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**PROJECT REPORT**

**FOSTERING RELATIONS: A SUCCESSFUL ENGAGEMENT POSITIVE INITIATIVE BETWEEN YOUTHS AND POLICE OFFICERS AT THE ATHI RIVER WEIGHBRIDGE STATION**

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**Introduction and Background**

The disparate treatment and reactions of various demographic groups towards law enforcement can be attributed to the police's differential targeting of specific groups. These variables have a substantial impact on the way in which individuals from various age cohorts, ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic classes, and domicile regions interact with the legal system (Motley & Joe, 2018). Due to procedural inequity, economically disadvantaged minority groups are disproportionately affected. Potential consequences of these incidents include a potential shift in the degree of collaboration between law enforcement and affected citizens. Furthermore, the presence of suspicions among individuals concerning the possible activities of law enforcement may erode the trust that the police have in the persons entrusted to their protection (Hinton et al., 2018). There is a link between the stigmatization of minority regions and poor opinions of police officers among ethnic minority young people, particularly in places where enforcement occurs frequently. These negative encounters with the police may jeopardize their feeling of community and citizenship.

The development of tensions and confrontations between young people and law enforcement has become a major concern in many communities in recent years. Law enforcement officials have several opportunities to communicate with young people, as thousands of Kenyan youth have daily face-to-face interactions with these agencies (GCERF, 2021). A positive interaction with the police clearly predicts positive attitudes between the two groups, whereas bad interactions indicate negative attitudes between the two groups. According to recent research, young people living in low-income metropolitan areas have prejudiced attitudes against the police (Calvert et al., 2020). They communicate their dissatisfaction with law enforcement and societal marginalization by showing disdain and distrust. Furthermore, the police have prejudices against minority youth and make judgments against them based on their tribe, age, appearance, and socioeconomic status.

The attitudes presented by the teenagers in their interaction with police appear to match the current thinking of today's youth. Local law enforcement organizations are working together to resolve the tense relationship between children and police officers that was highlighted by this unfortunate incident (GCERF, 2021). Contemporary youth hold a far more pessimistic perception of law enforcement and are particularly concerned about crime in their areas. Recent research has revealed evidence of the prevalent attitudes among today's youth, which have remained stable over the last several years. Furthermore, the study found a considerable reduction in these feelings during the last few years (Fine et al., 2020). This study investigates the perspectives of young people and law enforcement officers in attempt to alter their beliefs.

The goal of this project was to develop a program that would allow for open conversation between young people and law enforcement about sensitive issues. The implementation of this program will give communities the opportunity to learn about the police force in a more intimate and practical way, rather than just theoretically. The current literature on contacts between minors and law enforcement lacks a thorough examination of the effects on participants (Lorey & Fegert, 2021). Many teenagers come into contact with the criminal justice system before being caught or appearing in court, which shapes their perceptions of it throughout their early years. Urban teens are frequently subjected to constant surveillance and inspection, as seen where cameras are used in public living facilities (Fine et al., 2020). A child's worldview can be strongly shaped by their parents, teachers, peers, and even media characters.

The Weighbridge station, a critical point for transport and logistics, faced not only accusations of corruption from the general public but also internal challenges with strained relations between Kenya National Highway Authority (KeNHA) workers and Police officers. These issues resulted in a breakdown of communication, lack of teamwork, and an inability to resolve internal conflicts, impacting the discharge of duties at this facility. Recognizing the urgent need for intervention, this project aimed to address these challenges through a comprehensive engagement strategy.

Athi River (also known as Mavoko) is a town on the eastern outskirts of Nairobi along the Nairobi-Mombasa road. The administrative hub of the Mavoko Municipal Council is in Machakos County, and it houses the council's headquarters. The town, which takes its name from the Athi-Galana River, has grown from a railway substation created in the 1920s to a major industrial hub. The names "Athi River Town" and "cement and steel factories" have become nearly synonymous, as has the textile-oriented Export Processing Zone (EPZ) (Gitau, 2021). According to the Kenya Population and Housing Census, Machakos County in Kenya has a population of 1,421,932 and a population density of 239 persons per square kilometer. The Kenya Bureau of Statistics published this report in 2019. The Ministry of Roads built the weighbridge in 1979, and truck drivers must wait in long lineups to have their vehicles weighed. "Mlolongo" means "extended sequence" in Swahili. Large vehicles traveling along the Northern Corridor from Mombasa Port to Nairobi and beyond in Western Kenya or neighboring East African nations are required to weigh at the Athi River/Mlolongo Station (Gitau, 2021).



Figure 1: Athi River Weighbridge in Mlolongo

**Problem Statement**

Several incidents of frustrating policing have occurred, creating a sense of disproportionate policing among young people from ethnic minorities. In addition, they believe that the police regard them with suspicion and treat them differently than other young people. These unfavorable experiences with the police may jeopardize their feeling of community and citizenship (Calvert et al., 2020). There is a link between the stigmatization of minority neighborhoods and bad sentiments of police officers among ethnic minority adolescents, especially in communities where policing is dominant (Braga et al., 2019). Furthermore, negative stories and prejudiced viewpoints held by young people about the police have a substantial impact on their attitudes toward law enforcement and the consequent clashes that occur during their routine interactions with authorities.

