

Optimizing Juvenile Probation: A Concurrent Triangulation Study on Supervision Practices and Recidivism in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of probation supervision is to ensure compliance with probation conditions, improve public safety, and rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders back into a pro-legal and social lifestyle. However, statistics in Kenya point to consistently high rates of recidivism in the past two decades. Despite this, limited information exists on the effect of juvenile supervision practices on recidivism in the country. This study aimed to evaluate the existing juvenile probation supervision practices and their outcomes in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study sampled 226 respondents comprising juvenile probationers and probation practitioners. Using a concurrent triangulation mixed-method approach, three probation supervision practices, namely, frequency and mode of supervision, supervision skills and workload, were examined. The outcomes for each of the three practices were varied, with frequency and mode of supervision having a reducing effect on recidivism but not significant. Supervision skills and probation officers' workload significantly impacted recidivism. Collectively, the centrality of the existing probation supervision practices in curtailing juvenile reoffending behavior was evidenced. However, a number of challenges, including limited specialized training and mentorship in juvenile matters, resource constraints and overwhelming workloads, limited optimal outcomes. The study recommends consistent juvenile-focused training on supervision skills, clear guidelines to sustain manageable caseloads, and leveraging technology for administrative tasks and remote supervision.

Key Words: Juvenile, Probation, Supervision, Recidivism

INTRODUCTION

Probation supervision is key to attaining sentencing objectives, especially in reducing incidences of recidivism and successful offender reintegration. According to Killinger and Cromwell (1990), effective probation supervision ensures compliance with probation conditions, enhance public safety and reintegrate the offender back into a pro-legal and social lifestyle. Nevertheless, the success of this supervision is dependent on a number of factors, including, the frequency and mode of officer-probationer contacts, the skills of probation officers, and the caseload each officer manages (Probation Service, 2008). At the center of juvenile probation supervisions, are the probation officers. Described as “caseworkers” of the juvenile justice system (Guy et al., 2015) and the “eyes and ears” of the juvenile justice system (Mohammad & Azman, 2018), their approach to probationer supervisions greatly determines the probation outcomes. Consequently, supervision practices including the frequency and mode of supervision, along with the specific skills of probation officers, as well as the sizes of their caseloads, are pivotal in determining the success of probation, particularly for juvenile offenders.

A number of studies demonstrate a consistency in the effectiveness of the frequency of officer-offender contacts and the reliability of in-person interactions, while others highlight the inadequacies in other modes of supervision such use of telephones. For instance, Wan et al. (2016) utilized the propensity score matching technique to compare 2,772 offenders placed under post-release supervision against 4,722 post-release unsupervised

offenders. They found that offenders under post-release supervision had elongated time frames to reoffending, reduced odds of reoffending, and their frequency of recidivating was lower as compared to their counterparts who were unsupervised. Zettler and Medina (2020) observed that missed officer-probationer contacts have a negative impact on probation success. In semi-structured interviews with twelve probation practitioners, Dominey et al. (2021) found that the use of telephone in probation supervision makes probation supervision challenging, with probation practitioners unable to observe probationer's non-verbal cues critical to any communication process. Additionally, their surety of ascertaining the offender's geographical area as claimed over the phone is diminished.

Wan et al. (2016) study suggests that regular and structured supervision is crucial in reducing recidivism rates. The study emphasizes the importance of sustaining a consistent frequency in monitoring offenders. The study by Zettler and Medina (2020) implies that the quality and reliability of face-to-face interactions are vital for the success of probation, while Dominey et al. (2021) indicate that telephone mode of supervision may lack the personal connection and immediacy that face-to-face interactions provide, potentially making it less effective. In sum, the studies are indicative that both the frequency and the mode of supervision are critical in determining the success of probation. However, Bouchard et al. (2015) found inconsistent findings in the meta-analysis of intensive probation supervision programs. The authors observed that positive findings are small and not statistically significant. On the other hand, negative findings are reinforced by statistically significant results. The contrast suggests that while regular and appropriate modes of supervision are vital, the mere intensification of supervision may not yield substantial improvements in outcomes. This highlights the need for more nuanced and evidence-based approaches to probation strategies, especially in handling distinct groups of offenders like juveniles.

Probation officers' skills is another factor that forms part of probation supervision and has an impact on recidivism. In evidence-based community supervision, Bonta et al. (2011) studied probation officers' training program that was anchored on a risk-need-responsivity model. Their findings showed that supervision skills, such as cognitive skills, have a reducing effect on recidivism. Bourgon and Gutierrez (2012) also found that with a mere three-day training on Strategic Training Initiatives in Community Supervision (STIC), Canadian probation officers were somehow equipped with the cognitive-behavioral skills necessary to supervise probationers effectively. The findings are echoed by Reynor (2019), who noted that correctional practitioners who sustain the use of diverse supervision skills – comprising both relationship skills and structuring skills – often aid their correctional clients in having lower reconviction rates. A later study by Breno et al. (2023) investigated the strategies applied to reduce the likelihood of technical, absconding, and new arrest violations during the early phase of probation supervision. The study found that success in the first 6 months of supervision was pegged on probation officers' use of incentives to promote positive behavior, and reliance on skill-building plans to heighten interactions and build rapport.

