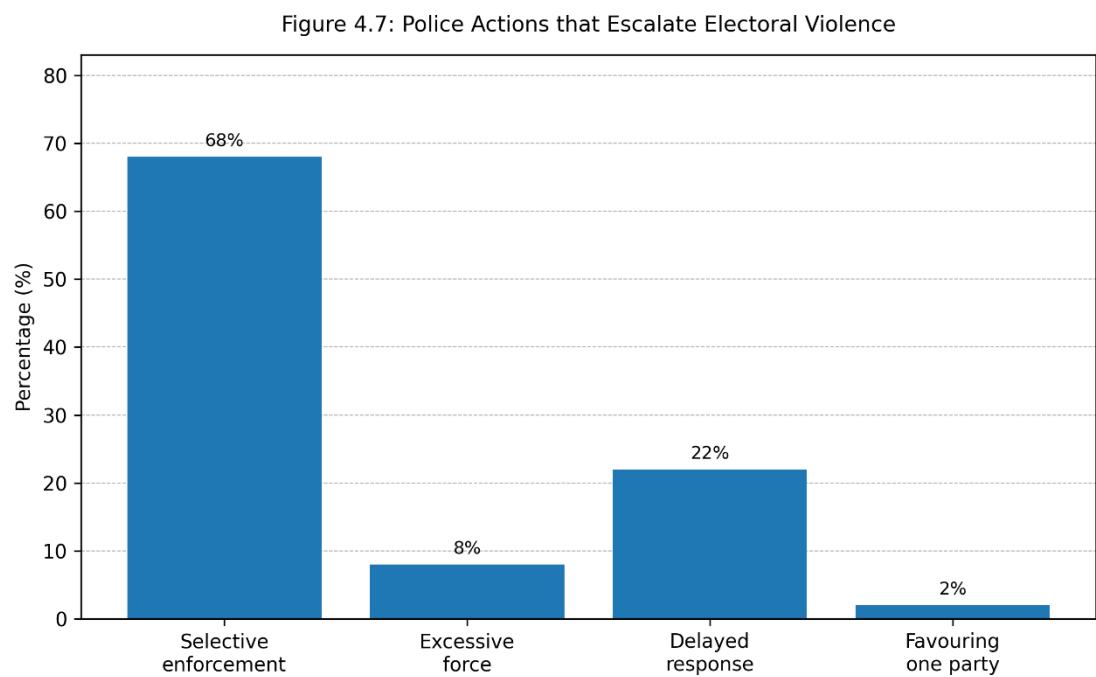


Figure 4.7: Specific police actions that tend to escalate violence during elections

The results showed that selective enforcement of laws was the most frequently identified police action that escalated electoral violence, as reported by 237 (68%) of the respondents. Delayed response to violence reports was cited by 77 (22%) of the respondents, while excessive use of force was reported by 28 (8%). Public statements favouring one political party were reported by only 6 (2%) of the respondents. These findings suggest that perceptions of unequal application of the law significantly contributed to heightened tensions and

conflict during elections. The results further indicate that impartial law enforcement is essential in maintaining public confidence and electoral peace.

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the effectiveness of police-community collaboration significantly influenced electoral violence management. Results showed that police-community collaboration significantly predicted electoral violence management outcomes, $\beta = .581$, $p < .001$. The model explained approximately 33.8% of the variance in electoral violence management ($R^2 = .338$). This finding suggests that stronger collaboration between police and communities is associated with improved management of electoral violence.

4.3.2.3 Community's most critical role in managing electoral violence

Study respondents were asked to mention the community's most critical role in managing electoral violence. Identifying the community's most critical role helped determine whether existing community capacities were being leveraged, overlooked, or undermined, and informed interventions that empowered communities to complement police efforts rather than depend solely on them. Figure 4.8 shows the community's role in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City.

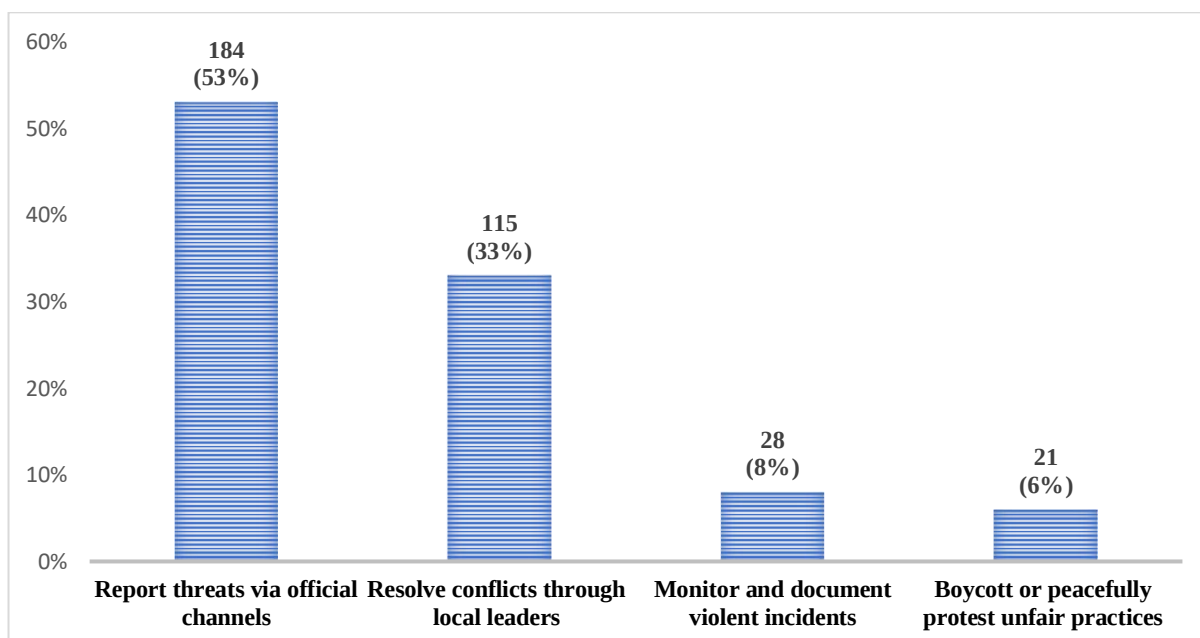


Figure 4.8: Community's Role in the Management of Electoral Violence in Lilongwe City

From Figure 4.8, the majority, 299(86%) respondents believed the community's primary role during electoral violence was to report threats through official channels, such as the police, and to resolve conflicts through

local leaders. Issifu's (2015) research in Ghana supported this view, noting that active community reporting to police was a vital strategy for early intervention in violence.

In contrast, 49 (14%) respondents cited alternative roles, including monitoring and documenting violent incidents, as well as boycotting or peacefully protesting unfair practices. Though smaller in number, this group was significant because it represented a more proactive and autonomous vision of community engagement, one that extended beyond cooperation with state institutions to include holding those institutions accountable. Overall, the findings revealed a community that recognized its role in maintaining peace but viewed that role as most effective when connected to the official state system.

4.3.2.4 Factors discouraging community cooperation with police in managing electoral violence

Study respondents were asked to identify primary factors that discouraged community cooperation with police in managing electoral violence. This question was important because understanding these factors helped identify what discouraged collaboration and efforts to address the underlying issues. These factors are shown in Figure 4.9.

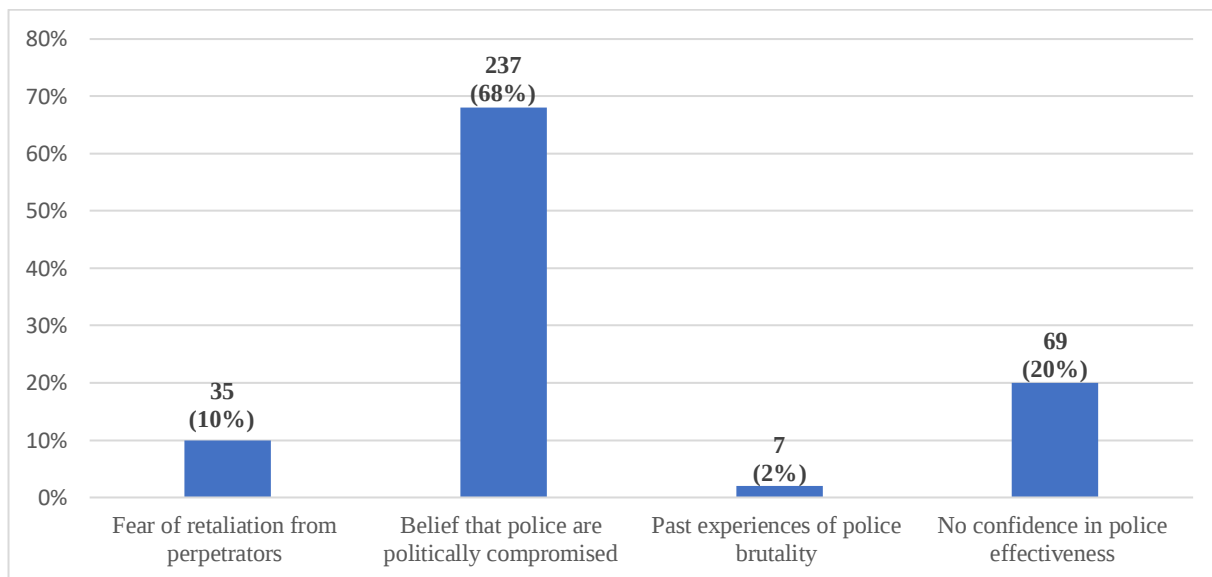


Figure 4.9: Factors that discourage communities from cooperating with police

Figure 4.9 shows that the principal barrier to community-police cooperation during elections was not operational incompetence but a profound crisis of acceptability. A majority 237(68%) respondents identified the belief that police were politically compromised as the primary deterrent, framing police as partisan

opponents rather than neutral protectors. Baker (2022) posits that political bias is a far stronger predictor of withheld cooperation than perceptions of incompetence or fear of crime.

A lesser factor, such as past brutality cited by 7 (2%) respondents, was still a symptom of a legitimacy deficit. However, Alemika and Chukwuma (2020) noted that while political bias was paramount, police brutality and extortion often served as more tangible daily deterrents than the abstract risk of political compromise. Overall, these findings affirmed that in electoral contexts, police legitimacy was first and foremost about political neutrality.

4.3.2.5 Reforms to improve role clarity in the management of electoral violence

The study asked respondents to propose reforms that would improve role clarity in managing electoral violence in Lilongwe City. By asking respondents to propose reforms, the study captured practical, context-specific solutions grounded in local experiences. These proposals offered actionable insights for policymakers and security sector reformers to clarify mandates, improve coordination, and strengthen collaborative violence prevention. Proposed responses are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Proposed reforms to improve role clarity in the management of electoral violence.

Proposed reform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Publicly signed performance charters for police	45	13
2. Community-police joint training simulations	132	38
3. Legislation defining specific roles for each actor	52	15
4. Independent oversight committees with community representatives	118	34
Total	348	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 4.7 shows that the most endorsed proposals for improving police-community relations were joint training simulations and independent oversight committees, cited by a combined 250 (72%) respondents. Supporting this finding, Hornberger (2011) observed that shared training in South Africa built essential interpersonal trust and familiarized both parties with each other's operational constraints before a crisis. In contrast, less frequently cited reforms, including legislation defining roles and publicly signed performance charters, were

proposed by 95 (28%) respondents. Collectively, these findings indicated that while institutional reforms matter, communities prioritize tangible, interactive processes that demonstrate genuine commitment to change.

4.3.2.6 Specific events where police-community role ambiguities worsened tensions during the 2019 elections

Respondents were asked to describe specific events from the 2019 Malawi tripartite elections in Lilongwe City, in which unclear roles between police and community escalated violence. This question sought to establish lived experiences, focusing on specific events from the 2019 elections, a period widely recognized for electoral tensions in Malawi, in which unclear roles between police and community escalated violence. These events provided empirical evidence of the consequences of unclear roles, reinforcing the need for clearly defined mandates and coordinated strategies in future elections. Descriptions of these incidents are presented in Figure 4.10.

