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Strategic approaches to mitigating security challenges faced by small and Medium Enterprises (SMES) in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are universally recognized as indispensable drivers of economic vitality, but their survival is severely threatened by pervasive insecurity. This study examined the effect of physical security infrastructure investment and local community policing partnerships on the level of insecurity among SMEs in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Methods: This study was guided by Contingency Theory and adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data were collected from a sample of 299 owners and managers of SMEs using a structured questionnaire, and the hypotheses were tested with multiple linear regression analysis.

Results: The findings revealed that the overall model was statistically significant ($F(2, 296) = 133.241, p = .000$), accounting for 47.3% of the variance in the level of insecurity ($R^2 = .473$). Specifically, physical security infrastructure investment was found to have a strong, significant negative effect on the level of insecurity ($\beta = -0.613, t = -12.011, p = .000$). Local community policing partnerships also had a significant, albeit weaker, negative effect ($\beta = -0.206, t = -4.032, p = .000$). The study concludes that while both strategies are effective in mitigating security threats, SMEs in a volatile environment prioritize and derive greater benefit from tangible, self-controlled physical security measures over collaborative partnerships hampered by institutional mistrust.

Contribution: The findings underscore the urgent need for SME owners to continue investing in robust physical security, while also highlighting the imperative for law enforcement agencies to initiate trust-building measures to make community policing a more viable and effective strategy for business protection.

Keywords: Insecurity, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs); Physical Security Infrastructure; Community Policing; Contingency Theory

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1. Introduction

Nigeria, which is perceived as the giant of Africa as pointed out by Stella, Priscilla, and Ifeoma (2022), has experienced an unprecedented incidences of insecurity, including the activities of Fulani herdsmen, Boko Haram insurgencies, kidnappings, Armed robberies, religious and political crises, killings, destruction of oil facilities by Niger Delta militants, child trafficking and abduction. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are vital to economic vitality, innovation, and job creation in both developed and developing countries (Tshikovhi, More, & Cele, 2023). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates that SMEs comprise approximately 99% of all firms in member countries and contribute 50% to 60% of value added on average. Particularly in emerging economies, they are considered the "backbone" of economic growth and poverty alleviation (Masroor et al., 2023). However, their potential is severely threatened by insecurity, defined as vulnerability to danger, which includes criminal activities like theft and violence, leading to asset loss, operational disruptions, and diminished investor confidence (Castronovo, 2023; Ndonwi, 2024). According to Stella et al. (2022) The higher rate of insecurity in the state and throughout Nigeria signifies a weakened security system. Tribalism, corruption, and favouritism seem to have taken over the Nigerian security system (Nelson, 2019: Stella, Priscilla & Ifeoma, 2022). Chinelo, Ngozi, Shalom and Ejike (2021) noted that the killings as a result of various forms of insecurity in the land makes the country to be regarded as conflict ridden and at war; while the country is not at war in the real sense.

In Nigeria, the insecurity context for SMEs is particularly acute, with challenges such as armed robbery and kidnapping compelling many businesses to adopt aggressive security measures (John, 2022). This study focuses on Anambra State, a commercial hub with a high concentration of SMEs vital to the regional economy. To address these risks, businesses employ various security strategies, primarily categorized into two approaches. The first is investing in physical security infrastructure, which involves measures such as CCTV cameras, alarm systems, and perimeter fencing to protect assets and personnel (Atieh, 2021). The second approach focuses on local community policing partnerships, promoting collaboration between law enforcement and communities to proactively tackle crime and social disorder (Santoso, 2024). These strategies enhance collective security, extending efforts beyond individual firms to the broader community.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The survival and growth of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Anambra State, a vital commercial hub, are severely threatened by pervasive insecurity. Pervasive threats such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and burglary disrupt operations, drain significant financial resources, and create a volatile environment that stifles growth and investor confidence. In response, many SMEs have independently adopted two primary strategies for protection: investing in physical security infrastructure like CCTV and private guards, and participating in local community policing partnerships.