The literature, though very insightful, predominantly focuses on the impact of supervision skills on adult offenders. It emphasizes the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral and relationship skills in reducing recidivism. However, a significant gap exists in understanding how these skills translate to juvenile offenders, who have distinct developmental, psychological, and social needs compared to adults. The studies by Bonta et al. (2011), Bourgon and Gutierrez (2012), Reynor (2019) and Breno et al. (2023), while insightful, do not specifically address whether the same supervision skills are equally effective for juveniles or if there is a need for tailored approaches that consider the unique challenges of working with younger populations.

For a number of years, criminologists and penologists, especially probation practitioners, have argued that expanded caseloads limit officers' effectiveness towards a positive probation outcome. In support, a study in Oklahoma City, USA, recorded a 30% reduction in recidivism rate among offenders supervised by officers with a lower caseload of 54 cases compared to their counterparts under the supervision of officers with a normal caseload of 106 (Jalbert & Rhodes, 2012). Fox et al. (2021) also found a reduction in reoffending rates among probationers supervised by officers with reduced caseloads (approximately 50 cases) as compared to their comparators supervised by officers handling 100 or more cases. On the contrary, Burrell (2006) concluded that caseloads alone are not a determinant for negative probation outcomes, which includes offender recidivism. Thirteen years later, Gayman et al. (2018) affirmed that caseload numbers do not have such an impact on offender rehabilitation outcomes.

The mix in the findings presents a complex picture, with some studies suggesting that manageable caseloads allow probation officers to provide more effective supervision. However, contrasting views, such as those by Burrell (2006) and Gayman et al. (2018), argue that other factors beyond caseload size significantly influence probation outcomes. This divergence in findings highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of how caseload size interacts with other variables, such as frequency and mode of supervision, and supervision skills, to impact probation effectiveness. Moreover, the existing studies are principally based in more developed contexts with better-resourced probation systems; they underscore a need for research focused on juvenile probationers in an African country such as Kenya. Kenya's unique socio-economic challenges and comparatively underdeveloped probation infrastructure may result in different dynamics between supervision practices and their impact on recidivism. A study in this context could provide valuable insights into how probation supervision affects juvenile recidivism.

In African settings, research in regard to the aspects of probation supervision practices remains scanty. Those that have been done either focus on institutionalized offenders' or examine the delivery and/or general effectiveness of community corrections. In Nigeria, Yekini and Salisu (2013) investigated the application of probation as a non-custodial measure in Nigeria. The study revealed that while the existing legal mechanisms allow the use of probation, inadequate institutional facilities hampered its prevalence. Ten years later, Asangausung (2023) also found that community-based corrective measures such as parole and probation were effective in rehabilitating offenders in Nigeria. These studies, though, are insightful; they are silent on how offenders are supervised. A similar trend in the gap regarding probation supervision practices and their outcome is replicated in South Africa. Bouffard et al. (2016), while examining the effectiveness of South Africa's restorative justice programs, observed that juveniles referred to children's court process demonstrated greater recidivism as compared to their counterparts who went through restorative justice programs.

Research that focuses on probation in Kenya examines it from the perspective of its application or the extent of its utilization as a non-custodial rehabilitation mechanism. For instance, Omboto (2022) relied on secondary data to analyze probation order sentences and their application in Kenya. The study specifically explored probation history in Kenya, probable probation conditions, techniques of probation rehabilitation and probation use in the country. Kenya National Crime Research Center (NCRC) (2019) principally investigated the extent to which probation orders are utilized by the Kenyan courts and factors affecting the utilization of probation order sentences. The study by Omboto (2022) is fundamental in detailing probation offender management processes. However, there is no information from the study that demonstrates the relationship between probation supervision practices and recidivism. NCRC (2019) established the high utilization of probation as a community-based offender rehabilitation mechanism, but there is scanty information in relation to how probationers are supervised. The two studies also do not focus on juvenile probationers.

Ngetich et al. (2019) examined superficially the relationship between offenders and their supervisors as an attribute of offenders' perceptions towards Community Service Orders (CSO) programs in Kenya. They noted that supervisors' flexibility, empathy, and professionalism were key to a good relationship between the offender and supervisor. Mutisya (2019) delved into the effectiveness of probation and Community Service Order Sentencing on Offenders. The two studies are silent on aspects of probation supervision, such as frequency and mode of supervision and officers' caseloads. Both studies scantily examine offenders' characteristics and supervision skills, such as the gender of the offender and officers' proficiency in the use of cognitive skills, respectively. Even so, the offender's characteristics and supervision skills are examined in relation to the level of satisfaction with the use of probation orders and not to the likelihood of reoffending.

The African studies have made valuable contributions to understanding non-custodial measures and their effectiveness. However, a significant gap regarding probation practices remains. While the Nigeria-based studies highlight the challenges and effectiveness of community-based corrections, they overlook detailed aspects of probation supervision practices. The South African study draws attention to the effectiveness of restorative justice programs but does not delve into probation-specific supervision. In Kenya, Omboto (2022) and the NCRC (2019) shed light on the application and utilization of probation orders, they are short of addressing the nuances of supervision practices and their impact on recidivism, particularly for juveniles. Ngetich et al. (2019) and Mutisya (2019) superficially provide insights into offender-supervisor relationships and the effectiveness of probation and community service orders. They, too, leave critical elements of probation supervision, such as the

frequency and mode of supervision, officer characteristics and their influence on recidivism, unaddressed. This underscores the need for more comprehensive research that explores the detailed practices of probation supervision and their direct impact on recidivism rates, with a particular focus on juvenile offenders.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling and Data Collection

In this mixed-method research design study, 226 respondents—comprising 127 juvenile probationers, 91 probation officers, 7 probation center managers, and the county director of Probation and Aftercare Services—were selected from Nairobi County. The county has seven probation centers: Nairobi City station, Milimani probation station, Makadara station, Kibera station, Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) station, Mathari probation station, and Ngong probation station. Using the juvenile probation placement register, all juveniles under probation at the time of the study were purposely included in the sample. The probationers were distributed across five probation centers, excluding Mathari and JKIA stations. The stations were excluded because of their special focus on mental health issues and immigration-related cases, respectively.

