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Assessment Of The Relationship Between Youth And Police

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In Likoni Sub County- Mombasa County, Kenya

By Team Likoni:

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Acknowledgement
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About the Authors
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This report was researched and written by four youth activists in Likoni, Kenya. These activists - Shamim Juma, Sakina Maliq, Christine Matunda, Ali Mashua - grew up in Likoni and are dedicated to empowering their sub-county's youth to reach their potential for their own future and the future of their community. Each of the authors works in different fields and therefore brought unique perspectives to bear in shaping this research and writing the report. They hope that, in addition to offering tangible suggestions for improving the relationship between youth and the police, this project will stand as an example of the critical role that young people can play in driving positive change.

Abbreviations
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DARE:	Drug abuse resistance education
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
ISD:	Institute for Strategic Dialogue
IPOA:	Independent Policing Oversight Authority
KNBS:	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
NPS:	National police service
NCPD:	National Council for Population and Development
TAPS:	Teen and police services

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Executive Summary

This report examines the relationship between law enforcement and youth in Likoni, a sub-county of Mombasa, Kenya. The relationship between police officers and youth has been strained throughout Likoni's history. For decades, authorities have worked to try and alleviate tension between young people and police and improve this crucial relationship for the safety of the wider community. This study hopes to contribute to this effort by exploring perceptions amongst youth and police, investigating how each group understands their own role in the challenge, and identifying key barriers to cooperation.

This study found that while young people and police both shared concerns about the state of their relationship and showed willingness to work toward a solution, their perceptions about each other were marred by deeply held mistrust. Youth in particular expressed fear and anger about the police and their treatment of the community, even when they had not had direct interactions with the police themselves. It is clear that a great deal of work must be done to address and resolve this challenging relationship.

Any efforts should work to include both police and young people in a way that empowers both parties, educates them about their collective responsibility and inspires them to take ownership of the role they can play in fostering a more productive relationship. Furthermore, efforts should go beyond youth and include the entire community to enlighten the residents of Likoni about their constitutional rights and create an environment in which citizens can engage freely with the police.

As part of this study, the research team surveyed 60 young citizens of Likoni and conducted focus groups with 10 local police officers, Data collection included quantitative and qualitative methods with desktop review blending.

Chapter One: Introduction

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Youth and Police in Likoni

The relationship between police officers[1] and youth has been strained throughout Likoni's history. Young people play a key role in Likoni's violent gangs and are frequently involved in violent crimes.[2] In response, police have come down hard on juvenile gangs and have been accused of using excessive force. According to research conducted by Amnesty International, police reforms in Kenya were "a drop in the ocean", especially in confrontations with young suspects. The cycle of distrust that has resulted has hampered efforts to normalise relations between police and youth and prompted the Mombasa County Government and several civil society organizations to emphasise facilitating trust between police and the youth.

Research shows that young people in Kenya generally hold negative attitudes towards police, portray little or no confidence in them and rate them poorly on measures of competency, trust and overall performance as they interact with youth in their daily duties.[3] These feelings may stem from perceptions or the experience of being targeted or harassed by police.[4] Police have also reported great difficulties in working with youth, frequently reporting difficult and uncooperative behavior from young people. The resulting frustration is so intense that the police have publically accused Likoni residents of being uncooperative and perpetuating violence in the region as a result.[5] Both youth and police have their own grievances and both parties have an important role to play in mediating this conflict.

This antagonistic relationship is not sustainable in the long term. Negative interactions reaffirm mistrust, while mistrust contributes to hostile interactions for both parties, perpetuating a cycle of dissatisfaction and antagonism that risks serious escalation and undermines security for the entire community. Everyone involved in this situation has their own side to tell; however, in order to begin repairing this relationship, it is crucial to begin with those who are most intimately involved: the police and youth of Likoni sub-county. What is at the core of this distrust, and how can we begin to repair it?

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[1] The term "police" throughout this research does not refer to a specific department; rather it is used as a generic term for all police.

[2] Mohamed, A. (2019)

[3] (Flexon et al., 2009; Hurst and Frank, 2000; Hinds, 2007)

[4] (Carr et al., 2007; Fagan and Tyler, 2005; Hinds, 2007; Piquero et al., 2005)

[5] Kasuku, A. (2019)

Likoni Sub-County

Likoni is situated in the heart of Mombasa County and consists of five administrative wards: Bofu, Likoni, Mtongwe, Shika Adabu and Timwani. Diverse media have identified Likoni as a violent hot-spot where crime is a regular part of life.[6] Young people play a significant role in perpetuating this security challenge, as many are vulnerable to recruitment into violent or criminal gangs. Youth vulnerability in Likoni stems from many challenges, including a lack of opportunities, unequal access to education and economic hardship. As a result, police interact with young people regularly and the nature of these interactions is paramount for the security of the community.