Despite the widespread adoption of these measures, their actual effectiveness in mitigating insecurity for businesses within the specific context of Anambra State remains empirically unverified. A clear gap exists in understanding how, and to what extent, these distinct strategies reduce the tangible security threats experienced by these enterprises. It is against this backdrop that this study, therefore, aims to determine the specific effect of physical security infrastructure investment and local community policing partnerships on the level of insecurity among SMEs in Anambra State.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the effect of selected approaches in addressing insecurity among SMEs in Anambra State. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- Determine the effect of physical security infrastructure investment on the level of insecurity among smes in Anambra State.
- Examine the effect of local community policing partnerships on the level of insecurity among smes in Anambra State.

1.3. Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study

- What is the effect of physical security infrastructure investment on the level of insecurity among SMEs in Anambra State?

- What is the effect of local community policing partnerships on the level of insecurity among SMEs in Anambra State?

2. Literature review

2.1. Conceptual Review

2.1.1. Insecurity

The concept of insecurity is multifaceted, encompassing both objective threats and subjective perceptions. Esq and Aduku (2023) provides a widely accepted definition, framing insecurity as "the condition of worry or anxiety resulting from a real or perceived absence of protection". This definition underscores the psychological dimension of the phenomenon, which is a critical factor in business decision-making. Expanding on this, Ishaya (2021) offer a dual perspective, defining insecurity as both the state of being exposed to the threat of danger and the state of anxiety felt in anticipation of misfortune. This distinction is vital, as the objective threat environment in Nigeria, characterized by armed robbery, kidnapping, and burglary, directly cultivates a psychological state of anxiety among SME owners. According to Ndubuisi-Okolo and Nwagbala (2021) Statistical evidence shows that several youths are engaging in illegal activities (such as internet fraud, abduction, ritual killings, armed robbery, political bigotry, and prostitution) as a means of living. Ezeanokwasa, Nwagbala, Nwachukwu, Oranusi and Ani (2023) stated that in the era of disruption, businesses encounter several experiences and challenges in their pursuit of sustainability which is a very critical issue for Nigeria. This anxiety, in turn, influences strategic choices, often leading to risk aversion and the diversion of capital from growth-oriented activities toward purely defensive measure (Ezeanokwasa at al., 2023).

The ramifications of insecurity on enterprise performance are severe and well-documented. Insecurity discourages potential investment by inflating the cost of doing business, both through direct losses of assets and indirect costs associated with implementing protective measures (Aikor, 2021). According to Madume and Owulo (2024), a World Bank study found that 36% of Nigerian business operators considered insecurity a major barrier to investment, a sentiment that sends a negative signal to potential foreign investors. For existing enterprises, the impact is equally devastating, leading to operational disruptions, asset loss, and in many cases, outright business closure or relocation to safer regions. A study on SMEs in Southeast Nigeria, for instance, found a significant negative relationship between burglary attacks and the timely delivery of products, highlighting the direct operational consequences of physical insecurity (Asogwa, Onyekwelu and Azubike, 2023). This forces Nigerian SMEs to bear a security tax the high cost of protective measures that their counterparts in more stable regions do not, placing them at a significant competitive disadvantage by eroding profit margins and making their products less competitive.

2.1.2. Small and Medium Enterprises

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are universally recognized as the "backbone of an economy," serving as indispensable drivers of innovation, employment, and economic growth, particularly in developing nations (Melibaeva, 2024). In Nigeria, their contribution is immense, with MSMEs accounting for approximately 50% of the national GDP and over 87% of employment. The official definition and classification of these enterprises are provided by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) in the National Policy on MSMEs (2021-2025), which uses a dual-criteria system based on employment and annual turnover. According to this policy, Micro Enterprises are defined as having 3 to 9 employees and an annual turnover between ₦3 million and ₦25 million. Small Enterprises employ between 10 and 49 individuals with an annual turnover ranging from ₦25 million to ₦99 million. Finally, Medium Enterprises are classified as having 50 to 199 employees and an annual turnover of ₦100 million to ₦1 billion (Mugano & Dorasamy, 2024). Thus, these small businesses as cited by Nwagbala, Harrieta, Promise and Ejiogu (2024) are the foundation of the local economy, fostering innovation, generating employment opportunities, and enhancing regional economic growth.

Despite their economic importance, the inherent characteristics of SMEs render them highly vulnerable to security threats. Their limited financial resources, less formal operational structures, and high visibility within local communities make them "soft targets" for criminal activity (Kubalova & Loveček, 2023). This creates a paradox where the very attributes essential for their business success (such as predictable operating hours and accessible locations) simultaneously generate structured opportunities for their victimization. The daily routines of an SME are easily observable, making them predictable and therefore highly "suitable targets" for offenders who seek to minimize their own risk. This vulnerability is compounded by the fact that the financial burden of security is disproportionately heavy for SMEs compared to larger corporations (Asgary, Ozdemir & Özyürek, 2020).