Following a three-week advance notice that included the provision of relevant information for the study and seeking consent from potential study participants, consent from juvenile respondents was obtained from their respective parents through probation center managers. Every probation officer has a schedule of when they interact with their clients at their stations. However, during the study period, officers were requested to have the juveniles report at their reporting stations on a common date. The date was mutually agreed upon between the officers and the juveniles. Structured questionnaires were administered face-to-face, with juveniles' responses put verbatim in writing by filling in the questionnaire. In-person interviews were conducted with the probation center managers in their offices, with the interviews lasting between 45 and 60 minutes.

Variable Description

Probation supervision practices grouped into three- mode and frequency of supervision, supervision skills, and workload- were the independent variables of interest in this study. Recidivism was the dependent variable of the study measured in terms of juveniles' prior number probation orders and breaches of probation conditions. Juveniles were asked to indicate their previous number of probation sentence and number of times they had breached probation conditions in their current probation placement. The information was confirmed by checking in their respective pre-sentence investigation reports and probation supervision case files, respectively.

Data Processing and Analysis

Prior to qualitative data analysis, the recorded data was transcribed by the use of Otter.ai Software App. The transcribed data was cleaned to correct the anomalies that arose during the transcription, as the software is seventy percent accurate. The completeness and accuracy of the questionnaires was verified, and found all the responses in the juvenile questionnaires to be in order.

Analysis of qualitative data collected commenced by evaluating particular statements and themes. A total of 8 Key Informants' transcribed texts were analyzed through a thematic approach by the help of Max QDA Software. Quantitative data was coded, entered, and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. The quantitative data was analyzed descriptively in terms of frequencies and percentages. The data was also analyzed inferentially to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Specifically, a binary logistic regression model was used to analyze the relationship between the independent variables and recidivism, measured by the summated number of previous probation orders and breaches of probation conditions. The analysis was conducted at a 95% confidence interval, with a p-value < 0.05 considered statistically significant.

A binary logistic regression model is suitable in analyzing a mix of different continuous, categorical, discrete and dichotomous variable (Tabachnick et al., 2013). A binary logistic regression is suitable for the current study as the variables are dichotomous. Therefore, expressing the binary logistic regression model capturing the

probation supervision practices in stochastic form. The binary logistic regression model is stated as follows:

$$Y_i = \left(\frac{p_{\pi i}}{1 - p_{\pi i}} \right) = \beta_0 + \beta_i X_i + \mu_i \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

where Y_i denotes the binary dependent or outcome variable of focus (recidivism), whereby 0 denotes no, and 1 indicates yes, i denotes the respondents $i = 1, \dots, 127$. The probation supervision practices are denoted by X_i indicating the independent variable of interest. The practices were measured in a 5-Likert scale, with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. $p_{\pi i}$ indicates the probability of reporting recidivism and $1 - p_{\pi i}$ denotes probability of no reported recidivism. The coefficient estimates of the slope and probation supervision programs are denoted by β_0 and β_i . The stochastic term is denoted by μ_i .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study received 177 responses from a total of 226 participants. This represents a 78.32% response rate. Table 1 shows the overall response rate as well as that of the sampled participant categories. The structured interviews yielded responses from the County Director of Probation and Aftercare Services and probation center managers. Probation officers and juvenile probationers did not achieve a score of 100%. This is for a variety of reasons. For probation officers, some questionnaires were rejected because they contained multiple entries in a single question or were incomplete. Some juvenile probationers could not be contacted during the study because they had relocated without the knowledge of their probation officers or had vanished from their homes. The 78.32% response rate was deemed appropriate for analysis, interpretation, and recommendations. Idrus and Newman (2002) argue that a response rate of 50% or higher is sufficient for social science research. Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) agree that a 50% response rate is sufficient. They go on to say that 60% is good, and 70% or higher is considered excellent.

Table 1: Rate of Response to Instrument.