County Assembly Wards

■	Mtongwe
■	Bofu
■	Timbwani
■	Shika Adab
■	Likoni

0   1.5   3   6 Kilometers
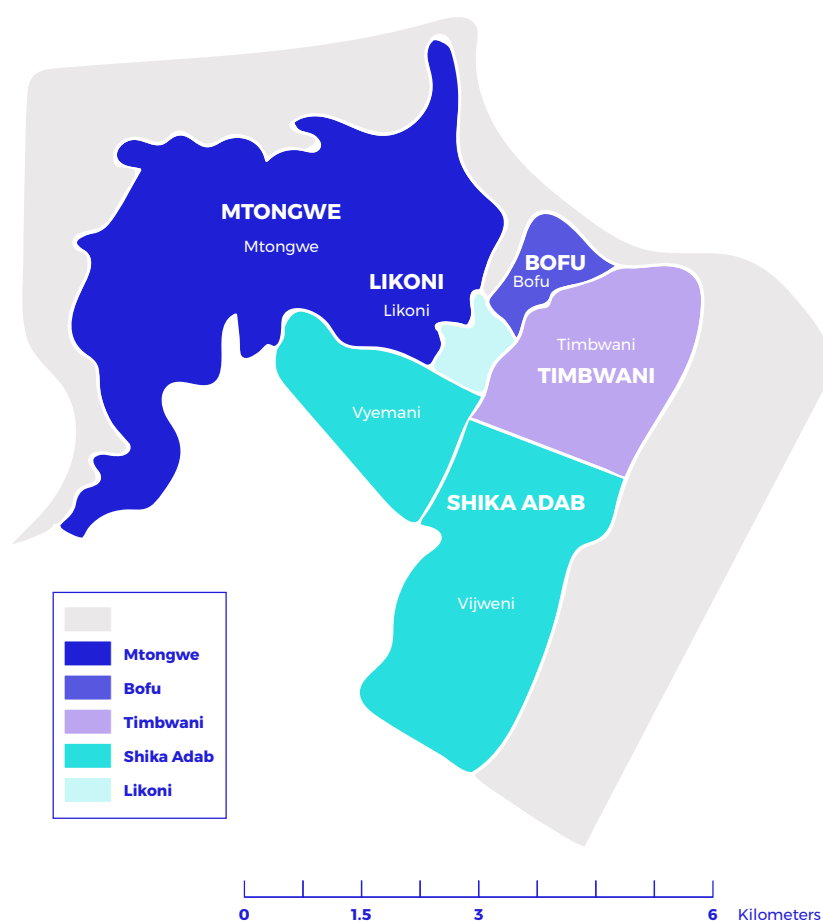
1.1 **LIKONI SUB COUNTY WITH EXISTING WARDS**

Source: Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission-Kenya

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[6] Mkutu,Wandera,Opondo, Kajumbe, 2016

The Research: Understanding Youth-Police Relationships in Likoni

In order to help improve the relationship between police and youth in Likoni, this research project set out to understand how these two groups perceive each other, as well as their own role in this situation. Therefore, it was important to include both perspectives and speak with police and youth in Likoni.

As part of this project, the research team:

1   **surveyed 60 young people** from all 5 of Likoni's wards about their experience and perceptions of local police, as well as their security-affective behaviour. The survey included a mix of 13 closed and open-ended questions, giving participants the chance to expand on their answers and provide crucial context.

2   **engaged 10 police officers** in a **focus group** to discuss their perception of youth in Likoni and how they think youth see the police.

Combined with desk research and data from the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (I.P.O.A) and Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government in Kenya, this research reveals a complicated relationship. While on the whole, police were more optimistic than the youth, the majority of the people participating in the study expressed good will toward the other and a desire to change the nature of the relationship between these groups. However, both groups also expressed a mixture of resentment and confusion that seems to typify many of the interactions between police and youth in Likoni.

The main purpose of the study was to examine the interactions between young people and the police to better understand what drives distrust and dissatisfaction amongst them in Likoni, and identify key barriers to police-youth cooperation. The secondary purpose was to identify police youth-centered approaches with the potential to improve relations between the two parties.

To this end, the research was carried out with three key objectives:

1   **To assess the attitude of young people towards the police**

2   **To assess the attitude of the law enforcers towards young people**

3   **To determine the nature of collaboration between the youth and police officers in Likoni**

Background:
Youth And Police Relations In Likoni

Building trust and respect is a key exercise for police to maintain law and order, reduce tensions within a community and respond to crisis situations. When a community regards police with suspicion and aggression – or vise versa – the gap between these groups widens and a community as a whole suffers. This relationship is particularly difficult with young people who, on the whole, tend to have more troubled ties with police than adults.[7] This has been explained in part by young people's greater use of public spaces and heightened contact and conflict with the police;[8] however, this is not the whole story. It is crucial to understand what is affecting young people's attitudes toward police to be able to address them holistically.