2.1.3. *Physical security infrastructure investment*

Physical security infrastructure refers to the deployment of tangible measures and equipment designed to protect facilities, assets, and personnel from unauthorized access, damage, or loss (Atieh, 2021). Khidzir and Ahmed, (2025) outlines a modern approach to physical security that moves beyond simple "guards and gates" to a layered strategy encompassing deterrence, detection, delay, and response. Deterrence measures, such as visible CCTV cameras and security lighting, aim to prevent criminal attempts. Kuhns et al. (2022) found that 60% of burglars would avoid a target if they noticed surveillance cameras. Additionally, Chalfin et al. (2021) noted that well-lit areas experienced a 39% decrease in criminal activity. Detection systems like alarms and motion sensors alert owners to breaches, while delay mechanisms such as reinforced locks and access control systems slow intruders down. For SMEs, investment in such infrastructure is a critical strategic decision that can yield a substantial return through reduced losses and enhanced employee and customer confidence (Armenia et al., 2021).

Modern technological advancements have transformed the nature of this infrastructure from passive barriers to an active, responsive security ecosystem. The integration of AI analytics, remote monitoring, and real-time alerts means that a security system can actively "see" and "notify" an owner of a threat, regardless of their physical location (Han & Zang, 2025). This technological force multiplier effectively projects the presence of a guardian even when no human is on-site, fundamentally altering the risk calculation for a potential offender and allowing an SME owner to manage security more efficiently.

2.1.4. *Local community policing partnerships*

Local community policing is a collaborative security model defined by the U.S. Department of Justice as a philosophy promoting alliances between law enforcement and the community to proactively address the conditions that give rise to crime (Kappeler, Gaines and Schaefer, 2020). In Nigeria, this approach is officially endorsed, with the aim of creating an "atmosphere in which the police and law-abiding citizens can work in partnership" to solve problems, share intelligence, and improve overall safety. The 2020 Nigeria Police Act provides a legal foundation for this strategy by mandating the establishment of Community Policing Committees to foster engagement and reduce crime (Ndukwe & Nwachukwu, 2024). The core principles of this model are mutual trust, shared responsibility, and joint problem-solving, which collectively aim to create a secure and investment-friendly environment beneficial to businesses (Al Mukhaini & Yesilada, 2023).

However, this strategy represents a form of "social guardianship" that is fundamentally dependent on intangible factors like trust and communication (Hanna and Paans, 2022). Unlike the tangible reliability of a steel door, the effectiveness of community policing hinges on the strength of the police-citizen relationship. The literature indicates that this relationship in Nigeria is often strained by a history of mistrust, inadequate funding for police, and a lack of sufficient training. Consequently, for an SME owner, relying on this form of guardianship can be a high-risk proposition, as the guardian (the partnership itself) may prove to be inconsistent or unreliable when a threat materializes (Ba et al., 2025).

2.2. **Theoretical Framework**

This work is anchored on Contingency theory by Fred Fiedler in 1964. The theory posits that there is no single best way to organize, lead, or make decisions within an organization. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent upon the internal and external situation. The idea behind the theory was a direct challenge to the classical, Universalist management principles that proposed a "one-size-fits-all" solution. Fiedler's model, for instance, suggested that a leader's effectiveness is determined by the "fit" between their leadership style (either task-oriented or relationship-oriented) and the "situational favorableness," which he defined by three key variables: leader-member relations, task structure, and the leader's position power. Therefore, effective management is about accurately diagnosing the situation and deploying the most appropriate strategy for that specific context.

Contingency Theory provides a robust framework for analyzing the security strategies adopted by SMEs in Anambra State. In this context, the "situation" is the high-insecurity business environment, characterized by specific threats like armed robbery and kidnapping. The SME owners or managers are the decision-makers who must choose an appropriate response to this challenging environment. The two security strategies under investigation in this study represent distinct management strategies for mitigating risk. The theory suggests that the choice and ultimate effectiveness of either strategy are not absolute but are contingent upon the specific variables of the SME's operating environment. For instance, an SME located in a dense, anonymous urban market might find a task-oriented, infrastructure-heavy approach more effective, whereas an SME in a close-knit industrial cluster might benefit more from a relationship-oriented, community-policing approach. This study, therefore, aligns with the contingency perspective by seeking to

understand how SMEs adapt their security management to their environment and which of these contingent strategies is most effective for reducing insecurity in the specific context of Anambra State.