Category of Participants	Sample	Response Rate	%	Data Collection Instrument
County Director of Probation Aftercare Services	1	1	100	Structured Interview schedule
Probation Center Managers	7	7	100	Structured interview schedule
Probation Officers	91	75	82	Closed-ended questionnaire
Juvenile Probationers	127	94	74	Closed-ended questionnaire
Overall	226	177	78.32	

The study's Key Informants were 7 probation center managers in the probation stations within Nairobi and the County Director of PACS. They were well-seasoned group of professionals, with the shortest tenure being 15 years and the longest being 30 years. The significant length of service suggests a deep level of expertise and familiarity with the juvenile probation supervision practices. The seasoned officers were stationed at various centers including trafficked stations like Makadara, Milimani and Nairobi Stations. This information is summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Key Informants' Demographics

Key Informants	Current Station	Years in service as a Probation Officer
1	County Director, PAS	30
2	Milimani Station	18

3	Nairobi Station	18
4	Makadara Station	15
5	Kibera Station	17
6	Ngong Station	20
7	JKIA Station	17
8	Mathari Station	26

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Out of the 94 juvenile probationers who participated in the study, a majority (84%) were male, while 16% were female. This means that the number of male juveniles placed under probation supervision is five times that of their opposite gender, demonstrating the prevalence of criminal activities among young male people aged between 10 and 17 years. On the gender of probation officers, 48(64%) were female and 27(36%) were male. Out of the seven probation center managers within Nairobi County, only one was of the male gender. There was a male County Director of PAS overall. This demonstrates gender inequality among probation officers in favor of females. Table 3 indicates a summary of the distribution of respondents by their gender.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by their Gender

Gender	Juvenile Probationers	Probation Officers	Probation Center Managers	County Director of PAS
Male	79 (84%)	27 (36)	1 (14.3%)	1
Female	15 (16%)	48 (64)	6 (85.7%)	-
Total	94	75	7	1

Other socio-demographic characteristics of juvenile probationers were sought and the findings are presented in Table 4. As shown in Table 4, 52.2% of the juvenile respondents were aged 17 to 18, while 40.4% ranged between 15 and 16 years, 7.4% were aged between 13 and 14 years, and no juvenile was aged between 10 and 12 years. This observation suggests a prevalence of delinquencies among older juvenile probationers.

On the level of education, over half (59.6%) of the juveniles reported having a secondary-level education. Juveniles with a primary level of education constituted 35.1%, while those with a nursery level of education constituted 5.3%. This implies that juvenile delinquencies increase with progression in schooling. Moreover, there were no juvenile respondents who never stepped foot in a school.

Table 4: Other Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Juvenile probationers		
	Description	N	%
Age bracket	10 -12	-	-
	13-14 years	7	7.4%
	15-16 years	38	40.4%
	17-18 years	49	52.2%

Education level	Zero schooling	-	-
	Nursery	5	5.3%
	Primary	33	35.1%
	Secondary	36	59.6%
Probation time	0-3 months	23	24.5%
	4-6 months	22	23.4%
	7-9 months	16	17.0%
	10-12 months	25	26.6%
	13+ months	8	8.5%
Total		94	

Rate of Recidivism

The findings in Figure 1 indicate that a significant majority of juvenile probationers (73.3%) have had no previous probation orders, demonstrating the high presence of first-time offenders within the probation system. In contrast, 26.7% of the juvenile probationers have had one or more previous probation orders. This smaller yet notable group represents the recurring participants within the probation system. Regarding breach of probation conditions, the overwhelming majority (95%) did not violate their probation conditions, indicating high compliance rates. Conversely, only 5% of juveniles violated their probation terms, pointing to a minority of juveniles who struggle to comply with probation requirements.

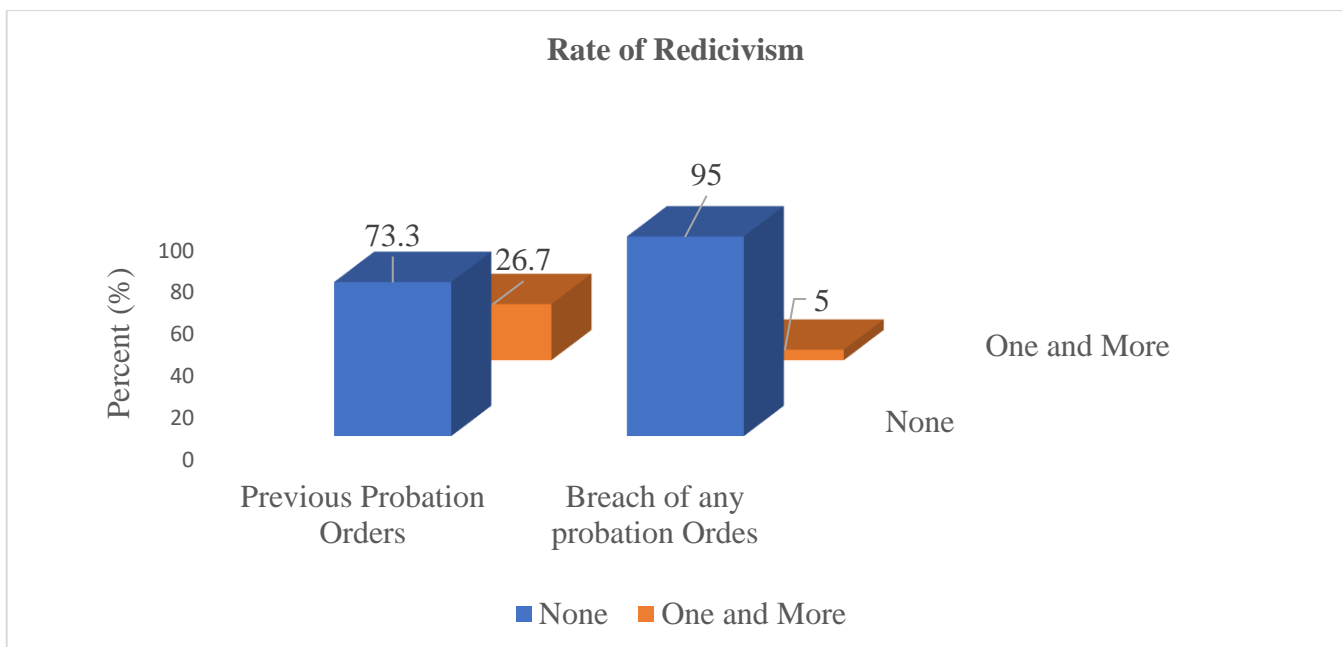


Figure 1: Rate of Recidivism

Probation Supervision Process and Recidivism

General Model Estimation

Binary logistic regression model stated in Eq. (1) was estimated following the formulated hypothesis. Thus, the results under this section are broadly classified into two parts. Specifically, the model for each independent