There has been only limited public discourse or consultations on crime and violence prevention and policy formulation in Kenya. For instance, community policing has had some attention in the last two decades, but the outcomes are hardly felt, because of the poor understanding of the concept and lack of real partnership between the communities and the police.[9] Therefore, a shift in policy or the implementation of community policing has to be actioned throughout Kenya to create a safe and open environment.

The clamor for police reforms in Kenya reached its peak following post-election violence in 2007/2008 during which police relied on brutal tactics that many claim violated human rights.[10] The violence was quelled through the signing of a national peace accord, which led to a power sharing deal brokered through the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation process and included police reforms.[11] The proposed reforms were later strengthened by the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya (2010), which provided for further changes in both legal and institutional frameworks that govern the police service. These included transforming the police force into a service, placing the Kenya Police Service and Administration police under one command, establishment of the office of the Inspector General of police, the National Police Service and National Police Service Commission, the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA). It also led to the introduction of the National Police Service Act (2011) and the National Police Service Commission Act (2011) to promote implementation of the Constitutional provisions.

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[7] Flexton et al., 2009
[8] Loader, 1996; McAra and McVie,2010
[9] Ruteere and Pomerolle, 2003
[10] Goldstein et al 2008
[11] Goldstein et al 2008

Young people's attitudes towards the police

Effective policing requires officers to build a relationship with the community in which they work. While this demands police build a relationship with all citizens, this relationship with youth is particularly crucial and historically more difficult. On the whole, when compared with adults, young people tend to have more negative attitudes towards the police.[12] As young people begin to socialize more with peers in public spaces away from their parents' gaze, adversarial contact with the police generally increases.[13] Although congregations in groups are a means of youthful expressions and leisure, they may incur police attention. In Kenya, this distrust has been a key problem.[14]

While there is little research available on the nature of youth and police interactions in Kenya specifically, much has been written about how young people formulate their attitudes toward police that is valuable for this study. McAra and McVie (2005) [15] found that in poor neighborhoods in the United States, regular contact with the police during early adolescence actually increased offending and encouraged further hostility and defiance toward law enforcement. Murphy (2015) explained that because young people have more interactions with police, they can be more sensitive to differences in policing than adults and are therefore more likely to be suspicious of police authority or to perceive the police as a threat to their independence.[16] However, a growing literature argues that the nature of these interactions matter and that more positive interactions with the police can correct youth perceptions. For example, insight from procedural justice research shows that fair processes and respectful treatment of young people can increase legitimacy and compliance with the law.[17]

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[12] Hurst and Frank, 2000

[13] Loader,1996

[14] Kiereini, D. (2018)

[15] McAra and McVie (2005

[16] Murphy (2015)

[17] Fagan and Tyler,2005

Chapter Two: Research Findings And Analysis

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This study adopted a descriptive survey method that utilised both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data was collected through an in-depth **focus group discussion** with 10 police officers. Quantitative data was gathered through **questionnaires** that included both closed and open-ended questions. These questionnaires were administered by dedicated surveyors to 60 youths. [18]

Sampling

1   10 participating police officers were selected randomly from Likoni's police force. They were evenly split between male and female officers.

2   60 young survey participants were selected through purposive sampling from twenty youth groups across five wards, with 12 young people selected from each ward. They were all aged 18-23 and 75% were male and 25% female.

2.1 Focus Groups with Police: Police Perceptions/ Attitudes towards Youth

Focus group discussions with police revealed a complicated perspective. All the participating officers stressed they had a very "positive attitude" towards the youth in Likoni and were very willing to work with them. The majority of them emphasized that relationship building is important to gain community information and to abolish the notion that "police are the enemy"; however, the process was difficult. Many of the officers explained that they actively try to create relationships and be friendly with the youth, but were only successful with a small proportion. Furthermore, several officers noted that they can 'see' a fear of police in the youth of Likoni, to the extent that many young people will run away at the first sight of a police officer.

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[18]   For more details on the research methodology, see Appendix 1

> *"Here in Likoni, the relationship between the police and youth is not good at all. Like when you are walking and [the youth] see you, they run… In my experience there is no police who has passed somewhere and seen a group of youth and they remain standing; they always run. So I think they run because there is a problem somewhere; I do not know if it is the police or the youth"* [Police Officer]

Some of the officers offered explanations for why this happens:

1   **A fear of immediate consequences:** The youth are involved in a misdemeanor crime, or may be in possession of drugs and do not want to be caught in the act

2   **They are raised in an environment of fear:** some officers insisted that the youth just fear them. They attribute this to their surrounding environments, where crime and drugs are common so youth grow up seeing people run from police. This can be amplified when parents use the police as a way to correct behavior. For example, it is not uncommon for parents to threaten to call the police if a child doesn't behave, where they would be subjected to caning or hard labor.