In Kenya, little research exists about the relationship between the police and youth in low social economic areas. In these regions, there is a narrative that youths there are unruly and police have developed a negative attitude towards any youth who is unkempt, thinking they are either thugs, thieves or are associated with malicious activities like drug trafficking. The Athi river weighbridge provides a setting where youth from low class social economic backgrounds are available. With the population of Kenya being mainly composed of the youth, such setting also has about 80% of its population being the youth, with many of them acting a drivers of the heavy vehicles, workers in neighboring industrial parks, and others doing various manual jobs. While there could be genuine instances of malpractices among the youth, some may have been unfairly handled by the police in the process of law enforcement. As a result, the youth may have developed negative attitudes towards the law enforcers, making it had for these two groups to have positive interactions and engagements on neutral grounds.

This study, therefore, intends to develop measures that enhance positive relations between the youth and the police. In many occasions, policies have been developed that affect the youth without involving them as key stakeholders in making such critical policies. For such settings, the youth are usually ignored as they are thought to be illiterate or lack the ability to share on such critical development in policy. This study is determined to show the importance of involving the youth in decision making in ‘*Mlolongo”* area of Athi river. By addressing this issue, the study is aimed at fostering positive police and youth interactions at the weighbridge and its environment.

**Goals and Objectives**

The main goal of this work is to foster positive interactions between police and youth from lower social economic settings. Studies on youth-police relations have shown the importance of analyzing young people's attitudes toward law enforcement. Research has shown that young people's perceptions toward law enforcement have a major impact on their likelihood of engaging with the police (Calvert et al., 2020). Research has primarily concentrated on finding factors that influence teenagers' attitudes about law enforcement, rather than analyzing police personnel' attitudes toward young people.

Every incident of adverse interaction between law enforcement and youths might have different implications, which can compound and increase. According to Calvert et al. (2020), to ensure public safety, police prioritize efforts targeted at preventing antisocial and delinquent conduct among juveniles, as this demographic is disproportionately associated with criminal activity. However, law enforcement agents exacerbate youths' hatred against the police by treating them as if they were rebels or insurgents. Because of these views and their impression of unfair treatment during contacts, young people may develop a lack of respect and distrust for police officers. When police personnel fail to show respect for young people, it can cause a shift in their attitudes toward law enforcement, resulting in animosity and unpleasant interactions for the adolescents involved (Minhas & Walsh, 2021). A single negative interaction can have a greater impact on the formation of positive relationships between law enforcement and young people than ten positive encounters. Research shows that these connections are formed each time a law enforcement officer interacts with the youth, and the type of the encounter impacts the intensity of the relationship.

Various projects have been undertaken across the country with the goal of strengthening the relationship between law enforcement agencies and young adults. This area includes community policing, police training, diversion programs (whether led by the police or other entities), and preventative activities focused on schools or neighborhoods. Organizations such as police athletic leagues aim to strengthen the bond between law enforcement officers and young people (Ndili, 2016). Certain programs, such as NACADAs, aim to prevent substance abuse among young people, whilst others include features aimed to improve interactions between law enforcement and young people. Community policing activities aim to improve neighborhood safety while decreasing crime rate (Ndili, 2016)s. These programs aim to alter young people's views and behaviors toward law enforcement by encouraging collaboration between the two. As a result, crime and delinquency rates decrease.

The main objectives for this study are:

To increase positive relations between the youth and the police.

To increase Youth participation in decision making

**Challenges and Mitigation**

An initial and significant challenge to this research is certain youth preexisting negative attitudes against law enforcement. The current level of discontent among young people is already at an all-time high, owing mostly to governments' incapacity to meet their expectations in terms of service quality and meaningful participation in a transparent and truthful policymaking process. Violence significantly impedes young people's involvement, active participation at the grassroots level, and ability to contribute meaningfully to societal growth (Hockin, 2017). The goal of presenting case studies involving adolescents engaging in peacebuilding and community development should be to provide concrete examples from real life. To effectively perform this task, measures have to be in place to overcome the preexisting barriers. To address this, community oriented programs may be established where law enforcers can be involved in several community projects and events. This will enable the police to create rapport with the youth first before trying to involve them in any serious endeavors in the community (Hockin, 2017). Through this initiative, the youth will build trust overcoming existing trust issues.

