An Assessment of the Level of Community Engagement in Community Policing Policy and Practice in Kisumu Central Sub-County, Kisumu County

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Abstract:- Community-oriented policing (COP) stands as a globally recognized and pivotal strategy for reforming the security sector. Nations across the globe have woven COP into their policy frameworks and legal systems, facilitating collaboration between law enforcement agencies and communities. This approach aims to quell criminal activities and uphold public order through non-traditional avenues of policing. The Kenya National Police Service Act (NPSA) of 2011 meticulously outlines the structure and objectives of community policing, fostering a symbiotic partnership between the police and the populace. In 2017, the Inspector of Police COP Booklet further refined regulations to expedite the implementation of COP in Kenya. However, despite these earnest efforts, instances of crime and disorder continue to plague the Kisumu Central sub-county. The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of COP initiatives in combatting crime within the confines of Kisumu Central, scrutinizing the extent of community involvement in policing policies and practices. The research, guided by Lindblom's Incrementalism theory, used a mixed-methods approach involving various research methods. Extensive data collection covered Kisumu Central's six administrative Wards, with 394 participants. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) included community members, officials, and leaders. Different sampling methods were used, with quantitative and qualitative data analyzed accordingly. The study's focus was centered around five key indicators, revealing compelling findings: Awareness and Manifestation: Merely 32.5% were aware of COP, with 64% regarding vigilantes as a response to perceived COP absence. Community Views Collection: A meager 18.5% felt their views were acknowledged, and only 5.5% approved of prevailing policing methods. Strategic Engagement: A staggering 98% were unaware of tailored COP strategies for their respective wards. Broad-Based Representation: Unlike the COP guidelines, which advocate for comprehensive representation across 15 categories, this practice was not evident in Kisumu Central. Education and Awareness: An astonishing 84.5% reported no exposure to COP education and awareness initiatives. Recommendations include systematic awareness campaigns, policy design for community-oriented policing (COP), stakeholder analysis, and innovative strategies. These findings can revitalize police reforms and inform policymaking at national and local levels in Kenya, improving community policing for safer neighborhoods and crime prevention.

Keywords:- Community Engagement, Policing Policy and Practice, Community-Oriented Policing, Kisumu Central Sub-County, Crime Reduction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Community policing, commonly referred to as community-oriented policing (COP), stands as a globally acknowledged approach within security sector reform, characterized by systematic and programmatic strategies aimed at democratizing state police forces. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 16 regards COP as a sustainable avenue towards realizing "peace, justice, and strong institutions." This comprehensive paradigm involves an array of mechanisms implemented by both state and non-state actors (Pinto & de Garay, 2014). These mechanisms encompass funding strategies that prioritize COP initiatives (Government of Kenya, 2017; 2020), the adoption of multi-sectoral approaches that welcome contributions from various stakeholders (Sitole, n.d.), and efforts to embed COP principles into broader security sector reform frameworks, spanning policy and program dimensions (Diphoon & Stapelle, 2020; Pinto & de Garay, 2014).

A fundamental objective underpinning COP is the suppression of crime through an unconventional pathway - fostering a symbiotic relationship between law enforcement and the community. This relationship engenders an environment conducive to engagement, collaboration, and mutual understanding. In this process, a bedrock of trust is established, serving to curtail instances of public disorder, criminality, and the propagation of hazardous surroundings. Thus, COP operates as both a goal and a strategy in the battle against crime (Sitole, n.d.). By its effective execution, COP engenders a milieu wherein public safety is safeguarded, and criminal incidents are minimized. The community, as the recipient of policing efforts, proactively undertakes responsibility for its own security, intervening to address disruptive elements (Ibid). The spectrum of COP

encompasses a spectrum of activities imperative for achieving these desired outcomes.