> *"As much as we try to befriend these young boys, we do still have a gap… I still remain to them the police and the fear of police is still in them. Us [police] we are not bad, we know we do not have any badness in us, we do not judge people that this one looks like has done wrong or something we also have a normal life but the youth may not understand, they just fear us"* [Female Police Officer]

3   **A fear of wrongful punishment:** the youth run away from police because they fear that they might be arrested and accused of a crime they have not committed.

Despite these challenges, the police say they are trying to connect with young people. The focus group participants discussed several community activities they have organised in order to help citizens better understand community policing and help make the officers more approachable. One such example was community food gatherings for residents and police to come together and socialize in hopes of bridging the misunderstandings between these two groups. One officer also noted that some other police officers participate in community service. The police also used the focus group as a chance to discuss activities they could organize to enable further integration with the youth, such as talent shows, sports, and games.

2.2 Survey Responses: Youth Perceptions/ Attitudes towards Police

On the whole, youth had negative attitudes toward police and were suspicious of their presence within the community, even if they did not themselves feel unsafe in their presence. Participating youth responded to a questionnaire of 13 questions that explored multiple dimensions of youth-police relations, including: how they felt the police treated themselves and the wider community, their understanding about the role of the police, and their own role in maintaining the security of the community, including their likelihood to report crimes. The results of this survey are described below.

Safety in the Presence of Police Officers

0% of respondents indicated that they felt safe in the presence of police officers in Likoni; 40% said they did not. Crucially, this shows that while a majority of the respondents do feel safe in the presence of police, there was still a large number who do not.

Safety in the presence of police officers
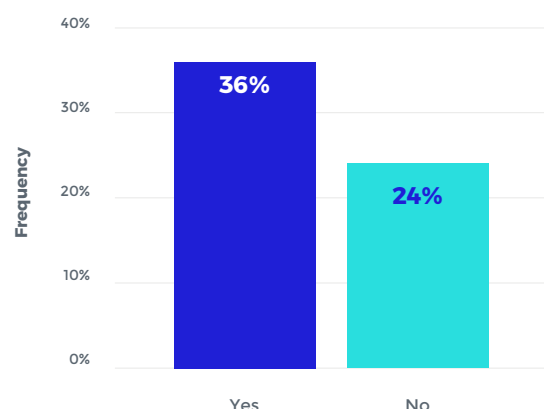
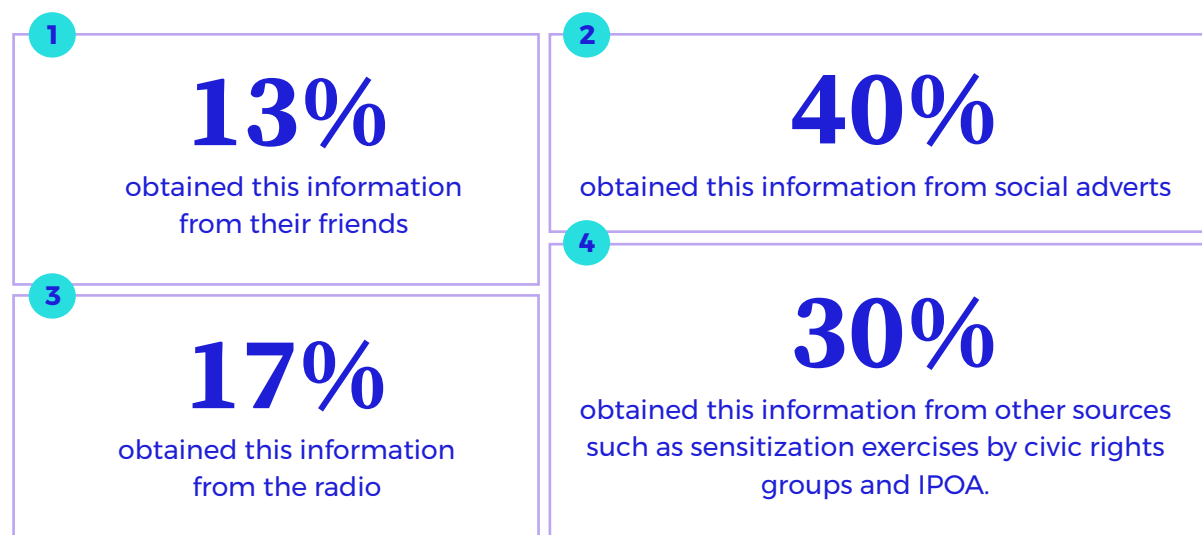**3.1** SAFETY IN THE PRESENCE OF POLICE OFFICERS