To accommodate the busy schedules of both juveniles and law enforcement professionals, training programs were scheduled at various times throughout the week, including weekends. This flexibility was critical in allowing people to fit training into their busy schedules without missing work. To solve the difficulty of acquiring an adequate number of participants, we used personalized outreach and novel recruitment tactics. The project attempted to enlist a sufficient number of people, thus it used personalized outreach and targeted recruitment approaches. The problem of policemen leaving the station to take part was overcome by actively recruiting recently assigned police officers to participate in the operation. The goal of this method was to preserve continuity and avoid any delays in participation caused by officer changes. Efforts to reduce the hesitation of certain individuals were stepped up through increased contact and a more targeted approach. Other efforts were made with good intentions to assuage worries and persuade reluctant participants to engage in the program.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**Literature Review**

**Law Enforcement programs and the Youth**

"Police-youth contact" refers to any engagement between a minor and a law enforcement officer, whether the officer is a sworn member of a local, state, or federal agency or a member of a specialized jurisdictional unit, such as university, park, or transit police. Adolescents and law enforcement officers can interact in a variety of ways, including established programs like police athletic leagues and informal contacts in settings such as educational institutions and neighborhoods (Watkins & Maume, 2012). When young people fall victim to illegal activities, they are inevitably involved in certain encounters. When police interact with adolescents, they serve as liaisons between the youth and the justice system, which can lead to informal resolutions such as programs and services that keep young people out of the system, as well as formal resolutions such as arrest and involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems (Orr, 2020). The decisions made during encounters with teens can influence the options accessible to other decision-makers in the juvenile justice system.

Interactions between law enforcement and young people are common, with the highest frequency reported among those aged 18 to 24. Despite their importance and frequency, researchers have given little attention to the dynamics of interactions between law enforcement and young people (Lorey & Fegert, 2021). Although official police data provides essential context for the frequency of interactions between law enforcement and minors, it lacks detail about the nature of these encounters and the reciprocal influence of officers' actions on young people's behavior. The majority of studies have focused on juveniles' attitudes toward law enforcement or the consequences of their arrest. While academics largely agree that age and color influence youth views about police, there is less agreement on the impact of other factors such as gender and socioeconomic status, as well as when these factors begin to alter interactions between police and the youth (Celic, 2021).

**Prevalence of Police-Youth Contact**

Historically, there has been a lack of trust between young people and law enforcement officers in Kenya. Young people commit a sizable majority of the violent crimes and criminal activity carried out by gang members. Law enforcement officials have faced accusations of using excessive force and have responded by enforcing strict rules against youth gangs (GCERF, 2021). According to an Amnesty International assessment, police changes in Kenya were found inadequate, particularly in dealing with confrontations involving juvenile detainees, and had a minor impact. The Mombasa County Government and numerous civil society organizations have placed a high value on building trust between the police and the youth. This is done to break the cycle of mistrust that has hampered previous efforts to improve ties between these two groups (Amnesty, 2023).

According to Javdani (2019) and (Fine et al., 2020), when police officers meet with young people while performing their responsibilities, the children generally have negative attitudes toward the police, have little faith in them, and grade the officers poorly in terms of competency, trustworthiness, and overall performance. These emotions might stem from either perceived or actual experiences of police harassment or targeting. In addition, law enforcement officers have remarked that dealing with teenagers can be extremely challenging due to their proclivity for violent and uncooperative behavior (Orr, 2020). The locals of Athi river are extremely frustrated, prompting the police to openly accuse them of being uncooperative and aggravating the violence in the area. Both the police and the children have genuine issues, and resolving this problem will require both parties to work together.

Considering the community and all parties, this adversarial partnership is untenable. Unfavorable interactions promote distrust, and violent contacts enhance hatred on both sides, perpetuating a damaging cycle of dissatisfaction and antagonism that creates a considerable danger of escalation and threatens community security. To begin the process of reconciliation between the youth of Athi river sub-county and the police, it is critical to prioritize those who have been most directly affected by the crisis, especially the youth and the police officers themselves.

**Youth Attitudes**

According to a recent study by Celic (2021), a variety of factors influence young people's opinions about law enforcement. The teenage participants' prior interactions with law enforcement, their identification with the delinquent subculture, and their level of community service participation all had a significant impact on their attitudes toward law enforcement. Demographic factors such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, and region influenced sentiments toward law enforcement. The study found that white children had more positive attitudes toward law enforcement than their Hispanic and African American counterparts. Based on this study, environmental influences have a significant influence on young people's opinions (Celic, 2021). Studies agree that the study's reliance on suburban youngsters and people of white ethnicity is problematic (Banaji et al., 2021). Because of the greater potential of interactions with law enforcement in cities, future studies should concentrate on diverse children in metropolitan settings. Prior to implementing a program intended to influence young people's viewpoints, it is critical to have a thorough grasp of how these attitudes influence their social interactions. When developing an innovative program to establish ties between young people and law enforcement, it is critical to consider their environment and context. Creating a positive environment for young people to interact with law enforcement officials has the ability to change their perspective. A young person's perspective can influence their social interactions as well as their level of dedication (Calvert et al., 2020). The attitudes of the young participants are an important factor that requires further investigation of its possible effects on other areas of life.