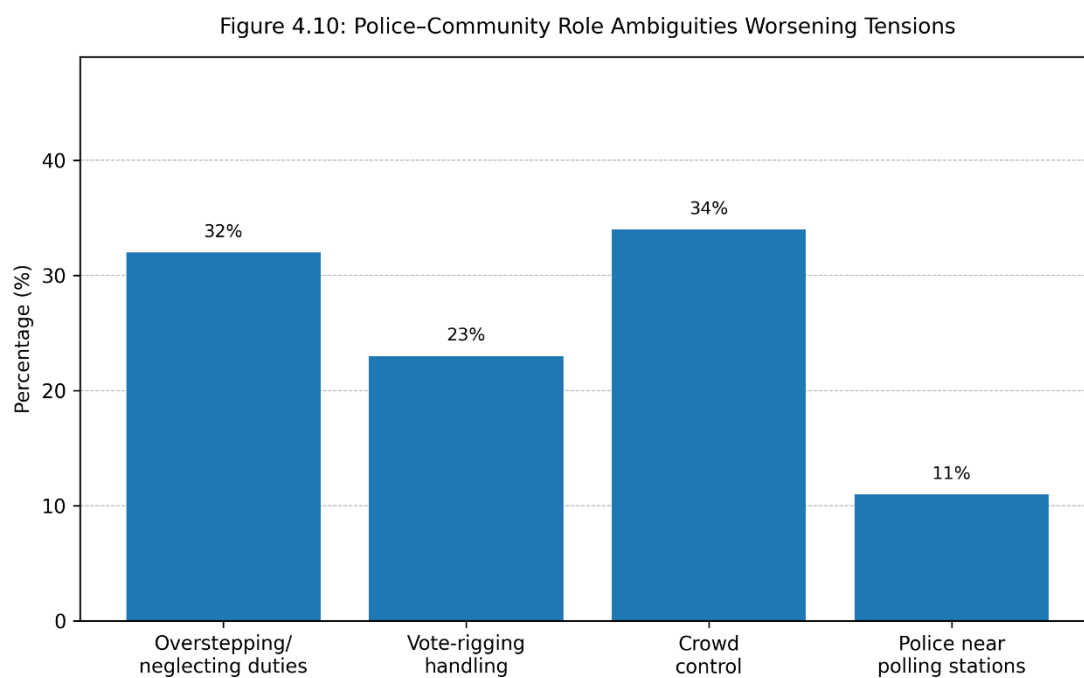


Figure 4.10: Incidents of police-community role ambiguities that worsened tensions

The findings indicated that crowd control issues were the most common source of role ambiguity, reported by 119 (34%) of the respondents. Police overstepping or neglecting their duties was cited by 111 (32%), while handling of alleged vote-rigging incidents was reported by 80 (23%). Police presence near polling stations was identified by 38 (11%) of the respondents. These findings suggest that unclear responsibilities and expectations

between police and community members contributed to misunderstandings and tensions during elections. The results highlight the importance of clearly defining roles and responsibilities in electoral security management.

Interview participants consistently reported that unclear role boundaries between police officers and community members contributed to tensions during the 2019 electoral demonstrations.

One community leader explained: "Many residents expected police to stop political violence immediately, while the police expected communities to provide information first. This misunderstanding created frustration on both sides."

A police officer similarly stated: "There were situations where community members expected us to intervene instantly, yet they were unwilling to cooperate by providing intelligence."

These findings suggest that role ambiguity reduced the effectiveness of collaborative violence prevention efforts.

Review of police records revealed that although community policing structures existed in most study areas, their operational responsibilities during election periods were not always clearly understood by residents. In several communities, researchers observed varying interpretations of the responsibilities of neighborhood committees and police officers regarding election-related disputes.

Document analysis of reports by the Malawi Human Rights Commission (2020) and the European Union Election Observation Mission (2021) indicated that misunderstandings regarding security responsibilities during demonstrations contributed to confrontations between protesters and security personnel. These findings corroborated both survey and interview results.

4.3.3 Presentation of results based on objective THREE

The findings presented in this section were obtained through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The demographic characteristics of respondents strengthened the credibility of these findings because both community members and institutional actors had direct experiences with electoral violence management.

Youth respondents provided perspectives as active participants in electoral activities, while clergy, police

officers, and civil society representatives offered professional insights regarding the effectiveness of existing police-community relations strategies.

4.3.3.1 Effectiveness of police-community relations strategies in the management of electoral violence management

Study respondents were asked to identify the most effective police-community strategy in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City. By asking respondents to identify the most effective strategy, the study captured grassroots perspectives on what worked in practice rather than merely in policy design. This allowed the study to highlight proven approaches warranting investment while identifying overused or ineffective strategies that consumed resources without yielding tangible outcomes. Figure 4.11 presents their responses.

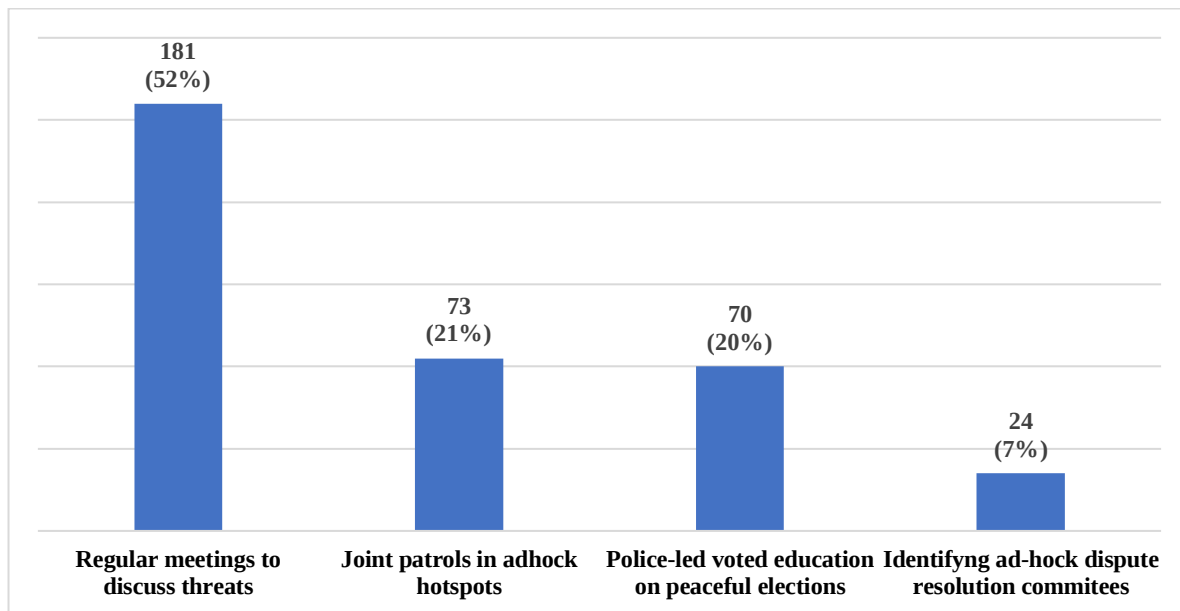


Figure 4.11: Effectiveness of police-community relations strategies

From Figure 4.11, the majority, 181 (52%) respondents, indicated regular meetings between police and community members as a strategy that has worked to discuss threats. The finding resonates with Bayley and Skolnick's (1986) seminal argument that institutionalized dialogue through meetings builds trust and enables proactive problem-solving, a principle applicable to managing electoral violence. Equally, a combined 143 (41%) respondents mentioned joint patrols in violence hotspots and police-led voter education on peaceful elections as effective strategies. Participant 7, a block leader from Ntandire Township within the city, attested to the transformative impact of joint patrols as follows:

The 2019 elections showed us the power of unity. When political youths torched market stalls to intimidate voters, our neighborhood watch joined police patrols and the arsonists vanished. Party thugs who once ruled these streets disappeared when they saw police working with us. That election season proved that when communities and security forces stand together, violence doesn't stand a chance (Source: Field data, 2025).

However, the 24 (7%) respondents who suggested ad hoc dispute resolution committees presented an interesting point of divergence. According to Hills and Francis (2013), ad hoc committees in the African context often proved more effective than formally established ones, which risk co-optation by political elites.

Interview participants overwhelmingly identified regular meetings and dialogue forums as the most effective strategy for preventing electoral violence.

A clergy representative stated: "When police officers meet community members before elections, tensions reduce because people understand what is expected of them."

A civil society representative added: "Dialogue creates trust and prevents misinformation from escalating into violence."

Researchers observed evidence of community policing forums and stakeholder engagement meetings in some study locations. Notice boards displaying community policing information were visible in selected areas, indicating ongoing efforts to strengthen police-community collaboration.

Analysis of electoral security reports produced by the Malawi Electoral Commission and the United Nations Development Program showed that stakeholder engagement meetings and community dialogues were repeatedly recommended as effective conflict-prevention mechanisms. These documentary findings reinforced the survey and interview results.

Although the findings largely support previous studies by Tankebe (2019), Skogan (2019), and Gill et al. (2014), the study contributes new knowledge by addressing the contextual gap identified in the literature. Previous studies were conducted largely in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Western countries, while empirical evidence from Malawi remained limited. The present study demonstrates that police-community relations

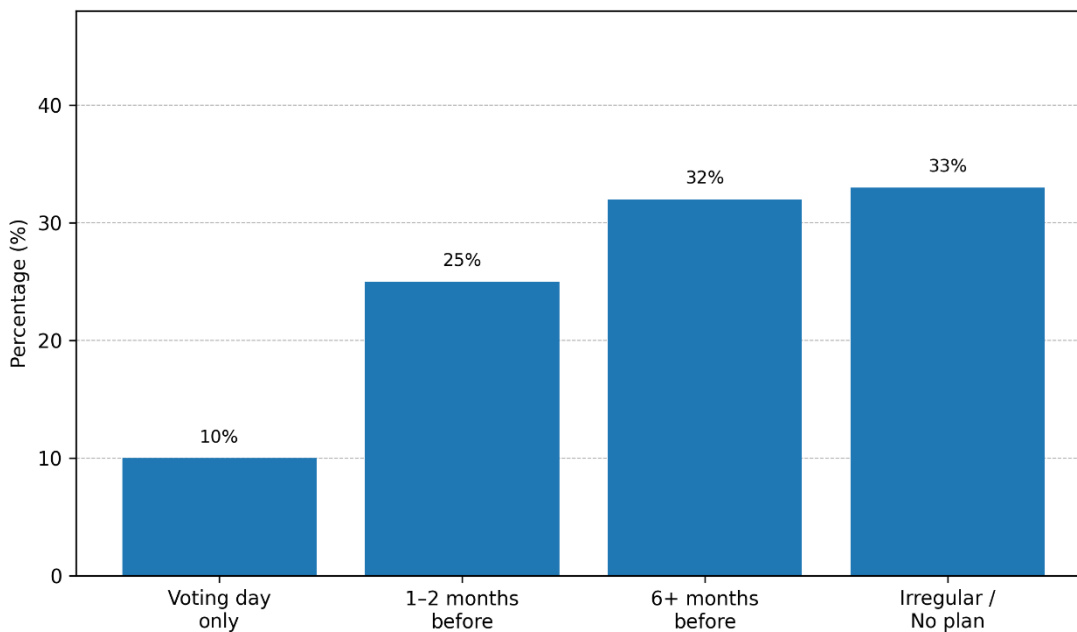
strategies are similarly effective within the Malawian context, while also revealing context-specific challenges such as political interference and perceptions of police partiality that uniquely shape electoral violence management in Lilongwe City.

The findings further support Community Policing Theory, which argues that collaborative partnerships between police and communities enhance public safety outcomes. The effectiveness of regular meetings, joint patrols, and voter education programmes demonstrates the importance of sustained interaction and shared responsibility in preventing electoral violence. Although the findings largely agree with studies by Tankebe (2019), Gill et al. (2014), and Skogan (2019), some divergence emerged regarding ad hoc dispute resolution committees. While Hills and Francis (2013) argued that informal committees may be more effective than institutionalized mechanisms because of their flexibility and community ownership, respondents in Lilongwe ranked such committees as the least effective strategy. This contradiction may be attributed to differences in political contexts, institutional trust, and implementation capacity.

4.3.3.2 Timing strategies in the management of electoral violence

Respondents were asked to comment on the timing of strategy implementation. Understanding timings allowed the study to assess whether interventions were proactive or reactive, which was critical for recommending when strategies should be deployed to maximize impact during electoral periods. Responses are detailed in Figure 4.12.

Figure 4.12: Strategy Implementation Timing

**Figure 4.12: Strategy implementation timing**

The findings revealed that 115 (33%) of the respondents reported that police-community relations strategies were implemented irregularly or without a clear plan. Another 111 (32%) indicated that strategies were implemented six or more months before elections, while 87 (25%) stated that implementation occurred one to two months before elections. Only 35 (10%) reported that strategies were implemented only on voting day. These findings suggest that although some preventive efforts were initiated well before elections, a significant proportion of respondents perceived strategy implementation as inconsistent. This may have reduced the effectiveness of police-community initiatives in preventing electoral violence.

Several respondents indicated that police-community engagement initiatives were often activated only during election periods instead of being maintained continuously.

One CSO participant remarked: "Most community engagement activities begin when elections are approaching. By then, mistrust has already developed."

Researchers observed that some community policing structures appeared inactive outside election periods, suggesting irregular implementation of collaborative strategies.

Review of election observation reports revealed concerns regarding inconsistent implementation of community policing programmes between electoral cycles, supporting respondents' perceptions.

4.3.3.3 Effectiveness of police-community strategies in the management of electoral violence

Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of community policing strategies for managing electoral violence in Lilongwe City. This question provided a direct, evaluative measure of how well existing strategies performed from the perspective of those most affected. The ratings are presented in Figure 4.13.