Hence, COP emerges as a dual-edged instrument for governmental bodies: on one facet, it endeavors to bridge the chasm between law enforcement agencies and the community; on the other, the strategies deployed to traverse this chasm constitute pivotal steps towards the broader COP objective - the establishment of a responsive, democratic, and innovative national police service. The specific focus of this study narrows down to one of the pivotal aims of COP - the endeavor to surmount the divide between police and the community through community engagement in policing policy and practice. As underscored by Diphoon & Stapelle (2020, p. 564), a significant scarcity of studies in the developing world investigating this dimension of COP, thus emphasizing the exigency for primary data to deepen comprehension of the strategy's efficacy. Engagement in policing policy and practice calls for robust educational and awareness creation strategies targeted at community members, especially in areas where COP is largely alien and/or has had a long history of police-community dis-peace, conflicts, or related issues (Wanjohi, 2014; Diphoon & Stapelle, 2020). Kisumu Central sub-County, which hosts traditional notorious conflict hotspots such as Kondele, and slums such as Obunga, Nyalenda, and Manyatta, serves as a good site to study the extent of community engagement as a strategy for combating crime in the sub-County.

Emphasizing Kenya as a case study, the advent of official community policing policies can be traced back to 2016 with the Inspector General of Police's formulation of Community Policing Guidelines. The primary objective of COP as captured in the Inspector General's COP Guideline and Booklet (GoK, 2016; 2017) is to sustainably manage crime through mutual understanding between community members and the police. Within this context, this study strives to scrutinize the extent to which the strategies enacted within COP, particularly in Kisumu City within Kisumu Central Constituency, are attaining the overarching goal of crime reduction through community engagement in policing policy and practice. A crucial premise is founded upon the notion that the sustainable suppression of crime hinges upon the effectiveness of COP strategies - those endeavors aimed at narrowing the divide between the public and law enforcement, and vice versa (Diphoon & Stapelle, 2020).

This study seeks to comprehensively examine the persistent occurrence of criminal activities, with a specific focus on Kisumu County, particularly Kisumu Central Sub-county. By honing in on Kisumu Central Sub-county, the researchers aims to gain a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of community engagement in policing policy and practice. It can be argued that the lack of such engagement is responsible for the notable events such as the recent instance of organized crime involving community youths in Kondele, the continued presence of the "42 brothers gang" (REINVENT, 2019), the elevated incidence of burglary and break-ins, exceeding the national average by 13 percentage points (55% compared to the national average of 42%), an increased murder rate at 29.3% in contrast to the national average of 15.3%, theft of livestock at 38.4% compared to the national rating of 31.4%, and the theft of motorcycles at 6.6% versus the national average of 4.3%, among various other indicators (National Crime Centre, 2022).

Against the backdrop of these persistent criminal activities, Kisumu Central Sub-County stands as the focal point for an in-depth evaluation of community policing in practical application – narrowing down to the issue of community engagement in policing policy and practice. The study endeavors to scrutinize the effectiveness of Community-Oriented Policing (COP) programs as they are being executed within Kisumu County. In essence, this research takes a granular approach to understanding the complexities underpinning criminal activities within Kisumu Central Sub-county. Through a meticulous analysis of the implementation of COP initiatives – focused on community engagement - in this region, the study strives to uncover insights into the extent to which these efforts are fostering a harmonious relationship between the police and the community, ultimately influencing the reduction of crime rates and public disorder occurrences

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Community policing, a fundamental component of modern law enforcement, involves structured and ongoing engagement between police and the community to shape policing policies and practices. This proactive involvement empowers the community to influence how it is policed, establishing a foundation of trust and legitimacy crucial for effective policing. The departure from conventional approaches, in the long run, fosters enhanced police-community relations, advancing public safety and upholding constitutional policing principles (A Framework for Community Policing in Cleveland, n.d, p. 5; Sitole, n.d; Pinto & de Garay, 2014).

Both Mexico (Pinto & de Garay, 2014) and the USA (Vera Institute of Justice, 2016) emphasize that police divisions bear the responsibility of soliciting input from community members, both as individuals and as part of "community asset groups," on substantive policing matters. Correspondingly, these divisions are accountable for responsive action to these inputs. Within the USA context, the Decree mandates the establishment of a 13-member Community Police Commission (CPC) in Cleveland. This commission collaborates with the diverse communities constituting Cleveland to formulate recommendations aligning police practices with the values and priorities of residents (A Framework for Community Policing in Cleveland, n.d, p. 5). Furthermore, as part of reform endeavors, the CPC and Monitoring Team have sought community perspectives on various subjects, including body-worn cameras, use of force, and community policing. As the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP) designs its community policing strategy, it necessitates a perpetual plan for engaging the public in policy discussions, consistently

incorporating community viewpoints (Kiprono, 2019; Pinto & de Garay, 2014).

