



## CITIZENS' SATISFACTION WITH POLICE RECRUITMENT EXERCISE: A CASE STUDY OF BOMET COUNTY, KENYA.

*Rotich K.<sup>1\*</sup>, Mbuba J. M.<sup>2</sup> and Kiboro C. N.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>*Chuka University, Department of Humanities, P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka*

<sup>2</sup>*2101 E Coliseum Blvd, Neff 260H, Fort Wayne, Indian 46805, USA.*

*\*rotikibu@gmail.com*

[cnkonge@chuka.ac.ke](mailto:cnkonge@chuka.ac.ke)

[brotich@chuka.ac.ke](mailto:brotich@chuka.ac.ke)

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### ABSTRACT

Previous studies have examined citizens' perceptions of the police. However, studies on the citizens' perception of police recruitment are scarce. Thus, this study aimed at evaluating citizens' attitudes toward the recruitment of new police officers into the national police service. The study's objective was to determine citizens' satisfaction with the way police recruitment exercise is carried out in Bomet County, Kenya. The target population for the study was 875,689 citizens. This study used a descriptive research design. The simple random sampling method was used to pick three Sub-Counties in Bomet County and the respondents for the study from those selected sub-counties. A questionnaire with a series of statements on the Likert Scale was used to collect data. Analysis of the data was done through frequencies, percentages, and Chi-Square. The results were presented through frequency distribution tables. The study found that the respondents were not satisfied with the way police recruitment is done. The police recruitment exercise is still affected by police illegitimacy and other various vices such as bribery, nepotism, favoritism, and discrimination. The conclusion was that police the recruitment process is still below the recommended fairness, accountability, and transparency standards. These low standards during recruitment make citizens feel dissatisfied with police recruitment exercises.

**Keywords:** Citizens' satisfaction, police recruitment exercise

### INTRODUCTION

Internationally, various studies are conducted on public attitudes toward the police (Gaarder, Rodriguez & Zarts, 2004; He, Ren, Zhao & Bills, 2017; Rosenbaum et al., 2005). The United States police departments have continuously used public surveys as an appropriate way to measure public perceptions toward the agents of law enforcement (Brown & Benedict, 2002). Several studies carried out in the United States (U.S), Europe, and Australia show that the public holds favorable attitudes toward the police (Benedict, Brown & Bower, 2000; Cao, Frank & Cullen, 1996; Reisig &

Giacomazzi, 1998). However, it is becoming more apparent that the number of those with less favorable attitudes toward law enforcement is increasing (Yuksel & Tepe, 2013). This argument is corroborated by the GALL UP poll (2021) findings that, following public protest after the killing of George Floyd at his time of arrest in Minneapolis in late May 2020, citizens' confidence in the police reduced significantly in the U.S.

A large body of literature on how people feel about police officers and police satisfaction has reported findings on socio-demographic characteristics, safety, and police contact (Yuksel & Tepe, 2013). Other research has identified two aspects of police behavior that influence citizens' evaluations and opinions: acts about the process and actions about the result (Tyler, 2006). The degree to which police treat civilians in a procedurally just manner, regardless of whether the officers' acts are lawful or not, is one of the process-based elements that might influence citizens' satisfaction with police (Tankebe, 2009). The way police actions and their outcomes are viewed during police recruitment determines whether citizens will be satisfied or not. According to most studies, positive interaction with the police increases perceptions of the police, but harmful contact has the reverse impact (Worrall, 1999; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Mbuba, 2010). The National Police Service (NPS) recruitment process involves actions and outcomes that determine citizens' evaluation of the police.

Each year, the National Police Service Commission (NPSC) in Kenya recruit new officers to increase their number in the National Police Service (NPS). This is done to both increase the number of officers, improve the police-citizen ratio, and replace those who have exited the service for various reasons (Mbuba, 2017). This shows that recruitment is critical in police organizations.

Some of the recruitment drives' challenges include corruption, patronage, nepotism, and favoritism (Gommans & Musumbu, 2014). Nevertheless, the NPS recruitment is portrayed as free, fair, transparent, and accountable. However, it has been reported that Kenyan police service has misplaced its glory in terms of performance through the years. The loss of glory is because their recruitment exercises are riddled with unethical practices, including bribery, nepotism,

favoritism, and tribalism (Gommans & Musumbu, 2014). This finding is further corroborated by Githinji (2017), who argued that the recruitment process, training, vetting, and promoting of law enforcement officials throughout the country of Kenya has continually been characterized by corruption amongst senior law enforcement officials. Tankebe (2009) opines that police misconduct is vital to comprehending satisfaction with the police because procedural injustice frequently witnessed in police service has the propensity to scale down citizens' ethical identification with the police.