2.3. Empirical Review

Studies have been conducted to explore the multifaceted relationship between security challenges, policing strategies, and the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria.

Maisaje et al. (2025) investigated the impact of insecurity on the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Gombe State, located in North Eastern Nigeria. The study employed a survey design for their methodology, collecting data through questionnaires administered to a sample of 257 SMEs spread across 11 Local Government Areas within Gombe State. The collected data was subsequently analyzed using regression analysis to test the formulated hypotheses. The findings demonstrated a strong and significant relationship between the overall insecurity level and the performance of SMEs ($R = 0.812$, $R^2 = 0.659$, $F = 120.4$, $p < 0.001$). Each specific security threat was found to have a significant negative effect on SME performance: armed robbery ($\beta = -0.45$, $p < 0.001$), kidnapping ($\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.001$), theft ($\beta = -0.29$, $p < 0.001$), and communal crises ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < 0.001$). The study concluded that insecurity poses a severe and multifaceted threat to SMEs in Gombe State, significantly reducing their sales volume, profitability, and capacity for expansion and customer retention.

Leawat and Usman (2025) conducted a study to assess the impact of community policing collaborations between the Nigerian Police Force and local communities on crime reduction within Plateau State. The research methodology was an ex post facto survey design, utilizing purposive sampling to select respondents who were directly involved with or affected by community policing initiatives. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires, while secondary data was sourced from academic journals, books, and other credible publications. The findings of the study, though presented qualitatively, indicated that community policing collaborations have a significant positive impact on crime reduction. This was attributed to enhanced trust and improved information sharing between the police and community members, which led to better intelligence gathering and more proactive policing. However, the study also identified significant challenges, including a lack of adequate resources, persistent mutual suspicion between the police and citizens, and insufficient training. The study concluded that despite the operational challenges, community policing represents a viable and effective strategy for reducing crime in Plateau State.

Otodo et al. (2025) studied the impact of community policing on both crime prevention and community relations in Umuahia, the capital of Abia State. The researchers employed a qualitative research design for their methodology, which was centered on in-depth interviews as the primary mode of data collection. To gain a holistic perspective, they conducted interviews with a diverse sample of 20 participants, which included 5 police officers, 5 community leaders, 5 local business owners, and 5 other residents. The data from these interviews were then analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that community policing has led to discernibly improved trust and communication between the police and the community, fostering increased participation in crime reporting. However, the study also uncovered significant barriers to its effectiveness, such as inadequate resources for the police force, a general lack of public awareness about the program's goals, and a lingering mistrust rooted in past negative interactions with law enforcement. The study concluded that while community policing in Umuahia has been successful in enhancing police-community relations, its direct impact on crime prevention is still developing and is significantly hampered by these unresolved challenges.

Amadi and Eke (2024) analyzed the effect of security challenges on the performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) operating in Rivers State, Nigeria. The methodology adopted for the study was a survey research design. The researchers identified a target population of 150 owners and managers of registered SMEs in Port Harcourt, from which a sample of 109 respondents was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula. Primary data was gathered using a structured questionnaire, whose reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82. To analyze the data and test the hypotheses, simple linear regression was utilized. The findings from the regression analysis were statistically significant and clear. Militancy was found to have a significant negative effect on the performance of SMEs, explaining 64.2% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.642$, $F = 191.4$, $p = 0.000$). Similarly, kidnapping was also shown to have a significant negative effect on SME performance, accounting for 71.5% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.715$, $F = 267.8$, $p = 0.000$). The study concluded that security challenges, particularly militancy and kidnapping, are powerful destructive forces that severely impede the performance, growth, and survival of SMEs in Rivers State.