Effectual community engagement concerning policy and practice is a core component of community policing and necessitates multifaceted approaches, as recognized by A Framework for Community Policing in Cleveland (n.d, p. 5). Notable attributes of successful endeavors encompass broad participation from diverse communities and stakeholders, educating community members about policy nuances to facilitate informed dialogue, enabling meaningful avenues for substantive public input, earnest consideration of this input by agencies, and transparent communication to the community about decisions made and subsequent actions. Various methods can be employed to solicit community input and to engage them on policing policies and practices, these include online surveys, community forums, and focus groups, often combined to ensure comprehensive participation. In the case of Portland, an online portal and community forums were utilized, while in Cleveland, the Monitoring Team and CPC adopted diverse strategies including forums, online and paper questionnaires, and study groups to engage different communities (Pinto & de Garay, 2014). To Diphoon & Statepelle (2020) the huge deficit hindering engagement bodes on factors such as community awareness and involvement in COP initiatives, or lack of such initiatives at all, monitoring and evaluation as a deficit, leading to a lack of community ownership of COP within their communities. The scholars further establish that such situations often prompted communities in Kenya to establish alternative policing mechanisms, such as vigilante groups. Wanjohi (2014) confirms these assertions while studying Machakos County and argues that community members had found it easier to form community policing outfits that provided tailored security, monitoring insecurity within the known hotspot regions of the community.

An effective approach, especially for intricate issues, involves collaborative task forces comprised of both community members and law enforcement personnel. The Vera Institute of Justice (2016) cites the Law Enforcement and Leaders of Color Collaboration (LELCC) formed in Dane County, the state of Wisconsin, after a high-profile officer-involved shooting. This task force, involving police officials, community representatives, and city agencies, generated recommendations through joint efforts and sought wider community input through listening sessions (p. 46).

In essence, regardless of the specific approach chosen, genuine community participation is pivotal in shaping policies and practices that impact them directly. Agencies are compelled to genuinely consider community input and ensure reciprocal communication of decisions. Engagement in policing policy and practice not only identifies barriers to inclusive participation but also provides insights for reaching communities less engaged with policing programs, and enhances the efficacy of community forums and town halls in driving meaningful engagement (Ibid).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an exploratory mixed-methods design, which allowed for a comprehensive investigation of the topic (Babbie, 2008). The exploratory design was chosen due to the scarcity of research on community policing in developing countries, particularly about police-community trust deficit. The mixed-methods approach enabled the use of multiple data collection methods to gather insights from various stakeholders involved in community policing implementation. Quantitative data was collected from community members, across six wards in Kisumu Central sub-county, while qualitative data through Key Informants was collected from selected key actors involved with COP within the study area. The use of exploratory design provided room for flexibility for researchers in reaching out to emerging respondents.

The research focused on Kisumu Central Sub-County, specifically in the Migosi, Shaurimoyo-Kaloleni, Kondele, Railways, Market Mlimani, and Nyalenda B Wards. These administrative Wards were selected based on their representation within the Sub-County and their relevance to the study objectives. The choice of Kisumu Central was informed by its cosmopolitan nature, the hosting of the central business district, crime history, and the prevalence of slums. The study population has consisted of law enforcement officers, community policing committee members, grassroots peace committee members, politicians, and National Government Administration Officers (NGAOs). They have provided a diverse perspective on community policing. The sample size consisted of 394 individuals arrived at using the Fisher et al. (1991) formula. Different strata from each Ward were included, with sample sizes proportionate to the population of each Ward. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants for FGDs and KIIs, ensuring representation from each stratum.

Besides the collection of the primary data as indicated above, the study also used secondary data. Secondary data were gathered through document analysis from relevant studies, policy documents, journal articles, and organizational records. The combination of both primary and secondary data allowed for triangulation in enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings. The qualitative data collected has been analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify the categories and themes emerging from the study. Quantitative data on the other hand has been analyzed through simple descriptive statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 26) and presented through tables, percentages, and pie charts in providing the various mechanisms of engagement through COP in taming crime within Kisumu Central.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In its findings, this study has presented data on the level of awareness, manifestation, mechanisms, strategies, breat,h and pathways of community engagement in establishing the level of engagement between the police and the community in the implementation of the COP in Kisumu

Central sub-county. The findings have been presented and discussed along the above themes with the overall aim of illuminating the efficacy of community engagement in community policing endeavors and its implications on crime reduction and the maintenance of public order.