variable’s constructs was carried out and the subsequent general model of the summated probation supervision practices was also carried out. Table 5 shows the findings of the individual impacts of probation supervision practices on recidivism. The table depicts coefficient estimates, standard error and associated significant values.

The pseudolikelihood ratio value of (-68.420) indicates that the applied binary logistic model and the selected supervision practices and sociodemographic explanatory variables fit the data correctly and collectively contribute to significant explanation of determinants of recidivism. Also, although, some identified sociodemographic explanatory variables were identified to be insignificant, the pseudo R² value of (0.1714), with a significantly (p -value=0.0047<0.05) greater Wald Chi-Square value of (18.720) depicted that the estimated binary logistic model entails adequate explanatory power, thus appropriateness of model estimations.

As shown in Table 5, gender, duration of probation period, probation supervision skills and supervision workload were significantly linked to recidivism. For instance, gender had a significant effect on recidivism (β =1.138; p =0.033 \leq 0.05) at a 5% significant level, suggesting that females have a higher likelihood of recidivism than males. On the duration of probation supervision, the results reveal that the longer a juvenile stay on probation supervision, the more the chances of reoffending (β =0.323; p =0.000 \leq 0.05). Regarding specific supervision constructs, frequency and mode of supervision were observed to have an insignificant reducing relationship with recidivism with β = -0.647; p =0.051 \leq 0.05 at a 5% significant level. Supervision skills were found to significantly lower the likelihood of juvenile recidivism. This is demonstrated by a coefficient of -0.681 and a p -value of 0.014 at a 5% significance level. This implies that an increase in supervision skills by 1 unit results in a decline in recidivism by 0.681 units. On the contrary, an increase in officer’s caseload was significantly related to high recidivism (β =0.641; p =0.049 \leq 0.05).

Table 5: Specific Constructs of Supervision Programs and Recidivism

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z	P > Z
Constant	0.947	1.859	0.510	0.610
Gender	1.138**	0.533	2.130	0.033
Age	-0.181	0.360	-0.500	0.616
Education	0.468	0.349	1.340	0.179
Duration	0.323*	0.192	1.680	0.000
Frequency and mode of supervision	-0.647*	0.391	-1.950	0.051
Supervision Skills	-0.681**	0.276	-2.460	0.014
Supervision caseload	0.641**	0.326	1.970	0.049
Log pseudolikelihood	-68.420			
Wald chi2(5)	18.720			
Prob > chi2	0.0047			
Pseudo R ²	0.1714			

Note: * p <0.10; ** p <0.05; *** p <0.01

Key informants shared their insights to enhance a deeper understanding of the relationship between probation supervision practices and recidivism. Their perceptions indicate that juvenile supervision is a complex process that balances the need for effective oversight with the imperative to protect young offenders from stigma and

disruption of their educational paths. They also highlighted the challenges encountered in the juvenile probation supervision process.

The key informants pointed out that an offender's risk level and needs inform the frequency and intensity of juvenile supervision. High-risk juveniles receive more intensive supervision, especially at the beginning of their probation period. On further probing, they acknowledged a reduced frequency of contacts based on a certain level of stability established in the supervision process. They also underscored the reduction in frequency and intensity to allow more flexibility for both the juvenile and their family. To delve deeper, the Key Informants accentuated the relevance of developing Individual Treatment Plans (ITPs) for each juvenile, prioritizing specific goals and setting time frames for achieving them. A tailored approach is necessary to address the unique circumstances and challenges faced by each juvenile offender.

They also acknowledged to heavy reliance on the support of local administration and the cooperation of parents in complementing supervision efforts. While highlighting local administrators being handy in monitoring the juveniles within the community, the juvenile's parents assume a crucial role in ensuring compliance with probation conditions. According to the Key Informants, this collaborative approach has a dual benefit. It not only contributes to effective caseload management but also offers a support network for the juveniles.

In illustration, Key Informant 6 said:

"The number of meetings is dependent on the risk. An offender's risk level is very important when it comes to supervision. If you find high-risk clients, you may see them often. It also depends on the stage. In the beginning, it has to be intense. You have to know what's going on with this client, even if they are going to be calling you every day and coming every week. So, supervision is intense at the beginning as you assess the situation. But if you realize some stability, you may give the minor and the parent permission to go to the office once in a while. But first, you have to watch out for this."

This was affirmed by Key Informant 4, who said,

'Our Probation Operations Manual stipulates that we should see them at least once a month. However, it will depend on a person's risk. There are ones which we need to see often, as often as twice a month or even more. The needs of the client dictate the frequency of the visit. Besides us seeing them, we rely on local administration for monitoring. Parents of the juvenile are very key; we depend heavily on them.'