Asogwa et al. (2022) studied the effects of prevailing security challenges on the business sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria over a thirteen-year period from 2008 to 2020. The study was based on a quantitative research design methodology, utilizing annual secondary data sourced from the Global Terrorism Index

and the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics. To ensure the validity of their model, they conducted diagnostic tests, including the Augmented Dickey-Fuller Unit Root Test and a co-integration test, which confirmed a long-term relationship. The core analysis was performed using a multiple regression model via the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) technique. The results showed varied impacts: Boko Haram attacks had a negative but statistically insignificant relationship with SME performance ($\beta = -0.0157$, $p=0.741$). In contrast, kidnapping had a negative and highly significant relationship ($\beta = -0.428$, $p=0.003$). Armed robbery showed a positive but insignificant relationship ($\beta = 0.297$, $p=0.076$). The overall model was significant (F-statistic = 4.256, $p=0.045$), with an Adjusted R-squared of 0.452. They concluded that security challenges, especially kidnapping, have a significant detrimental effect on SME performance in Nigeria.

Hassan et al. (2020) conducted a study to examine the impact of government policy and insecurity on the productivity of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. The study utilized a survey design, gathering data from a large nationwide sample of 590 SME respondents in the year 2020. For their methodology, the researchers employed multinomial logistic regression to test their hypotheses. The findings revealed that the government policy of multiple taxation had a significant and adverse impact on the productivity of SMEs, specifically by causing a rise in operational costs, which was reflected in the variable "Hikes in product price" and was statistically significant ($X^2 = 6.163$, $p < 0.05$). In contrast, the analysis showed that none of the government's intervention programs aimed at supporting SMEs were effective, as indicated by Wald statistics with p-values greater than 0.05. Furthermore, none of the insecurity variables, including insurgency, kidnapping, or armed robbery, were found to have a statistically significant impact on SME productivity in their model. They concluded that burdensome government policies like multiple taxation pose a more direct and statistically verifiable threat to SME productivity than either insecurity or the existing ineffective government support initiatives.

Ojiagu and Nzewi (2019) carried out a study on the relationship between physical security and the survival of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in the Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Adopting a survey research design methodology, the researchers collected data from owners and managers of SMEs in the region. From a population of 410, a sample size of 202 respondents was scientifically determined using the Taro Yamane formula. The data, gathered through questionnaires, was analyzed, and the study's hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The statistical findings were definitive, showing a significant negative relationship between armed robbery and the survival of SMEs, with a correlation coefficient (r) of -0.582 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. Similarly, kidnapping was found to have an even stronger significant negative relationship with SME survival, yielding a correlation coefficient (r) of -0.672 and a p-value of 0.000. The study concluded that physical insecurity is a critical factor that severely undermines the survival of SMEs in Southeast Nigeria, and they strongly recommended government intervention to create a more secure and enabling environment for businesses to thrive.

Although the Above existing research clearly links insecurity to poor business performance, few studies have compared the effectiveness of the specific security strategies that Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) actually use. This study addresses that gap. This study empirically investigates and compares how physical security infrastructure and community policing partnerships help SMEs mitigate security challenges.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to assess the impact of selected security approaches specifically physical security infrastructure investment and local community policing partnerships on the level of insecurity among Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population consisted of 1,504 officially registered SMEs, from which a sample of 316 was determined using the Taro Yamane formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. A simple random sampling technique, utilizing the lottery method, was applied to ensure equal selection chances for each SME.

Data collection utilized a structured questionnaire divided into two parts: Part A for demographic information and Part B focused on the study's objectives, featuring a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire underwent face and content validation by two business management experts, and a pilot study yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.93, indicating high reliability. The questionnaire was administered over six weeks with the help of four trained research assistants, using both physical and online methods to maximize response rates.

Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics, with research questions addressed through mean and standard deviation calculations. Hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression analysis at a 0.05 significance

level, utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0 to determine the relationships between the independent variables (security approaches) and the dependent variable (level of insecurity among SMEs).

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Here, the analysis carried out for this study is presented and interpreted. Out of the 316 distributed copies of the questionnaire, only 299 copies were retrieved and valid for analysis, giving a 94.6% response rate.

Research Question 1: What is the effect of physical security infrastructure investment on the level of insecurity among SMEs in Anambra State?

