

Journal of Public Policy and Administration (JPPA)

**Influence of Police Visibility on Perceived Public Satisfaction with the Police in
Embakasi East Sub County, Nairobi County, Kenya**

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Influence of Police Visibility on Perceived Public Satisfaction with the Police in Embakasi East Sub County, Nairobi County, Kenya



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Article History

Received 24th March 2026

Received in Revised Form 27th April 2026

Accepted 25th May 2026



How to cite in APA format:

Nduta, A., Gathoni, B., & Kimani, A. (2026). Influence of Police Visibility on Perceived Public Satisfaction with the Police in Embakasi East Sub County, Nairobi County, Kenya. *Journal of Public Policy and Administration*, 11(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.47604/jppa.3781>

Abstract

Purpose: Public confidence in the Police in Kenya has continued to decline as reported by Transparency International Kenya and Missing Voices pointing to corruption, poor service delivery coupled with heavy handed treatment as the key drivers of dissatisfaction. The aim of the study therefore, was to examine the influence of police visibility on perceived public satisfaction with the police in Embakasi east sub county, Nairobi County, Kenya.

Methodology: The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study sampled 400 adult residents across the five wards who visited police stations in Embakasi East Sub County. The sample was selected using Yamane's formula for quantitative data. Qualitative data were gathered from community leaders, including ward administrators, chiefs, assistant chiefs and Nyumba Kumi leaders.

Findings: The study found that there was a positive and significant effect of police visibility on perceived public satisfaction with the police in Embakasi East sub county ($\beta = 0.486$, $p = 0.000$). This study concludes that perceptions of police patrols in neighborhoods are low. Police engagement through community forums enhances cooperation and trust. Communication channels between the police and the public are moderately effective, while police visibility strengthens neighborhood security and satisfaction.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The National Police Service should increase police visibility and expand community policing initiatives. Regular patrols and sustained engagement through public forums can improve security presence, reduce crime and enhance stronger cooperation between the police and local communities. Strengthening communication channels, including the use of modern technology such as hotlines and mobile reporting platforms can enhance accessibility and make the police more responsive to community needs.

Keywords: *Police, Police Visibility, Perceived Public Satisfaction, Embakasi East Sub County, Nairobi County*

JEL Codes: H83, K42, H75, D73

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INTRODUCTION

Perceived public satisfaction reflects community contentment regarding needs, especially in relation to police services (Ballart *et al.*, 2024). It is crucial in discussions of police effectiveness (Bolger & Lytle, 2021) and promotes community engagement in crime-solving (Merenda & Bachanan, 2021). Police visibility is the extent to which police officers are physically present in communities through activities such as foot patrols, vehicle patrols, traffic control and community engagement (Bolger & Lytle, 2021). Police visibility is important in promoting public confidence, reducing fear of crime and enhancing perceptions of safety among citizens. The visible presence of police officers is a symbol of law enforcement accessibility, responsiveness and authority, which can significantly influence the public's evaluation of police performance (Shiyab *et al.*, 2023). Police visibility influences citizens' trust, security and willingness to cooperate with law enforcement agencies.

Public satisfaction with police varies, influenced by demographics and personal experiences. A Cato Institute survey (2016) revealed that 68% of white Americans expressed satisfaction compared to only 40% of African Americans and 49% of Hispanics, highlighting racial disparities. In Portugal, citizens' dissatisfaction correlates with perceived crime increases. Cheng (2015) indicated that income, age and police interactions influence public satisfaction with police. In Ghana, Gyamfi (2022) cites poor visibility, trust issues and fear of criminals as dissatisfaction influencers. South Africa also reports low public satisfaction due to rising crime, police brutality and misuse of force (Shults, 2019), exacerbating challenges with perceived public satisfaction.