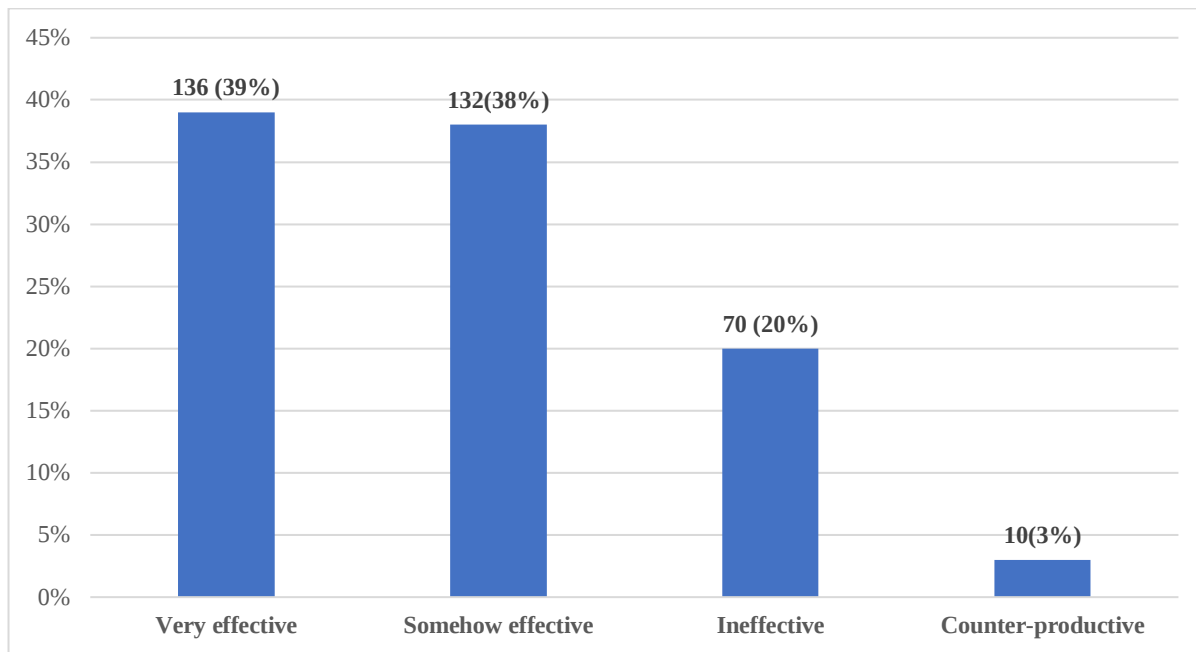


Figure 4.13: Respondents' rating of community policing strategies for electoral

Figure 4.13 shows majority, 268 (77%), of respondents considered police-community approaches very effective. This finding aligned with Mutahi (2021), who argued that sustained dialogue forums and collaborative security committees between police and communities help in de-escalating tensions by fostering shared ownership of the electoral process in Kenya's relatively peaceful 2017 election. This study further found that a minority, 80 (23%), of respondents considered community policing strategies ineffective. These findings are in line with those of studies conducted in Malawi by Mutupha and Zhu (2022) and Kayira (2025). Mutupha and Zhu (2022) identified multiple factors undermining police-community relations in Malawi's Central Region, including inadequate protection, poor treatment of citizens, corruption, and lack of confidentiality. Similarly, Kayira (2025) found that police- community relations structures in Lilongwe are weakened by human rights abuses, lack of feedback, and misconduct by both police officers and community members.

Most interviewees viewed police-community strategies as effective when implemented consistently.

A community member stated: "Where police regularly engage the community, violence is easier to prevent because information reaches the authorities quickly."

Review of police records revealed that areas with visible police-community interaction structures appeared to have higher levels of public engagement and cooperation.

Electoral security reports reviewed during the study indicated that collaborative policing approaches contributed significantly to reducing election-related tensions in several districts.

4.3.3.4 Collaborative approaches that outperformed police-only interventions in the management of electoral violence

Respondents were asked to provide examples of collaborative approaches that outperformed police-only interventions in managing electoral violence. This question sought to identify partnership-based strategies perceived by communities as more effective than unilateral police action. Figure 4.14 presents these interventions.

Figure 4.14: Effectiveness of Collaborative Approaches

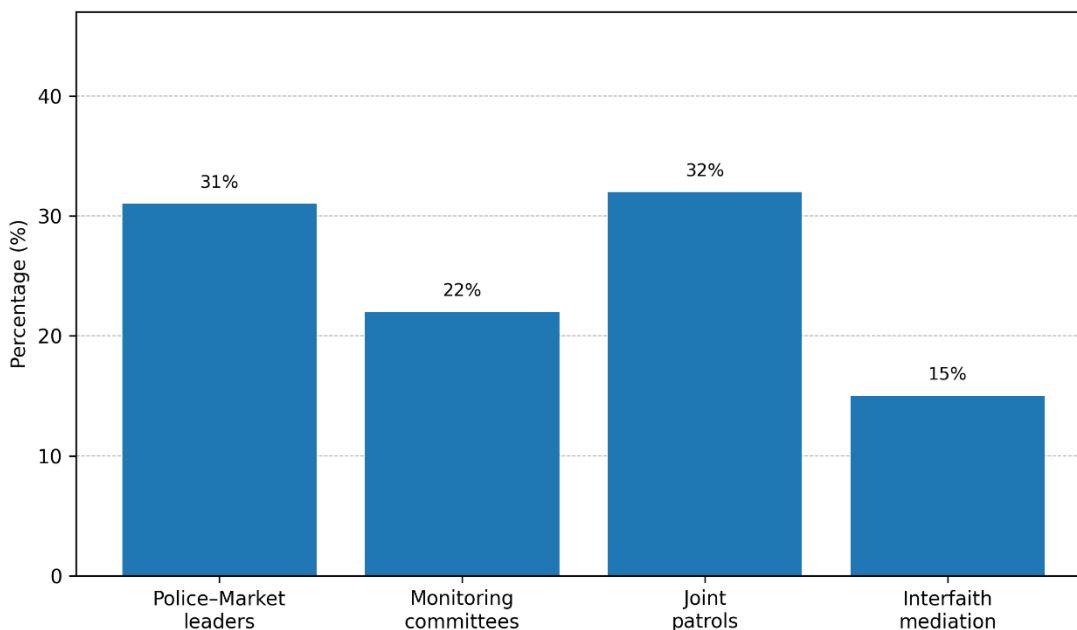


Figure 4.14: Collaborative approaches effectiveness

The findings showed that joint patrols were perceived as the most effective collaborative approach, as reported by 111 (32%) of the respondents. Police-market leaders committees were cited by 108 (31%), while joint monitoring committees were identified by 77 (22%). Interfaith mediation was reported by 52 (15%) of the

respondents. These findings suggest that practical and direct forms of collaboration between police and community stakeholders were viewed as more effective in managing electoral violence. The results further indicate that cooperative security initiatives can strengthen trust, improve communication, and enhance the management of election-related conflicts.

Participants identified joint patrols as one of the most successful collaborative interventions. A community leader noted: "Joint patrols make people feel protected because both the community and police are visibly involved."

Researchers observed instances where local leaders and police officers coordinated community security activities, particularly in areas previously affected by political demonstrations. Reports from the Malawi Police Service highlighted the contribution of joint patrols and community monitoring initiatives in enhancing electoral security preparedness.

4.3.2.6 Recommendations for enhancing police -community efforts in managing electoral violence

Respondents were asked to make recommendations on how community efforts in managing electoral violence in Lilongwe City can be enhanced. Table 4.8 shows recommendations.

Table 4.8 Recommendations for enhancing police-community efforts in managing electoral violence

Recommendation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Joint planning	181	52
Clear communication	73	21
Voter education campaign	70	20
Oversight committees	24	7
Total	348	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 4.8 shows that the top recommendation was regular pre-election joint planning sessions, favoured by a majority of 181 (52%) respondents. This finding was in line with the framework proposed by Isal (2022), who argued that the cyclical nature of electoral violence necessitates security planning integrated into the entire electoral calendar, not just the campaign period. A minority, 50 (13%) respondents, proposed the establishment of community oversight committees.

4.3.4 Presentation of results based on objective FOUR

This section presents findings on challenges affecting police-community relations in the management of electoral violence. The demographic composition of respondents enhanced the reliability of the findings because community members provided lived experiences while police officers, clergy, and civil society representatives contributed institutional perspectives on barriers affecting collaboration. Data from interviews, observations, and documentary sources were used to complement quantitative findings.

4.3.4.1 Level of agreement regarding the constraints affecting the Malawi Police Service's (MPS) ability to maintain positive police-community relations in the management of electoral violence

The study asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with selected constraints that hamper the MPS in managing electoral violence in Lilongwe City. By capturing these levels of agreement, the study identified the most widely recognized constraints hindering police effectiveness, thereby ensuring that reform efforts focus on the most pressing issues. Table 4.9 presents these varying levels of agreement.

Table 4.9: Constraints impeding MPS in the management of electoral violence

Constraint	Level of agreement	
	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Political interference	80	20
Resource constraints	63	37
Shortage of personnel	55	45
Capacity gaps	70	30

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 4.9 shows that the majority, 307 (80%), of respondents perceived political interference as the primary factor eroding trust between police and community during elections, suggesting that the police are viewed as politically biased rather than neutral arbiters. This finding was in tandem with by Mwakibolwa and Kweka's (2022) analysis of Tanzania's police under a dominant-party system, which found the force structurally embedded within the ruling party's apparatus, making neutrality during elections impossible. Similarly, Chirwa and Dulani (2021), using Afrobarometer data, empirically demonstrated that most Malawians perceive the police as partisan, a perception strongly linked to distrust and unwillingness to cooperate, particularly during electoral periods. Beyond political interference, institutional weaknesses such as capacity gaps,

resource constraints, and personnel shortages also emerged as significant concerns. Atuhaire (2025) demonstrated that in Uganda, acute resource shortages persist, with police seeking funding for recruitment ahead of the 2026 elections while warning that these deficits would compromise electoral security

Interview participants consistently identified political interference as the most serious challenge affecting police-community relations.

One civil society representative stated: "People lose trust when police are perceived as protecting political interests instead of enforcing the law equally."

A police officer acknowledged: "Political pressure sometimes affects operational decisions and creates negative perceptions among community members."

Researchers observed that discussions concerning police neutrality frequently emerged during interviews and community interactions, indicating the prominence of this issue.

Analysis of Afrobarometer (2023), Malawi Human Rights Commission (2020), and International Crisis Group (2020) reports revealed persistent public concerns regarding police impartiality during elections. These findings strongly supported survey responses.

4.3.4.1.1 Challenges hampering police-community relations in the management of electoral violence

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the given challenges and to mention additional challenges hampering police-community relations in managing electoral violence in Lilongwe city. This question was important because it captured specific relational barriers between police and communities, rather than focusing solely on internal police constraints. While the previous question addressed institutional factors such as resource shortages or political interference, this question examined how those factors translated into deteriorated relationships during elections. Table 4.10 presents the level of agreement for each challenge.

Table 4.10: Challenges hampering police-community relations in the management of electoral violence

Challenge	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
1. Political interference in police operations during elections	16	4	24	56
2. Inadequate funding	18	19	25	38
3. Insufficient police personnel	26	19	23	32
4. Lack of equipment	17	13	27	43
5. Lack necessary training and capacity to manage electoral violence	14	16	32	38

Source: Field Data (2026)

From Table 4.10, a majority, 307(80%), of respondents overwhelmingly acknowledged that political interference was the most intensely felt challenge undermining police operations during elections. These findings are in tandem with Chirwa and Chunga (2020), who found that in Malawi, political interference is structurally embedded in police operations, leaving key directives vulnerable to executive and partisan influence. Notably, insufficient personnel were most unpopular, with 211(55%) respondents acknowledging it was a challenge. These findings suggest that respondents perceived the quality and neutrality of policing as more important than the number of officers deployed (Opongo and Murithi, 2022).

The findings demonstrate conditions under which Procedural Justice Theory may fail to operate effectively. Political interference, perceptions of police bias, inadequate resources, and weak accountability mechanisms undermine perceptions of fairness and legitimacy, thereby reducing public willingness to cooperate with law enforcement agencies. While previous studies largely treated these challenges independently, the present study found that they are interconnected. Political interference contributed to perceptions of bias, which in turn weakened trust and reduced community cooperation. This finding provides a more integrated understanding of the factors affecting police-community relations during elections.

4.3.4.2 Structural deficiencies in the police system that erode public trust during the election period

The study examined structural deficiencies in the police system that erode public trust during election periods. Respondents were asked to identify systemic institutional failures that repeatedly undermine public trust in electoral contexts. This insight was critical for diagnosing specific structural flaws that could be targeted for institutional reforms. Figure 4.15 presents the specific structural deficiencies identified by respondents.

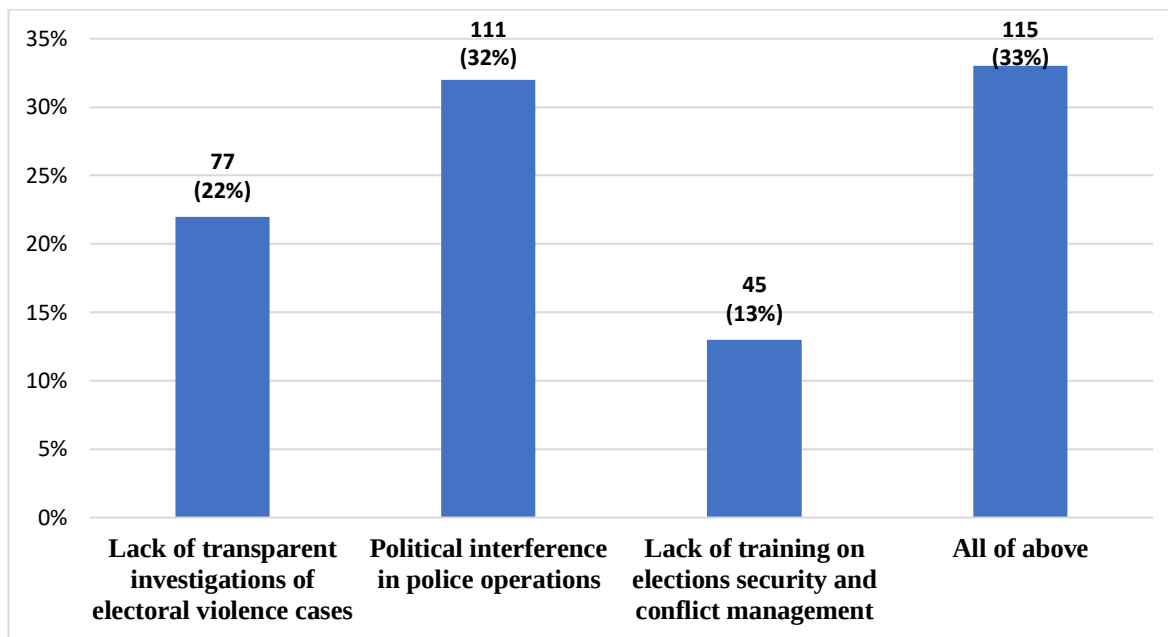


Figure 4.15: Police structural deficiencies damaging public trust during election periods

Figure 4.15 revealed that a majority of respondents identified multiple structural deficiencies eroding public trust during elections, with a majority of 115 (33%) respondents citing systemic failure, political interference, lack of transparent investigations, and insufficient training. These findings revealed that public distrust was rooted in a perception of comprehensive institutional dysfunction rather than isolated shortcomings. These findings were validated by Mbaegwu (2025), whose analysis of Nigerian policing suggested that systemic issues such as corruption and weak institutional mechanisms were major enablers of electoral violence. The minority, 45 (13%) respondents who cited insufficient training, agreed with Olorunnisola's (2025) finding that deficiencies in Nigerian policing were directly linked to electoral violence, and that lack of operational capacity was among the causes responsible for the police's inability to guarantee voter safety.