This section presents the findings of the study. Qualitative data was corroborated with quantitative data leading to a discussion of the study findings. Community engagement serves as an indispensable means and strategy for the efficacious implementation of community policing (Diphoorn & Stampele, 2020). This assertion is reinforced by Wanjohi (2014), which underscores that in communities where historical antipathy, distrust, and direct conflicts between law enforcement and community members prevail, engagement emerges as a pivotal element in transforming these police-community dynamics. By doing so, engagement becomes the catalyst for collaborative crime prevention efforts, thereby restoring public order and ensuring long-term safety. Kisumu Central fits within this description as the police and community have been in a state of antipathy, distrust, and direct exchanges for a long time (NCIC, 2022).

As articulated in A Framework for Community Policing in Cleveland (n.d, p. 5), community engagement encapsulates the notion of structured and routine police-community interaction concerning policing policies and practices. The primary impetus behind this engagement is to empower the community with the agency to influence how law enforcement operates within their vicinity (Ibid). The initial goal of this study is to assess the degree to which Community-Oriented Policing (COP) is guided by informed and engagement-focused practices in Kisumu Central. This inquiry is guided by a framework derived from Diphoon and Stapelle (2020) and A Framework for Community Policing in Cleveland (n.d, p. 5), which delineates four central domains crucial for effective community engagement within community policing. These areas are harmoniously aligned with Kenya's COP policy documents, particularly the Inspector General of Police's Community Policing Guidelines (p. 6-8):

Broad-based participation from a variety of communities and stakeholder groups: Successful community engagement necessitates the active involvement of diverse communities and stakeholders, promoting a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

Efforts to educate community members about policy choices and tradeoffs to ensure informed discussion: Educating the community about the nuances and trade-offs inherent in policing policies facilitates meaningful and well-informed discussions.

Meaningful opportunities for members of the public to provide substantive input: Providing genuine platforms for the public to contribute substantive insights fosters a sense of ownership and collaboration in shaping policing strategies.

Serious consideration by the agency of the input it receives, and communication back to the community of the decisions made and the steps the agency plans to take to address community concerns: The legitimacy of community engagement lies in the commitment of law enforcement agencies to earnestly consider community input, coupled with transparent communication regarding decisions and subsequent actions taken.

By anchoring the study within these comprehensive dimensions of community engagement, the research seeks to ascertain the extent to which COP practices in Kisumu Central align with the aforementioned principles. The overall aim is to illuminate the efficacy of community engagement in community policing endeavors and its implications for crime reduction and the maintenance of public order.

A. Level of Awareness of Community Members of Community Policing

To establish a foundation for investigating the role of community engagement in combatting crime through community policing in Kisumu Central Sub-County, the study initially delved into preliminary inquiries. This approach aimed to prevent any presumptions that Community-Oriented Policing (COP) was universally recognized and operational within the selected study sites, and consequently, every respondent possessed the capability to assess and comment on COP-related matters. The primary query within this context sought to gauge the level of awareness among the respondents. As evidenced below, only 32.5% (124 respondents) were familiar with COP within their communities while a significant number represented by 67.5% constituting 257 individuals had not encountered or heard of COP within their communities.

➢ *Have you Ever Heard of Community Policing?*

Table 1 Level of Awareness of Community Members of Community Policing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	124	32.5	32.5	32.5
	No	257	67.5	67.5	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author (2023)

While COP may adopt diverse manifestations and potentially be confused with other policing initiatives (Sitole, n.d.), this finding still accentuates that the penetration of COP into the wards of Kisumu Central

remains limited. Notably, a female respondent, who herself is a member of the Community Policing Committee (CPC) in Tom Mboya Estate, confirmed the lack of awareness regarding COP. She recounted that COP was often

misperceived by community members as synonymous with police surveillance-oriented approaches. She opined that "……Here, only a handful of us are acquainted with what COP entails. Myself and merely three others from this community were selected to undergo COP training. While the training was beneficial, the tangible impact of COP remains elusive within our community. The truth is, that a significant portion of people remains unaware of its existence. This misconception prevails mainly due to the visible utilization of individuals, typically CPC members, by the police for surveillance purposes. To the police, COP seems more of a surveillance tool than a method for genuine community engagement….'' - A CPC Member and a former COP Trainee during Key Informant Interview, 12th May 2023.