Do the young people understand the role of Law enforcers?
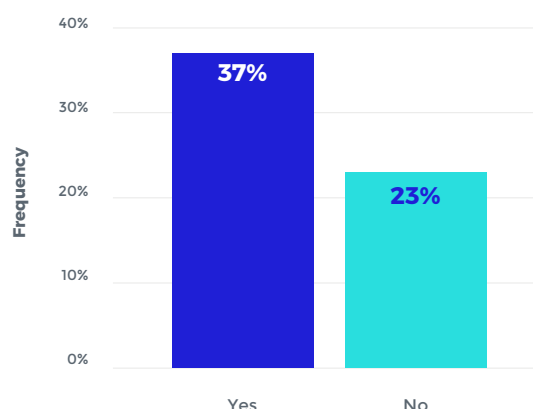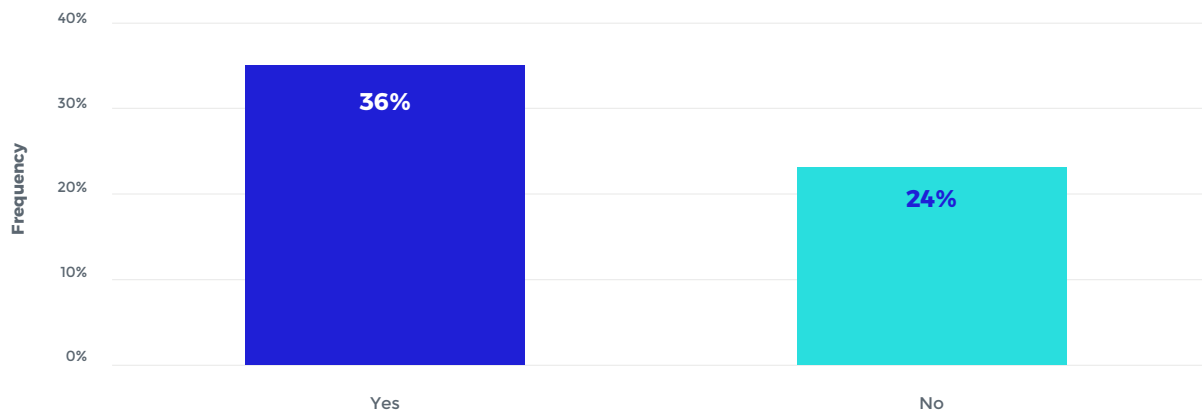

3.2 UNDERSTANDING ROLE OF LAW ENFORCERS

The Role of Police

Many of the young people surveyed were dissatisfied with how police performed their duties, yet when asked, only a small majority claimed to know much about what those duties were. Only 62% of the youth surveyed said that they understood the role of police officers, and an additional 58% indicated that they had ever received any information about law enforcers' duties in Likoni. Furthermore, many of those who had gotten information reported receiving it from unofficial sources:

1
13%
obtained this information from their friends

2
40%
obtained this information from social adverts

3
17%
obtained this information from the radio

4
30%
obtained this information from other sources such as sensitization exercises by civic rights groups and IPOA.
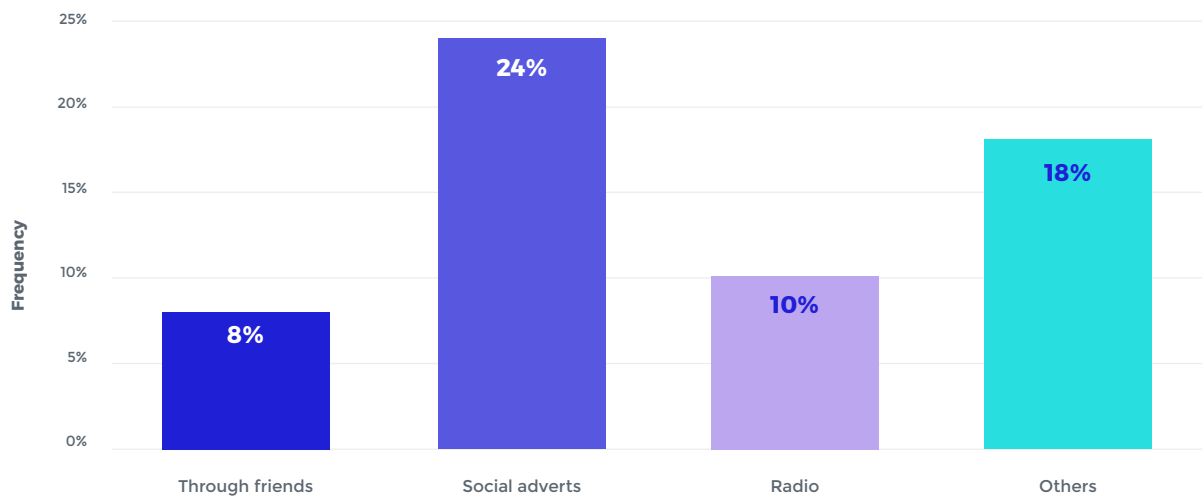
Do you have information on Law enforcers duties?