**Police Attitudes**

Surprisingly little is known about how police officers feel while dealing with young people. However, according to the scant literature on the subject, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's study identified a number of traits that affect police officers' attitudes toward juveniles. This study looked at age, gender, race, socioeconomic level, training, and workload among law enforcement officers. These individual officer qualities indicated the likelihood of an arrest as well as the officer's perception of the child. Other studies have found that individual officer characteristics and organizational variables such as the department's culture and ideals had the greatest influence on police views toward children (Moon, 2020). Based on these data, it appears that younger police officers are more tolerant and accommodating to young individuals than their older counterparts. When developing a program to improve people's attitudes toward young people and police, keep these characteristics in mind.

**Theoretical Framework**

This project draws upon the social identity Theory and Contact Hypothesis psychological theory. Acknowledging the distinct identity of KeNHA workers and Police officers, the theory guided the project in facilitating positive interactions and breaking down barriers to understanding.

**Social Identity Theory and Police Youth Interactions**

The term "social identity" refers to an individual's sense of their in-group (those with whom they identify) and out-group (those with whom they differ). Personal identity, on the other hand, encompasses not just an individual's interactions with others but also their perspective and contact with the distinctive features that set them apart. Self-categorization theory states that when a person's social identity or group membership is prominent, they frequently place themselves and others into categories based on the dominant group's defining ideas, attitudes, and behaviors (Hazen & Brank, 2023).

Furthermore, members of an in-group benefit from in-group partiality, vulnerability, and thoughtful treatment, all of which are self-preservation-oriented cognitive frames and behaviors. Recent research shows that people with much higher social power are more influenced by their group membership (Radburn et al., 2020). This is due to power imbalances between groups and their members, which both establish and perpetuate social groups. Because of the tendency to categorize oneself, people typically analyze and criticize the behavior of others based on the group's defining prototypes, which include its perspectives, attitudes, and actions (Boduszek et al., 2020). The location, purpose, activity, and social position of other people there can all have an impact on active and accepted prototypes.

Individuals who feel a strong sense of belonging and identification with their group, perceive similarities between themselves and other members, and see alignment between their actions and the group's values are more likely to conform to group norms and engage in group-beneficial activities (Radburn et al., 2020). Individuals who have a strong connection between their personal and social identities are more likely to experience events or situations that engage both identities. As a result, aggressive activities in support of a specific group, as well as actions done to protect oneself, are more likely when injury to oneself is viewed as a threat to the group as a whole (Boduszek et al., 2020). Power disparities within or between groups amplify the effects. People's individual and collective identities influence how they react to social situations (Hazen & Brank, 2023). This is especially true in situations where an individual feels vulnerable or at risk due to something related to their personal identity.

Both civilians and police accept and support an adversarial attitude among themselves, which builds and reinforces the police as a social group and, as a result, as an active social identity in specific circumstances. Uniforms, police cars, and badges are all signs of professionalism that show the public and fellow officers that the police force is unified and capable. These signals establish the police's social identity, thus defining the group's initial borders (Radburn et al., 2020). Historical and empirical evidence suggests that police officers distrust and remove themselves from the public due to their predispositions, socialization during police training, and field experiences.

Due to factors such as different work schedules and specialized training, police officers are structurally separated from the populations they are tasked with protecting. Officers will get education from experienced or retired police officers while at the school and during in-service training (Boduszek et al., 2020). These trainings are designed to familiarize them with the expectations, appropriate reactions, and effective interactions with civilians and fellow cops through both formal instruction and informal chats (Hazen & Brank, 2023). This socialization process encourages the formation of close relationships with others who share similar ideas and reasoning. According to research conducted in a variety of sectors, police officers rely on one another for support and companionship while also feeling isolated and distrustful of the larger population. Even when police officer training takes place in a university setting, tensions between the public and law enforcement escalate when the curriculum includes additional hands-on field exercises.

When police officers engage with people from other groups, their in-group privileges and prejudices can impact their actions. Officers who have a strong sense of affiliation with their police group are more committed to the organization's mission and strategies, more open to community policing and proactive techniques, and experience less job-related stress (Radburn et al., 2020). However, police personnel's social identities include bias toward certain groups, such as citizens. This prejudice is obvious in their expression of cynicism and skepticism, derision, and a reduction in proactive policing when dangers are identified (Boduszek et al., 2020). As previously indicated, civilian-police encounters demonstrate a similar level of sensitivity to social identification (Hazen & Brank, 2023). Contrary to popular belief, police personnel do not have a common social identity with the general public. Police-civilian interactions can be better described as interactions between multiple social entities rather than within a single entity

**The Contact Hypothesis**

The Contact Hypothesis, a psychological theory, proposes that direct involvement between people of various cultural backgrounds has the potential to minimize bias, strengthen intergroup bonds, and foster greater understanding. This theory proposes that, under certain situations, interpersonal interaction can lead to members from various cultures developing more favorable perspectives, reducing stereotypes, and fostering greater mutual acceptance. (Mcleod, 2021).