Interviewees highlighted weak accountability mechanisms and inadequate resources as major structural deficiencies.

A community respondent explained: "People report incidents, but they rarely receive feedback about investigations."

Researchers observed logistical limitations in some police facilities, including shortages of equipment and operational resources.

Documentary evidence from electoral security reports consistently identified resource shortages and institutional weaknesses as barriers to effective election security management.

4.3.4.3 Community perceptions that hinder collaborative violence prevention efforts

Respondents were asked to mention community perceptions that hinder collaborative electoral violence prevention efforts. This question was necessary because community perceptions towards police shape their willingness to help prevent violence. Identifying these perceptions helped the study recommend ways to build trust rather than simply urging communities to cooperate. Figure 4.16 presents these perceptions.

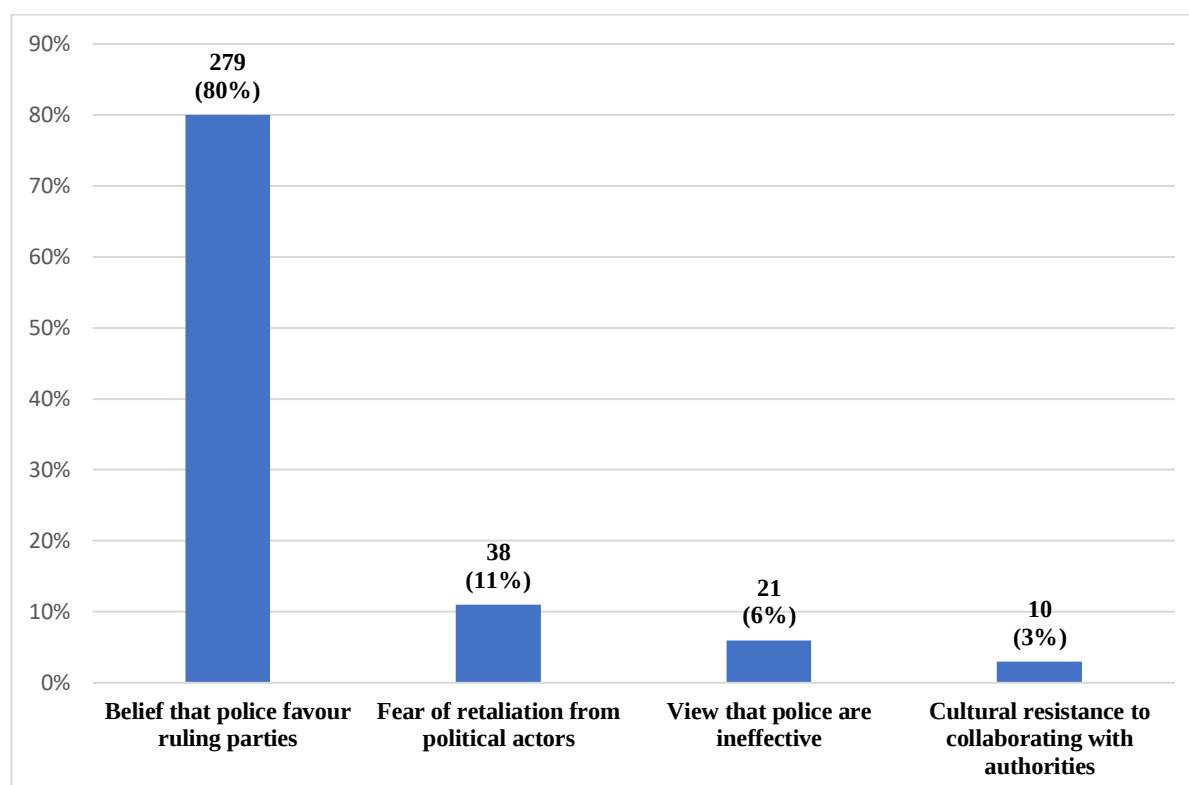


Figure 4.16: *Community perception hindering collaborative violent prevention efforts.*

According to Figure 4.16, a substantial majority of 279 (80%) respondents believed that police disproportionately favoured ruling parties, a perception that presented a major barrier to cooperation. This finding signaled that law enforcement served partisan interests rather than public safety; consequently, communities withdrew from the cooperative relationships necessary for effective violence prevention. Chisamba (2025) documented how perceived partisan policing, where opposition supporters faced arrests while ruling party loyalists enjoyed immunity, gradually eroded public confidence and delegitimized the police as a neutral institution in Malawi. The study also found that a minority of 10 (3%) respondents perceived cultural resistance to collaborating with authorities, which hindered community participation in preventing electoral violence. Though numerically minor, this concern revealed a deep-seated barrier rooted in historical community relations rather than immediate political or operational failures. This small percentage likely represented community members whose disengagement was embedded in cultural identity, making them particularly resistant to conventional reform efforts. As noted by Goldsmith (2005), policing in many societies must contend with ‘cultural fissures’ where historical patterns of distrust have become embedded in community identity, and even a minority expressing cultural resistance signaled that reform must address deep-seated historical grievances, not merely procedural shortcomings.

Most participants believed that perceptions of police bias discouraged community cooperation.

A youth respondent stated: "Many young people do not report election-related violence because they think police favour certain politicians."

Researchers observed considerable skepticism among community members regarding police neutrality during discussions on electoral security.

Reports reviewed during the study repeatedly cited concerns regarding public trust and perceptions of partisan policing.

4.3.4.4 Barriers preventing effective collaboration between the police and Lilongwe residents in curbing election-related violence.

The study solicited respondents' perspectives on the primary barriers to effective police-community collaboration in curbing election-related violence in Lilongwe city. By identifying the primary barriers, the study pinpointed the most critical obstacles to genuine collaboration, ensuring recommendations targeted root causes rather than merely calling for more cooperation. Table 4.11 presents these barriers.

Table 4.11: *Barriers preventing effective collaboration*

Barrier	Percentage	
	Frequency	(%)
Selective enforcement of laws	132	38
Absence of formal, sustained platforms for police-community dialogue.	101	29
Insufficient personnel, outdated equipment, and lack of specialized training	73	21
Mismatch between formal policing approaches and local conflict-resolution traditions.	42	12
Total	348	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 4.12 illustrates that the highest concern, cited by the majority, 132 (38%) respondents, was selective enforcement of laws targeting opposition supporters while ignoring ruling-party affiliates. Muedini (2021) confirms that police are often used as political weapons during elections. This majority perspective revealed that communities perceive police as politically compromised rather than neutral, fundamentally undermining institutional legitimacy and public trust. In contrast, the lowest concern, cited by the minority, 42 (12%) respondents, identified a mismatch between formal policing approaches and local conflict-resolution traditions. Though numerically minor, this finding was significant as it exposed a cultural disconnect that conventional reforms often overlook, suggesting that even well-intentioned interventions may fail if they do not align with community norms.

Participants indicated that selective enforcement of laws was a major obstacle to collaboration. One clergy member remarked: "Communities cooperate when they believe laws are applied equally to everyone."

A review of police records showed that trust levels were generally lower in communities that reported previous experiences of unequal treatment by law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, election observation reports similarly identified perceptions of unequal law enforcement as a recurring challenge affecting public confidence in security institutions.

4.3.4.6 Recommendations on strengthening police-community relations to prevent and respond to election violence

Respondents were asked to make recommendations for strengthening the police-community relationship to better prevent and respond to election violence. This question was important because it shifted the study from identifying problems to developing solutions grounded in local experiences. These recommendations offered actionable guidance for strengthening collaboration and preventing electoral violence. Figure 4.17 presents these recommendations.

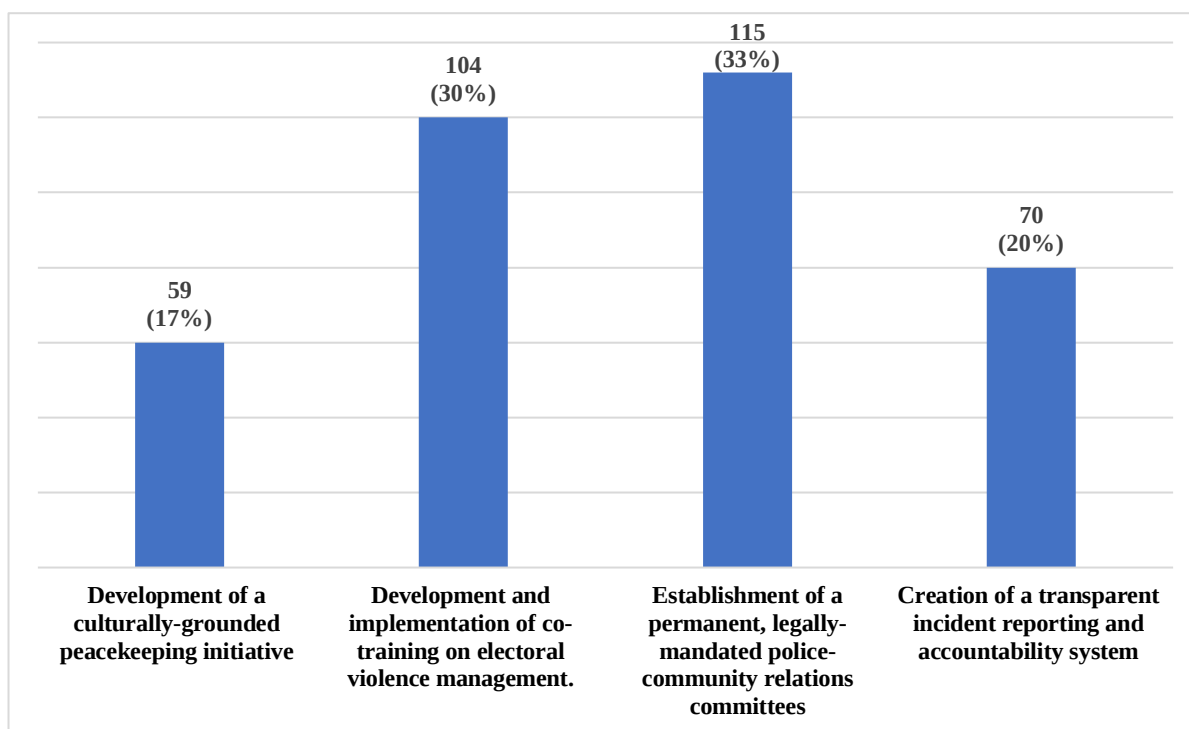


Figure 4.17: Respondents' recommendations

Figure 4.17 shows that respondents proposed several key recommendations. The highest-supported measure, cited by 115 (33%) respondents, was establishing permanent, legally mandated police-community relations committees to provide a structural foundation for violence prevention. The majority recognized that collaboration requires a permanent structure, not just occasional meetings. Odhiambo and Kanyinga (2021) found that legally established county peace committees in Kenya successfully prevented electoral violence when given proper resources and legal backing. Similarly, Chirwa and Ntaba (2022) recommended this model for Malawi, arguing that District Peace and Security Committees need legal force to be effective.

The second-highest recommendation, cited by 104 (30%) respondents, called for developing and implementing joint training programs on electoral violence management. Mkutu and Sabala (2020) found that co-training exercises in Kenya reduced the "us versus them" mindset between police and communities. The official training manual co-developed by the Malawi Electoral Commission and UNDP (2021) approved that the shared understanding built through training was critical for preventing electoral violence.

