

The Role of Police Service Devolution on Enhancing Police-Public Rapport in Sengerema District, Mwanza Region, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Original research paper

This study investigated the effect of police service devolution on enhancing police-public rapport in Sengerema District, Mwanza Region - Tanzania. The research was motivated by ongoing efforts in Tanzania to decentralize public services, including policing, with the aim of improving community engagement, trust, and service delivery. A mixed research approach was employed, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure comprehensive data collection and analysis. Specifically, a descriptive survey design guided the study, allowing for systematic gathering of perceptions, experiences, and attitudes from various stakeholders. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews involving police officers, local government authorities, private security companies, non-government organizations and community members. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were thematically analysed to capture deeper insights into community-police relations. Findings revealed that devolution has moderately improved the accessibility and responsiveness of police services at the local level. Community members reported increased participation in security matters and improved communication channels with local police units. However, challenges such as limited resources, inadequate training, and unclear roles between local authorities and police services continue to hinder full realization of the intended outcomes. The study concludes that while police service devolution in Sengerema District has contributed positively to police-public rapport, its impact remains partial and context-dependent. Also the study recommended the needs for stronger policy support and adequate resources for devolved policing.

Keywords: Police Service Devolution, Police-Public Rapport, Community Policing, Decentralization.

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Introduction

Community policing is a notion that police force cooperates with the community they are serving (Bell 2023). Many countries in Europe, North and South America and Africa have implemented Community policing because it is able to address security and other emerging issues which are concern to people and their governments (Cross 2016).

Community policing was first introduced by British statesman Sir Robert Peel in the 19th century and gained prominence in the 20th century. It spread to Western European countries in the 1960s and was subsequently

adopted by African and Asian nations during the 1970s and 1980s. Most African nations have domesticated community policing programs modelled after practices in developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom; however, the approach varies from one country to another, often shaped by each nation's unique historical and socio-political context (Barlow & Barlow, 2009).

Devolution in policing refers to the transfer of law enforcement functions from centralized national or federal agencies to lower levels of government, such as regional, municipal, or community-based policing units. This approach

has been widely implemented in various countries to improve police responsiveness, enhance accountability, and foster better relationships between law enforcement and the public. Weisburd et al. (2021), in their study *Decentralized Policing and Public Trust: A Comparative Analysis*, conducted a longitudinal analysis of policing structures in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Their research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining crime statistics, public perception surveys, and interviews with law enforcement officials. Their findings revealed that in jurisdictions where police devolution had been successfully implemented, public trust in law enforcement was significantly higher. Additionally, crime reporting rates improved as citizens felt more comfortable engaging with local police. However, the study also identified a key gap—the impact of devolution varied significantly based on local governance capacity and financial resources, raising concerns about sustainability in underfunded regions.

In the United Kingdom, the concept of neighbourhood policing, which involves devolving certain policing functions to local law enforcement units, has been a critical component of modern policing strategies. Rosenbaum et al. (2020), in their study *The Impact of Localized Policing in Britain: A Study on Community Trust and Engagement*, used ethnographic research and public surveys across various police districts in England and Wales. Their findings demonstrated that citizens who had direct access to locally assigned police officers were more likely to report crimes, participate in community policing initiatives, and express confidence in the police. However, their study also highlighted a challenge—while devolution improved police-community relationships, it sometimes led to disparities in service quality between well-funded urban areas and resource-constrained rural communities.

In Canada, Lum et al. (2020) examined the regionalization of policing services in their study *Devolving Police Services: Examining Community-Based Law Enforcement in Canada*. Their research used case studies of municipalities that transitioned from federal or provincial policing models to locally administered police forces. They found that devolution resulted in better service delivery, as locally controlled police units were more attuned to community needs and operated with greater transparency. However, a significant research gap identified in their study was the lack of standardized training and oversight mechanisms, which led to inconsistencies in how decentralized police units engaged with the public.

Similarly, in the United States, Tyler and Huo (2020) explored the role of police precinct decentralization in their study *Localized Law Enforcement: The Effect of Precinct-Based Policing on Community Relations*. Using crime data analysis and qualitative interviews, they found that precincts

with devolved authority to engage in community-led initiatives had lower crime rates and higher levels of public cooperation. However, a noted limitation was that successful devolution required strong local governance structures, which were often lacking in economically disadvantaged communities.