No substantive studies focus on citizens' satisfaction with police recruitment in Kenya based on the available literature. The few studies available on NPS typically investigate other aspects of policing and their work (Hope 2018; Githinji, 2017; KNHCR, 2016). These studies leave a gap in attitudes toward recruiting new police officers into the police service. It is against this context that the study seeks to assess citizens' attitudes toward recruitment into the police service.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Sir Robert Peel in England championed the establishment of the first highly reorganized police department in 1829 (Balko, 2013). Balko (2013) reported that Peel changed the law enforcement organization by introducing uniforms and badges, stricter recruitment standards, a national headquarter, and a semi-militarized structure. Since that remarkable transformation in police departments, there has been much concern on how the police and public relate (Frank, Smith & Novak, 2005). Walker and Katz (2012) opined that police mostly interact with the public to execute their constitutional mandate. Their mandate mainly revolves around crime prevention, investigation, and preservation of public order in various communities inhabited by people who are targeted by those crime prevention measures.

There is a need to evaluate police services to determine how citizens rate them. This evaluation was coined by Bellman's (1935) "Police service rating scale." It was improved later by developing a survey instrument to gauge how citizens perceived the police (Parrat, 1938). Research on public perception has gained considerable attention (Brown & Benedict, 2002). Public opinions surveys are vital means to measure how the public feels about the police and have been used in the U.S. police department since the 1960s (Brown & Benedict, 2002). Public opinions are vital in enlightening the government on policy formulation and keeping government officials under control (He et al., 2017).

Recently, public opinions based on community policing have been sought regarding understanding public attitudes toward the police. Among the elemental constituents of community policing, the viewpoint is to extend the number and value of police-citizen interactions (Sherman, 1997). Community policing depends significantly on citizen participation to recognize and resolve the community's problems (Tebe & Yuksel, 2013). Therefore, it is imperative to establish and appreciate the public view of the police to create a mutually working relationship between the police and the community (Mbuba, 2010). Different aspects such as police officers' jobs, fear of crime, the effect of community policing on crime, and citizens' satisfaction, among others, have been put into consideration in understanding public perception (Yuksel & Tepe, 2013). There is a need to refocus the understanding of public perception on recruiting new police officers to the police service. It is hard to convince the public to trust the police if they have no trust in the police recruitment exercise. Citizens usually contact the police during the recruitment of new police officers, just as they do in community policing.

According to Rosenbaum, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, and Ring (2005), interactions between members of the public and law enforcement officers usually lead to the formation of public attitudes. These interactions are evident by several pieces of literature which show that both direct and indirect negative police interactions lead to negative feelings and beliefs about the police (Charney & Robertson, 2013; Hinds, 2009; Longan, Greenfeld, Durose & Levin, 2001; Mazerolle et al., 2013; Miller & Davis, 2008; Rosenbaum et al., 2005). On the other hand, studies on community policing show that citizens' positive interactions with the police authorities will nurture positive public opinions toward the police (Gaarder, Rodriquez & Zarts, 2004). It is not only during community policing where citizens come in contact with police authorities but also during police recruitment exercise. Thus, fairness and accountability must be embraced by police bosses and their juniors to manage public perception of the exercise and to preserve positive sentiments about the police.

The way police officers come in contact with the citizens during recruitment determines how citizens will evaluate them. Law enforcement has to exercise fairness and favorable treatment when interacting with the public to be perceived as a legitimate force (Correia, Reisig & Lovrich, 1996). Legitimacy during police-citizen interactions is

likely to determine citizens' decision on whether to welcome the police or not. The public encounter with the police determines whether policing is embraced or resisted by the community that the police serve (Mazerolle et al., 2013; Mbuba, 2010; Webb & Marshall, 1995). Brown & Benedict (2002) opined that law enforcement officers' evaluations must be scrutinized on issues linked to the damaging evaluation of the law enforcement officers.

Job seekers are more inclined to be satisfied when treated professionally and positively, thus leaving them with a positive evaluation of the organization (National University of Ireland, 2006). Generally, according to Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer and De Vohs (2001), they propose and substantiate that undesirable actions have more significant impacts on attitudes than desirable actions. These actions include those engaged in by police during the recruitment process. At best, the current police recruitment in the U.S. faces a lack of consistency, slight use of investigation to direct employment efforts, and fragmented approach to appreciating the crisis and planning a reaction to it (Orric, 2008; White & Escobar, 2008).