Participant 12, a senior officer from the MPS, recommended that the MPS demonstrate its commitment to impartial justice by arresting and prosecuting all perpetrators of political violence. She had this to say: The MPS must show its commitment to impartial justice by arresting and prosecuting all perpetrators of political violence, no matter their political connections or party affiliation. The police must also be willing to hold their own members accountable for failing to uphold professional standards, as this is vital for rebuilding public trust. This will strengthen police-community relations, which in turn will assist in both preventing and responding to election-related violence (Source: Field data, 2025).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents discussions, summary, conclusions, and recommendations. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of police-community relations on the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. To achieve this aim, the study assessed the state of police-community relations, analyzed distinct roles of police and community members in managing electoral violence, evaluated effectiveness of existing collaborative strategies, and examined challenges that hamper police-community relations during electoral periods.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study not only confirmed several observations reported in previous literature but also addressed the methodological, conceptual, and contextual gaps identified in Chapter Two. Methodologically, the integration of questionnaires, interviews, observations, and document analysis provided triangulated evidence beyond the single-method approaches commonly used in previous studies. Conceptually, the study examined trust, legitimacy, accountability, communication, participation, and collaboration simultaneously rather than focusing on isolated dimensions of police-community relations. Contextually, the study generated

empirical evidence from Lilongwe City, Malawi, thereby addressing the limited availability of local evidence on police-community relations and electoral violence management. Consequently, the study contributes original context-specific knowledge to the growing literature on electoral violence management in Malawi.

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 Research Question One: The nature of police-community relations in the management of electoral violence

The research question sought to examine the nature of police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. The study found that police-community relations in Lilongwe City were fragile. Day-to-day cooperation through patrols and interactions gave an appearance of positive relations, but beneath this surface lay little genuine trust. According to the study findings, a notable minority rated the relationship as poor, and some described it as openly hostile. During elections, most respondents described the relationship as generally cooperative despite some tension. The most damaging factors undermining police legitimacy were police failure to prevent or investigate violence, use of excessive force, and biased enforcement of laws. This discussion synthesizes these findings with three studies to contextualize the results and highlight contributions to understanding police-community relations dynamics in electoral contexts.

The finding that police-community relations in Lilongwe City were fragile is in line with the work of Kayira (2025). Specifically, the majority of respondents, 109 (60%) indicated that daily cooperation reflected surface-level engagement rather than deep trust. Conducted in the same geographic context, Kayira's (2025) qualitative study examined community policing as a form of co-producing public safety in Lilongwe District. Further, he established that while regular contact through joint patrols and community forums created an appearance of functional relations, these structures concealed persistent dissatisfaction with police neglect and inconsistent service (Kayira, 2025). This finding directly mirrors the present study's observation of surface-level cooperation. However, Kayira focused on routine policing rather than electoral periods. The present study extended this work by demonstrating that the fragility Kayira (2025) documented became acutely dangerous during elections, when communities required police to serve as neutral arbiters. Furthermore, while Kayira (2025) identified routine service challenges, the present study revealed that perceived political bias, a factor

his study did not examine, was the critical mechanism through which dissatisfaction transformed into a legitimacy crisis during politically charged moments.

However, the findings contradicted the more optimistic conclusions of Tankebe (2019), who reported that sustained police-community engagement generally resulted in high levels of trust and cooperation during elections in Ghana. In contrast, the present study found that routine engagement did not necessarily translate into genuine trust in Lilongwe City. While engagement structures existed, underlying perceptions of political bias continued to undermine confidence in police neutrality.

The finding of moderate acceptance rather than deep trust also aligned with the national study by Mpesi and Dulani (2022). Their study analyzed Afrobarometer survey data from 1,200 respondents to measure public trust in the Malawi Police Service nationally. They found that only 38% of Malawians trusted the police due to widespread perceptions of corruption, unprofessionalism, and disrespect for citizens' rights (Mpesi & Dulani, 2022). The relevance of this national snapshot to the present study was that it validated the localized findings of fragility in Lilongwe City as part of a broader systemic issue. Additionally, while Mpesi and Dulani (2022) quantified scale of distrust nationally, the present study added qualitative depth by revealing the conditional nature of that distrust. It demonstrated that even when residents rated their relationship positively on the surface, those ratings often hid underlying distrust that became exposed during elections, a distinction quantitative surveys alone could not capture.

The finding that police inaction during politically charged incidents damaged trust aligned with documentation by the Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC). In its preliminary report on the July 2019 nationwide demonstrations, the MHRC (2019) investigated human rights violations during the post-election period, noting concerns regarding the conduct of security forces, including failure to adequately protect protesters (MHRC, 2019). The present study's findings were directly relevant to this report as they added an important layer of community interpretation. While the MHRC (2019) documented the events from an institutional perspective, this study revealed how residents interpreted those events. It found that when police failed to act during politically charged incidents, communities did not perceive this as restraint but as evidence that police

were taking sides. This finding highlighted that trust was damaged not only by what police did wrong, but also by what they failed to do when duty required them to act.

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that police-community relations in Lilongwe City existed in a state of fragile coexistence rather than genuine partnership. Integrating this study's findings with existing literature revealed that this fragility, evident in routine interactions documented by Kayira (2025) and quantified nationally by Mpesi and Dulani (2022), became dangerously exposed during electoral periods. The MHRC (2019) documented the events that tested these relations, while the present study revealed how communities interpreted those events through perceived political bias.

The researcher concurs with the finding that police-community relations in Lilongwe remain characterized by fragile coexistence rather than genuine partnership. This fragility, evident in routine interactions documented by Kayira (2025) and national patterns quantified by Mpesi and Dulani (2022), becomes critically exposed during electoral periods. The researcher is convinced that as long as communities believe police take sides during elections, no amount of routine patrols or formal structures can cultivate the deep trust necessary for peaceful elections. Thus, without confronting perceived political partiality, police-community relations in Lilongwe will remain fragile and prone to collapse each election cycle.

Theoretically, from a functionalist perspective (Durkheim, 1893/1997), the day-to-day patrols and community interactions observed in Lilongwe City served a latent function of maintaining surface-level social order and preventing overt daily conflict, which explained why 60% of respondents described routine cooperation as functional. However, functionalism alone could not account for why this apparent order collapsed during elections. Procedural Justice Theory (Tyler, 1990) filled this gap by emphasizing that police legitimacy depended on perceived neutrality, voice, respect, and trustworthiness. The study's finding that police failure to prevent violence, use of excessive force, and biased enforcement were the most damaging factors directly confirmed that violations of procedural justice, particularly the perceived lack of political neutrality, destroyed legitimacy. The fragile coexistence documented in this study therefore represented a system that was functionally stable in routine times but procedurally lacking during electoral periods. This integration showed that surface-level cooperation persisted because it served functional needs for daily order, but genuine trust

failed to develop because communities repeatedly experienced procedural injustice, especially perceived political bias, which became dangerously exposed when elections demanded police neutrality.

5.3.2 Research Question Two: The distinct police and community roles in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi.

The study analyzed the distinct roles of police and community in managing electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. The findings revealed that an overwhelming majority, 213 (61%) of respondents rejected the idea that either party should bear sole responsibility. Instead, they advocated for a structured partnership with clearly divided roles. Communities viewed their primary function as reporting threats through official channels and resolving local conflicts through traditional leaders, while expecting police to serve as impartial enforcers. However, the findings also exposed significant role ambiguities that worsened tensions during elections. A majority, 119 (34%) of respondents cited misunderstandings over crowd dispersal as a key trigger of conflict, and recounted specific incidents where police inaction during attacks on protesters or selective enforcement against opposition supporters created confusion over who was responsible for maintaining peace.

The findings that respondents rejected purely police-led or community-led approaches and instead advocated for structured partnership aligned with the work of Baker (2022). In his study titled "Hybrid Governance and Security in Africa," Baker examined how security was delivered across the continent through combinations of state and non-state actors. Drawing on case studies from Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Mozambique, he found that hybrid security models were widespread and often preferred by citizens who distrusted state institutions but also recognized the limitations of community-based justice (Baker, 2022). This finding directly related to the present study, where respondents in Lilongwe City rejected unilateral approaches and endorsed partnership models. However, Baker (2022) provided a broad continental overview without examining how hybrid arrangements functioned during electoral periods. The present study addressed these gaps by focusing specifically on Lilongwe during elections, revealing that while citizens preferred partnership models, their willingness to cooperate was undermined by perceptions of police political bias.

The findings also differed from Fischer's (2002), who suggested that communities often function as neutral actors in conflict prevention. In the present study, respondents indicated that political polarization sometimes

influenced community participation, thereby limiting the neutrality of some community actors during electoral periods.

Further, the finding that communities viewed their primary function as reporting threats through official channels was in line with the work of Issifu (2015). In his study "Community Policing and Electoral Violence Prevention in Ghana," he examined how community-based approaches contributed to mitigating electoral violence. Drawing on case studies from Ghana's electoral cycles, he found that active community reporting to police was vital for early intervention and prevention of electoral violence (Issifu, 2015). This finding directly aligned with the present study's discovery that respondents believed the community's primary function was reporting threats through established channels. While Issifu (2025) documented what communities should do, the present study revealed why they sometimes did not do it. Perceived police partiality undermined their willingness to share information with authorities they viewed as partisan actors. The convergence of findings across Ghana and Malawi suggested that effective community reporting depended on communities believing their information would be acted upon fairly.

Furthermore, the finding that selective enforcement by police escalated violence corroborated the work of Kagoro (2012). In his article "The Political Economy of Electoral Violence in Africa," Kagoro examined structural factors fueling electoral conflict across the continent. Drawing on case studies from multiple African countries, he found that politically biased policing was a primary catalyst for electoral violence, arguing that when police forces favored ruling party interests and enforced laws selectively, they became instruments of political repression rather than neutral arbiters (Kagoro, 2012). The present study's identification of selective enforcement as the primary police action escalating violence supported Kagoro's (2012) framework. Qualitative evidence, including accounts of police standing by as attackers targeted protesters, illustrated how selective enforcement manifested in Lilongwe and escalated violence during elections. While Kagoro established a theoretical link between biased policing and electoral violence at a continental level, the present study demonstrated how those dynamics played out locally, revealing that communities interpreted selective enforcement as deliberate partisanship rather than institutional failure.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that respondents in Lilongwe City overwhelmingly prefer structured partnerships with clearly divided responsibilities over unilateral approaches. Integrating these findings with existing literature reveals that while hybrid security models are widely preferred across African contexts (Baker, 2022), and community reporting is recognized as vital for prevention (Issifu, 2015), these arrangements cannot function effectively when selective enforcement and political bias have eroded trust (Kagoro, 2012). The present study extends these previous findings by demonstrating that in the context of electoral violence management, even the well-designed partnership structures are weakened when communities perceive police as partisan actors rather than neutral arbiters.

The researcher agrees with the finding that structured partnerships with clearly divided responsibilities are more effective in managing electoral violence than unilateral approaches. As observed by Baker (2022), hybrid security models are widely preferred across African contexts due to their effectiveness. Furthermore, the researcher concurs with Kagoro (2012) that such structured partnerships cannot function effectively when selective enforcement and political bias erode trust. Accordingly, the researcher affirms that even the most well-designed partnership structures are undermined when communities perceive the police as partisan actors rather than neutral arbiters.

Theoretically, these findings supported both Functionalism and Procedural Justice Theory. Functionalism explained why respondents (61%) preferred structured partnerships with clearly divided roles: communities reported threats while police enforced impartially, each serving a distinct function for social order. However, Procedural Justice Theory explained why these functional arrangements failed. The finding that selective enforcement and police inaction (cited by 34% of respondents as triggers of conflict) created role confusion was not merely a structural problem but legitimacy problem. Communities withdrew cooperation not because roles were unclear, but because police were perceived as biased. Thus, the study demonstrated that functional role differentiation required neutrality, fairness (procedural justice) to remain effective during elections. Without perceived neutrality, even the clearest division of roles collapsed into mistrust and escalation.

5.3.3 Research Question Three: Effectiveness of police-community relations strategies in the management of electoral violence

Effectiveness of police-community strategies in electoral violence management refers to the capacity of collaborative interventions to prevent violence, build trust, and ensure public safety during politically sensitive periods (Denney & Jenkins, 2013). The study found that strategies such as joint patrols and regular meetings between police and local leaders were effective when used at the right time, as cited by a majority, 181 (52%) of respondents. However, a significant number of respondents noted that these strategies became ineffective when applied irregularly or without proper planning. A small minority stated that community policing as a strategy made things worse when initiated too late or co-opted by politicians.

The finding that respondents rated joint efforts as effective when implemented consistently aligned with the work of Denney and Jenkins (2013). In their report *Securing Communities: The What and the How of Community Policing*, they examined community-oriented policing initiatives across Nepal, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. They found that such strategies fostered dialogue, addressed local concerns before escalation, prevented violence, and promoted transparency and accountability. The present study was consistent with their conclusions. However, while Denney and Jenkins (2013) documented successful implementation across three countries, the present study found that effectiveness in Lilongwe City was conditional on timing and consistency. Where strategies such as regular meetings and joint patrols were applied throughout the election period, they worked effectively; but where they were left to the last minute or implemented only on voting day, they failed. The present study thus extended their framework by demonstrating that even well-designed strategies could fail if applied irregularly or without proper planning.

The findings partially contradicted studies that portrayed community policing strategies as uniformly successful. While previous studies reported positive outcomes, respondents in Lilongwe indicated that such strategies occasionally became ineffective when implemented irregularly or influenced by political interests. The findings therefore demonstrate that effectiveness is context-dependent rather than automatic.