Although global studies emphasize the benefits of devolution in policing, they also expose key gaps, particularly in under-resourced communities where local governance structures may be weak or absent. This raises an important research question—how can police service devolution be effectively implemented in areas with financial and institutional constraints?

In Africa, the concept of devolving police services has been explored as a means of improving law enforcement responsiveness, promoting community participation, and addressing deep-seated mistrust between citizens and centralized police forces. Tankebe (2021), in his study *The Promise and Pitfalls of Police Decentralization in Africa*, conducted field research in Ghana and South Africa, using structured interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. His findings revealed that regions with decentralized police services reported higher community engagement in crime prevention and improved citizen perceptions of law enforcement. However, a significant challenge identified was the persistent issue of political interference, where local police units were sometimes co-opted by local politicians for personal or partisan interests.

In South Africa, the Community Police Forums (CPFs) serve as a model of decentralized policing by involving citizens directly in local law enforcement decision-making. Skogan (2022), in his study *Evaluating Decentralized Policing in South Africa: A Study of Community Police Forums*, used a combination of policy analysis, crime data evaluation, and community feedback mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of CPFs. His findings indicated that while CPFs increased police accountability and responsiveness, they struggled with resource constraints, particularly in rural areas where law enforcement infrastructure was underdeveloped. The study highlighted a crucial research gap—the need for sustainable funding and institutional support to ensure that decentralized police units can operate effectively across diverse regions.

In Kenya, police service devolution has been a key aspect of community policing reforms. Rosenbaum et al. (2020), in their study *Decentralized Policing in Kenya: Strengthening Law Enforcement through Local Governance*, analysed the impact of shifting police authority to county governments. Their study found that locally controlled policing initiatives improved response times, reduced public complaints about police misconduct, and increased community participation in safety programs. However, the study also pointed out a

significant challenge—inconsistent implementation across different counties, leading to disparities in the effectiveness of police service devolution.

In Nigeria, community policing efforts have included the creation of state and regional policing units as an alternative to the historically centralized law enforcement system. Weisburd et al. (2021), in their study *Decentralization and Police Effectiveness: Lessons from Nigeria's Security Reforms*, conducted an in-depth analysis of state policing structures in Lagos, Kano, and Rivers states. Their findings showed that decentralized police services improved local intelligence gathering and crime response rates. However, they also found that without robust oversight mechanisms, some devolved police units became susceptible to corruption and political manipulation, creating a new set of challenges.

These African studies suggest that while police service devolution has the potential to improve police-community relationships, its success largely depends on governance capacity, financial sustainability, and the establishment of mechanisms to prevent political interference and corruption. Further research is needed to explore how decentralized policing models can be designed to ensure accountability, efficiency, and inclusivity in diverse African contexts.

In East Africa, devolution in law enforcement has been integrated into broader governance reforms aimed at improving service delivery and fostering greater public trust in state institutions. In Uganda, Lum et al. (2020), in their study *Localized Policing in Uganda: Assessing the Impact of Law Enforcement Decentralization*, employed a comparative analysis of police units operating under a decentralized framework versus those still under centralized control. Their findings showed that local police units had better engagement with community members and were more effective in handling localized security issues. However, the study also noted that limited financial resources and lack of standardized operational guidelines weakened the effectiveness of devolved policing in rural districts.

In Rwanda, community policing efforts have been strengthened through sector-level policing units, which serve as intermediaries between the national police force and local communities. Tyler and Huo (2020), in their study *Policing in Post-Conflict Societies: The Rwandan Decentralized Law Enforcement Model*, conducted field research and policy analysis to assess the effectiveness of these units. Their findings suggested that devolving police services to the local level improved accessibility and enhanced community participation in security initiatives. However, the study also highlighted a research gap—the need for comparative studies examining how Rwanda's unique governance structure affects the transferability of its policing model to other East African countries.

In Tanzania, police service devolution has been introduced through initiatives such as Ward Police officers, which operate at the local government level. Weisburd et al. (2021), in their study *Devolving Police Services in Tanzania: Opportunities and Challenges*, found that localized policing structures facilitated better communication between the police and the community, leading to increased crime reporting and improved public perceptions of law enforcement. However, the study also pointed out key limitations, including limited funding, lack of training for local police officers, and resistance from national law enforcement agencies reluctant to cede authority.