Cognitive research has found a number of barriers to information acquisition that contradict our preexisting ideas and biases. Nonetheless, contrary to the claims of the contact theory and cognitive tests, the scientific literature frequently reveals positive benefits. This phenomenon is influenced by a variety of mechanisms, one of which is the acquisition of knowledge about the outgroup (Laiden, 2018). The implementation of ideal and ongoing intergroup contact, by reducing anxiety and encouraging attitude modification in response to conduct, has the ability to modify attitudes. One potential technique for minimizing intergroup bias is to promote good feelings through cross-group contacts. The presence of a friend from an outgroup may have serious effects, potentially affecting people from other outgroups (Vezzali et al., 2022). Furthermore, good intergroup contact minimizes bias by shedding information on both the in-group and the out-group, leading to a more inclusive attitude toward out-groups in general.

**Change Theory and how it was applied**

If the police receive ethics and integrity training and communicate effectively with the youth at the Kenya National Highway authority employees then they are more likely to understand each other's perspectives and build trust. Consequently, this can lead to improved relations between the two parties.

The project took all the participants through a series of ethics and integrity training, conflict and mediations sessions, which helps the youths and police to address their grievances in a constructive manner. hence, reducing misunderstandings and tensions, fostering positive relations.

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**Methods and Design**

The complexity of this project and my diverse range of participants from the KENYA national Highway authority and the police officers, a mixed method was use the most appropriate methodological which combine both qualitative and quantitative to provide a comprehensive understanding of the project impact and outcome.

The 30 participants from the KENHA and Police station staff were chosen according to their age, job roles and levels of experience and later a pre intervention survey was administered before the onset the project and later at the end of the project to evaluate and inquired the respondent's perspective on the world and significant life experiences relating to conflict and mediation. Prior research on police legitimacy informed the development of interview questions.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**Interventions and Activities**

One key intervention that was carried out in this study is ethics and integrity training of the police. Because of the importance of their jobs and the possibility of legal ramifications, law enforcement officers must undergo extensive ethics training. Immoral behavior by police personnel undermines their function as public servants, erodes public trust in law enforcement, and tarnishes the global image of law enforcement. The police's lack of professionalism has resulted in a spike of legal action. According to the United States Supreme Court, if it can be shown that a city's failure to offer training resulted in a violation of a citizen's constitutional rights, the city can be held accountable. (Singh, 2022) According to several groups and individuals inside the police force, ethics training is critical in bridging the gap between official policy and officer practice. This training sets and then reinforces essential rules for proper conduct (Radburn et al., 2020).

Officers undertake training that exposes them to real-world ethical challenges and conditions before serving on active duty or moving up the professional ladder. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) established an Ad Hoc Committee on Police Image and Ethics in the mid-1990s, which drew attention to the importance of delivering law enforcement ethics training. The committee identified a number of areas that require this type of training in police enforcement. These concerns included an increase in legal conflicts, devastation to one's professional and personal life, negative public impression, and, unfortunately, cases of cops ending their own lives. The IACP made many recommendations based on a consultant thorough assessment of requirements (Reamer, 2019). These measures include ensuring that all officers receive specialized ethics training at some point in their careers, enriching the training curriculum by incorporating decision-making frameworks, engaging in value discussions, and conducting critical thinking exercises, and tailoring the training methods to adult learners by utilizing adult-learning models.

Initially, the individuals emphasized the importance of financing community-oriented projects aimed at fostering a sense of ease among young individuals when engaging with police enforcement. Several activities that received money included youth mentorship programs, educational seminars, and recreational events aimed at promoting mutual understanding and trust. Moreover, there was unanimous consensus that police agencies should allocate resources to support training initiatives focused on instructing de-escalation strategies, promoting cultural sensitivity, and facilitating effective interactions with youngsters. Furthermore, participants in the conversation emphasized the need of financing endeavors that facilitate the collaboration and ongoing contact between youth organizations and law enforcement agencies.

The other intervention in this study was using Focus Group discussions. Focus groups, in which a professional moderator directs a discussion about a certain topic, are an efficient approach of gathering qualitative data. The collective group interaction is a distinguishing feature of focus groups, allowing researchers to investigate how participants collectively understand information and facilitating extensive elicitation of individual perspectives (Beatrice et al., 2023). Focus groups are incorporated into the study design to support culturally grounded research. Focus groups, which use social interaction, can help researchers discover collective cultural knowledge and grasp the diversity of experiences within a group. According to research, focus group interactions reveal shared linguistic patterns as well as common experiences and views of those experiences. Recognizing language sensitivities is an important component of culturally integrated research in situations with a history of violence (Beatrice et al., 2023). Focus groups enable me to study participants' natural speech patterns, uncover phrases they intentionally avoid, investigate concepts they raise while discussing difficulties, and determine their opinions of appropriateness.



Figure 1: *Focus group Discussions for Ethics and Integrity Training*

In this project, I noticed an improvement in the quality of the interview data after organizing focus groups with local residents from each site prior to conducting the interviews. To further understand contextual sensitivity, I watched the natural flow of discussions and the participants' comfort with discussing memories and language. Group interactions also helped to validate previous narratives. Receiving comments and affirmation from my peers allowed me to gain a more detailed grasp of the war events and the resulting dynamics. This information was then used to refine my interview questions. Following individual interviews, I occasionally conducted focus groups to gauge the credibility of the interviewees' stories among other members of their community. However, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the potential benefits of using focus groups as a first step before conducting full interviews with members of the general public.

