THE INFLUENCE OF DIVERSION PROGRAMMES ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHILD OFFENDERS IN KAKAMEGA COUNTY, KENYA

Onwuemenyi Marizu Chinemeze

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of The Requirement of the Conferment of the Degree of Master of Arts in Criminology of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

SEPTEMBER, 2025

DECLARATION AND CERTIFICATION

Declaration by Candidate

This research thesis is my original work prepared with no other than the indicated sources and support. It has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award for the award of Criminology in any University.

Signature …… Date ……

Name: Onwuemenyi Marizu Chinemeze

REG NO: CCJ/G/01-57056/17

CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISORS

The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommend for acceptance of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology the research thesis '**The Influence of diversion Programmes on the Transformation of Child Offenders in Kakamega County, Kenya''**

Signature……. Date……..

Dr. Erick Ater

Department of Criminology and Social Work

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

Signature……. Date……..

Dr. Patricia Kariaga

Department of Criminology and Social Work

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

DEDICATION

This work is lovingly dedicated to my dear parents, Ezinne and Samuel Nwaigudu, whose unwavering love, sacrifice, and encouragement have been my constant source of strength and inspiration. Your values and guidance have shaped me into the person I am today.

I also dedicate this work to my beloved son, Master Marizu Samuel, whose presence fills my life with joy and purpose. May this achievement be a reminder that with faith, perseverance, and hard work, all dreams are within reach.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful to the Almighty God for His unfailing grace, strength, and guidance, which sustained me throughout this academic journey.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Erick Ater and Dr. Patricia Kariaga, for their invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and unwavering support in shaping this study. Your mentorship has been both inspiring and transformative.

Special appreciation goes to the Chair of the Department of Criminology and Social Work, Dr. Evans Oruta, for his leadership and encouragement. I also wish to acknowledge all the lecturers in the department for their dedication and commitment to nurturing academic excellence. In particular, I am grateful to Madam Mandilla and Mr. Winslause Yamame for their encouragement and valuable input during the course of my studies.

I am deeply indebted to the respondents who participated in this study. Their openness, courage, and willingness to share their experiences provided rich insights that form the foundation of this work. May you continue to conform amidst challenges, drawing strength from the resilience you have already shown, and may this research contribute in some way to supporting your journey of positive transformation and acceptance within the community.

Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to my colleagues in the Department of Criminology and Social Work for their friendship, collaboration, and support, which made this academic journey both enriching and memorable. In particular, I wish to recognize Ms. Daisy Gachoki, whose encouragement and collegial spirit were a source of great motivation throughout this process.

ABSTRACT

Child offending continues to pose a significant challenge to juvenile justice systems in Kenya, particularly due to the limitations of custodial sentences in promoting meaningful transformation. In response, diversion programmes have been introduced as alternative, child-friendly interventions aimed at transforming children in conflict with the law. This study sought to examine the influence of diversion programmes on the transformation of child offenders in Kakamega County. Specifically, the study explored the forms of diversion programmes in use, assessed the role of community involvement in child rehabilitation, and identified challenges affecting the effectiveness of these interventions. The study was guided by Restorative Justice Theory (Zehr, 1990) and Labeling Theory (Becker, 1963). A descriptive research design was employed. The target population was 326 respondents, with a sample of 180 determined using Yamane's formula (1967). Proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were used, among the child offenders while purposive sampling was utilized among key respondents including child offenders, community members, and justice system stakeholders. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews, with validity ensured through expert review and reliability confirmed via internal consistency. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Findings indicated that all five diversion supervision programmes, therapeutic psychosocial counseling, education, placement to host families, vocational training, and victim-offender mediation, significantly influenced child offenders' transformation ($p < 0.05$). Therapeutic psychosocial counseling ($Exp(B) = 5.92$, $p = 0.000$) and education ($Exp(B) = 4.75$, $p = 0.000$) were the strongest predictors of positive change. Additionally, 90.4% of respondents highlighted host families as crucial for social reintegration, while vocational training (90.2%) and education (85.6%) were recognized for equipping child offenders with essential skills. Community engagement was also found to be vital, with 83.0% of respondents emphasizing resource provision, mentorship, and positive shifts in societal attitudes as key to successful rehabilitation. However, respondents identified challenges such as resource constraints, stigma, and difficulties adapting to new environments. The study concludes that diversion supervision programmes positively impact child offenders' transformation by providing supportive environments and essential resources. It recommends strengthening and expanding these programmes through integrated diversion mechanisms to enhance their reach and effectiveness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION AND CERTIFICATION ..... **ii**