In Kenya, dissatisfaction with police performance is consistently documented. Onyango and Otuya (2021) reported that 60% of Kenyans expressed discontent with the police, citing corruption, poor accountability, and misuse of force. Transparency International Kenya (2016) found that 53% of Nairobi and Kisumu residents who interacted with police reported dissatisfaction, primarily due to demands for bribes, with 27% citing poor treatment and 9% reporting extortion. More recent reports, such as Missing Voices (2023), highlight declining trust linked to corruption, mistreatment of civilians, and compromised law enforcement. The Maraga Taskforce (2023) further noted that reform efforts have failed due to entrenched corruption and weak enforcement of justice. At the sub-county level, Embakasi East reflects these national trends: Missing Voices (2023) reported that 60% of residents lack confidence in the police, while Atieno (2019) identified rising insecurity and corruption as factors eroding trust.

Despite these findings, existing studies have largely emphasized corruption, accountability, and police misconduct, with limited focus on how police visibility itself shapes perceived public satisfaction at the sub-county level. This gap is particularly relevant in Embakasi East, where insecurity and mistrust remain pressing concerns. The aim of this study was to examine the influence of police visibility on perceived public satisfaction with the police in Embakasi East Sub County, Nairobi County, Kenya, thereby addressing the identified gap.

Statement of the Problem

Public dissatisfaction with the police in Kenya remains persistently high. Onyango and Otuya (2021) reported that 60% of Kenyans were dissatisfied with police performance, citing corruption, poor accountability, and misuse of force. Transparency International Kenya (2016) similarly found that over half of Nairobi and Kisumu residents expressed dissatisfaction, with bribe demands, mistreatment, and extortion being common experiences. More recent reports,

such as Missing Voices (2023), highlight declining trust in the police due to corruption, abuse of civilians, and compromised law enforcement. At the sub-county level, Embakasi East reflects these national trends: 60% of residents reported no confidence in the police (Missing Voices, 2023), while Atieno (2019) identified rising insecurity and corruption as key factors eroding trust.

Although several studies have examined police corruption, accountability, and misconduct, they have largely overlooked the role of police visibility as a determinant of public satisfaction. For instance, Atieno (2019) focused on insecurity and corruption, while Ogola *et al.*, (2021) emphasized crime reporting and erosion of trust, leaving out visibility and procedural justice. Shults (2019) examined satisfaction based on police response time but did not address visibility. These conceptual and contextual gaps suggest that while trust and dissatisfaction are well-documented, the specific influence of police visibility on perceived public satisfaction remains underexplored, particularly at the sub-county level in Kenya. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining the influence of police visibility on perceived public satisfaction with the police in Embakasi East Sub County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Procedural Justice Theory, advanced by Tyler (1990), guides this study. The theory emphasizes that citizens' satisfaction with authorities is shaped less by outcomes and more by the fairness, transparency, and respectfulness of the processes through which decisions are made. In policing, procedural justice highlights that when officers treat citizens with dignity, explain their actions, and apply rules consistently, public trust and legitimacy are strengthened. A policing culture that prioritizes fairness and respectful engagement fosters cooperation, reduces hostility, and enhances perceptions of safety among community members. Such an environment also improves officers' job satisfaction and resilience when faced with stressful situations, as citizens are more willing to support and comply with law enforcement. Understanding these dynamics has significant implications for police training and departmental policies. By embedding procedural justice principles into visible policing practices such as foot patrols, traffic control, and community engagement police departments can enhance accessibility, accountability, and responsiveness. This proactive approach not only improves individual officer interactions but also enhances institutional legitimacy. Procedural Justice Theory therefore aids in understanding the nexus between police visibility and public satisfaction. It spotlights how visible policing, when conducted fairly and respectfully, shapes citizens' perceptions of trust, confidence, and cooperation with law enforcement in contexts such as Embakasi East Sub County.

Empirical Review

Hawdon and Ryan (2013) investigated police-resident interactions in South Carolina and found that increased police visibility through patrols improved citizen perceptions and satisfaction. Similarly, Borovec *et al.*, (2021) examined police visibility in Croatia using foot and vehicle patrols. Their regression analysis revealed that foot patrols positively influenced feelings of safety, while vehicle patrols had a negative effect. However, while the study focused primarily on fear of crime and perceptions of safety, it left out the broader dimension of institutional satisfaction with police performance, a gap that the current study seeks to address.