The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) in the U.S. recommended different ways for diversifying police personnel recruited to reflect the community (White & Escobar, 2008). Any police recruitment that gives equal chances to different ethnic groups of the community may satisfy citizens as it reflects the true representation of people. Thus, it is essential for police departments to have recruitment goals that reflect ethnic diversity (Mckay & Avery, 2005; Orick, 2008). Experience similarly reveals that a good employment practice can positively influence many other elements of an organization's functioning. In contrast, a wrong appointment can have damaging impacts far away from the organization in which it originated (Ekwoaba, Ikeife & Ufoma, 2015). In light of this, the mode of police recruitment is crucial in determining citizens' satisfaction. Nevertheless, there is scanty information concerning citizens' satisfaction with the police recruitment process. This study thus seeks to find more information as to whether citizens are satisfied with the mode of police recruitment.

Successful recruitment grounded on the set standards, the rule of law, reverence for human rights, and fairness may result in citizens' satisfaction. Conversely, whether real or perceived, unfairness may result in citizens' dissatisfaction with the mode of recruitment and the police service in general. Policymakers are more concerned with comprehending the determining factors of contentment with police to develop practical approaches to advance police-citizen relations (Nivette & Akoensi, 2017). Recruitment for diversity in a police organization that does not reflect authentic and credible organizational ideas might be perceived as dishonest and increase turnover (Mckay & Avery, 2005).

Due to rapid changes in community needs and demographics, it is not well known the kind of abilities departments should consider for choosing the candidates to be hired (Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police et al., 2000; Woksa, 2006). Organizations should comprehend the role of research and data gathering in the process of choosing personnel (Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police et al., 2000). Based on such research, recruitment and choosing of workers similarly offer a chance for the organization to show itself positively (National University of Ireland, 2006). If the organization fails to achieve that, the citizens will likely perceive them negatively and generally become dissatisfied with the way recruitment is done. Any form of unfairness, misconduct, or mistreatment during recruitment makes citizens feel dissatisfied.

Previous studies on citizens' satisfaction found that interpersonal treatment received when citizens encounter police determine citizens' contentment with the police and their lawfulness in a range of contexts (Tyler & Huo 2002, Sunshine & Tyler 2003; Hinds & Murphy 2007 & Reisig, Bratton & Gertz, 2007). Arguably, the recruitment of new officers into the police service provides grounds for interpersonal treatment.

To facilitate good human interaction between police and the public, policing requires a broad range of skills and attributes, rather than physical skills and performance (Miller, 2012). The police recruitment and selection process should consider soft skills and attributes such as people skills, computer skills, and problem-solving skills to improve police service. That kind of experience is likely to determine citizens' satisfaction with the mode of police recruitment. However, the issues and tendencies grounded in qualifications, generational preferences, and attrition affect police recruitment and transcend economic conditions (Wilson, 2014 p. 1).

Based on the literature reviewed so far, a lot of research has been done on how people selection and recruitment of police is done. There is scanty literature on citizens' attitudes toward police recruitment. These studies, therefore,

leave a gap in attitudes toward the recruitment of new officers into the police service. This research aims to bridge that gap.

### METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey design. This design focuses on the description, collection, examination, and presentation of the circumstances of the study subjects. The sample size for this study was determined from the target population using Slovin's Formulae (2002),

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + Ne^2)}$$

at a confidence level of 95% and a margin error of 0.05.

Where, n – Sample size

N – Target population

e – Margin error

$$n = \frac{875,689}{(1 + 875,689 \times 0.05^2)}$$

n = 400

Therefore, a sample size of 400 was obtained from the population target of 875, 689.

A stratified sampling method was used to group the population into five different strata based on geographical locations. These strata include Chabalungu, Sotik Bomet Central, Bomet East, and Konoin. Simple random sampling was used to pick three sub-counties including Bomet East with a population of 144, 275, Bomet Central with 175, 215, and Konoin with 163, 507 residents respectively. Therefore, to get respective sample sizes for the various selected sub-counties, Kothari's formula (2004) proportional allocation method was used

$$n1 = \frac{n1 * P}{N}$$

Where, n1 – Sample size of Bomet East

n – Sample size of the target population

N – Total population of the three sub-counties

P - Population of sub-county

Table 1: Sample Size

Location	Kothari's Formula	Sample size
Bomet east	$n1 = \frac{n1 * P}{N}$	120
Konoin	$n1 = \frac{n1 * P}{N}$	145
Bomet Central	$n1 = \frac{n1 * P}{N}$	135

The objective was to determine citizens' satisfaction with the way police recruitment is carried out. This objective was tested by administering 11 statements where respondents were asked on a five-point Likert Scale to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. The data collected were analyzed and presented in Table 3 regarding frequencies and percentages and in Table 4 in Pearson's Chi-Square. Discussion of the results obtained was also done for every statement.