DEDICATION ..... **iii**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **iv**

ABSTRACT ..... **v**

TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... **vi**

LIST OF TABLES ..... **xi**

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS ..... **xiii**

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS ..... **xiv**

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1 Background of the Study 1

1.2 Statement of the problem 6

1.3 General Objective of the Study 7

1.4 Specific objectives of the study 7

1.5 Research Questions 8

1.6 Justification of the Study 8

1.6.2 Policy Justification 9

1.7 Scope of the Study 10

1.8 Limitations of the Study 11

1.9 Assumptions of the Study 12

1.10 Chapter Summary 13

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW..... 14

2.1 Introduction..... 14

2.2. Overview of the Influence of Diversion programmes on Child Transformation 14

2.3 Forms of Diversion Programmes Applied to Child Offenders in Promoting the Transformation of Child Offenders 16

2.3.1 Placement to Host Family..... 18

2.3. 2 Institutional Placement for Vocational Training 19

2.3.3 Therapeutic Psychosocial Counseling 23

2.4 Contribution of Community Involvement on the Transformation Child Offender 29

2.5. Challenges Affecting Diversion Programmes 38

2.6 Research Gaps 42

2.7. Conceptual Framework..... 44

2.7.1. Restorative Justice Theory..... 44

2.7.2 Labeling theory..... 46

2.8. Conceptual framework..... 49

2.9 Chapter Summary 51

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 52

3.1 Introduction..... 52

3.2 Research Design 52

3.3 The Study Area..... 53

3.4 Target Population..... 54

3.5 The Study Population 54

3.6 Sampling procedure and Sample size 55

3.7 Data Collection Instruments 58

3.8 Data collection procedure 59

3.9 Pilot study 61

3.10 Validity and Reliability 62

3.11 Data analysis and Presentation 63

3.12 Ethical Considerations 63

3.13 Chapter Summary 65

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 67

4.1 Introduction 67

4.2 Response rate 67

4.3 Demographic profile 68

4.3.1 Gender of respondents 69

4.3.2 Education level of children 70

4.3.3 Age of the children 71

4.3.4 Duration of children in Diversion programmes 73

4.4 Diversion Programmes on Child Offenders' Transformation 77

4.4.2 Results from the regression analysis for Diversion Programmes 94

4.5 Community Involvement in the Diversion Programmes on Child Offenders' Transformation 97

4.6 Challenges Affecting the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programmes in Transforming Child Offenders. 108

4.7 Multiple Regression Model Analysis 118

4.7.2 Regression Coefficients 119

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS... 124

5.1 Introduction..... 124

5.2 Summary of Findings 124

5.2.2 Contribution of community in the implementation of diversion programmes 125

5.2.3 Challenges Affecting the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programmes in Transforming Child Offenders 126

5.3 Conclusions..... 127

5.3.1 General conclusion 127

5.3.2 Conclusion based on each objective 127

5.4 Recommendations..... 129

5.4.2 Suggestions for Further Research 131

REFERENCES 132

APPENDICES..... 153

Appendix I: Introduction 153

Appendix II: Consent Form (For Parents/Guardians) 154

Appendix III: Assent Form (For Children)..... 155

Appendix IV: Research Questionnaire for Children Offenders 156

Appendix V: Interview guide for key informants..... 163

Appendix VI: Approval Letter..... 164

Appendix VII: NACOSTI Letter..... 165

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Sample Distribution of Child Offenders by Court Jurisdiction…….……58