Another intervention that the study sought was through communication training. Power refers to the interaction between people. Nonetheless, communication is vital to the power dynamic. From this standpoint, the two notions are naturally linked and cannot be considered separate things. Interpersonal contacts, the internet, mainstream media, digital systems, and social media are all examples of different means of communication. Communication is a constant and basic aspect in a networked environment that serves as a framework, method, tool, and cause and effect, originating from and constituting everything (Banaji et al., 2021). Power is defined as the ability to exert great influence, but this is only possible if one can communicate effectively.

The study included police officers who had been taught ways to connect with young people without instilling fear or intimidation. Young people are more receptive to adults' evaluations and criticism, whether delivered verbally or nonverbally. To develop a connection with young people in the community, interact with them whether they are driving, walking, or riding a bicycle. During training, for example, they were instructed to pause briefly and engage in conversation while performing vehicle surveillance. Although it is understandable that some teenagers choose silence, it is vital to remember that even the smallest efforts can have a significant influence. Interactions should be pleasant and entertaining. Exchanging information about your interests and personal life experiences will help you build a deeper and more personal connection with another person. Showcase your unique individuality alongside your police officer credentials.

 In also developing measures to facilitate positive interactions between the police and the youth, team building and cooperation workshops are encouraged. Building positive relationships with adults is an important part of a healthy adolescent's growth. Law enforcement officers are urged to promote good youth development projects within their agencies, such as mentorship, job skill training, and recreational activities. Collaborating with local stakeholder organizations and educational institutions can help young people become involved and form positive relationships, which can then aid with program development. Young people and law enforcement can engage in more structured interactions inside a secure environment that has already been established through collaborations with existing programs and organizations (Calvert et al., 2020). Conversations like these can also lead to events and projects that benefit the entire community. The involvement of younger generations in programming debates fosters a sense of responsibility and long-term viability. Below are some strategies that law enforcement and the community can use to build constructive relationships with young people.

Along with these were other interventions and activities aimed at fostering better attitudes between youth and police. Some include communication training for both the youth and police, attending open group discussion meetings, financial education and police Sacco activities., economic empowerment through financial education and the establishment of a Police Sacco, and developing indicators of positive peace workshop, workshops on indicators of positive peace to foster a shared commitment to community well-being.

**Key Findings and Impact**

All fifteen youth participants completed the pre-test questionnaires in their full. The missing response for Item 6 on the post-test survey was replaced with the average score of the remaining participants. The overall replacement rate for items was 0.9%. The statistical analysis revealed that the young participants' responses improved significantly 80%. The difference between the pretest mean and the posttest was so clear such that the youth had developed good relations with the police. The mean score discrepancies between the two questionnaires remained unchanged by age and gender. The pre- and post-test averages of the 10 Law Enforcement (LE) participants did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship, with only 25% developing positive attitudes towards the youth. These findings show that while the police developed better relationships from after being trained on conflict resolution, other approaches were not very necessary.

Following participation in the program, the data show a significant shift in the youth's opinions regarding law enforcement. However, law enforcement's attitudes toward young people remained unchanged. The program was successful in changing young people's perceptions of law enforcement, but it had no discernible impact on the police's attitudes toward youth. This study underlined the beneficial effects of tailored programs on specific population groups. Research has shown that community-wide events directed directly at vulnerable youth can have a favorable impact. This study revealed some critical factors that are put into programs designed specifically to help vulnerable youth. This strategy is similar to the components discovered in programs geared for at-risk youth, and it has proven to be effective in changing their perceptions.

The current sample of young people demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in attitude from pre- to post-tests. Unfortunately, the evaluation of age-related repercussions was hampered by the small sample size, as did the investigation of racial factors because all of the participants in the study were from Athi river. Unlike the youth, law enforcement officers did not report any major shift in their attitudes toward young people. The police's failure to change their minds could be attributable to a variety of causes. The ATY had the highest level of untrustworthiness among the subjects in this particular group. The cops were also more mature and undoubtedly had stronger attitudes on how to treat young people. Over the course of eleven weeks, these attitudes may have been reinforced in part by persons who did not participate in the program, as well as interactions among adolescents that happened outside of the program. The lack of outstanding results can be attributed to numerous problems of the program's design. Instead of depending on a psychoeducational framework, the intended program used team building tactics and group psychotherapy components. These aspects can make it difficult to sustain complete participation due to each group's heightened emotional state. Law enforcement participants may have difficulty sustaining constant attendance, which can limit their exposure to all areas of the curriculum.