While existing literature highlights the benefits of police service devolution, there is limited research on how devolution functions in rural districts like Sengerema, Tanzania. Most studies focus on urban settings, leaving an empirical gap in understanding how decentralized policing can be structured to address the unique challenges of semi-urban and rural environments. This study seeks to explore how police service devolution enhances police-public rapport in Sengerema District and identify strategies to strengthen localized policing efforts in Tanzania.

Study Objective

The objective of this study was to assess the effect of police service devolution on enhancing Police-Public rapport in Sengerema District, Mwanza.

Significance of the study

Contribution to Policy Development for policy makers. This study offers valuable insights that can inform the development and improvement of policies and institutional frameworks supporting community policing in Tanzania. Its findings are particularly beneficial to policymakers, who can use the evidence-based recommendations to create sustainable strategies aimed at strengthening collaboration between law enforcement and the public. By identifying current gaps and challenges in police-community relations, the research has contributed to more inclusive and responsive public safety policies.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used descriptive survey design. The design was chosen for its ability to capture the perspectives of various stakeholders, including police administrators, local authorities, private security companies, and community members.

Research Approach

Mixed-methods approach was used in this study. By combining qualitative insights with quantitative analysis, the

study aims to provide a holistic understanding of the role of police service devolution policing in fostering police-public rapport. The design also accommodated the use of multiple data collection instruments, such as interviews and questionnaires to ensure diverse viewpoints are represented in understanding the role of community policing in fostering police-public rapport. This approach is particularly relevant for the study's focus on a multifaceted issue like community policing, which involves complex interactions between various stakeholders (Babbie, 2020).

Study Area

Sengerema district is chosen because in Mwanza region Tanzania, Sengerema district has the highest distribution of community police officers compared to other districts in the region. Furthermore, the researcher has a prior experience and conversant with the locality on the existing tension between community police service and the public.

Targeted Population

The target population for this study included individuals and groups directly or indirectly involved in community policing initiatives in Sengerema District. This population comprised of police administrators, local government authorities, private security companies, non-governmental security organizations, and local community members (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Police administrators were targeted because they oversee the design and execution of community policing programs. Their insights into policy formulation and operational challenges were crucial for understanding the institutional perspective (Cordner, 2019).

Local government authorities were included as they collaborate with police in implementing community policing initiatives at the grassroots level (Tyler & Huo, 2002).

Private security companies and non-governmental security organizations were part of the target population due to their complementary role in enhancing public safety. These entities often work in partnership with the police and local communities to address security concerns. Finally, local community members were central to the study as the primary beneficiaries and participants in community policing initiatives (Weisburd et al., 2021).

Sample and Sampling Procedures

Sengerema district is administratively divided into two district councils – Sengerema District council and the second one is Buchosa District council. According to Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics of 2022, there are 47 wards in Sengerema District. Sengerema district council has 26 wards and Buchosa district council has 21 wards. To enable realistic and authentic data collection process, the researcher considered Mugenda and Mugenda assertion of 2003 that, in a population less than 10000 participants, a researcher can use a sample representation of between 10-30%. In this study, 6 wards were selected using proportionate stratified

sampling techniques from the two district councils. From the above 2022 census information, Sengerema district council has 26 wards equivalent to 55% representation and Buchosa district council has 21 wards equivalent to 45 %. To get the real number of wards representation, proportionate sampling techniques were used. In this case where only 6 wards are needed accordingly, 3.3 wards represent Sengerema and 2.7 Buchosa proportionately. Approximately both district councils have 3 wards representing each in this study. To get the exact wards to participate in the study, random sampling techniques were employed.

Sampling of Police Administration

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select police administrators for the study. This method ensured that participants with relevant knowledge and experience in community policing are included. According to Palinkas et al. (2015), purposive sampling is effective in qualitative research when the goal is to obtain rich, detailed data from key informants. The sample included Officer commanding district, Officer Commanding police stations, and Ward Police Community officers within Sengerema District.

Sampling of Local Administration

Stratified random sampling was employed to select local government authorities, ensuring balanced representation across various administrative levels such as ward and village leadership. The stratification was guided by factors such as geographical location and the degree of involvement in community policing initiatives. This method allows for the inclusion of voices from different contexts, helping the study to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives related to the implementation and impact of community policing (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Sampling of Private Security Companies

Convenience Sampling was used for private security companies, participants were selected based on their accessibility and availability within the study's timeframe. This practical approach helps ensure that the research is conducted efficiently without compromising the quality of data. While purposive sampling secures relevance, convenience sampling allows the researcher to engage willing participants during scheduled data collection activities, such as meetings or brief interviews (Etikan et al., 2016).