Table 3.2 Sampling techniques and data collection methods used…….61

Table 4.1 Response rate……..67

Table 4.2 Gender of the children……69

Table 4.3 Education for children……70

Table 4.4 Age Brackets of children……71

Table 4.5 Duration of children in Diversion programmes……..73

Table 4.6: Distribution of Offence Types Leading to Diversion (n = 180)……75

Table 4.7: Forms of Diversion Programmes Accessed (n = 180)……..77

Table 4.8: Diversion Programmes on Child Offenders' Transformation……...87

Table 4.9 Logistic Regression Results for Diversion Programmes……94

Table 4.10: Community Involvement in the Diversion Programmes…….98

Table 4.11: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for Community Contribution and Child Transformation (n=180)……..106

Table 4.12: Challenges Faced in Implementing the Diversion Programmes……...108

Table 4.13 Model Summary……118

Table 4.14 ANOVA Model …….119

Table 4.15 Regression Coefficients…….120

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework……..50

Figure 3.1 Map of Study Area……53

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACRWC: Africa Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

ACPF: African Child Policy Forum

CBT: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

CCI: Children Charitable Institutions

CDC: Center for Disease and Control

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child

JRHs: Children Remand Homes

JRI: Justice Reinvestment Initiative

KNBS: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

KNCRC: Kenya National Crime research Centre

NCRB: Modified Justice Models

MST: Multi- Systemic Therapy

MST-PSB: Multi-Systemic Therapy for Children with Problems Solving Sexual Behavior

PAC: Probation and after-care

PC: Penal Code

RNR: Risk – Need - Responsively

RS: Rehabilitation Schools

SNDP: Special Needs Diversionary Programme

UN: United Nations

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNODC: United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime

VOM: Victim Offender Mediation

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Child in conflict with the law: In this study refers to a term often used to describe a person under the age of 18 who has been accused or found guilty of committing a crime or offense that is recognized as such under the legal system. This term is often preferred over child offender or juvenile delinquent as it emphasizes that the child is involved in a legal conflict rather than focusing solely on their actions.

Children Offenders' Transformation: In this study, refers to measurable improvements in psychosocial well-being, educational re-engagement, positive attitude change, successful reintegration into family and community life, and compliance with diversion programme requirements.

Child-friendly justice: Refers to a justice system that is accessible, age-appropriate, speedy, diligent, and focused on the best interests of the child, ensuring that children are treated with dignity, compassion, and respect at every stage of legal proceedings. It emphasizes rehabilitation over punishment, protects children's rights, and promotes their participation in a safe and supportive environment.

Challenges: For the purpose of this study, challenges of diversion programmes refer to the practical barriers and limitations that affect the implementation, accessibility, and effectiveness of diversion interventions for child offenders.

Community Involvement: In this study, refers to the active participation and support of community members, leaders, and organizations in the diversion and transformation of children in conflict with the law. The effectiveness of community involvement is assessed by

its contribution to reducing stigma, fostering social acceptance, and reinforcing transformative outcomes.

Diversion: In this study, refers to the process of redirecting child offenders away from formal judicial proceedings and instead offering alternative, interventions aimed at transformation. It is guided by the best interests of the child and typically involves measures such as counseling, mentorship, community service, or restorative justice, with the goal of preventing stigmatization and reducing contact with the criminal justice system.

Diversion Programmes: In this study, refers to structured interventions designed to redirect child offenders away from the formal criminal justice system into rehabilitative and restorative alternatives. Operationally, diversion programmes are measured through the specific services provided, including placement in host families, institutional vocational training, educational support, therapeutic psychosocial counselling, and victim-offender mediation (VOM).