This insight from the CPC member was corroborated by counterparts from other wards, who indicated that in their awareness, only a meager representation, perhaps themselves or three individuals from their wards, had been trained in matters related to the CPC. This observation was further substantiated by a non-governmental organization (NGO) working in conjunction with the Police Inspector General's Office.

This discovery runs in contrast with the core tenet of the *muddling-through approach* to Public Policy, which asserts that the formulation and execution of policies are intricate undertakings. Decision-makers are compelled to factor in stakeholders affected by the policy and adopt a gradual, iterative approach to policy implementation (Lindblom, 1959). The crafting and execution of public security policies, including COP, represent complex, multi-stakeholder endeavors. The evident lack of engagement with community members, substantiated by both qualitative findings and the survey, underscores that policy-makers possibly adopted a rational comprehensive approach. This approach involved the participation of only a select few elite policy-makers during policy formulation and a limited number of individuals from the affected communities during its execution. Subsequent findings further corroborate that the mode of implementation is CPC-driven, diverging from the intended community-oriented approach.

B. Manifestations of Community Policing within the Communities

To unravel the varying facets through which community policing is understood at the grassroots level, the study engaged respondents in further probing. The outcomes, as portrayed in the subsequent table, shed light on distinct perspectives held by respondents. A notable 63.5% (243) of respondents believed that community policing equated to police presence within their community. This notion was substantiated through dialogues with police officers who affirmed the police's role in working within the community to restore peace and order. However, working in collaboration with the community was perceived as challenging, with one officer emphasizing the complex nature of this endeavor and expressing skepticism about its feasibility, especially within the Kenyan context of policing which he described as "structurally complicated and predicated on the idea of policy and community as separate and irreconcilable factions''.

In contrast, 36.2% (138) of respondents associated community policing with vigilante activities. This alignment with vigilantes stemmed primarily from the failure of the police department to actively engage the community in policing efforts. Consequently, the void left by such non-engagement fostered not only enduring mistrust and antipathy but also an increase in criminal activities, particularly within slum areas.

➤ *If yes above, how does it Manifest in this Community?*

Table 2 Manifestations of Community Policing within the Communities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Police working in the community	243	63.8	63.8	63.8
	Community policing through vigilantes	138	36.2	36.2	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author (2023)

In response to the survey, many male and youthful respondents emphasized vigilantes as their preferred recourse for establishing order and safety within their communities. Their reasoning converged around three core factors:

The police's perceived failure to restore order, coupled with allegations of corrupt practices and misuse of authority, led many to view them negatively. Heightened crime rates fueled disillusionment with the police's approach of working within the community, rather than collaboratively. Vigilantes had gained widespread familiarity within these communities, garnering trust and even soliciting police endorsement for their involvement; Conversely, the police vehemently opposed the notion that vigilantes could contribute positively to community well-being. According to many officers, vigilantes were perceived as conduits for criminal activities, with youths using them as cover for their transgressions. One Officer in Charge of the Police station elucidated during an interview that:

"…To be clear, the vigilantes are the very groups exacerbating insecurity in Kisumu Central Sub-County. Youths exploit their guise to carry out heinous acts. We do not endorse them, and if they operate, it is under close supervision by our officers…." - Key Informant Interview, 13th May 2023

These viewpoints align with prevailing realities. For instance, in Manyatta Arabs and its environs, youths conveyed a distinct dissatisfaction with the police's conduct, accusing them of disrupting vigilante operations that once maintained a degree of order. Since then, these youths perceived that the police had failed to assume their responsibilities and were instead engaging in extortive practices within the community. This deficiency in community engagement has pushed active community members, especially youths, towards seeking alternative policing solutions.

Engagement inherently empowers the community with a voice (Government of Kenya, 2016). The COP policy explicitly tasks policy-makers with ensuring that COP differentiates itself by placing community members at the forefront of decision-making, shifting the locus of control from the police to the community. Despite this directive, as indicated in the table, this objective appears to be distant. Among the respondents, a mere 18.5% felt they had a say in the policing approach within their community. Contrastingly, the majority, 83.5% (318), perceived their voices as inconsequential, with policing strategies aligned with the dictates and plans of the police department.