The finding that strong community policing as a police-community relations strategy reduced violence, while poor implementation made things worse, corroborated the work of Claes and von Borzyskowski (2018). In

their field study, ‘*What Works in Preventing Election Violence: Evidence from Liberia and Kenya*,’ conducted during the 2017 general elections in both countries, found that strong community-oriented policing helped reduce election violence, while weak or poorly implemented strategies often exacerbated it. In Liberia, community policing built public trust and lowered tensions during elections. In Kenya, although both police and communities were initially well prepared, violence later broke out when police responded harshly to demonstrations, undoing earlier progress (Claes & von Borzyskowski, 2018). The positive examples from Lilongwe, where joint patrols and regular meetings helped prevent violence during the 2019 elections, supported their conclusion that strong community policing reduced electoral violence. The Kenyan case, where violence erupted despite good preparation, echoed concerns raised in Lilongwe about police using excessive force during protests. This suggested that even when police-community relations strategies worked initially, underlying tensions could resurface and trust remained fragile. The present study therefore showed that effectiveness depended not only on having the right strategies, but also on implementing them consistently throughout the election period and addressing deeper issues such as excessive use of force.

The finding that inclusive community involvement as a police-community relations strategy was essential for effectiveness, but that strategies could backfire when co-opted by politicians, resonated with the work of Ndono, Muthama, and Muigua (2019). In their study titled *Effectiveness of the Nyumba Kumi Community Policing Initiative in Kenya*, they examined the Nyumba Kumi initiative in Kayole area, Nairobi County. Their objective was to assess how effective this police-community relations strategy, which involved clustering households to work with security organs, was in promoting human security and preventing violence. They found that the effectiveness of the initiative hinged on all-inclusive community involvement, which was a key success factor. Their findings emphasized that inclusivity and broad community participation were essential for building trust and ensuring program success.

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objective was to assess how effective this police-community relations strategy, which involved clustering households to work with security organs, was in promoting human security and preventing violence. They found that the effectiveness of the initiative hinged on all-inclusive community involvement, which was a key success factor.

Their findings emphasized that inclusivity and broad community participation were essential for building trust and ensuring program success. The findings of the present study agreed with Ndonso, Muthama, and Muigua's (2019) their emphasis on inclusive involvement, but they also revealed a vulnerability that their work did not fully explore. A minority of respondents in the present study viewed inclusive policing as counterproductive when co-opted by politicians. This finding extended Ndonso, Muthama, and Muigua's (2019) framework by identifying specific conditions under which an inclusive strategy could backfire. It demonstrated that even well-designed programs failed if captured by partisan interests or implemented irregularly. The present study thus contributed an important qualification that inclusivity, while necessary, was not sufficient without insulation from political interference and consistent implementation throughout the electoral period.

These findings have demonstrated that police-community relations strategies are effective in managing electoral violence, but their success depends on the timing of implementation and whether community members perceive the police as neutral. When these strategies are applied irregularly or late (Claes & von Borzyskowski, 2018), or co-opted by politicians (Ndonso, Muthama, & Muigua, 2019), they become ineffective or even counterproductive. These findings therefore mean that the effectiveness of police-community relations lies not in the strategies themselves, but in how, when, and with what consistency they are implemented.

The researcher agrees with the present study's finding that police-community relations strategies can be effective in managing electoral violence, but only when implemented consistently, timely, and free from political interference. While supporting Denney and Jenkins (2013) on the value of collaborative strategies, the researcher extends Ndonso, Muthama, and Muigua (2019) by showing that inclusivity alone is insufficient; poor timing, irregular application, or political co-optation can render these strategies ineffective or even

counterproductive, as also reflected in Claes and von Borzyskowski (2018). Thus, the researcher asserts that effectiveness lies not in the strategies themselves, but in how, when, and with what neutrality they are executed.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings demonstrated that the effectiveness of police-community relations strategies depended on both functional consistency and procedural fairness. Functionalism explained why 181 (52%) of respondents rated joint patrols and regular meetings as effective when applied at the right time, these strategies served the manifest function of preventing violence and maintaining order during politically sensitive periods. However, Functionalism alone could not explain why the same strategies became ineffective or counterproductive when applied irregularly, late, or co-opted by politicians. Procedural Justice Theory provided that explanation: communities evaluated strategies not only by their presence but by the fairness of their implementation. When strategies were initiated too late or used inconsistently, communities perceived disrespect and untrustworthiness. When police were co-opted by politicians, communities perceived a direct violation of neutrality. The study therefore showed that functional strategies (joint patrols, meetings) required procedural justice (timely, consistent, neutral implementation) to achieve effectiveness. Without procedural fairness, even well-designed strategies backfired, eroded trust, or escalated violence rather than preventing it.

5.3.4 Research Question Four: Challenges hampering police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi

When respondents in Lilongwe City were asked what challenges undermine police-community relations during elections, political interference emerged as the most significant concern. The majority believed police favoured ruling parties, and that such selective policing discouraged collaboration and eroded trust. Other challenges such as resource shortages were viewed as secondary. Evidence from the 2019 protests, during which officers watched as demonstrators were attacked and failed to arrest known perpetrators, demonstrated that political interference was not merely a perception but a reality that enabled electoral violence. This underscored that, unless the crisis of public confidence was addressed, no amount of funding or personnel would resolve the underlying problem.

In the study, '*The Impact of Political Pressure on Police Morale and Electoral Security in Ghana*,' Acheampong (2016) examined how political pressure affected police officers stationed in areas marked by high election-related tensions. The central aim of his research was to explore how political interference shaped police performance and morale during electoral periods in Ghana. Drawing on interviews with officers serving in volatile regions, he found that those who experienced demands from politicians to prioritize partisan interests over professional standards suffered from decreased morale, which in turn undermined their performance and willingness to act impartially (Acheampong, 2016).

The present study's finding that an overwhelming majority of respondents identified political interference as the primary constraint on police-community relations in Lilongwe City aligned with Acheampong's (2016) conclusions. Both studies revealed that political interference was a fundamental barrier to effective policing during elections. However, while Acheampong (2016) centered his analysis on officers' experiences and internal institutional damage, the present study extended this work by examining how political interference shaped community perceptions and trust. Together, these studies demonstrated that political interference damaged policing from both inside and outside the institution.

Unlike studies that identified resource constraints as the primary obstacle to effective policing, the present study found that political interference and perceptions of police bias were more significant challenges than logistical limitations. This finding suggests that institutional legitimacy may be more important than material resources in electoral violence management.

The finding that police bias and selective enforcement were major barriers to collaboration resonated with the 2011 Human Rights Watch report, *Turning Pebbles: Evading Accountability for Post-Election Violence in Kenya*. The report examined police and judicial responses to violence following Kenya's 2007 elections, documenting that officers who abused their power during protests enjoyed impunity, and that police used excessive force against opposition supporters while refusing to investigate their own colleagues (HRW, 2011). The alignment with the present study was striking: in both Kenya and Lilongwe, police bias and selective enforcement against opposition supporters generated cycles of mistrust and retaliation that fueled electoral violence. However, the scale of violence in Kenya was far greater, resulting in over 1,133 deaths and the

displacement of 350,000 people (HRW, 2011). The present study therefore served as an early warning, demonstrating that the same dynamics of police bias and impunity that had contributed to Kenya's devastating post-election violence were already emerging in Malawi.

In a related study, *'Policing and the Challenge of Election Security in Nigeria,'* Mbaegwu (2025) examined the relationship between policing and electoral security, focusing on the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies during elections. Drawing on case studies from Nigeria's 2019 and 2023 general elections, he identified systemic issues such as corruption and weak institutional mechanisms as major enablers of electoral violence, arguing that without addressing these fundamental failures, efforts to secure elections would remain ineffective (Mbaegwu, 2025). Findings from the present study, specifically that systemic failures such as lack of transparent investigations and weak accountability mechanisms erode public trust, support Mbaegwu's (2025) analysis. Both studies converge on the conclusion that electoral violence stems from deeper institutional dysfunction rather than isolated incidents. The present study suggests that underlying institutional weaknesses must be addressed before surface-level interventions can restore trust or prevent electoral violence. Relatedly, Mbaegwu (2025) proposed constitutional changes granting police autonomy in Nigeria as a prerequisite for restoring trust.

Across multiple African contexts—including Ghana (Acheampong, 2016), Kenya (HRW, 2011), and Nigeria (Mbaegwu, 2025)—the present study's findings converge on a central conclusion: political interference is the most significant challenge undermining police-community relations during elections. The preferred solution identified by respondents' permanently mandated police-community relations committees aligns with Kenyan evidence showing that institutionalized structures are more effective than ad hoc initiatives (Odhiambo & Kanyinga, 2021).

The researcher fully agrees with the present study's findings and affirms that political interference is the most significant challenge undermining police-community relations during elections, as demonstrated across Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria. He concurs that challenges such as resource shortages are secondary to the deeper problem of police partiality and selective enforcement, which erodes public trust and fuels electoral violence.

The study proposes that unless the problem of public confidence in their police is addressed, no amount of funding, personnel, or surface-level reforms will resolve the underlying problem of electoral violence.

In conclusion, across multiple African contexts, this study and the literature converged on a central finding: political interference was the most significant challenge undermining police-community relations during elections. In Lilongwe City, respondents identified political bias and selective enforcement as primary barriers to collaboration, a finding that aligned with evidence from Ghana (Acheampong, 2016), Kenya (HRW, 2011), and Nigeria (Mbaegwu, 2025). Together, these studies demonstrated that political interference damaged policing from within by demoralizing officers and from without by eroding public trust. The preferred solution identified by respondents, permanently mandated police-community relations committees, aligned with Kenyan evidence that institutionalized structures were more effective than ad hoc initiatives (Odhiambo & Kanyinga, 2021). The study concluded that unless the crisis of public confidence was addressed, no amount of funding, personnel, or surface-level reforms would resolve the underlying problem of police partiality during elections.

Theoretically, the finding that political interference was the most significant challenge undermining police-community relations could best be explained by Procedural Justice Theory rather than Functionalism. Functionalism would predict that resource constraints would be the primary challenge because material capacity is necessary for institutions to perform their manifest functions. However, the study found that political interference and perceived police bias surpassed resource constraints as barriers to collaboration. Procedural Justice Theory explains this finding that when communities perceive that police have favoured ruling parties and enforced laws selectively, the core procedural justice pillar of neutrality is violated. Without perceived neutrality, legitimacy collapses regardless of available resources or personnel. The study therefore demonstrated that political interference was not merely an operational challenge but a fundamental procedural injustice that rendered all other police functions suspect. Functionalism accounted for secondary challenges like resource shortages, but Procedural Justice Theory alone explained why political interference, by destroying perceived fairness, emerged as the primary obstacle to effective police-community relations during elections.

5.4 Overall Conclusion

The overall objective of this study was to examine the influence of police-community relations on the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. The study concludes that police-community relations significantly influence the management of electoral violence. Positive relations characterized by trust, communication, cooperation, accountability, and community participation enhance information sharing, strengthen conflict prevention mechanisms, and improve public confidence in electoral security processes. Conversely, political interference, perceived police bias, resource constraints, and historical mistrust weaken collaboration between police and communities and increase the risk of electoral tensions and violence. The study therefore concludes that sustainable electoral peace depends not only on effective policing but also on strong partnerships between police officers, communities, civil society organizations, religious leaders, and other electoral stakeholders.

Theoretically, this study concludes that Functionalism and Procedural Justice Theory together provide a complementary lens for understanding police-community relations in electoral contexts. Functionalism explains why surface-level cooperation persists: daily patrols, community meetings, and routine interactions serve the latent function of maintaining social order and preventing overt daily conflict, even in the absence of deep trust. However, the study concludes that Functionalism alone is insufficient to explain why this apparent order collapses during elections. Procedural Justice Theory fills this critical gap by demonstrating that police legitimacy depends fundamentally on perceived neutrality, voice, respect, and trustworthiness. The study's consistent findings across all four research questions, that political bias, selective enforcement, inaction during politically charged incidents, and irregular implementation of strategies were the most damaging factors, confirm that violations of procedural justice destroy legitimacy when communities need police neutrality most. The study therefore concludes that functional structures and strategies cannot succeed without procedural fairness. Even the most well-designed partnerships, clearly divided roles, or timely strategies become ineffective or counterproductive when communities perceive police as partisan actors. Thus, sustainable electoral violence management requires not only functional collaboration but, more critically, the procedural justice foundations of perceived neutrality and fairness.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made to key stakeholders:

5.5.1 Recommendation on Nature of Police-Community Relations

The study found that police-community relations in Lilongwe city exist in fragile coexistence rather than genuine partnership. Consequently, there is need for the MPS to institute regular trust audits that measure hidden distrust, particularly before election periods, so that sustained trust throughout the electoral period can contribute to the effective management of electoral violence. Furthermore, communities widely perceive police as serving ruling party interests. To reverse this perception, it would be beneficial for the MPS to publicly commit to non-partisanship through a binding code of conduct signed by all officers. It is also recommended that the MPS demonstrate commitment to impartiality by arresting and prosecuting all perpetrators of electoral violence regardless of their political connections.

5.5.2 Recommendation on Police and Community Roles

According to findings from this study, fragile coexistence and role ambiguity persistently weaken police-community partnerships in Lilongwe City. Addressing this challenge requires community members to actively participate in joint patrols and similar activities, which help build sustained trust and clarify shared responsibilities. Communities would also benefit from using their leaders and local mediation structures to resolve conflicts before they escalate into violence. Additionally, they are encouraged to demand police transparency and accountability by reporting misconduct to oversight bodies and civil society organizations.

The study further found that, while communities are willing to partner with the police in principle, they are unable to trust them in practice, particularly during electoral periods. To bridge this gap, community leaders, who command considerable trust, could serve as neutral mediators in local disputes. Their involvement would help de-escalate tensions before police intervention becomes necessary, especially during elections.