Formal Judicial Proceeding: In this study, refers to the official legal processes conducted in a court of law where a child's case is heard and determined by a judicial officer. These proceedings follow established legal procedures, including arrest, arraignment, trial, and sentencing, and may involve lawyers, prosecutors, and judges. In the context of child justice, they are often considered a last resort, with a preference for alternative measures like diversion to avoid exposing children to the adversarial nature of court processes.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Diversion programmes have emerged as vital mechanisms for addressing the underlying causes of child offending while simultaneously promoting the reintegration of child offenders into society. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) emphasizes diversion as a critical tool for ensuring that children in conflict with the law are handled in ways that uphold their rights, dignity, and best interests (Nwachukwu, 2023). Unlike punitive measures that expose children to stigmatization and the harmful impacts of incarceration, diversion directs them toward rehabilitative and community-based interventions. Such measures reduce the risk of reoffending and foster social inclusion by prioritizing support, guidance, and rehabilitation over punishment.

The administration of justice for children rests on principles of retribution, rehabilitation, deterrence, and incapacitation (Barkan, 2004), although their application varies depending on how societies define "child" and interpret criminal responsibility. Central to these debates is the doctrine of *doli incapax*, the presumption that children lack the capacity to form criminal intent, which has been central in shaping child justice systems (Goldson & Muncie, 2015). This underscores the need for approaches that balance accountability with developmental considerations. Diversion, therefore, is designed not only to hold children accountable but also to address broader welfare concerns by emphasizing education, counselling, vocational training, and restorative interventions such as victim-offender mediation (McDiarmid, 2016; Marecek, 2017).

Globally, diversion programmes have been embraced in varied forms, each designed to address the root causes of offending while fostering transformation. Evidence from Canada, New Zealand, and the Netherlands shows that host family placements create stable, supportive environments that promote prosocial behavior, while vocational training equips young offenders with marketable skills that increase employability and reduce the likelihood of reoffending (Duke & Salmon, 2020; Lipsey et al., 2020). Education also emerges as central to transformation, as studies in the United States demonstrate that offenders who remain engaged in structured learning report improved self-esteem, stronger cognitive skills, and lower delinquency rates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Beyond skill-building, diversion programmes foster psychosocial growth through therapeutic counselling, which addresses trauma, enhances emotional regulation, and strengthens resilience (UNODC, 2021). Restorative justice mechanisms, including victim-offender mediation, enable accountability by allowing offenders to understand the impact of their actions, repair harm, and rebuild relationships, thereby reducing stigmatization and supporting identity transformation (Skelton & Batley, 2020).

International legal and policy frameworks reinforce these rehabilitative approaches. Instruments such as the Havana Rules (1990) emphasize that deprivation of liberty should be a last resort, while the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child underscores the importance of diversion as a rights-centered approach to child justice (Bologna, 2011; Sloth-Nielsen & Gallinetti, 2004). Global institutions, including UNICEF and UNODC, actively support states in implementing diversion, thereby strengthening systems that prioritize rehabilitation over punishment (Okutoyi, 2015). Collectively, these interventions illustrate that diversion not only prevents the harmful effects of incarceration but also transforms child

offenders by building their capacities, restoring their dignity, and reintegrating them as constructive members of society.

Across Africa, many countries are increasingly incorporating diversion strategies into their child justice systems, guided by international frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Diversion is widely recognized in Eastern and Southern Africa as an effective and efficient response to children's offending behavior, with the added benefit of preventing repeat offenses (UNICEF Office of Research, 2019). However, the approaches, models, and criteria used to implement diversion vary across countries, depending on their legislative, institutional, and cultural contexts. Some countries, such as South Africa, have developed comprehensive legal frameworks, while others, like Uganda and Ghana, rely on probation services, prosecutorial discretion, or civil society partnerships to operationalize diversion (African Child Policy Forum, 2018).