3.3 **SAFETY IN THE PRESENCE OF POLICE OFFICERS**

## Sources of information on role of law enforcers

3.4 **SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON ROLE OF LAW ENFORCERS**

The Role of the Youths in Security Matters

Participants were asked if they knew what role young people should play in security matters in Likoni Sub County, and the results revealed a lot of confusion. While 23% of respondents said they knew the role that Likoni youth should play in maintaining security in the sub-county, most did not. 43% of respondents said they were unsure, while 17% said they had no idea and 17% were neutral. The majority of respondents responded negatively to this question, suggesting that there is a lack of understanding amongst young people in Likoni about their own role in helping maintain security in their sub-county.

Idea on role of the youths in security matters
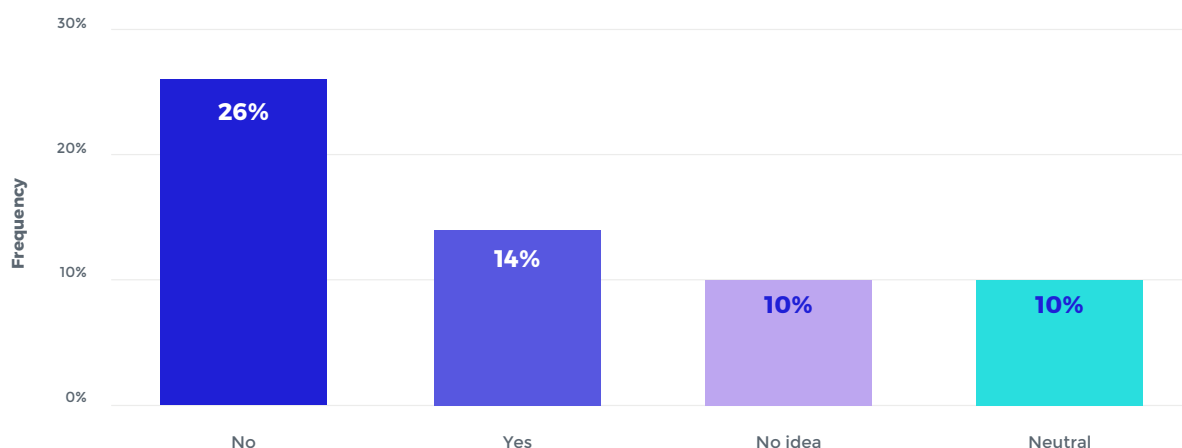
3.5   IDEA ON ROLE OF THE YOUTHS IN SECURITY MATTERS
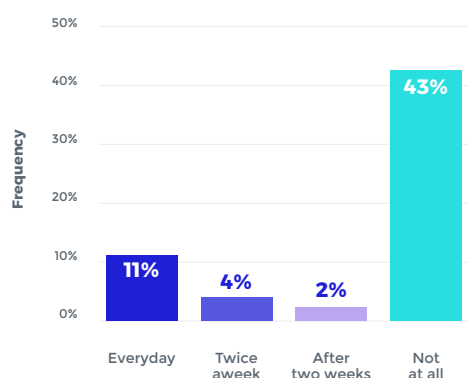
Reporting Crime to the Police

Reporting crime is a critical way in which citizens can support police in maintaining the security of their community and can serve as an important test in a citizen's willingness to support the police. Participants were evenly divided on whether or not they would report a crime they witnessed to police in Likoni, with 50% indicating that they would not report any crime they witnessed to authorities. Those who answered no were asked in an open-answer question to explain why, and their reasons included: a lack of proper witness protection and personal security fears. This finding is critical as citizens' willingness to report crimes they have witnessed is an important part of maintaining security within Likoni.

Frequency of Interactions with Police Officers

Despite their strong opinions about the police, the vast majority of the young people surveyed in this research have had very limited interactions with them. 72% of the respondents said they did not interact with police officers in Likoni at all. Amongst those who did interact with police, 18% of respondents said they did so daily, 7% did so twice a week, and 3% every two weeks.