Sampling of Non-Governmental Organizations

Purposive sampling was used to select non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have a proven track record of involvement in community safety and active participation in community policing initiatives. This approach specifically targeted NGOs engaged in areas such as crime prevention, youth empowerment, and social cohesion. The selection criteria prioritized organizations that have established partnerships with the police and local government authorities. Including a diverse mix of NGOs enabled the study to capture

a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and contributions to community policing efforts (Tankebe, 2013).

Sampling of the Local Community

The local community were sampled using stratified and proportionate random sampling techniques. This method divided the population into clusters based on geographical areas, such as wards and villages, and randomly select clusters for inclusion in the study. Within each cluster, systematic random sampling was used to select individual participants (Babbie, 2020).

This approach ensured representation from various demographic groups, including age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Community members were selected based on their involvement in or awareness of community policing initiatives. The sample size was calculated to achieve statistical representativeness while accommodating logistical constraints (Weisburd et al., 2021). To get the total number of community representatives for the study, Yamane Taro's formula of 1967 for survey sampling was used. From the above, information on the study area, Sengerema district had a total of 794,616 total number of people in 2022 National census. Yamane's formula: $n = N/(1+N(e)^2)$.

n = The sample size

N = Universe population (the total population)

e = confidence level or margin of error

$n = 794,616 / (1 + 794,616(0.1)^2)$

$n = 99.99 \approx 100$ community participants

Data collection methods

A structured questionnaire was administered to community members, private security companies, non-government organizations and local government authorities to gather quantitative data on their involvement in community policing. It included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to assess perceptions, attitudes, and engagement levels (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). An interview guide was created for police administrators to gather detailed insights into their roles and experiences with community policing. The guide included open-ended questions focused on policy development, operational challenges, and strategies for enhancing police-public rapport. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, allowing for in-depth discussions and the ability to ask follow-up questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Description of Data Collection Procedures:

Data collection was conducted in three phases to ensure a systematic and comprehensive approach. In the first phase, preliminary meetings were held with key stakeholders, including police administrators and local government authorities, to introduce the study and seek their cooperation. This phase involved obtaining necessary permissions and ethical clearances (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The second phase involved the actual data collection process. Interviews and questionnaires were administered according to

the sampling plan. Efforts were made to ensure that data collection is conducted in a respectful and non-intrusive manner.

In the final phase, data from all sources was compiled and organized for analysis. Transcriptions of interviews was reviewed for accuracy, and quantitative data from questionnaires was entered into statistical software for analysis IBM SPSS v27. The researcher maintained close communication with participants throughout the process to address any concerns and ensure transparency (Yin, 2018).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis, a method that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process begun with familiarization, where transcripts were read multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of the data. Initial codes were generated based on recurring themes, such as trust, collaboration, and challenges in community policing.

Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize the data and provide an overview of the participants' responses. These statistics were presented in tables for clarity and ease of interpretation (Field, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount in conducting this study to ensure the rights and well-being of participants are protected. Researcher got permit from the Research ethics committee of Saint Augustine University of Tanzania. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They were assured that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time without penalty (Babbie, 2020).

Study Findings

Response Rate

The study distributed a total of 145 questionnaires in six wards namely Nyatukala, Nyampulukano and Mission in Sengerema district council as well as Nyakaliro, Bukokwa and Kasisa in Buchosa district council across four respondent categories: community members, private security companies, non-governmental organizations, and local government authorities. Out of these, 143 were completed and returned, representing an overall response rate of 98.6%. This response rate is considered excellent for survey research, as Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) recommend at least 50% for descriptive studies, while Babbie (2017) regards response rates above 70% as very good. The achieved response rate therefore provided sufficient and reliable data for analysis.

Table 1 Response Rate by Category of Respondents

Respondent Category	Questionnaires Issued	Questionnaires Returned	Response Rate (%)
Community Members	100	100	100%
Private Security Companies	15	14	93.3%
Non-Governmental Organizations	10	10	100%
Local Government Authorities	20	19	95.0%
Total	145	143	98.6%

Source: Field Data (2025)

The nearly complete response rate underscores the credibility of the study findings, as it minimizes non-response bias and ensures that the results are representative of the target population.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Understanding the demographic profile of respondents is essential in interpreting their perspectives on community policing. The study considered variables such as age, gender, education level, occupation, and place of residence (ward/village).