South Africa provides a strong example of structured diversion. Initially introduced in the early 1990s through a prosecutorial directive allowing charges to be withdrawn when prosecution was unnecessary in the public interest, diversion was later institutionalized in the Child Justice Act (2008), making it a cornerstone of the country's juvenile justice system. This framework, supported by community involvement and child-centered case management, significantly reduced the number of children entering formal courts (Gallinetti, 2009; Wood, 2013). Elsewhere, diversion programmes across Africa typically include counseling, life skills training, educational support, and restorative justice sessions. These interventions address the root causes of offending, such as poverty, peer influence, family breakdown, and lack of

education (UNICEF, 2019). Research shows that effective diversion reduces stigmatization, enhances psychosocial development, and strengthens reintegration into family and community life (Sloth-Nielsen & Gallinetti, 2004). Despite these successes, challenges such as socio-cultural perceptions of discipline, weak institutional capacity, limited resources, and inadequate community sensitization continue to hinder the full realization of diversion's goals across the continent.

In Kenya, the Children Act, 2022 (No. 29 of 2022) emphasize diversion interventions as alternatives to institutionalization for child offenders. In the Status Report on Children in the Justice System in Kenya, 2019, the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) noted strong support for diversion among key stakeholders, with some purporting that more than 90 per cent of cases involving children in conflict with the law should be diverted. The diversion policy applies to different categories of offenders, identifying children as a particular sub-group, and outlines the guiding principles, types of measures and processes for diversion. It also defines the mandate of key stakeholders and monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and review requirements. Previously, in line with the diversion policy, public prosecutors were the actors mandated to determine eligibility for diversion. However, the Children Act that was enacted on 24 July 2022 provides that "any authorised officer or judicial officer dealing with any matter in which a child is suspected of or charged with the commission of an offence shall consider the child for diversion.

Similarly, significant reforms have been undertaken to promote child-friendly justice. The enactment of the Children Act, 2022 and the establishment of diversion guidelines under the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) reflect a national commitment to protecting child offenders from unnecessary institutionalization (ODPP, 2021). Diversion

frameworks aim to hold children accountable while supporting their reintegration into society through family- and diversion solutions. These interventions emphasize the importance of psychosocial support, life skills development, educational re-engagement, and community mentorship (National Council for Children's Services [NCCS], 2023). Community participation is a central pillar, with stakeholders such as local leaders, religious institutions, families, and child protection officers expected to collaborate in the implementation of diversion (Republic of Kenya, 2020).

Diversion programmes play a crucial role in the transformation of child offenders in Kakamega County by offering alternatives to formal judicial proceedings, thereby keeping them out of the traditional justice system. Instead of punitive measures that expose children to stigmatization and increase the likelihood of reoffending, these programmes address the root causes of delinquent behavior through counseling, community service, educational support, vocational training, and family involvement. By focusing on transformation rather than punishment, diversion initiatives promote the reintegration of young offenders into society while minimizing the harmful impacts of institutionalization. In Kakamega County, the importance of diversion is underscored by the high number of children in conflict with the law. According to the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ, 2019), Western Kenya records some of the highest incidences of child-related cases, with Kakamega contributing significantly due to its large population, estimated at 1.9 million people, of which 46% are children (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019). Reports from the Probation and Aftercare Service (2021) further indicate that Kakamega has one of the highest caseloads of children placed on non-custodial supervision in the country. These statistics highlight the pressing need for child-centered interventions within the county. Diversion

programmes in Kakamega therefore play a transformative role by fostering a supportive environment that enhances accountability, builds personal growth, and promotes social reintegration. Ultimately, these programmes contribute not only to the positive transformation of child offenders but also to reducing recidivism and strengthening community safety (Sage, 2019). This study therefore, examined the influence of diversion programmes on child in conflict with the law in Kakamega County.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Child justice systems are expected to prioritize the best interests of the child by employing rehabilitative and rights-based approaches such as diversion programmes. These programmes aim to uphold children's rights, prevent stigmatization, and facilitate their successful reintegration into society. International instruments like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1990) strongly advocate for diversion programmes as a child-friendly alternative to formal judicial proceedings and custodial sentences. In well-functioning systems, diversion programmes contribute to the holistic transformation of child offenders by addressing the root causes of delinquent behavior through psychosocial support, education, vocational training, and family reintegration (UNODC, 2021; McCartan, Death & Richards, 2020).