Frequency of interaction with police officers

3.6 FREQUENCY OF INTERACTION WITH POLICE OFFICERS

## Would you report a crime you have witnessed to the police authorities?
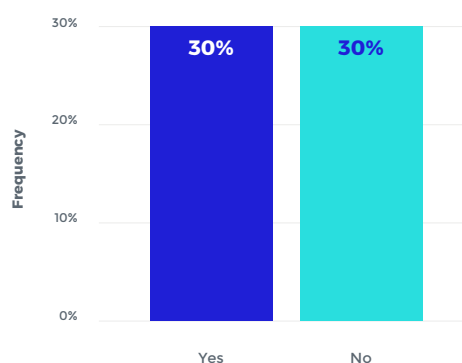
3.7 CRIME REPORTING TO THE POLICE OFFICERS

Police Treatment of Members of the Community

Young people form their opinions about the police not only through their own experiences, but also through the experiences of others. Participants were asked to rate how they felt members of the community in Likoni were treated by members of the police. 22% felt that the police force treated the community fairly, while 63% felt the police treated the community unfairly and 8% said they treated the community in a brutal way. 7% were neutral in how they felt the police treated the community. It is potentially significant that the majority of participants surveyed felt police mistreated members of the community.

How does the police force treat members of the community?
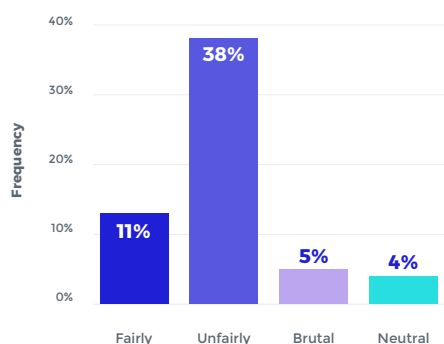
3.8 POLICE TREATMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

Can police officers and the youth work together?
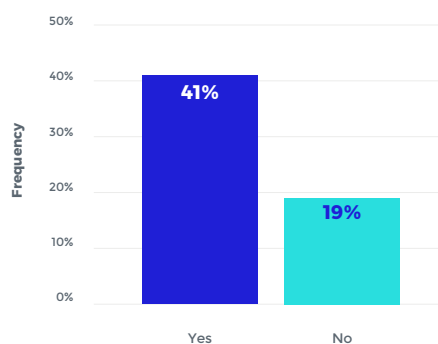
3.9 POLICE WORKING TOGETHER WITH YOUTH

Police Working Together with Youth

When asked if young people and police could work together in Likoni, the majority of the young people surveyed were optimistic: 68% of respondents agreed that the police officers and the youth can work together. However, a fairly significant minority of 33% said they could not.

Recommendations

The study found that while there is some negative perception of youth and police towards one another, that ultimately a large majority on both sides are willing to actively come together and work as one to bring about a cohesive community. Based on this, we strongly recommend the following interventions:

1 Regular meetings, seminars, and trainings should be held jointly in the community with both law enforcement and youth in attendance. Open conversation and honest dialogue could provide an avenue to address pertinent issues in regard to police-youth relations, as well as improving performance by police and the community at large.

2 Engage justice actors close to the community with an effort to enhance the community to freely work with the law enforcement. This could increase public understanding of constitutional rights, responsibilities and the law thus building a trusted system by the community members.

3 Encourage and enable collective responsibility. Each citizen bears responsibility in discharging information and promoting security; therefore, the whole community should be encouraged to become involved in reporting crime, as well as participating in anti-crime initiatives. This would require direct outreach, training and support for all parts of the community, including youth and elders.

4 Remedial interventions for youths with past negative encounters with the police through activities that will engage both youth and police in a safe, neutral space. Such activities could include: sports, clean-up exercises, and public engagement forums. Similarly interventions/ police trainings on how to engage youth. This will foster and enhance team building that increases trust and respect between youth and police.

5 Sharing experiences from different stakeholders about methods to improve police youth relations. This helps to highlight areas in need of improvement to build a more positive relationship between youth and police.

6 The police should share more material via social media to connect with youth directly. Social media is an invaluable platform to communicate with youth in Kenya. The police should utilize this space to share information, educate youth about the law and role of the police, and run campaigns that help youth get to know the police better as members of the community.

Appendix 1:
Research Methodology

This annex presents the methodology used to carry out the study. It further describes the type and source of data, the target population and sampling methods and the techniques that were used to select the sample size. It also described how data was collected, analyzed and the suitable methodology in this study which gave the guidelines for information gathering and processing.

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey method, in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to gather and disseminate data in a bid to establish assessment of the relationship between youth and police in Likoni Sub County, Mombasa County. Qualitative analysis was used to assess behavioral skills, personal attributes and insights that cannot be quantified, while a quantitative approach was used in processing numerical data that can be easily measured using systematic collection of data on study objectives and analyzing using descriptive statistics. Descriptive studies- cross-sectional are more formalized and typically structured with clearly stated investigative questions (Vyas & Bapat, 2011). The descriptive survey research design was important as it helped to overcome time as well as budget constraints (Cooper & Schindler, 2013).

Sample

This research was carried out in Likoni Sub-County within the Mombasa County lines, Kenya specifically targeting youths and local police. The research was carried out over a period of one month.