Table 1 Mean Ratings on Physical Security Infrastructure Investment and Level of Insecurity

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
	Physical Security Infrastructure Investment				
1	Our company has invested in CCTV surveillance systems to monitor the premises.	299	4.18	0.912	Accepted
2	We employ private security guards to protect our business assets and personnel.	299	3.97	1.103	Accepted
3	Our facility is equipped with a functional alarm system to detect unauthorized entry.	299	3.51	1.231	Accepted
4	We have installed physical barriers like reinforced doors or perimeter fencing for security.	299	4.33	0.844	Accepted
	Level of Insecurity				
5	Our business has experienced incidents of theft or burglary in the past year.	299	3.81	1.155	Accepted
6	We are concerned about the risk of armed robbery at our business location.	299	4.09	1.011	Accepted
7	Incidents of vandalism or property damage are a problem in our area.	299	3.63	1.204	Accepted
8	The safety and security of our employees at work is a major concern.	299	4.26	0.957	Accepted
	Grand Mean	299	3.97	1.052	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data in Table 1 addresses the effect of physical security infrastructure investment. The analysis reveals an overwhelming acceptance across all items, with all mean scores surpassing the 3.00 criterion. Item 4 had the highest mean score ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.844$), followed closely by Item 8 ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.957$) and Item 1 ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.912$). The lowest mean score was for Item 3 ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.231$), which was still well above the acceptance threshold. The overall Grand Mean of 3.97 ($SD = 1.052$) confirms that SMEs significantly invest in physical security infrastructure in response to a high perceived level of insecurity.

Research Question 2: What is the effect of local community policing partnerships on the level of insecurity among SMEs in Anambra State?

Table 2 Mean Ratings on Local Community Policing Partnerships and Level of Insecurity

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
	Local Community Policing Partnerships				
1	Our business actively collaborates with local vigilante groups for security.	299	3.48	1.301	Accepted
2	We regularly share security information and intelligence with the local police.	299	2.87	1.411	Rejected
3	A representative from our company attends community security meetings.	299	2.64	1.348	Rejected

4	We have a strong, trusting relationship with law enforcement in our area.	299	2.41	1.292	Rejected
	Level of Insecurity				
5	Our business has experienced incidents of theft or burglary in the past year.	299	3.81	1.155	Accepted
6	We are concerned about the risk of armed robbery at our business location.	299	4.09	1.011	Accepted
7	Incidents of vandalism or property damage are a problem in our area.	299	3.63	1.204	Accepted
8	The safety and security of our employees at work is a major concern.	299	4.26	0.957	Accepted
	Grand Mean	299	3.40	1.210	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 presents the analysis of local community policing partnerships. The findings show a significant division in respondent views. Items 5 through 8, related to the level of insecurity, were all accepted with high mean scores, with Item 8 being the highest (M=4.26, SD=0.957). In contrast, a majority of items concerning community policing were rejected. Item 4 recorded the lowest mean score (M = 2.41, SD = 1.292), followed by Item 3 (M = 2.64, SD = 1.348) and Item 2 (M = 2.87, SD = 1.411). Only Item 1 (M = 3.48, SD = 1.301) was accepted from this variable group. Despite the rejection of several key partnership indicators, the high mean scores on the insecurity items pulled the Grand Mean up to 3.40 (SD = 1.210), resulting in an overall acceptance for the table.

4.1. Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression analysis at a 0.05 level of significance.

- H₀₁: Physical security infrastructure investment has no significant effect on the level of insecurity among SMEs in Anambra State.
- H₀₂: Local community policing partnerships have no significant effect on the level of insecurity among SMEs in Anambra State.

Table 3 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.688 ^a	0.473	0.469	0.74123

a. Predictors: (Constant), Local Community Policing Partnerships, Physical Security Infrastructure Investment

The Model Summary in Table 3 shows a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.688, indicating a strong positive relationship between the predictor variables (physical security infrastructure investment, local community policing partnerships) and the dependent variable (level of insecurity). The R Square value of 0.473 indicates that approximately 47.3% of the variance in the level of insecurity among SMEs can be explained by the two security strategies combined.

Table 4 ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	146.438	2	73.219	133.241	0.000 ^b
Residual	162.681	296	0.5496		
Total	309.119	298			

a. Dependent Variable: Level of Insecurity; b. Predictors: (Constant), Local Community Policing Partnerships, Physical Security Infrastructure Investment

The ANOVA in Table 4 is used to determine the overall significance of the regression model. The F-statistic of 133.241 with a significance value (p-value) of .000, which is less than the alpha level of 0.05, indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. This means that the combination of physical security infrastructure investment and local community policing partnerships is a significant predictor of the level of insecurity among SMEs.

