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**Citizens' Satisfaction with Police Recruitment Process:  
A Case of Bomet County, Kenya.**

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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 in which police recruitment exercise is conducted 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 to identify the respondents for the study from the selected sub-counties. A questionnaire with a series of statements on the Likert Scale was used to collect data. Analysis of the data was conducted 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 in which police recruitment is conducted. The police recruitment exercise is still affected by police illegitimacy and other vices such as bribery, nepotism, favoritism, and discrimination. This study found police recruitment to be below a fair threshold of accountability and transparency standards, which causes citizens' dissatisfaction with police recruitment exercises. The findings of this study provides significant insights to hu-

## Introduction

Studies abound 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). Studies carried out in the United States, Europe, and Australia shows 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 people 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 United States.

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 recruits new officers to increase the number in the National Police Service (NPS). This is done both to 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, NPS recruitment is portrayed as free, fair, transparent, and accountable. However, it has been reported that the Kenyan police service has lost its glory in terms of performance over 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 promotion of law enforcement officials throughout the country 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 the procedural injustice frequently witnessed in police service has the propensity to scale down citizens' ethical identification with the police.

No substantive studies have focused 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 this study seeks to assess citizens' attitudes toward recruitment into the police service.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to the Kenyan Constitution, one of the NPSC's responsibilities is recruiting and training citizens into the police service (Constitution of Kenya, 2010, art. 246). The recruitment process must be free, fair, transparent, and accountable. Police re-

forms were sought for, established, and implemented to transform the police recruitment and training process and to facilitate the change of NPF to NPS in all aspects. However, the NPSC has been accused of recruitment and workplace malpractices over the years. The alleged illegal practices include biases, corruption, nepotism, patronage, and lack of transparency and accountability during recruitment. Despite these allegations, some officers observe the code of ethics and professionalism in their work, while others negate the established code of conduct, thus tainting the image of the police. These differences, including their work conduct, have sparked mixed reactions among citizens. These mixed reactions could make citizens develop particular attitudes toward police recruitment exercise.

### **The objective of the Study**

To determine citizens' satisfaction with the way in which police recruitment exercise is conducted in Bomet County, Kenya.

### **Research Question**

Are the citizens satisfied with the way police recruitment exercise is carried out in Bomet County Kenya?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study provides significant insights into the malpractices at police recruitment and makes recommendations to the NPSC for the necessary investigations. It is also anticipating to help the Government of Kenya (GoK) refocus the need to implement police reforms across the NPS, as

highlighted in the Constitution of Kenya 2010. The findings of this study form a basis for informing human rights organizations and other actors to advocate for the full implementation of police recruitment reforms that would enhance the outward appearance of the police to the public.

### **Literature Review**

Sir Robert Peel in England championed the establishment of the first organized 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 opinion 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

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, Rodriguez & Zarts, 2004). It is not only during community policing that citizens come into contact with police authorities but also during police recruitment exercises. Thus, fairness and accountability must be embraced by police supervisors and their juniors to manage public perception of the exercise and to preserve positive sentiments about the police.

The way police officers come into 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 & Marshal, 1995). Brown & Benedict (2002) opined that law enforcement officers' evaluations must be scrutinized on issues linked to the damaging evaluation of law enforcement officers.

Aspiring recruits are more likely to be satisfied when they are 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), undesirable actions have more significant impact 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 & Ecobar, 2008).

The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) in the U.S. recommended different ways for diversifying police personnel to reflect the community diversity (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 the population. 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 gen-

eral. 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 ideals 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 in which recruitment is conducted. 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

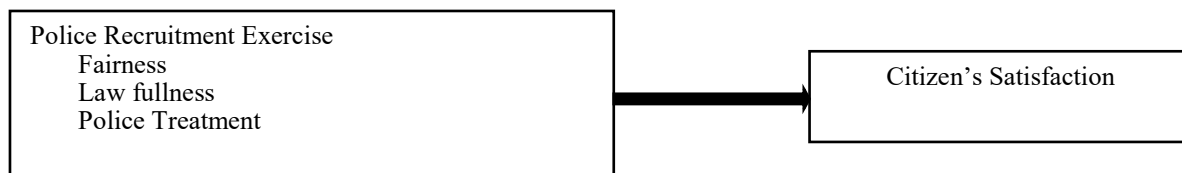
their lawfulness in a range of contexts (Tyler & Huo 2002, Sunshine & Tyler 2003; Hinds & Murphy 2007 & Reisig, Bratton & Gertz, 2007). Arguably, the recruitment of new officers into the police service provides grounds for interpersonal treatment.