5.5.3 Recommendation on Effectiveness of Strategies

Political interference has been identified as the most formidable impediment to police-community relations. Therefore, there is a need for Parliament to enact legislation establishing an independent oversight committee composed of no political appointees, empowered to investigate complaints of partisan policing without political influence. Relatedly, it is advised that Parliament amend the Police Act to establish statutory guarantees of police operational independence during electoral periods. Such measures would uphold police neutrality and provide for the accountability of any political actors who violate this principle.

5.5.4 Recommendation on Challenges

This study found that political interference has severely eroded police legitimacy in the eyes of communities. Therefore, there is need for political actors and political parties to make public pledges to respect police neutrality and to refrain from exerting pressure on officers to act in partisan interests. It is further recommended that political actors protect police from political interference and cooperate fully with police-community relations committees to resolve electoral disputes through dialogue rather than confrontation.

5.6 Areas for Further Research

This study opens several avenues for future investigation. First, given that the findings characterize police-community relationships in Lilongwe City as fragile coexistence rather than genuine partnership, where routine cooperation masks deep-seated distrust that becomes dangerously exposed during elections, further research should undertake longitudinal ethnographic inquiry across multiple Malawian cities and rural areas, covering both non-electoral and electoral periods. Such research is necessary to determine whether the patterns observed in Lilongwe reflect national dynamics or are specific to the capital's political environment, while also identifying the specific turning points where trust breaks down and assessing whether interventions between elections can produce lasting change. This would move beyond the present study's cross-sectional diagnosis to inform evidence-based interventions capable of transforming fragile coexistence into resilient partnership.

Second, this study found that while communities in Lilongwe City prefer structured partnerships with clearly divided roles for managing electoral violence, their willingness to report threats through official channels is undermined by perceived police political bias and selective enforcement. Further research should therefore investigate the conditions under which communities are willing to share information with police during electoral periods despite existing distrust. Specifically, a comparative case study across several Malawian cities could examine whether community reporting increases when police demonstrate impartiality through specific actions or whether trust in police during elections requires structural reforms beyond visible acts of even-handed enforcement.

Third, while this study found that police-community strategies are effective only when implemented consistently, timely, and free from political interference, it remains unclear why these conditions are so often absent during elections. Again, this study documented successful cases, such as the Kawale Market incident in Lilongwe City, where police-community interventions successfully de-escalated electoral violence. Further research should be undertaken to investigate institutional and political factors that lead to irregular implementation, poor timing, and political co-optation of police-community strategies in Lilongwe city. Additionally, a comparative examination of successful cases where police-community relations effectively prevented electoral violence could identify replicable models and best practices. Understanding why certain communities succeeded where others failed would inform evidence-based interventions capable of strengthening police-community partnerships across diverse electoral contexts.

Lastly, the present study found that political interference is the most significant challenge undermining police-community relations during elections in Lilongwe City, a pattern consistent with evidence from Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria. However, while Ghana and Kenya have experienced electoral violence and implemented reforms that successfully reduced tensions, existing studies did not examine how police officers navigated and responded to political pressure during electoral periods. Further research should therefore investigate the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and moral dilemmas of frontline police officers when faced with demands from politicians to act partially. Such a study would complement the present study's focus on community

perceptions by exploring the internal institutional dynamics that enable or resist political interference, thereby identifying entry points for reforming police culture and accountability from within.

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APPENDIX I: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

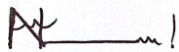
Dear Respondents,

I am a student at Africa Nazarene University Kenya, pursuing a Master of Science in Governance Peace and Security. As a requirement for the award of this degree, I am conducting a research study on '*police-community relations influence on management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi.*' I am requesting to provide information needed to meet objectives of this study.

Note that information obtained will be used for study purposes only and will be accorded the required confidentiality. You have a right to refuse or withdraw from participating in this study any time of data collection.

Your assistance is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Lael Alexander Chimtembo

APPENDIX II: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title: Influence of Police–Community Relations on the Management of Electoral Violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi

Researcher: Lael Alexander Chimtembo, Africa Nazarene University, Department of Governance Peace and Security

Introduction

You are being invited to participate in a research study that seeks to examine the influence of police-community relations on the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi. Before deciding whether to participate, please read the information below carefully.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how police-community relations influence the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi.

Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be requested to respond to interview questions, or provide information relevant to the study. The process will take approximately 30–60 minutes.

Confidentiality

All information obtained during the study will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your identity will not be disclosed in any report or publication arising from this study. Codes or pseudonyms will be used instead of names.

Risks and Benefits

There are no known significant risks associated with participation in this study. The findings may contribute to improved police-community relations and better management of electoral violence.

Consent Statement

I have read and understood the information provided above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name: _____

Signature/Thumbprint: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX III: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) GUIDE

Study Title:

Influence of Police–Community Relations on the Management of Electoral Violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi

Section A: Introduction

1. Introduce participants and explain the purpose of the discussion.
2. Assure participants of confidentiality.
3. Seek permission to record responses where applicable.

Section B: Discussion Questions

Objective 1: State of Police–Community Relations

1. How would you describe the current relationship between the police and community members in Lilongwe City?
2. What factors contribute to good or poor relations between the police and the community?
3. How much trust do community members have in the police during elections?

Objective 2: Roles of Police and Community Members

4. What roles do police officers play in preventing and managing electoral violence?
5. What roles do community members play in preventing electoral violence?
6. How do police and community members cooperate during election periods?

Objective 3: Effectiveness of Existing Strategies

7. What strategies have been used to manage electoral violence in Lilongwe City?
8. How effective have these strategies been?
9. What challenges affect the implementation of these strategies?

Recommendations

10. What can be done to improve police-community relations?
11. What measures would strengthen the management of electoral violence?

Closing

Thank participants for their contribution and participation.

APPENDIX IV: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS MATRIX

Purpose: The document analysis matrix was used to systematically review relevant documents and extract information related to police-community relations and the management of electoral violence in Malawi.

No.	Document Source	Type of Document	Information Sought	Key Issues/Findings	Relevance to Study
1	Malawi Police Service Reports	Official Government Reports	Police roles, deployment, and community policing initiatives during elections		Examines police involvement in electoral violence management

No.	Document Source	Type of Document	Information Sought	Key Issues/Findings	Relevance to Study
2	Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) Reports	Election Reports	Electoral security incidents and election-related conflicts		Provides evidence on electoral violence trends
3	Malawi Human Rights Commission Reports	Human Rights Reports	Human rights violations during electoral periods		Assesses police conduct and accountability
4	Afrobarometer Reports	Survey Reports	Public trust, confidence, and perceptions of police performance		Measures public perceptions of police-community relations
5	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Reports	Development Reports	Electoral security strategies and peacebuilding interventions		Identifies best practices for violence prevention
6	National Statistics Office Reports	Statistical Reports	Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the study area		Provides contextual information on Lilongwe City
7	Government Policy Documents	Policy and Legal Frameworks	Laws, regulations, and policies governing electoral security		Establishes the legal framework for police operations
8	Political Party Reports and Statements	Organizational Documents	Complaints, concerns, and reports on electoral security		Provides stakeholder perspectives on police neutrality
9	Civil Society Organization Reports	Monitoring and Evaluation Reports	Community engagement and electoral violence prevention initiatives		Assesses the role of non-state actors in peacebuilding
10	Academic Journal Articles	Scholarly Publications	Theories, empirical evidence, and international experiences		Provides theoretical and empirical support for the study
11	Media Reports (Newspapers, Television, Online Platforms)	News Reports	Reported cases of electoral violence and police responses		Provides supplementary evidence on electoral incidents
12	District Peace and Security Committee Reports	Administrative Reports	Conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms		Evaluates local peacebuilding initiatives

No.	Document Source	Type of Document	Information Sought	Key Issues/Findings	Relevance to Study
13	Community Policing Forum Reports	Community Reports	Police-community collaboration and security concerns		Examines effectiveness of community policing approaches
14	Election Observation Mission Reports	Observation Reports	Observations on election conduct, violence, and security management		Provides independent assessment of electoral security
15	Court Records and Legal Documents	Judicial Records	Election-related disputes and legal outcomes		Assesses accountability and dispute resolution mechanisms

APPENDIX V: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant Identification Number.....

Date of interview.....

Interviewer’s code.....

This questionnaire is intended to collect data on *Police-community relations influence on management electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi*. Information collected from this questionnaire will be handled with high confidentiality and will strictly be used for academic purposes only.

SECTION A: Demographic characteristics

1. What is your age?
 - (A) <20years
 - (B) 21-40years
 - (C) 41-60years
 - (D) 61 and above
2. What is your sex?
 - (A) Female
 - (B) Male
3. What is your highest level of education?
 - (A) Primary school
 - (B) Secondary level
 - (C) Graduate
 - (D) Postgraduate
4. What is your employment status?
 - (A) Student
 - (B) Business
 - (C) Employed
 - (D) Unemployed

Section B: Current state of police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi

1. How regular do you interact with the police in your area?
 - (A) Never
 - (B) Rarely
 - (C) Occasionally
 - (D) Frequently
2. How would you rate the current relationship between the police and the community in Lilongwe?
 - (A) Poor
 - (B) Good

(C) Very good

(D) Excellent

3. How would you characterize the current state of police-community relations in Lilongwe city during elections?

(A) Highly collaborative and trusting

(B) Generally cooperative with some tensions

(C) Tense and distrustful

(D) Openly hostile and confrontational

(E) Other (Please specify and explain your characterization)

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4. What is the **most** common form of police-community conflict during elections in Lilongwe city?

(A) Use of excessive force by police

(B) Allegations of police partisanship

(C) Failure to respond to violence reports

(D) Demands for bribes by officers

(E) Other (Please specify and explain the form of conflict)

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5. Which factor **most** undermines police legitimacy during general elections in Lilongwe city?

(A) Perceived political bias

(B) Corruption incidents

(C) Brutality cases

(D) Slow response times

(E) Other (Please specify and explain the factor)

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6. Based on your experiences, what specific incidents have **most** damaged trust between police and Lilongwe city communities during general elections? *Please describe key examples and their impacts.*

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Section C: Distinct police and community roles in managing electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi

1. Who should take the lead role in management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city?
 - (A) Primarily the police through patrols, arrests, and enforcement
 - (B) Primarily community leaders through mediation and early warnings
 - (C) An equal partnership between police and communities with clearly divided responsibilities
 - (D) Other actors such as election officials, political parties, etc.

2. Which specific police action during elections tends to escalate rather than reduce violence in Lilongwe?
 - (A) Selective enforcement (e.g., only arresting opposition supporters)
 - (B) Excessive force (e.g., live ammunition on protesters)
 - (C) Delayed response to violence reports
 - (D) Public statements favouring one party
 - (E) Other (Please specify and explain the police action)

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3. What is the community's **most** critical role in management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city?

- (A) Report threats via official channels
- (B) Resolve conflicts through local leaders
- (C) Monitor and document violence incidents
- (D) Boycott or peacefully protest unfair practices
- (E) Other (Please specify and explain **most** critical role)

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4. What **primary** factor discourages community from cooperating with police in management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city?

- (A) Fear of retaliation from perpetrators
- (B) Belief that police are politically compromised
- (C) Past experiences of police brutality
- (D) No confidence in police effectiveness
- (E) Other (Please specify and explain the primary factor)

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5. Which reform would **most** improve role clarity in management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city?

- (A) Publicly signed performance charters for police
- (B) Community-police joint training simulations
- (C) Legislation defining specific roles for each actor
- (D) Independent oversight committees with community representatives
- (E) Other (Please specify and explain your proposed reform)

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6. Can you describe a specific event during general elections in Lilongwe city where unclear roles between police and community members escalated violence? What exact duties were misunderstood or contested?

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Section D: Effectiveness of police-community relations strategies in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi

1. Which police-community strategy is **most** commonly used by police in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city?

- (A) Police and community members conducting patrols in hotspots
- (B) Regular meetings between police and local leaders to discuss threats
- (C) Police-led voter education on peaceful elections
- (D) Ad-hoc committees to resolve election-related disputes
- (E) Other (Please specify and explain the strategy you believe is **most**

common).....

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2. At what stage in the electoral cycle are these police-community strategies typically implemented in Lilongwe?

- (A) Only on voting day
- (B) 1-2 months before elections
- (C) 6+ months before elections
- (D) Irregularly/without plan

3. How effective are police-community strategies in managing electoral violence in Lilongwe city?

(A) Very effective

(B) Somewhat effective

(C) Ineffective

(D) Counterproductive

(E) Other (Please explain your perspective)

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4. Can you identify specific cases where police-community strategies worked better than police-only approaches in managing election tensions?

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5. If you were advising both police and community leaders, what key recommendations would you make to enhance their joint efforts in managing electoral violence in Lilongwe city?

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Section E: Challenges hampering police-community relations in management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi

1. (a) In the following questions, please tick (✓) on the level that you agree to following statements concerning constraints affecting the Malawi Police Service's (MPS) ability to maintain positive police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City.

Key: 1. Not applicable/Don't know 2= Strongly disagree 3= Disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

Serial	Challenges affecting the Malawi Police Service's (MPS) ability to maintain positive police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city.	1	2	3	4	5
i	Political interference in police operations during elections					
ii	Inadequate funding					
iii	Insufficient police personnel					
iv	Lack of equipment					
v	Police and communities lack necessary training and capacity to effectively manage electoral violence					

1 (b) Are there any other significant constraints affecting the Malawi Police Service's (MPS) ability to maintain positive police-community relations in the management of electoral violence in Lilongwe City, that were not listed above? Please specify and explain.