Key Informants placed their concern on minimizing stigmatization and protecting juveniles' privacy. Probation officers are acutely aware of the negativity of being labeled as an offender in a young person's life, particularly within their school environment. Key Informants 3 and 4 note that school visits, as well as phone calls that could expose juveniles' probation status are avoided. On further probing, Key Informant 5 acknowledged the utilization of school holidays to discuss their progress and address any issues without drawing unwanted attention.

A significant finding from the responses was the importance of home visits. Key Informants unanimously agreed on its relevance in gaining a better understanding of the juvenile's living environment and in reinforcing the supervision process. However, this crucial aspect is hindered by limited government funding, which restricts the ability of probation officers to conduct regular home visits. As Key Informant 7 pointed out, this situation necessitates the prioritization of home visits for juveniles who fail to report as scheduled and are unreachable through phone calls.

Overall, Key Informants' insights depict a careful balancing act in frequency and mode of juvenile supervision. Officers prioritize the interests of the child while ensuring compliance with probation conditions. The frequency and mode of supervision are premised on the juvenile's risk level, individualized treatment plans, and support from local administration and parents. To create a supportive environment, probation officers strive to minimize stigma and protect the privacy of juvenile offenders by opting not to conduct school visits. The approach is necessary to enable young people to pursue their education and personal development without encumbrances. Key Informants' insights also depict conscious efforts to tailor supervision mechanisms by collaborating with school administrations and local administrations to foster positive outcomes for juvenile offenders, even with the prevailing constraints. This collaborative approach underscores the shared responsibility in the juvenile

supervision process. However, the frequency and mode of supervision, though have a reducing effect on recidivism ($\beta = -0.647$; $p = 0.051 \leq 0.05$), it is statistically insignificant at a 5% significant level. This may point to implementation challenges.

The results are in agreement with a study by Pearson et al. (2016), who investigated a UK-based "citizenship" probation supervision program and found a reducing but insignificant effect on offenders' reconviction rate. Similarly, Barnes et al. (2012) found no significant differences between the standardized and low-intensity groups. The conclusion was based on an experimental study that randomized 1,559 participants into two groups: 800 in the experimental group and 759 in the control group. The study sought to examine whether reducing the intensity of probation supervision, including fewer in-person meetings and phone contacts, would impact recidivism rates among probationers.

On supervision skills, the findings in Table 5 show that probation supervision skills are significantly associated with reduced recidivism incidences in Nairobi County. This is demonstrated by a coefficient of -0.681 and a p-value of 0.014 at the 5% significance level, suggesting that an increase in supervision skills by 1-unit results in decline in recidivism by 0.681 units. Key Informants' insights illuminate the importance of probation supervision skills in reducing juvenile recidivism in Nairobi County, Kenya. On-the-job training and mentorship programs are some of the initiatives for enhancing officers' supervision skills. Besides, approaches such as collaboration among specialist officers, leveraging collaborative efforts through case conferencing and personal initiative were cited as the other key components that support the development of supervision skills. The approaches to developing and enhancing probation supervision skills justify the significant effect of probation supervision skills in preventing juvenile offenders from reoffending.

Despite the efforts on continuous training and sensitization, limited specialized training in juvenile matters was evident. The Key Informants overwhelmingly affirmed the generality of training, with specific juvenile topics being covered occasionally or in passing. In particular, inadequate focus on juvenile-specific issues during entry-level job training and induction is apparent. While the induction process has been extended and improved, it still emphasizes general probation practices, HR rules, and government procedures, with only minimal attention given to juvenile matters. This lack of specialized training at the outset, coupled with the reliance on on-the-job mentorship and personal initiative, raises concerns about whether probation officers are sufficiently prepared to handle the unique challenges of juvenile probation supervision effectively. Additionally, while continuous training sessions exist, they are not accessible to all officers, and those who attend are expected to disseminate the information to their colleagues, which may not fully address the gaps in juvenile-specific knowledge and skills.

Addressing the existing gaps in training and sensitization and enhancing the focus on juvenile-specific issues would optimize supervision skills, thus contributing to increased reduction in recidivism rates. The findings of this study affirm the outcome of a study on "Reducing Recidivism Through Probation Supervision: What We Know and Don't Know from Four Decades of Research" by Trotter (2013). The study delved into various supervision skills employed in probationary routine supervision and their effects on recidivism. The study established a significant difference in the recidivism rates between offenders supervised by more skilled officers and offenders supervised by officers considered to be less skilled (20% recidivism rate to 55% recidivism rate).

Probation supervision skills characterized by officer-client quality relations significantly arbitrate rehabilitation outcomes such as recidivism and compliance with supervision conditions (Blasko et al., 2015). Chamberlain et al. (2018) observed that parolees who perceived their relationship with their parole officer as supportive and respectful were less likely to recidivate. They emphasize that when parole officers are seen as trustworthy and fair, parolees are more inclined to conform to parole conditions and less motivated to participate in unlawful doings. Though parole is not part of the current study, it is akin to probation as both involve offender supervision within the community.