Yesberg *et al.* (2019) assessed police visibility, fairness, trust, and collective efficacy in London using multilevel structural equation modeling. They found that visibility indirectly influenced collective efficacy through perceptions of fairness, showing that visible policing can strengthen trust and cooperation. Yesberg (2023) extended this work, demonstrating that higher police presence directly improved officer behavior assessments and indirectly supported collective efficacy. These findings highlight the importance of fairness in visible policing for building resilient communities.

Gyamfi (2022) emphasized that visibility alone does not guarantee trust; when police–public relations remain disrespectful, visibility fails to build confidence. Singh (2022) similarly found that strong police presence sometimes fosters corruption and bribery, undermining trust in law enforcement. Nalla and Nam (2020), studying India, showed that perceptions of corruption influenced support for female police officers, suggesting that visibility must be accompanied by integrity and procedural justice to improve satisfaction.

Bolaji and Metcalfe (2024) investigated how varying levels of police presence affect perceptions of legitimacy. They found that increased presence enhanced legitimacy assessments, particularly in disadvantaged neighborhoods where residents initially viewed police procedures as unfair. This suggests that visible policing, when combined with positive contact strategies, can improve attitudes toward police authority.

Cooley *et al.*, (2019) examined citizen evaluations of police services in high-crime areas and found that deterrence techniques reduced crime but faced challenges due to historical mistrust and resource constraints. Inzunza and Carlsson (2023) studied community-oriented crime prevention in Colombia, reporting improved trust despite persistent concerns about disorder. Carvalho and Guerra (2025) analyzed police blitzes and found significant short-term reductions in violent crime, supporting micro-policing tactics as effective visibility strategies.

Olaleye *et al.* (2021) explored mobile contact interventions in Nigeria, finding cautious adoption but potential for reducing anxiety in emergencies. While not directly tied to police visibility, the study underscores the role of innovative approaches in enhancing perceptions of safety and satisfaction.

Despite the breadth of studies on police visibility, most have been conducted in non-Kenyan contexts, limiting their applicability to Embakasi East Sub County. Existing research has emphasized fear of crime, safety perceptions, corruption, and procedural fairness, yet has not sufficiently examined how visibility directly shapes institutional satisfaction with police performance. Furthermore, methodological reliance on single-method surveys restricts deeper insights into community perceptions. These contextual, conceptual, and methodological gaps highlight the need for localized, mixed-methods research that explores the influence of police visibility on perceived public satisfaction within the Kenyan sub-county setting.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive research design, which systematically describes populations and phenomena (McCombes, 2019). It was conducted in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi, a densely populated area of 350,355 residents across five wards: Upper Savannah, Lower Savannah, Embakasi, Utawala, and Mihango. The target population comprised adult residents aged 18 and above who interacted with local police stations.

Table 1: Target Population

Ward	Population
Upper Savannah	78,081
Lower Savannah	78,081
Embakasi	66,913
Utawala	66,913
Mihango	60,367
Total	350,355

Stratified proportionate sampling was employed to ensure fair representation across wards, with each ward serving as a stratum. Using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level, a sample size of 400 respondents was determined and distributed proportionally.

Table 1: Sample Size

Ward	Population	Sample size
Upper Savannah	78,081	89
Lower Savannah	78,081	89
Embakasi	66,913	76
Utawala	66,913	76
Mihango	60,367	70
Total	350,355	400

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires covering demographics, police visibility, response time, procedural justice, organizational culture, and satisfaction, complemented by interviews with key informants such as ward administrators, chiefs, and Nyumba Kumi leaders. A pilot study with 40 participants from Kasarani Sub-County tested instrument validity and reliability, with Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.70 considered acceptable. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27, applying descriptive statistics and regression analysis for quantitative data, and thematic analysis for qualitative responses. Ethical considerations included voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and institutional approval, with pre-visits conducted to build trust before data collection.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Data