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2. Which structural deficiency in the police system damages public trust during electoral periods in Lilongwe city? (*select all that applies*)

- (A) Lack of transparent investigations of electoral violence cases
- (B) Political interference in police operations
- (C) Lack of training on elections security and conflict management
- (D) All of above
- (E) Other (Please specify)

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3. What community perception hinders their participation in joint strategies in the management of electoral violence?

- (A) Belief that police favour ruling parties
- (B) Fear of retaliation from political actors
- (C) View that police are ineffective

(D) Cultural resistance to collaborating with authorities

(E) Other (Please specify)

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4. Which resource limitation hinder police-community relations strategies against management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city? *(Select all that applies)*

(A) Insufficient funding for police-community relations programs

(B) Lack of secure communication channels (e.g. hotlines)

(C) Inadequate transportation for patrols

(D) No dedicated electoral violence monitoring system

(E) Other (Please specify):

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5. In your view, what are the main barriers preventing effective collaboration between the police and Lilongwe residents in curbing election-related violence?

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6. How can the relationship between police and Lilongwe communities be strengthened to more effectively prevent and respond to election violence?

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Thank you for your time in responding to these questions.

APPENDIX VI: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Target respondents: 96 (25%) of age groups and institutional actors (leaders from each group)

Questions:

- 1. Can you briefly describe your background (e.g., age, occupation, education)?

2. How would you describe the relationship between the police and communities in Lilongwe city, particularly during elections?
3. What specific incidents or patterns have you observed that either strengthen or undermine trust between the police and residents during electoral periods?
4. In your view, who should take the lead in managing electoral violence: the police, community leaders, or both? Give reason for your answer
5. Can you recall a situation where unclear roles between police and community members escalated election violence? What went wrong, and how could it have been avoided?
6. What strategies have you seen police and communities use to address election violence in Lilongwe? Which ones worked well, and why?
7. Could you share a case where joint police-community efforts succeeded (or failed) to manage electoral violence in Lilongwe city? What lessons can be learned from it?
8. How do community perceptions of police bias or inefficiency affect their willingness to report violence or collaborate?
9. If you could propose concrete steps to improve police-community relations for safer elections in Lilongwe city, what would they be?

APPENDIX VIII: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION LETTERS



P.O.Box: 53067 – 00200
Nairobi, Kenya.
Tel: 020 252 7170/1 – 5
Email: vc@anu.ac.ke
www.anu.ac.ke

13th June, 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH PERMIT: LAEL ALEXANDER CHIMTEMBO STUDENT NO. 21S01DMGP019

Lael Alexander Chimtembo No (21s01dmgp019) is a Bonafide postgraduate student at Africa Nazarene University in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences – Governance, Peace & Security Studies department. He is pursuing a Master's degree in Governance, Peace & Security Studies. This program entails Coursework and Thesis. He has successfully completed coursework and defended his thesis proposal entitled:

“Police-Community Relations Influence on Management of Electoral Violence in Lilongwe City, Malawi”.

Any assistance accorded to him to facilitate data collection and complete his thesis will be highly appreciated.

Faithfully,

Prof. Orpha Ongiti
Dean of Postgraduate Studies & Director Institute of Research.

APPENDIX IX: INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE RESEARCH PERMIT

Cable Address: POLGEN LILONGWE 3
 Direct Line: +265884733333
 Fax: 797 979
 E-mail: pro@police.gov.mw

In reply, please quote: PRO/DIG/1/3/A



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE

NATIONAL POLICE HQRS
 PRIVATE BAG 305
 CAPITAL CITY
 LILONGWE 3

16th June, 2025

Attention: Lael Alexander Chimtembo
 Central West Regional (CWR) Hqrs

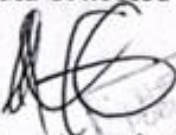
Copy: Commissioner of Police- CWR
 Officers In-Charge- Lilongwe Police Station
 Kanengo Police Station
 Lingadzi Police Station
 Kawale Police Station

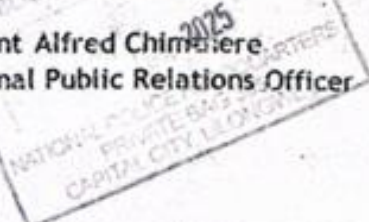
Sir,

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY TITLED, 'POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS INFLUENCE ON MANAGEMENT OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN LILONGWE CITY, MALAWI'

Your letter dated 13th June, 2025 on above captioned subject refers.

I am pleased to inform you that management has approved your request, provided that data collected and study findings are used solely for academic purposes.


 Superintendent Alfred Chimtembo
 Deputy National Public Relations Officer



APPENDIX X: LILONGWE CITY COUNCIL PERMIT

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

Our Ref: CEO/Admin/2025

23/06/2025



LILONGWE CITY COUNCIL

P.O. Box 30396

Lilongwe 3

MALAWI

Cell: +265 (0) 889843631

/Lilongwe_City_Council

info@lcc.mw

www.lcc.mw

Central West Regional Police Headquarters

P.O. Box 10

Lilongwe

Cell: 0999922166

Attention: Lael Alexander Chimtembo

Dear Sir,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EDUCATION RESEARCH

Reference is made to your letter in which you are requesting to conduct academic research titled police-community relations influence on management of electoral violence in Lilongwe city, Malawi.

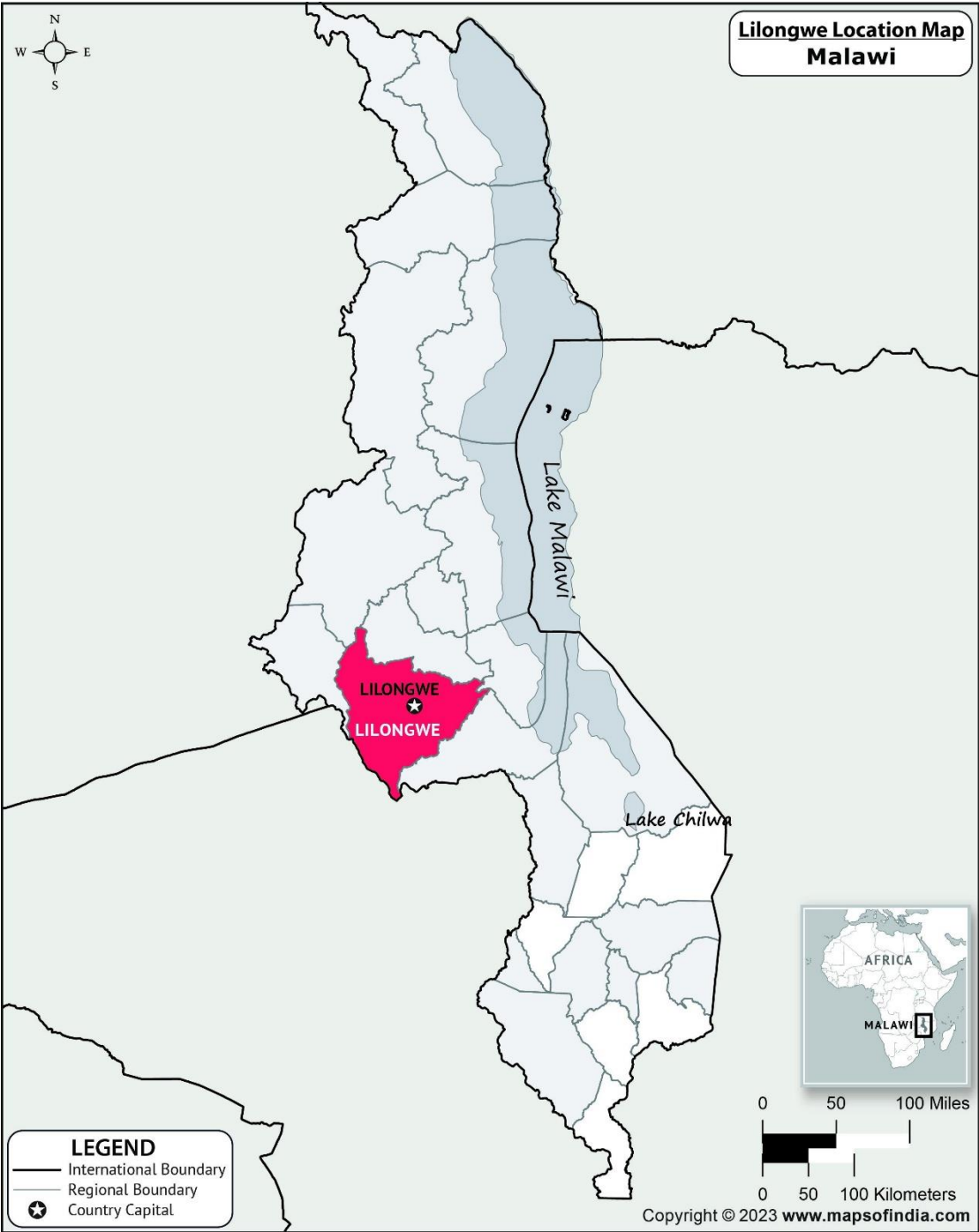
We wish to inform you that the permission has been granted and you can go ahead with your planned program. It is our sincere hope that the data collected will be used for academic purposes only and that all research ethics shall be followed.

Dr. Macloud D.A. Kadam'manja
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

CC: The Inspector General of Police, National Police Headquarters

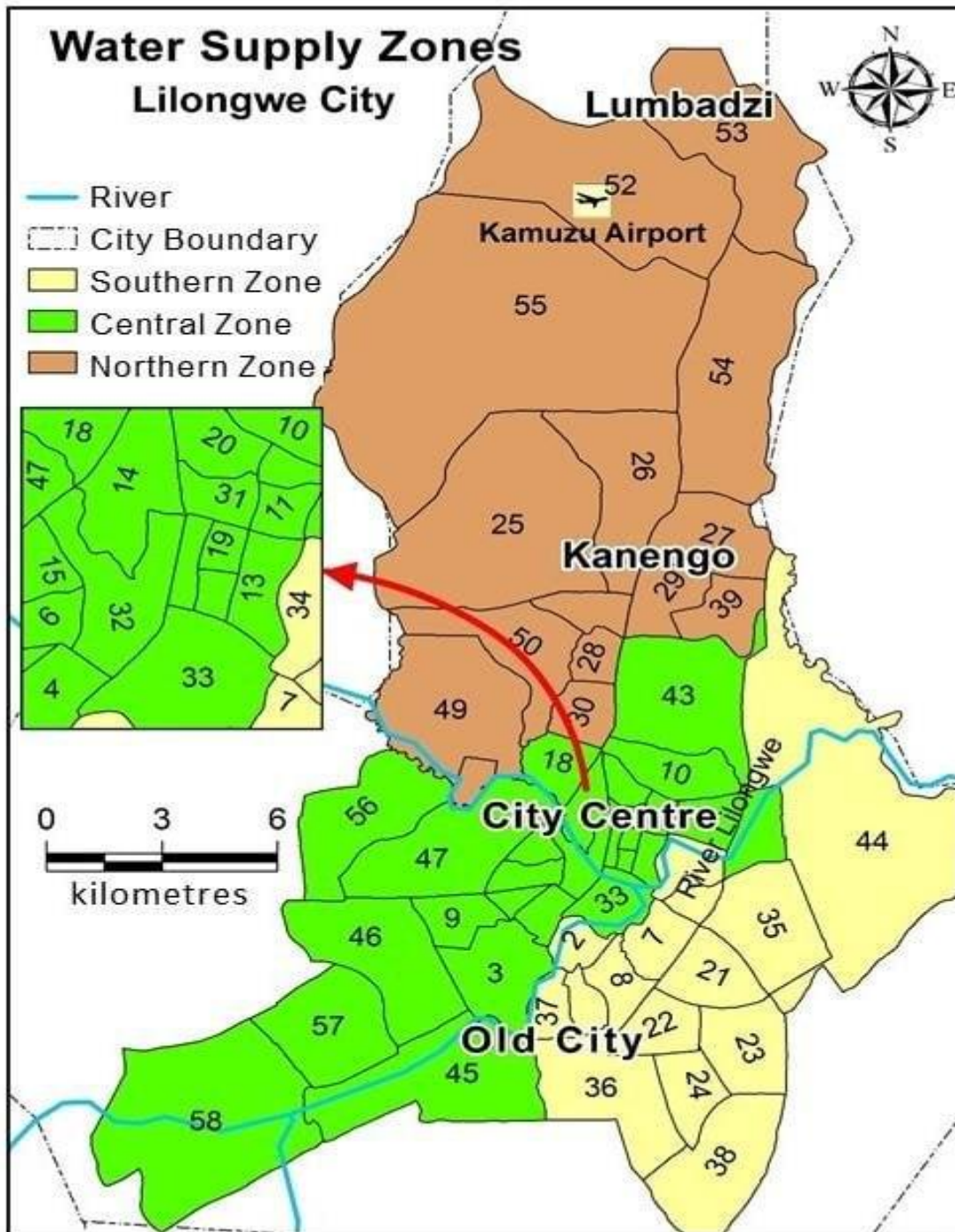
ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

APPENDIX XI: MAP OF MALAWI



Location	Latitude	Longitude
Malawi	9°22'S – 17°08'S	32°40'E – 35°55'E
Lilongwe City	13°59'S	33°47'E

APPENDIX XII: MAP OF LILONGWE CITY



Location	Latitude	Longitude
Malawi	9°22'S – 17°08'S	32°40'E – 35°55'E
Lilongwe City	13°59'S	33°47'E