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 foregoing literature, a lot of research has been done on how selection and recruitment of police are conducted. 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.

### Conceptual Framework



### 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. This study was carried out in Bomet County, one of Kenya's forty-seven (47) counties. It is situated in the South-Western part of Kenya. It borders four counties; Nakuru to the East, Kericho to the North-East, Nyamira to the South, and Narok to the West. The targeted population was 875 689 (434,275 males and 441,379 female) citizens of Bomet County as obtained in the Kenya Population and Housing Census (KPHC), volume II report (2019).

### Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

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 of error of 0.05.

Where, n – Sample size  
N – Target population  
e – Margin of error

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

n = 400

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 geographic locations. The 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. To get respective sample sizes for the various selected sub-counties, Kothari's formula (2004) propor-

tional 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

**Data Collection Instrument**

Data collection was done through a questionnaire containing a series of statements. The respondents were asked to point out on a 5-point Likert scale to what extent they agree or disagree with each statement. This 5-point Likert was preferred because it captures all the possible answers from the respondents. This particular instrument is good in gauging people's opinions, beliefs, and attitudes on statements concerning a particular phenomenon under study—this instrument enabled the investigator to collect the data on respondents' attitudes toward the police.

**Results and Discussions**

The objective was to determine citizens' satisfaction with the way in which 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 were analyzed and presented in Table 4 regarding frequencies and percentages and in Table 9 in Pearson's Chi-Square. An interpretation of the results is offered for each statement.



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

Statement /Rating	SA F	%	A F	%	U F	%	D F	%	SD F	%	Total %	
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 against 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	d.f.	Pearson's Chi-Square Value	P – Value
Police are generally unfair in their recruitment exercise.	16	195.08	0.00 0.00
Police usually break the law during police recruitment exercises.	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 of higher police rank to be recruited into national police service.	16	1128.648	0.00
There is discrimination against 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

**Summary of the Findings**

The result in Table 2 show that respondents were generally dissatisfied with the mode of police recruitment, with an average of 37.3% of respondents strongly agreeing that they are not satisfied with the way police recruitment is carried. 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) found that negative police encounter usually leads to negative feelings about the law enforcement agency. Among the factors

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 agree, and 26.6% agreeing, respectively. In addition, the results in Table 3 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.'

### **Conclusion**

The way police recruitment is carried out is displeasing to most of the respondents and this has resulted in respondent's dissatisfaction with the process. This dissatisfaction is as a result of respondent's negative evaluation of the manner in which recruitment is carried out in Bomet County. The study reveals that the police recruitment process is still below the recommended fairness, accountability, and transparency standards. The results affirms that police illegitimacy and various vices such as bribery, nepotism, favoritism, and discrimination contribute to the low police recruitment standard in Kenya. The presence of such vices during police recruitment affect the credibility of the recruitment process and this ultimately would taint the police organization's image.

Based on this study's findings, there is inadequacy in the police recruitment process leading to other problems in policing as incompetent and non-committed officers may be recruited into the National Police Service. Getting such a task force into policing could result in law enforcement's poor quality services rendered to the public. Poor quality policing services could be resulting from vices experienced during police recruitment that are transferred into policing work. This transfer is pointed out by the findings in this study that vices observed later in police work is blamed on the way police recruitment is conducted. This findings corroborate with Gommans and Musumbu (2010) findings that, practicing corruption and bribery, nepotism, impunity, and other police misconduct at

the police employment stage, new officers will carry the same tendencies to their place of work.

The findings of this study have pointed out various irregularities and illegal practices that dampen the police recruitment exercise in Kenya. 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. The respondents suggested that the government can achieve this by rolling out robust training for police recruitment officials on the necessity of having a free, fair and accountable recruitment exercise. The respondents also suggested that the National Police Service Commission (NPSC) should strongly condemn acts of corruption and other vices being witnessed and be willing to work and collaborate with Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) and Independent Policing Authority (IPOA) to curb that vice. All these bodies should work together with the judiciary to ensure the prosecution and punishment of those found culpable of such acts.

Since previous studies have mainly focused on public's attitudes toward the police, this particular study contributes to the body of knowledge on citizens' attitudes toward police recruitment. It focuses mainly on aspect of citizens' satisfaction with the way police recruitment is carried out.

**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.

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.

**Suggestion for Further Research**

Carry out a study on the impacts of policy reforms on citizens' attitudes toward police.

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