The results in Table 5 show that an increase in probation officer's caseload significantly increases recidivism ($\beta = 0.641$; $p = 0.049 \leq 0.05$). Within the juvenile justice system, in particular, the correction department, probation officers are considered the eyes and ears of the probation department. They play a pivotal role in the supervision, rehabilitation and reintegration of juvenile offenders back into society. Success in the execution of the vital

responsibilities and achievement of better rehabilitation outcomes is dependent on the conscious management of caseloads (the number of cases they oversee) and the accompanying workload (administrative tasks). Insights from the key informants depict the difficulty and strain probation officers face towards effective juvenile supervision, besides other administrative duties.

Across the interviews, twin challenges of effective caseloads and workload management were predominant. Though Key Informants acknowledged the encumbrances associated with high caseloads, they underscored the accompanying workload that often strains probation officers' ability to provide thorough supervision. They highlighted administrative tasks such as report writing, court appearances, and other urgent matters that often call for their immediate attention as some of the duties that make up probation workload besides case supervision. Makadara probation station was evidently cited as the station where officers grapple with high caseloads. According to the Key Informant from the station, the existing caseload was approximately 70 cases per officer. This is against the consensus that the ideal caseload is about 45 cases per probation officer. An upward caseload of 100 cases is considered very strenuous. On further probing, the Key Informants underscored the difficulty in allocating adequate time for client visits and personalized rehabilitation efforts, a limitation that has a direct impact on close behavior monitoring and proactive interventions. This, they said, escalates the risks of reoffending among juveniles under probation supervision.

Key Informants from stations with manageable caseloads emphasized the importance of prioritizing high-risk cases and employing strategies such as case classification to ensure intensive supervision where needed. In contrast, Key Informants from stations with overwhelming caseloads often found themselves prioritizing urgent workload demands over routine supervision tasks, potentially compromising the overall quality of care customized supervision. The revelation of having a high caseload to the extent of forgetting some probationers under an officer's supervision is not only shocking but also worrisome. It paints a picture of overstrained officers who limitedly focus on very high-risk cases, leaving the rest to manage themselves. This impacts negatively on proper juvenile supervision, leading to increased chances of recidivism ($\beta=0.641$; $p=0.049 \leq 0.05$). Below are some of the assertions from some of the Key Informants.

*"A high caseload is a very big problem. In active places like Makadara, mtu ako na 90 cases (An officer has a caseload of 90) under supervision. With such a number, how do you supervise these children? At the same time, you are expected to do social inquiries, write reports, go to court, and make applications for these four to five work grownups. How do you give enough time to your clients (probationers)? So, the workload becomes an issue. It impacts on the rehabilitation outcome of the client." **Key Informant 2***

*"The more work you have, the less time available for comprehensive supervision work. Such a scenario negatively impacts supervision because the little time you have is shared among the many cases you are supervising. For instance, Makadara is a very busy station. It cannot even be compared to our station. When we get 50 referrals per month, Makadara will be getting hundreds. But if you have a lower caseload like us here, which is about 15 cases per officer, you'll be able to do more home visits and have more quality time with the clients. You'll also be able to network on behalf of your clients to look for resources to support them. You can imagine the time and resources at your disposal when you have a caseload of 15." **Key Informant 3***

*"This is the busiest station within the County. It's a challenge because I have a caseload of almost 60, and most officers have approximately 70 cases. The little resources that you have are, therefore, shared among all the clients under your supervision. That sometimes fuels recidivism. Besides supervising, we have the pre-bail reports and other reports that we prepare for the courts. We also have other duties that come about, such as the prison decongestion exercises. This rarely gives us time to do a proper follow-up and go for home visits." **Key Informant 4***

*"When the numbers are very high, you even forget some of the probationers under your supervision. I remember the time I had 70 clients (juvenile probationers). To supervise all the cases, I classified them based on their risk levels. I then focused on high-risk ones and said, okay, these are the ones I'm working on. The rest can move on with life. But for now, I'm okay. I'm able to remember all my clients, able to check my diary, and able to update my cases." **Key Informant 6***

The findings of the study affirm earlier studies that investigated the same aspects. For instance, probation

officer’s workload was a subject of study by Matz, et al. (2018). In a systematic review study, the trio delved in workloads of adult probation and parole officers in a rural Western state in USA. Of significance is the finding that overwhelming caseload proved to be a major challenge to positive probation outcomes. The study revealed client supervision, administrative duties, and court appearances as some of the diverse tasks executed by probation officers. These collectively impact the workload experienced by officers and influence their ability to effectively supervise offenders. Thus, contributing to increased cases of reoffending.

HM Inspectorate of Probation (2021) also examined the effect of caseloads, workloads, and staffing levels within probation services in U.K. The study found that probation officers frequently handle unmanageable caseloads, which negatively affect provision of adequate supervision and support to offenders placed on probation. Moreover, increased caseloads were seen as hindrance not only to the quality of service but also heightened the risk of oversight and errors in probation offender supervision. In Kenya, Mburu and Wambui (2020) established that each probation officer was responsible for supervising around 80 to 100 cases at any given time. This heavy caseload was well above the recommended manageable limits making probation officers unable to conduct regular and thorough supervision, which are critical for monitoring and supporting offenders' rehabilitation.

Binary Logistical Analysis of the Relationship Between Summated Probation Supervision Practices and Recidivism.