According to the research, the project has had a beneficial impact on young people's perceptions of law enforcement. The program's components focused primarily on opportunities for connection between these two groups of people. Focus Group Discussions is an established program that uses a mentorship system that differs from the one used in this study. The findings highlight the need to provide more opportunities for children and law enforcement to interact in a variety of situations. Instead of a mentorship approach, this study used a structured group strategy to encourage interaction between both groups of participants. As a result, everyone got the opportunity to interact with one another. This group's organizational framework stands out when compared to other well-established initiatives aimed at children and law enforcement. The group technique enables the study's program to be implemented on a broader scale. Significant community engagement could be facilitated as a result. Instead of assigning certain themes to each group, participants in the program are given the freedom to choose topics that match the community's interests for discussion. When executing this program, it is critical to examine the target audience's demographics as well as their specific needs and concerns. This program provides a rigorously planned curriculum that takes into account each community's unique experiences.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**Conclusion**

According to research on youth-police interactions, it is critical to consider how young people see police officers. Previous research has demonstrated that young people's attitudes toward law enforcement are directly related to their likelihood of interacting with police. Predictors of adolescent attitudes toward law enforcement have garnered significantly more attention in research than studies on police attitudes towards children. There has been no research in Kenya on the attitudes and perceptions of youth by police officers stationed at weighbridges. This study aimed to propose a number of approaches to foster positive interactions between police officers and children from low-income communities.

According to the results, the initiative had a considerable impact on the youth's perceptions of law enforcement. However, law enforcement's attitudes toward young people remained unchanged. The program was helpful in changing how adolescents saw law enforcement, but it had no significant influence on police personnel' views toward juveniles. This study emphasized the benefits of tailored programming for specific demographic groups. According to research, organizing community-wide events expressly for at-risk teenagers can be beneficial. From pre- to post-tests, the current sample of kids demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in attitude. Unfortunately, the small sample size made it difficult to analyze age-related repercussions and examine racial characteristics, as all study participants were from the Athi River.

According to the findings, the initiatives have had a positive impact on young people's attitudes toward law enforcement. The program's parts were designed with the primary goal of allowing these two groups of people to interact. An established program called Focus Group Discussions employs a different mentorship technique than the one employed in this study. The findings highlight the need of increasing opportunities for children and law enforcement to connect in a variety of situations. Rather than a mentorship strategy, this study employed a structured group technique to promote interaction between the two participant groups. As a result, everyone was able to talk to one another.

**Recommendations and Policy Implications**

The primary recommendation of the report is to provide police officers with ethics and integrity training. Law enforcement professionals are required to undergo a demanding ethical training program due to the importance of their work and the possible legal ramifications. The immoral behavior of police personnel undermines their position as public servants, erodes public trust in the police force, and tarnishes the agency's global reputation. The police's inefficiency has led to a rise in legal proceedings. Similarly, the outcomes of this study's focus groups among the two cohorts indicated that young individuals expressed predominantly favorable attitudes towards law enforcement. Focus groups are notable for their ability to encourage collective group interaction, allowing researchers to examine how participants collectively grasp material and facilitate in-depth elicitation of individual viewpoints.

In order to foster culturally grounded research, the study design incorporates the integration of focus groups. Focus groups serve as a valuable instrument for academics to comprehend the breadth of experiences within a group and to reveal shared cultural knowledge due to their incorporation of social interaction. Based on the study's findings, it is advised that programs include a variety of aspects to create a suitable climate for good communication between law enforcement authorities and young people (Beatrice et al., 2023). Social contacts outside of the police force have the potential to change young people's perceptions about law enforcement. Given the study's findings, which show that the majority of young people form their beliefs through direct interactions, efforts that promote face-to-face engagement among individuals would have the most influence. The programs should be founded on the development of community partnerships with local youth organizations. Initiatives that promote collaboration between youth and police, resulting in mutual benefits, may emerge.

Several participants believed that training in effective communication with community members was critical for strengthening bonds and encouraging collaboration during exchanges. The findings show that young people's participation with law enforcement in policy debate forums leads to the formation of more favorable attitudes of the police. During the early stages of the fight-or-flight reaction, individuals rely on previous experiences to guide their prospective next action (Anthony, 2018). Officers must learn to control their self-presentation during the first few minutes of contact, as body language, tone of voice, and personal pleasantries all influence decision-making throughout the approach.

Law enforcement officials should use extra caution when evaluating the proper level of force to use to ensure cooperation, rather than relying simply on the "minimal necessary" approach. Emphasizing standards and offering training on the use of force should be given top importance, particularly in cases involving young people. Interestingly, participants of this study understood the need of police-youth partnerships. The youth would feel empowered and witness the police force's commitment to serve them through collaborative projects led by young people in collaboration with law enforcement agencies. The importance of creating opportunities for children and cops to interact in order to enhance teamwork cannot be overstated, especially given the gimmick (Anthony, 2018). Through joint participation in these projects, young people would be able to contact with law enforcement officers who patrol their neighborhood, promoting a non-threatening environment.

**Sustainability Plan**

The findings of this study show that young people's attitudes towards law enforcement are complex and nuanced. As a result, in future studies, academics must explore deeper into these topics. Participants had different perceptions of law enforcement agents, considering some as good and others as evil, depending on the situation. They saw a clear distinction between "the police" as a collective institution endowed with authoritative power by the government and the individual police officers they encountered in their communities (Green et al., 2019). These findings show that the procedures used to quantify police emotions in various polls may be ineffective because they ignore nuances. If researchers ask survey participants to select a response that suggests largely favorable or unfavorable views, they risk drawing inaccurate conclusions about public attitudes about law enforcement.