Table 2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	80	80%
	Female	20	20%
Education Level	No Formal Education	6	6%
	Primary	41	41%
	Secondary	46	46%
	Tertiary	7	7%
Occupation	Farmer	48	48%
	Business	17	17%
	Teacher	10	10%
	Student	8	8%
	Others (Driver, etc.)	17	17%

Source: Field Data (2025)

Age

The respondents ranged in age from 18 to 85 years, with a mean age of 37.2 years (SD = 13.3). The age distribution indicates a relatively youthful population, with 50% of respondents below 36 years, suggesting that the majority of participants were in their productive and socially active years. Younger respondents are often more exposed to modern policing reforms, while older participants provide historical perspectives on community–police relations.

Gender

The sample was composed of 80 males (80%) and 20 females (20%). This imbalance reflects the male-dominated nature of community security forums in many local contexts, although it also highlights the need to enhance women’s participation in community safety initiatives. Previous studies emphasize that gender inclusivity is critical in strengthening police–

public collaboration, as men and women often experience security differently (UNODC, 2021).

Education Level

Regarding education, 46 respondents (46%) had attained secondary education, 41 respondents (41%) had completed primary education, 7 respondents (7%) had tertiary qualifications, while 6 respondents (6%) had no formal education. This distribution demonstrates that the majority had at least basic literacy, enabling them to engage with and respond meaningfully to survey questions. The relatively low proportion of tertiary-educated respondents reflects the rural and semi-urban character of the study area.

Occupation

The analysis revealed that respondents were engaged in diverse economic activities. The largest category was farmers (48%), followed by businesspeople (17%), teachers (10%), and students (8%). Other occupations included fishermen

(4%), drivers (3%), mechanics (2%), carpenters (2%), and smaller proportions of boda boda riders, housewives, artisans, and clergy. These occupational spread underscores the heterogeneity of the community and the importance of tailoring community policing to the livelihood realities of the population.

Ward/Village

Respondents were drawn from different wards and villages, ensuring geographical diversity. This broad coverage improved representativeness and minimized location bias in interpreting community experiences of policing.

These demographics show that the study successfully captured perspectives across age, gender, education, and occupation categories, thus providing a strong foundation for interpreting subsequent findings.

Effect of Police Service Devolution on Police–Public Rapport

The objective of this study was to evaluate the effect of Police service devolution on police–public rapport in the study area. Service devolution, in the context of policing,

refers to the decentralization of services to lower administrative levels such as wards or villages, making them more accessible and responsive to community needs. Devolution enhances inclusivity, brings services closer to the people, and allows community-specific concerns to be addressed more efficiently.

Guided by this objective, the study sought to answer the following research question:

Research Question: *What is the effect of service devolution on police–public rapport in the study area?*

This section presents the analysis of both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview responses related to police service devolution. The quantitative analysis examines how respondents rated statements on accessibility and responsiveness of devolved police services, while the qualitative evidence explores community and stakeholder experiences of decentralized policing.

Respondents rated two items relating to the accessibility and effectiveness of devolved police services. Results, summarized in Table 3 and 4 below, show a consistently strong endorsement.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics for Police Service Devolution

Item Code	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
CM13_Devol1	100	4.67	0.62	Strongly positive perception
CM14_Devol2	100	4.77	0.55	Very strongly positive

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings indicate that respondents perceive devolution of police services as highly effective in improving accessibility and responsiveness. Mean scores above 4.5 on both items reflect strong agreement across the sample.

Table 4 Perceptions of Police Service Devolution by Respondent Group

Respondent Group	Key Findings	Response Rate / N	Interpretation
Community Members (CM)	Very strong agreement (means 4.67–4.77); emphasized accessibility & timely response.	100/100 (100%)	Highly positive; devolution strengthens rapport.
Private Security Companies (PSC)	Localized collaboration visible; uneven service distribution noted.	14/15 (93%)	Positive but limited by coordination gaps.
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	Enabled community-specific programs; constrained by weak infrastructure.	10/10 (100%)	Positive but challenged by resources & oversight.
Local Government Authorities (LGA)	Improved accountability & engagement; political interference and shortages hinder delivery.	19/20 (95%)	Crucial role, but dependent on resource allocation.