1. 60 youth survey participants were selected through purposive sampling from twenty youth groups across the five wards, with 12 young people selected from each individual ward. They were all aged 18-23 and 75% were male and 25% female.

2. 10 police participants were selected randomly from Likoni's police force. They were evenly split between male and female officers.

Data Collection Instruments

The primary research data was collected using both semi-structured questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. Items in the questionnaire were arranged in a logical sequence according to the themes being studied and items that would elicit similar responses being grouped together. The questionnaire had both closed and open-ended, predetermined and standardized set of questions. These closed-ended questions were adopted since they are easier to analyze as they are in an immediate usable form, are easier to administer and are economical to use in terms of time and money (Kothari, 2014). The open-ended questions gave the respondents complete freedom of response in one's own words. The questionnaire had 13 items which concentrated on safety of the youth in the presence of police officers, understanding the role of law enforcers, information on law enforcers' duties, sources of information on role of law enforcers, understanding of the role of youths in security matters, frequency of interaction with police officers, reporting of a crime witnessed by youths to the police authorities, perceptions of how the police force treats members of the community, and whether police officers and the youth can work together. The researchers accessed greater depth of responses from these open-ended questions since the respondents gave an insight into their feelings, background, hidden motivation, interests and decisions (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Secondary data was obtained from local and international academic writings (journals, articles, theses, and textbooks) related to police processes. The researchers made use of secondary data from the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (I.P.O.A) and Ministry of Interior and Coordination in Kenya. The secondary data obtained was used to help in cross validation of the collected primary data.

Data Collection Procedures

Before carrying out the focus group discussion and questionnaire distribution, the researchers had to seek for authorization from relevant authorities in Mombasa County and Likoni Sub County to collect data. Permission had to be granted from Mombasa County administration, Likoni Sub County Administration and chiefs through a cover letter explaining the objectives of the study and assurance of the respondents' confidentiality.

The research survey was conducted by a team consisting of a research consultant, Youth Group members and police commandants in Likoni Sub County Administration. The consultant designed the data collection tool and coordinated and supported the team to implement the assessment. The consultant had carried out a training prior to the fieldwork to the team on how to administer the data collection tools and capture data. The fieldwork was carried out for two weeks, where primary data was collected in the field. The chiefs were used to reassure the community of the legality of the exercise and mobilize the target respondents within the ages of 18-23. The research tool was conveyed to the respondents by the research team through self-administered questionnaires and focus group discussion with key informants using the interview and observation guide. The research team approached each respondent, introduced themselves and explained the nature and purpose of the study, the questionnaire was then administered as guided or self-administered depending on the respondent.

The collected data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Descriptive and inferential statistics was done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24. The set of data was described using percentage, mean standard deviation and coefficient of variation and presented using tables, charts and graphs.

Prior to the actual survey research, a pilot study was undertaken on 6 respondents to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, meeting the recommended threshold of 10% of the total sample. (Cooper & Schindler, 2013, Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

To ensure this research followed strict ethical guidelines (Bryman and Bell 2015), researches adhered to the following:

1. All respondents were asked to voluntarily participate and additionally, have the right to withdraw at any stage if they wished to do so.

2. Respondents' participation was based on informed consent, ensuring the researcher should give sufficient information and assurances about taking part in the research in order to allow individuals to understand the implications of participation and to reach a fully informed, well thought and freely given decision about whether or not to do so, without the exercise of any pressure or coercion.

3. There was no use of offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language in the formulation of the Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) interview guide.

4. Respondents were guaranteed their privacy and anonymity throughout the research survey process.

5. The researcher acknowledged the works of all other authors used in any part of this research report by citing and referencing the various authors.

6. The researcher maintained the highest level of objectivity during discussions and analyses throughout the research survey process.

Limitations of the Research Survey

The research was limited by the following set of variables and factors:

1 **Police information:** Some of the youth groups did not feel safe giving some information they had about police activities for fear of reprisal from the police.

2 **Scope:** The scope of this research was focused on Likoni Sub County only, it does not reflect a representative sample of Mombasa's wider population or draw general conclusions for Mombasa's other constituencies. The main goal of the research was focused on an assessment of the relationship between youth and police in Likoni Sub County-Mombasa County (rather than a general public perception of the relationship with the police in wider Mombasa).

3 **Resources and sampling:** The selection and size of the sample population was limited to the available financial resources from Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) and human resources of the Youth Groups, and does not constitute a representative sample of Likoni's youth population or law enforcement Despite its limitations in scope, it provides important insights into local youth-police dynamics and potential ways forward, and points to avenues for potential further research.

4 **Age Cluster:** The study targeted youths between the ages of 18 to 23 who have at least completed Form Four. It was very difficult to identify this age group as the majority of the participants were not willing to show their identity cards for secrecy reasons.

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