However, the reality in Kenya presents a mixed picture. While the enactment of the Children Act, 2022 and the development of diversion guidelines by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) mark progress in aligning with international standards, challenges persist. Studies by Okutoyi (2015) and Mwinami (2023) reveal that diversion programmes in practice are hampered by limited institutional capacity, lack of specialized training for justice

actors, inconsistent application of the law, and entrenched cultural perceptions regarding child discipline. These shortcomings mean that many children in conflict with the law continue to face punitive measures, stigmatization, and difficulties reintegrating into their communities.

The situation is particularly pronounced in Kakamega County, where, according to the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ, 2022), it consistently records among the top five counties with juvenile cases, accounting for approximately 8–10% of all child-related cases in Western Kenya annually. Despite the existence of diversion programmes, evidence on their effectiveness in transforming child offenders in Kakamega remains limited.

This creates a critical knowledge gap. While legal and policy frameworks strongly advocate for diversion programmes, there is insufficient empirical evidence on how they actually contribute to measurable aspects of child offender transformation within the Kenyan context. Therefore, this study sought to fill this gap by investigating the influence of diversion programmes on the transformation of child offenders in Kakamega County, Kenya.

1.3 General Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study was to investigate the influence of diversion programmes on child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County, Kenya.

1.4 Specific objectives of the study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

i. To analyze forms of diversion programmes applied in the transformation of child offenders in Kakamega County.

ii. To examine the contribution of community involvement in the implementation of diversion programmes for child offenders in Kakamega County.

iii. To explore the challenges affecting the effectiveness of diversion programmes in transforming child offenders in Kakamega County, Kenya.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

i. What forms of diversion programmes are applied to child offenders in Kakamega County, and how do they contribute to their transformation?

ii. How do community members contribute to the implementation and success of diversion programmes for child offenders in Kakamega County?

iii. What challenges affect the effectiveness of diversion programmes in transforming child offenders in Kakamega County, Kenya?

1.6 Justification of the Study

In light of the increasing recognition of children's rights and the shift toward restorative justice approaches, it is essential to examine interventions that offer alternatives to custodial sentences for child offenders. Diversion programmes have been introduced in Kenya as part of juvenile justice reforms aimed at ensuring rehabilitation, reintegration, and the overall well-being of children in conflict with the law. However, there is limited empirical research on how these programmes function at the community level, particularly in counties like Kakamega. This study is therefore justified both academically and from a policy perspective, as outlined below.

1.6.1 Academic Justification

Diversion has gained traction within scholarly discourse as an alternative justice model that prioritizes the rehabilitation, rather than punishment, of children in conflict with the law. A growing body of literature highlights the potential of diversion programmes to prevent criminalization, reduce stigmatization, and promote positive behavioral change among child offenders. However, existing studies tend to focus on legal frameworks or theoretical foundations, with few offering empirical insights into how diversion influences child transformation in real-world, localized contexts.

In Kenya, scholars such as Okutoyi (2015) have identified institutional and socio-cultural challenges that undermine the operationalization of diversion, including fragmented coordination among justice actors and resistance to restorative approaches. Mwinami (2023) further observes that while some community-based diversion initiatives demonstrate promise, their impact on children's long-term psychosocial development, educational reintegration, and identity reconstruction remains under-researched. This study addresses this scholarly gap by exploring how diversion programmes influence measurable aspects of child offender transformation in Kakamega County. By grounding the inquiry in local experiences and outcomes, the study will enrich the academic understanding of diversion within African contexts and provide a foundation for future research on restorative juvenile justice in the region.

1.6.2 Policy Justification

Kenya has made significant strides in reforming its child justice system in line with international standards, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC,

1990), which emphasize non-custodial and rehabilitative approaches for children in conflict with the law. At the national level, the Children Act (2022) and the National Diversion Guidelines (2019) institutionalize diversion as a central strategy to promote restorative justice, minimize children's exposure to formal judicial processes, and enhance social reintegration.