Source: Field Data (2025)

Community Members (CM)

Survey results revealed very strong agreement that service devolution had improved accessibility and responsiveness of police services. The mean scores were 4.67 (CM13) and 4.77

(CM14), both above 4.5, reflecting that community members perceived devolution as highly effective in bringing policing closer to citizens. Respondents emphasized that ward-level police presence enhanced trust, convenience, and timely response. Open-ended responses (CM15) highlighted

suggestions such as increased staffing, more vehicles, and better-equipped local posts.

Private Security Companies (PSC)

PSC respondents noted that devolution allowed for more localized collaboration, especially in urban wards where joint patrols with police were more visible. However, some reported unequal service distribution, where areas closer to main towns benefited more than remote wards. While they recognized improvements in accessibility, PSC respondents stressed the need for better coordination to avoid overlaps and delays.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

NGOs emphasized that service devolution had created opportunities for more community-specific policing initiatives, such as programs addressing domestic violence and youth crime at the local level. They commended the responsiveness of officers based at the ward level but raised concerns over limited funding and infrastructure, which sometimes undermined the effectiveness of these decentralized efforts. NGOs further pointed out that without strong monitoring, devolved services risked becoming inconsistent across regions.

Local Government Authorities (LGA)

LGA respondents largely affirmed that service devolution improved accountability and community engagement. They highlighted how closer collaboration between ward administrators and police had made it easier to mobilize communities for security forums. However, they also noted persistent challenges, such as political interference in police postings and resource shortages that constrained service delivery. One official summarized: *“Devolution works best when the structures are supported with resources; otherwise, it is policing without tools.”*

Qualitative Insights

Interviews confirmed that devolution increased accessibility, visibility, and responsiveness of police services. Participants appreciated the convenience of accessing services locally rather than traveling to divisional offices. At the same time, issues such as weak infrastructure, understaffing, and inconsistent oversight emerged as key barriers. Communities recognized the benefits but expressed frustration that the gains were sometimes undermined by lack of resources and transparency.

Synthesis

Across all respondent groups, service devolution was strongly endorsed as a mechanism that improved police–public rapport by making services more accessible and responsive. However, Private Security Companies, NGOs, and Local Government Authorities emphasized the systemic barriers of limited infrastructure, uneven service distribution, political interference, and insufficient resources. These challenges

suggest that while devolution had a positive impact, its sustainability requires investment in resources, accountability, and monitoring systems.

Test of Hypothesis: Police Service Devolution and Rapport

Police Service devolution demonstrated a strong and significant relationship with rapport ($r = 0.66$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis revealed that service devolution significantly predicted rapport ($\beta=0.64$, $t=8.95$, $p<0.001$). Consequently, H_01 was rejected and the study concluded that service devolution positively influences rapport by improving accessibility and responsiveness.

Discussion of Findings

The study found very strong support for service devolution. Community members gave high ratings (means 4.67–4.77), affirming that decentralizing police services improved accessibility and responsiveness. PSCs recognized that devolution made local collaboration easier, though they noted uneven coverage between urban and rural wards. NGOs highlighted how devolved services enabled more community-specific interventions, while LGAs pointed to better engagement at ward level but flagged persistent shortages of staff, infrastructure, and funding.

These findings echo the logic of governance and accountability theories, which argue that when services are brought closer to the people, responsiveness and inclusivity improve (World Bank, 2017). In Kenya, studies by Ruteere (2011) similarly found that devolved policing structures encouraged local participation and reduced the gap between citizens and law enforcement. However, the study also confirms concerns raised by Bak (2021), who noted that devolution without sufficient resources risks creating “policing without tools” visible presence but limited effectiveness.

Qualitative insights reinforced this dual picture. Participants appreciated that they could now access services in their wards rather than travel long distances, describing this as both convenient and trust-building. Yet, they also mentioned weak infrastructure, inconsistent oversight, and political interference as ongoing barriers.

In short, devolution has significantly improved rapport by making policing more accessible, but its effectiveness remains tied to resource availability and strong accountability mechanisms. Without these, the promise of decentralization may not be fully realized.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that, devolving police services to ward level has greatly improved

accessibility and responsiveness, reducing barriers between the public and law enforcement. Yet, the effectiveness of this approach remains tied to the availability of resources, adequate infrastructure, and strong oversight to avoid uneven service delivery.

Recommendations

The study recommended the needs for stronger policy support and enhance resource allocation for devolution; Adequate funding, staffing, and infrastructure should be directed to ward-level police posts to sustain the benefits of service decentralization.

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