The study analyzed the demographic characteristics of respondents in Embakasi East Sub County, including gender, age, education level, duration of residence, and administrative ward. The findings showed that most respondents were male (67%), with females accounting for 33%. Most respondents were aged between 36-50 years (47%), while 40% were aged 18-35 years and 13% were above 50 years. In addition, 65% had lived in the area for between one month and ten years, indicating familiarity with the study environment. The majority (76%) of the respondents had attained certificate or diploma level education, 23% held bachelor's degrees and 1% had postgraduate qualifications. The respondents were drawn from different wards, with the highest proportion from Utawala (38%), Mihang'o (23%), Upper Savanna (16%), Lower Savannah (13%) and Embakasi Ward (10%). This is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Demographic Data

Demographic Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	67%
	Female	33%
Age	18-35 years	40%
	36-50 years	47%
	Above 50 years	13%
Duration as Resident	1 month-10 years	65%
	11-20 years	22%
	Above 20 years	13%
Education Level	Certificate/Diploma	76%
	Bachelor's Degree	23%
	Postgraduate	1%
Administrative Ward	Upper Savanna	16%
	Lower Savannah	13%
	Embakasi	10%
	Mihang'o	23%
	Utawala	38%

Descriptive Analysis

The study determined the influence of police visibility on perceived public satisfaction with the police in Embakasi East Sub County. The findings presented in Table 4 illustrates that eight percent strongly agreed, 25% disagreed, 29% remained neutral, 2% agreed and 11% strongly agreed that there are enough police officers patrolling in their neighborhood hence they can feel their presence (Mean=3.09, SD= 1.131). Additionally, 7% strongly disagreed, 15% disagreed, 26% were neutral, 42% agreed and 10% strongly agreed that the police officers engaged with the community through forums, improving cooperation with the public (Mean=3.34, SD=1.066). 'The communication channels between the police officers and the members of the public are efficient' was strongly disagreed by 9 %, 22% disagreed, 31% were neutral, 31% agreed and 7% strongly agreed (Mean=3.02, SD=1.080). Furthermore, 4% strongly disagreed, 12% disagreed, 34% neither disagreed nor agreed, 28% agreed and 22% strongly agreed that the police visibility had improved the security in their neighborhood, increasing public satisfaction (Mean=3.53, SD =1.082). The statement, 'there are enough police stations in our area hence there is satisfactory police visibility' was strongly disagreed by 11%, 25% disagreed, 19% remained neutral, 33% agreed and 12% strongly agreed (Mean =3.09, SD=1.229). This is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis

Statement	n	Mean	Std. Dev.	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
There are enough police officers patrolling in our neighborhood.	348	3.09	1.131	8	25	29	27	11
Police officers engage with the community through forums.	348	3.34	1.066	7	15	26	42	10
The communication channels between the police officers and the members of the public are efficient.	348	3.02	1.08	9	22	31	31	7
The police visibility has improved the security in our neighborhood.	348	3.53	1.082	4	12	34	28	22
There are enough police stations in our area.	348	3.09	1.229	11	25	19	33	12
Mean		3.21						

Inferential Analysis**Correlation Analysis**

Correlation assessed the association between variables, ranging from +1 to -1. Pearson correlation analysis was performed, with results detailed in Table 5.

Table 5: Correlation analysis

		Public satisfaction
Police visibility	Pearson Correlation	.548*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	n	348

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Findings showed a moderate and significant correlation between police visibility and perceived public satisfaction with the police ($r=0.548$, $p=0.000$).

Linear Regression

Linear regression estimates the relationship between police visibility and perceived public satisfaction with police, and the model is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model Summary			
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.548 ^a	0.301	0.299	0.61330

The r square is 0.548, indicating that 54.8% of public satisfaction with police is influenced by police visibility, at 5% degrees of freedom. Other factors account for 45.2% of the variations in public satisfaction with police.