The summated model of combined probation supervision practices was analyzed following the models for each independent variable's constructs discussed in the previous section. Table 6 below depicts coefficient estimates, standard error and associated significant values. The pseudolikelihood ratio value of (-67.518) indicates that the applied binary logistic model and the selected supervision practices and sociodemographic explanatory variables fit the data correctly and collectively contribute to significant explanation of determinants of recidivism. Also, although, some identified sociodemographic explanatory variables were identified to be insignificant, the pseudo R² value of (0.1824), with a significantly (*p*-value=0.0017<0.05) greater Wald Chi-Square value of (19.260) depicted that the estimated binary logistic model entails adequate explanatory power, thus appropriateness of model estimations.

The respondents' gender, age and supervision practices were found to be significant predictors of recidivism at all three significant levels (1%, 5% and 10%). Accordingly, gender had a significant effect on recidivism ($\beta=1.121$; $p=0.035\leq 0.05$) at a 5% level. This implied that an increase in the number of female juveniles by 1 increases recidivism by 1.121 units, holding all other factors constant. Nevertheless, the respondent's age had a significant negative effect on recidivism ($\beta=-0.040$; $p=0.000\leq 0.05$) at 5%, signifying that as juveniles mature by one year, it results in a decline in recidivism by 0.040 units, holding all other factors constant.

Supervision practices had a significant negative effect on recidivism ($\beta=-1.613$; $p=0.000\leq 0.05$) at a 5% significance level. This implies that a unit increase in supervision practices results in a decline in recidivism by 1.613 units, holding all other factors constant. Therefore, the hypothesis stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between juvenile probation supervision and recidivism in Nairobi County is rejected, and a conclusion can be made that there is a statistically significant influence of the juvenile probation supervision process on recidivism in Nairobi County.

Table 6: Probation Supervision Practices and Recidivism

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z	P>Z
Constant	1.494*	1.785	0.840	0.403
Gender	1.121**	0.533	2.100	0.035
Age	-0.040**	0.342	-0.120	0.007
Education	0.442	0.339	1.300	0.192
Duration	0.299	0.184	1.630	0.103

Supervision Practices	-1.613***	0.406	-3.970	0.000
Log pseudolikelihood	-67.518			
Wald chi2(5)	19.260			
Prob > chi2	0.0017			
Pseudo R ²	0.1824			

Note: * p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

The probation supervision practices investigated included frequency and mode of supervision, supervision skills, and probation workload. Individually, frequency and mode of supervision had a reducing but insignificant effect on recidivism, while supervision skills significantly reduced juvenile recidivism. On the hand, increase in probation workload was found to increase recidivism rates. Despite the disparity in the impact of individual supervision practices, collectively, juvenile probation supervision practices play a key role in preventing reoffending behavior.

Harvell et al. (2018) underscored the relevance of control and oversight as a means of inhibiting juvenile reoffending behavior by acknowledging the effectiveness of supervision mechanisms targeted at juvenile offenders. According to Dady (2019), probation supervision approaches characterized by officer-client structured meetings that foster healthy relations with other members of society greatly support long-term behavior change. By probation officers maintaining professionalism through consistent, fair treatment of the juvenile, they are well placed to gain the trust and confidence of clients critical in probation supervision. National Research Council (2013) opined that positive supervision outcomes are realized when the correction officer fosters an honest, supportive, positive social interaction with the juvenile probationer.

In the UK, Smith et al. (2018) undertook a systematic review of 13 studies published between the year 2006 to 2016. This is following a synthesis of 1,247 records identified through database searches and 161 records from other sources. Influenced by Trotter's (2013) work on "Reducing Recidivism through Probation Supervision", they got interested in understanding the effect of probation supervision on recidivism. The findings of the study revealed a variation in the offender supervision process across the 13 studies. Overall, the study established reduced odds of recidivism for offenders who had received some supervision.

CONCLUSION

Overall, juvenile probation supervision practices are vital in de-escalating incidences of reoffending. The investigation reveals that while supervision skills are effective in reducing juvenile recidivism, other factors like frequency and mode of supervision have a minimal impact, and increased probation workloads exacerbate recidivism rates. Despite efforts to prioritize individualized care and minimize stigma, limited specialized training in juvenile matters and resource constraints are apparent. In particular, inadequate focus on juvenile-specific issues during entry-level job training and induction is evident. Additionally, the existing on-the-job training and mentorship programs limitedly cover juvenile unique and dynamic issues. Overwhelming caseloads coupled with the unpredictable and urgent nature of probation workload overstrain the efforts towards an effective juvenile probation supervision process. These challenges suggest a need for more targeted training in juvenile issues, better resource allocation, and strategies to manage caseloads effectively to optimize the overall quality of juvenile probation supervision and reduce recidivism.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

- i. Despite the ongoing training efforts, there is a need for juvenile-focused training to equip officers with the necessary supervision skills to effectively manage juvenile cases. The training should be anchored in the probation guidelines as annual or after two years event domiciled in each of the eight regions in Kenya. As a solution to resource constraints, the training should be done in batches and made a requirement for any job promotion.

- ii. There is a need to establish clear guidelines to sustain manageable caseload, preferably, 40 cases and to leverage technology for both administrative tasks and remote supervision. This will not only streamline workload management, but will also allow more time for correction officer-probationer interactions.

Limitation and Further Study

The study was conducted using a cross-sectional strategy, which, to a certain extent, fails to adequately demonstrate the cause and effects of probation supervision practices. Therefore, an experimental study would be ideal. The study would not only allow for the isolation but also testing of specific supervision methods, providing clear insights into what works and what doesn't.

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