Table 3: Percentages and Frequencies of Citizens' Satisfaction with the Police Recruitment Exercise

Statement /Rating	SA		A		U		D		SD		Total %	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Police are generally unfair in their recruitment exercise.	140	39.9	107	30.5	29	8.3	31	8.8	44	12.5	351	100
Police usually break the law during police recruitment exercises.	92	26.2	113	32.2	34	9.7	54	15.4	58	16.5	351	100

Police respect human rights during their recruitment exercise.	106 30.2	119 33.9	39 11.1	38 10.8	49 14.0	351 100
Police ask for bribes during police recruitment.	148 42.2	107 30.5	24 6.8	31 8.8	41 11.7	351 100
One must know someone in higher police rank to be recruited into national police service.	162 46.2	85 24.2	23 6.6	40 11.4	41 11.7	351 100
There is discrimination of people during police recruitment.	87 24.8	122 34.8	34 9.7	47 13.4	61 17.4	351 100
The manner in which police recruitment is done may be blamed for rising insecurity in the country.	89 25.4	94 26.8	53 15.1	57 16.2	58 16.5	351 100
Police recruitment exercise is stressful.	108 30.8	114 32.5	41 11.7	38 10.8	50 14.2	351 100
I would recommend someone to join the national police service.	102 29.1	112 31.9	37 10.5	42 12.0	58 16.5	351 100
Recruitment practices may be blamed for vices in NPS	92 26.2	106 30.2	48 13.7	39 11.1	66 18.8	351 100
I am satisfied with mode of police recruitment	131 37.3	103 29.3	26 7.4	45 12.8	46 13.1	351 100

KEY: SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agreed, U – Undecided, D – Disagree, SD – Strongly Disagree

Table 3: Pearson's Chi-Square Analysis of Citizens' Satisfaction with the Police Recruitment Exercise

Statement /Rating	df	Pearson's Chi-Square Value	P – Value
Police are generally unfair in their recruitment exercise.	16	195.08	0.00
Police usually break the law during police recruitment exercise.	16	113.682	0.00
Police respect human rights during their recruitment exercise.	16	139.207	0.00
Police ask for bribes during police recruitment.	16	196.856	0.00
One must know someone in higher police rank to be recruited into national police service.	16	1128.648	0.00
There is discrimination of people during police recruitment.	16	83.348	0.00
The manner in which police recruitment is done may be blamed for rising insecurity in the country.	16	119.530	0.00
Police recruitment exercise is stressful.	16	142.962	0.00
I would recommend someone to join the national police service.	16	52..541	0.00
Recruitment practices may be blamed for vices in NPS	16	146.014	0.00

The result in Table 3 show that respondents were generally dissatisfied with the mode of police recruitment, with an average of 37.3% of respondents strongly agreeing. That outcome resulted from irregularities, illegal activities, and other issues surrounding police recruitment. This is consistent with the findings of Tankebe (2009) that the form of misconduct among the police reduces the moral identification of citizens with law enforcement and is essential in comprehending contentment with the police. On the other hand, Chaney & Robert, (2013) & Mazerrole et al., (2013) negative police encounter usually leads to negative feelings about the law enforcement agency. Among those determined to contribute to dissatisfaction with the recruitment exercise, where the police were unfair, 39.9% of respondents agreed, law-breaking with 32.2% agreeing, bribery with 42.2% strongly agreeing, nepotism during the police recruitment exercise with 46.2% strongly agreeing and discrimination with 34.8% agreeing. The results also showed that the mode of police recruitment is a stressful exercise and could be blamed for vices observed in NPS and

for rising insecurity in the country, with 32.5% of respondents agreeing, 30.2% strongly agreeing, and 26.6% agreeing, respectively. In addition, Table 3 results show that there was a strong association for all other statements except two of them when Pearson's Chi-Square was used to determine the association between the statement, 'I am satisfied with the mode of police recruitment,' and the other 10 statements. The two statements that seemed to show that the respondents were likely to be satisfied were 'police respect human rights,' and 'I would recommend someone join NPS.'

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Inadequacy in police recruitment leads to other problems in policing as incompetent and non-committed officers may be recruited into NPS. The police recruitment process is still below the recommended fairness, accountability, and transparency standards. It is affected by police illegitimacy and various vices such as bribery, nepotism, favoritism, and discrimination. The respondents so far were not satisfied with the way police recruitment is done. This dissatisfaction is generally an indication of negative evaluation of the police recruitment process by the respondents, which translates to having negative attitudes toward the police recruitment exercises. It is, therefore, essential for the government and other stakeholders to reconsider how to eliminate such manifest vices and improve recruitment standards in all dimensions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. During the police recruitment process, the government of Kenya should deploy enough trustworthy IPOA officials and enlist support from non-governmental agencies to aid in monitoring police recruitment in all centers across the country.
- ii. The government of Kenya needs to learn from and adopt recruitment standards from developed countries like the U.S and incorporate the same in police recruitment reforms. It will help the government to have a well-structured, systematic, and organized way of recruiting qualified and competent individuals to the NPS.

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