Table 5 Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.811	0.203		23.688	0.000
Physical Security Infrastructure Investment	-0.577	0.048	-0.613	-12.011	0.000
Local Community Policing Partnerships	-0.214	0.053	-0.206	-4.032	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Level of Insecurity; **Source:** SPSS Output

The Coefficients in Table 5 shows the individual contribution of each predictor variable.

- **Physical Security Infrastructure Investment:** This variable has a beta coefficient (β) of -0.613 and a significance value of .000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_{01}). This indicates that investment in physical security infrastructure has a strong, statistically significant negative effect on the level of insecurity.
- **Local Community Policing Partnerships:** This variable has a beta coefficient (β) of -0.206 and a significance value of .000. As the p-value is less than 0.05, we also reject the null hypothesis (H_{02}). This shows that local community policing partnerships have a statistically significant negative effect on the level of insecurity, although its impact is weaker compared to physical security infrastructure.

5. Discussion of Results

The finding that physical security infrastructure investment has a significant negative effect on insecurity among SMEs is logical within the volatile Nigerian context. This result suggests that in an environment with high crime rates, business owners prioritize tangible, controllable, and immediate forms of protection. According to Contingency Theory, this task-oriented strategy represents the most rational "fit" for a situation demanding a direct and visible response to physical threats. SME owners can directly control the implementation and operation of CCTV, guards, and alarms, offering a more reliable sense of security than external collaborations. This finding aligns with the research of Ojiagu and Nzewi (2019) and Amadi and Eke (2024), who both established that severe physical threats like armed robbery and kidnapping directly undermine SME survival, thus justifying the strong reliance on physical countermeasures. Similarly, the work of Maisaje, Salisu, and Dakum (2025), which linked various forms of insecurity to poor business performance, further supports the rationale for SMEs to heavily invest in protective infrastructure to safeguard their assets and ensure operational continuity.

The study also found that local community policing partnerships have a significant, albeit weaker, effect on reducing insecurity. The diminished impact of this strategy can be attributed to the well-documented challenges of police-citizen relations in Nigeria, including deep-seated mistrust and perceived institutional inadequacies. While SMEs may engage with informal vigilante groups, their reluctance to fully trust and integrate with formal law enforcement dilutes the potential effectiveness of this relationship-oriented approach. This aligns with the contingency perspective, which would suggest that the effectiveness of a collaborative strategy is contingent upon favorable leader-member relations, which are evidently strained in this context. This result is consistent with the findings of Leawat and Usman (2025) and Otodo, Iton, Njibi, and Waziri (2025), who both acknowledged the potential of community policing while simultaneously highlighting significant barriers like a lack of resources and persistent public suspicion, which this study confirms empirically weaken its overall impact for businesses.

5.1. Summary of Findings

The study's findings, based on the results of the hypotheses tests, are as follows:

- Physical security infrastructure investment was found to have a strong, statistically significant negative effect on the level of insecurity among SMEs in Anambra State ($\beta = -0.613$, $t = -12.011$, $p = .000$). The implication is that direct investment in tangible security assets is a highly effective, primary strategy for businesses to reduce security threats.

- Local community policing partnerships were also found to have a statistically significant negative effect on the level of insecurity among SMEs in Anambra State, though the effect was weaker ($\beta = -0.206$, $t = -4.032$, $p = .000$). This implies that while collaborative security efforts are beneficial, they currently serve as a secondary, less potent strategy for risk mitigation compared to self-managed physical security.

6. Conclusion

For Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Anambra State, security is not a partnership but a fortress; they have been compelled to rely on the tangible defenses they can build and control themselves because the drawbridge of trust in formal community policing has been effectively raised, leaving them to fend for their own survival.

Recommendations

- SME Owners and Managers should continue to prioritize investment in layered physical security infrastructure while actively seeking modern, cost-effective technological integrations to maximize protection and operational efficiency.
- The Nigerian Police Force must urgently design and implement transparent, business-focused outreach programs to actively rebuild the trust that is currently lacking, which is essential for fostering the intelligence sharing needed for effective community partnerships.
- Local Government Authorities should create frameworks to formalize and support the existing collaborations between SMEs and local vigilante groups, thereby enhancing their legitimacy and improving coordination with official law enforcement.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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