➤ *Do you have a say in the Manner of Policing your Community?*

Table 3 Having a Say in the Manner of Your Policing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	63	16.5	16.5	16.5
	No	318	83.5	83.5	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author (2023)

Continuing this line of inquiry, the research probed respondents' approval of the current policing approach within their community. Astonishingly, a lower number of those asserting to have a say in the policing expressed approval of its manner. A mere 5.5% indicated approval, whereas an overwhelming 94.5% (360) voiced their disapproval of the existing policing practices.

Conversations with members of the Community Policing Committees (CPCs) during one-on-one interviews delved further into this aspect of approval. Varied perspectives emerged within different sub-groups. The youth cohort contended that the police were the root cause of their community's security issues, and vigilantes represented a viable solution. Conversely, non-youthful respondents, regardless of gender, posited that neither vigilantes nor the prevailing policing methods aligned with the community's interests. Thus, their disapproval extended to both facets. This sentiment mirrored the characterization of vigilantes as expressed by top police leaders at the sub-county headquarters. One respondent encapsulated this viewpoint:

"…The essence is Community-Oriented Policing (COP), not vigilantes and not the status quo. When the community members are adequately engaged, and the police acknowledge us as stakeholders, COP can be established and succeed. At present, we are stuck in a quagmire…." – Police Officer, 11th April 2023.

These findings converge with Kiprono's (2017) study, which explored the challenges of COP implementation within Kibera. His findings likewise indicated community disapproval of prevailing policing methods, and while some community members saw vigilantes as a plausible alternative, others disagreed. This divergence underscored the broader absence of community engagement by the police, spurring the search for alternative policing measures.

➤ *Do you approve of the Manner of Policing in your Community?*

Table 4 Community Approval of the Manner of Policing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	21	5.5	5.5	5.5
	No	360	94.5	94.5	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author (2023)

C. Mechanisms for Community Engagement: Engagement through Community Views Gathering

This phase of the study delved into the extent to which policing departments actively sought community input on matters about safety and order within the community. The results, encapsulated in the ensuing table, reveal that a mere 24.4% (94) of respondents reported their views being solicited. Conversely, the majority, constituting 75.6% (288), claimed to have never encountered any such endeavors by the police departments.

➢ *Have the Policing Departments ever Sought for your views on any Policing and Community Safety & and Order issues Relating to this Community?*

Table 5 Engagement through Community Views Gathering

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	93	24.4	24.4	24.4
	No	288	75.6	75.6	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author (2023)

To scrutinize whether this community input translated into actual changes in policing strategies, respondents were queried further. Specifically, they were asked if the solicited views contributed to enhanced community safety and order. The outcome painted a dismal picture, as only 12% of those whose views were collected believed their opinions influenced any changes. Astonishingly, a staggering 88% (81) contended that despite their views being solicited, no evidence indicated that these inputs were integrated into policing practices.

The study then inquired into the platforms through which respondents had shared their perspectives. The data revealed that the Chief's Barraza's (64% or 69) and the CPC (26% or 24) were the sole existing platforms for community engagement. Subsequently, participants were asked whether these avenues proved effective in facilitating participation and discourse for bolstering COP across the Kisumu Central sub-county. In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving representatives from various groups that engaged in these existing arrangements unearthed inherent dysfunctions. Insights from NGOs divulged irregular participation in CPC meetings, riddled with lapses in communication and inadequate planning. An NGO leader who played an instrumental role in COP programs expressed:

"…. Attending CPC meetings is often an exercise in futility. These meetings lack the seriousness required for genuine engagement with the community on policing policy and practice. Agendas are nonexistent or communicated haphazardly, primarily addressing urgent security concerns that have arisen…." – Key NGO Player in COP in Kisumu Central sub-County – 12th April 2023.

Corroborating this, a CPC member at Central Station disclosed that the platform, despite its civilian-led design, was subverted by the CPC deputy Chair, the OCS, who dominated discussions and stifled genuine community input. This revealed a discrepancy between the intended and actual dynamics of CPC leadership. It was noted that CPC chairs were often selected due to their affiliations with the OCS, rather than through authentic community election, as corroborated by findings in other regions of Kenya.