Table 7: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	ANOVA ^a		F	Sig.
		df	Mean Square		
Regression	59.863	1	59.863	159.151	.000 ^b
Residual	139.171	370	0.376		
Total	199.033	371			

The ANOVA results in Table 7 revealed a significance level of 0.000, indicating that the probability of the observed differences occurring by chance was low. Hence police visibility had a significant effect on perceived public satisfaction. The F-value ,159.151, is greater than the critical F-value, 2.372, hence the model was reliable for conclusions and recommendations.

Table 8: Coefficients

	Coefficients ^a		t	Sig.	
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	1.774	0.128	13.867	0.000	
police visibility	0.486	0.039	0.548	12.616	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: public satisfaction

Table 8 shows the model equation as:

$$Y = 1.774 + 0.486 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

There was a positive and significant effect of police visibility on perceived public satisfaction with the police in Embakasi East sub county ($\beta = 0.486$, $p = 0.000$). Thus, for every one-unit increase in police visibility, perceived public satisfaction increases by 0.486 units.

Qualitative Analysis

The study sought from the key informants' respondents' characterization of the level of police presence and patrol coverage in their localities. It was noted,

"The police presence in our area is limited and uneven. Some parts of the locality see regular patrols while others hardly ever have officers around. Most patrols respond to incidents rather than prevent them. Residents often rely on community leaders to report emergencies. I think patrol coverage could improve if more officers and vehicles were available."

The study sought to obtain examples of instances where police presence enhanced safety or increased public confidence in the community.

"There was a period when street thefts were common, but once police increased patrols, these incidents reduced significantly. People started feeling safe to walk in the evenings and visit local markets. During local events, police presence reassured residents and encouraged cooperation. Quick responses in emergencies-built trust in the police. Visibility clearly helped the community feel safer."

The study sought to identify barriers that hinder adequate police visibility in Embakasi and explore ways to address them. An assistant chief said,

"Traffic congestion and poor road networks make it difficult for police to reach some areas quickly. There are also not enough officers to cover the entire sub-county effectively. Limited patrol vehicles and inadequate communication equipment worsen the situation. To address this, more officers, better vehicles, and improved communication systems are needed. Community support and information sharing could also help increase visibility."

Discussion

These findings are consistent with Hawdon and Ryan (2013), who revealed that greater police visibility improved police-resident interactions and ultimately enhanced citizens' opinions of the police. The results also agree with Yesberg et al. (2019), who found that visibility enhanced trust in the fairness of the police. Hence, police visibility may have direct and indirect effects on satisfaction and trust. However, Singh (2022) observed that visibility can sometimes create opportunities for misconduct such as bribery, which undermines public confidence. This contrasts with the current finding, hence contextual importance of visibility in policing. Additionally, study by Borovec et al. (2021) established that visibility through foot patrols improved perceptions of safety, while vehicle patrols negatively affected perceptions, which indicates that not all forms of visibility yield the same effect. Indeed, Bolaji and Metcalfe (2024) further support the current study's findings as the authors found that increased police presence improves perceptions of legitimacy. On the contrary, Weston (2020) argued that increasing visibility alone may not guarantee satisfaction, since citizen reassurance depends on the quality of patrols rather than their quantity. Hence, while visibility is important, the symbolic communication and conduct of police officers during patrols are equally critical in influencing satisfaction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study concludes that perceptions of police patrols in neighborhoods are low. Police engagement through community forums enhances cooperation and trust. Communication channels between the police and the public are moderately effective, while police visibility strengthens neighborhood security and satisfaction.

Recommendations

The National Police Service should increase police visibility and expand community policing initiatives. Regular patrols and sustained engagement through public forums can improve security presence, reduce crime and enhance stronger cooperation between the police and local communities. Strengthening communication channels, including the use of modern technology such as hotlines and mobile reporting platforms can enhance accessibility and make the police more responsive to community needs.

Acknowledgments

I express my gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Benson Gathoni (Ph.D.) of Kenyatta University and Dr. Andrew Kimani (Ph.D.) of Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, for their guidance, professional support, encouragement and constructive criticism throughout the development of this paper. Their dedication, patience and academic grounding greatly contributed to the successful completion of this paper. I also appreciate my lecturers, colleagues, respondents and family members for their support, cooperation and encouragement.

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