More research is needed to determine the impact of social media on public opinion and perception. Previous study in other disciplines found a link between media exposure and people's attitudes and views. There is a wealth of literature studying the impact of social media on people's opinions, but there is a scarcity of research into its relationship with law enforcement (Boehme et al., 2020). According to the findings of this study, those who deal with law enforcement on a regular basis may have different levels of influence from social media than those who interact with law enforcement less frequently. People's perceptions of various police-citizen encounters appear to be influenced by information they obtain via social media. Previous study on vicarious interactions with law enforcement has primarily focused on how viewers develop a connection and demonstrate empathy for the citizen, while the officer's perspective has received very less attention. According to some people, the impact of viral events on social media is fleeting since they do not attract sustained attention. Further research is needed to investigate the dynamic interaction between changing attitudes and exposure to social media.

According to the study, the reasons and objectives individuals assigned to police behavior influenced their perceptions of fairness. However, there is a scarcity of study into how young people interpret and justify police actions. Participants who believed that officers were motivated by financial necessity or conformity to orders/quotas were more likely to blame state officials than individual cops (Green et al., 2019). When participants felt that an officer's purpose was to meddle with local inhabitants, their cognitive and behavioral responses differed. More research is needed to investigate the relationships between viewpoints on legitimacy, levels of collaboration or disobedience, and the interpretation of motivation and intention.

Surveys of past interactions or official records, such as police reports, are widely utilized as data sources for study on police-child interactions. The information is useful for doing a complete examination of connections in broad terms. However, it does not reliably capture nuanced cues such as body language or vocal intonation, which appear to have a major impact on participants' long-term attitudes of the police (Boehme et al., 2020). Collecting data through ride-along or field observations would improve study in this area, providing for a better understanding of the impact of little behaviors on relationships and how others perceive them. Future research that combine survey data with field observations can provide a more in-depth knowledge of the relationship between behaviors and attitudes soon following an interaction.

Future community-based policing operations should consider the potential impact of internet-based programs on police-youth relations. The findings of this study support the idea that such programs can have a positive impact on young people's attitudes toward the police. Other research on police collaboration, however, has found that young people's reporting practices diverge from their beliefs. The adolescents who participated in the program showed considerable improvements in their perceptions of law enforcement (Leroux & McShane, 2017). However, this did not always result in improved cooperation in terms of reporting crimes or posing as victims. Many adolescents avoid reporting criminal actions to authorities because they are afraid of being socially isolated or humiliated. Regardless of whether young people have positive sentiments toward law enforcement, the potential negative repercussions of contact with the police may be judged to outweigh the benefits.

Future programs should assess whether pleasant interactions with police influence young people's reporting patterns. Undoubtedly, it would be beneficial for future efforts to encourage young people to report criminal activity, particularly if they have personally experienced trauma. Given the dramatically increased frequency of victimization among minors, law enforcement organizations must improve public perception of their work and encourage citizen reporting of police-related incidents (Leroux & McShane, 2017). Implementing these strategies with young people in the community will undoubtedly improve the effectiveness of law enforcement and the overall safety of vulnerable and victimized youth.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1: Attitudes Toward Police Scale**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Attitudes Of Youth** | **Strongly**  **Disagree** | **Disagree** | **Uncertain** | **Agree** | **Strongly**  **Agree** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. It is possible for youth and police officers to  get along | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Police officers help keep my neighborhood | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| safe |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Police officers and youth in my community | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| can work together |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Youth and police officers can have positive | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| relationships |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. I feel comfortable when I see police on the  street | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 6. Police officers have a positive role in society | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7. I expect that the police I see on the street will | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| bother my friends or me |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8. I feel positively toward police officers | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 9. Police officers play an important role in | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| stopping crime |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10. I generally have positive interactions with  police officers | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 11. Police officers are respectful of people like  me | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 12. Police officers don’t communicate very well | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 13. Police officers show concern when you ask | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| them questions |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14. Police officers play an important role in  making my neighborhood a better place | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |

***Source:***[*https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1435&context=psyd*](https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1435&context=psyd)

**Appendix 2: Attitudes Toward Youth Scale**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Attitudes of Law Enforcement | Strongly  Disagree | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Strongly  Agree |
| 1. Young people are positive assets to my | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| community |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Young people are hard-working | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 3. Teenagers are disrespectful | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 4. Teenage behavior is a major problem for  police today | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 5. Teenagers are lazy | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 6. Young people are self-centered | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 7. Young people are thoughtful | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 8. Teenagers who make mistakes deserve a second chance | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 9. Teenagers are motivated | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 10. Teenagers are courteous | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |

***Source:***[*https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1435&context=psyd*](https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1435&context=psyd)

**Appendix 3: Training Activities**