Similar challenges were evident with the Chief's Barraza's. A participant who regularly attended these sessions bemoaned the sporadic presence of the OCS or their representatives and the minimal impact of the sessions on problem-solving. He shared:

"……I never miss a Barraza, but their effectiveness is questionable. The OCS may or may not attend, and the intervals between sessions are often prolonged. Even when they do convene, attendees fear retribution from the police. Suggestions hardly hold value, rendering it a futile exercise….'' – A frequent Chief Barraza Attendee, 6th June 2023.

These revelations echo the challenges found in Diphoorn & Stapelle's (2020) exploration of COP in coastal Kenya. Their research revealed a pattern of CPC leadership imposition by the OCS, hindering genuine community engagement. Such dynamics in leadership have repercussions for effective community input and engagement in policing policies and practices within the Kisumu Central sub-county.

D. Strategic Engagement: Availability of a Community Engagement Strategy

The Inspector General's Guidelines (GoK, 2016) emphasize the importance of adapting COP to the local context and underlining the necessity of a guiding strategy. Echoing this sentiment, A Framework for Community Policing in Cleveland (n.d) underscores that community engagement requires a tailored strategy for each community. Considering Kisumu Central sub-county as a community and its constituent wards as sub-communities, this study sought to ascertain whether a strategy encompassing goals, objectives, activities, stakeholders, and other pertinent aspects existed at either the sub-county or ward level. To the study's astonishment, neither CPC members nor community members were aware of such a strategy. Overwhelmingly, 98% of respondents indicated the absence of any strategy underpinning COP practices within wards and the sub-county.

> *Do you feel that the Policing Department in this County has a Clear Locally Relevant Community Policing Strategy for Engaging Community Members?*

Table 6 Availability of a Community Engagement Strategy

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
	Yes	5	1.3	1.3	6.6
Valid	No	376	98.0	98.0	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author (2023).

A respondent from the academic sector and a prominent figure in Kisumu's COP landscape reinforced this discovery during an interview. He highlighted a structural impediment obstructing robust COP efforts by raising pivotal questions:

"…. Strategy is imperative, but its execution needs thorough contemplation. Who funds it? Who covers the consultancy costs? COP remains a disregarded endeavor due to inadequate funding. It's unlikely to yield results without proper funding……." (Dr. X, during a key informant interview, 3rd June, 2023).

Kiprono's (2016) study buttresses Dr. X's assertion, unveiling that COP programs in Kibera often rely on NGOs' support, with the government's involvement limited to the articulation of comprehensive COP policies. Diphoorn & Stapelle (2020), on a broader scale, argue that COP's failure is interlinked with larger security sector reform movements, which frequently garner donor support. After policy formulation, donor interest wanes, and the government's priorities revert to their original state, leaving COP in limbo, as indeed this study confirmed.

E. Breadth of Community Engagement in Community Policing

The Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) stipulates that authentic community engagement necessitates a broad-based approach. Similarly, A Framework for Community Policing in Cleveland (n.d) designates "broad-based participation from a variety of communities and stakeholder groups" as a fundamental tenet of community engagement in COP and the COP Booklet from the Inspector General of Police's framework outlined clearly at least fifteen categories to be part of COP CPC.

This study aimed to gauge the breadth of community engagement in Kisumu Central. As depicted in the subsequent table, none of the respondents (who were relevant to answering this question) believed that participants in the CPC did comprehensively represent the requisite categories.

> *Are the Levels of Community Engagement broad-based [Does it Involve all the Required Actors as per the Government of Kenya COP Policy?*

Table 7 Breadth of Community Engagement in Community Policing

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
	No	15	4.0	18.1	18.1
Valid	N/A	364	96.0	81.9	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author (2023).

To illuminate the specific attendees that were common during CPC meetings, the study conducted interviews and FGDs. Analysis of the transcripts revealed that prevalent attendees included the OCS and or his/her representative, Chairperson (often from the business community), Boda Boda leader, and Youth representative. Other categories of stakeholders were conspicuously underrepresented in these gatherings.

F. Pathways to Community Engagement: Community Education and Awareness Creation

A Framework for Community Policing in Cleveland (n.d) underscores the importance of enhancing community engagement by initially identifying community needs and subsequently conducting education and awareness initiatives. Diphoorn & Stapelle (2020) add that in communities where COP emerges as a result of security sector reforms, education and awareness should be prioritized at the outset and integrated as COP programs and projects unfold. Summarizing the responses from the survey, the subsequent table delineates the outcomes of the inquiry. A mere 15.5% indicated that some form of education and awareness had been undertaken to familiarize individuals with COP and the rationale for engaging in it. In stark contrast, a staggering 84.5% reported no exposure to such activities in their communities.

> *Have the Police ever Conducted Community Education and Awareness Creation on this Strategy in this Community?*

Table 8 Community Education and Awareness Creation for COP Engagement

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Yes	59	15.5	15.5	15.5
	No	322	84.5	84.5	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author (2023)

Further scrutiny of the responses through cross-tabulation unveiled that those affirming the existence of education and awareness initiatives on COP were exclusively members of the CPC. Subsequently, through interviews and FGDs with both CPC and non-CPC respondents, the researcher delved deeper into this aspect. Key informant interviews (KII) unveiled that CPC members interpreted education and awareness creation as their initial training when Kisumu embarked on COP circa 2017, supplemented by ad hoc community meetings addressing security concerns.

In contrast, respondents not affiliated with the CPC considered education and awareness creation for COP to encompass organized, regular programs targeting wards and intended for the broader community, not a select group of elites. Overall, the study identified this as a deficiency, serving as a pivotal barrier to effective community engagement.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the findings reveal significant challenges in the implementation of Community-Oriented Policing (COP) in Kisumu Central. Community engagement, a key element for the success of COP, is limited, with only a minority of respondents aware of COP in their communities. Many associate community policing with either police presence or vigilante activities, indicating a lack of understanding and trust in the COP approach. Additionally, the study highlights that community members have little say in policing matters, and the majority disapprove of current policing practices.

Furthermore, the study shows that the solicitation of community views by the police is rare, and when it occurs, it often does not lead to changes in policing strategies. Existing platforms for community engagement, such as Chief's Barazas and Community Policing Committees (CPCs), suffer from irregular participation and a lack of effectiveness. The absence of a clear, locally relevant community policing strategy and limited breadth of community engagement, as outlined in government policy, further hinder COP implementation. Most critically, there is a lack of education and awareness creation about COP in the community, contributing to misconceptions and a failure to engage the broader community effectively.

In summary, the study underscores the need for comprehensive reform and revitalization of COP in Kisumu Central, including improving community education, enhancing community engagement platforms, in building trust between law enforcement and community members. These steps are crucial for the successful implementation of COP and the reduction of crime in promoting safety and order within Kisumu Central Sub-County.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

> *Community Education and Awareness Campaigns:*
Launch comprehensive community education and awareness campaigns focused on Community-Oriented Policing (COP) in Kisumu Central. These campaigns should target diverse community members, explaining the principles and benefits of COP and dispelling misconceptions. Use various communication channels, including community meetings, radio broadcasts, and social media, to reach a broad audience.

> *Enhanced Community Engagement Platforms:*
Strengthen existing community engagement platforms such as Chief's Barraza's and Community Policing Committees (CPCs). Ensure regular, well-structured meetings with meaningful agendas that address community concerns and actively involve community members in decision-making processes related to policing policies and practices.

> *Develop and Implement a Localized COP Strategy:*
Collaborate with community members, stakeholders, and law enforcement agencies to develop a locally relevant COP strategy for Kisumu Central. This strategy should outline clear goals, objectives, activities, and roles for all stakeholders. Allocate sufficient resources and funding to support the implementation of this strategy effectively.

> *Training and Capacity Building:*
Provide training and capacity-building programs for both law enforcement officers and community members. Law enforcement should be trained in community engagement, conflict resolution, and the principles of COP. Community members should receive training on their rights and responsibilities in COP, as well as how to effectively participate in the process. Encourage ongoing dialogue and collaboration between these two groups.

By implementing these recommendations, Kisumu Central can bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community, promote trust and understanding, and create a safer and more harmonious environment through the effective implementation of community engagement in policing policy and practice in Community-Oriented Policing.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

I declare that this research was scientifically undertaken. There was no form of funding and the topic was not influenced by any interests - personal or external – beyond the academic motivations.

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