Despite these frameworks, the successful implementation of diversion programmes remains uneven across counties. In Kakamega County, diversion is often underutilized or inconsistently applied due to limited capacity, inadequate training, and resource constraints among law enforcement officers, judicial officials, and community actors. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence to determine whether diversion practices are achieving their intended outcomes, including reduced formal justice contact, improved psychosocial well-being, and meaningful reintegration into schools, families, and communities. This study seeks to generate empirical data that can inform policy evaluation and enhancement, specifically guiding the operationalization of the Children Act (2022) and the National Diversion Guidelines, with the aim of strengthening child-friendly justice interventions at the county level.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the influence of diversion programmes on the transformation of child offenders in Kakamega County, Kenya. It specifically investigates the types of diversion interventions implemented for children in conflict with the law, the role of community stakeholders in supporting these programmes, and the challenges affecting their effectiveness in promoting behavioral and social change. The study is limited to non-custodial

interventions initiated under diversion frameworks as guided by the Children Act, 2022 and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP).

Geographically, the study was confined to Kakamega County, which presents a relevant context due to its active child protection systems and ongoing implementation of diversion programmes. The study was conducted in Kakamega County, Kenya, specifically within five selected sub-counties: Kakamega Central, Lugari, Mumias, Butali, and Butere. These sub-counties were chosen due to their significant number of child offenders enrolled in diversion supervision programmes, as well as the presence of active rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives.

The study targeted 751 respondents who were key factors in the children's justice system. These included child offenders admitted into diversion supervision programmes, and representatives of the local administration, such as chiefs, probation officers, and children's officers. These stakeholders were selected because of their direct involvement in the supervision, rehabilitation, and reintegration of child offenders.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by the following factors:

i. Fear of labelling and victimization. The fear of being perceived as morally wrong and labelled a delinquent or criminal makes interviewing children offenders a challenge. Also, for fear of victimization, most of them may not freely share the challenges they experience during their probation period. To overcome this challenge, the researcher ensured secrecy and confidentiality of information provided by the respondents.

ii. Uncooperative respondents. Some of the respondents were uncooperative, these was due to time restrains, fear or lack of interest in the study at hand. This affected the

study's data collection process. To address this challenge, the researcher engaged authority figures who facilitated cooperation from relevant individuals. Additionally, incentives such as snacks were provided to encourage participation. These ethical considerations remained crucial throughout the study, emphasizing the importance of balancing participant motivation with adherence to ethical research practices.

iii. Limited Funding. The researcher self-funded the study, which may have limited the amount of data collected due to budget constraints. To mitigate this, the researcher prepared a research budget in advance. Limited funding posed a potential challenge for the research, as the researcher self-funded the study, which could have restricted the scope of data collection. However, the research was successfully completed within the available budget. To address financial constraints, the researcher prepared a detailed research budget in advance, ensuring that resources were allocated efficiently and all critical aspects of the study were covered. This proactive planning enabled the researcher to manage expenses effectively and complete the study as intended.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

i. Participation and Honesty: The study assumes that child offenders and other respondents involved in diversion programmes will provide truthful, accurate, and complete information during data collection.

ii. Effectiveness Link: The study assumes that participation in diversion programmes has a direct influence on the transformation of child offenders in terms of psychosocial development, educational reintegration, and behavioral change.

iii. Community Support: It is assumed that community actors, including families, local leaders, and social institutions, actively participate in supporting child offenders undergoing diversion, influencing the outcomes of the programmes.

iv. Consistency Across Contexts: The study assumes that the experiences of child offenders in Kakamega County are sufficiently representative to provide insights applicable to similar county-level diversion programmes in Kenya.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has the introduction, outlines the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the overall and specific objectives and research questions of the study. In addition, it presents the policy and academic justification of the study as well as a brief scope of the study: the geographical, content, population, methodology and timeframe of the study. In the summary it lays the foundation for chapter two which reviewed the relevant literature on the influence of diversion programmes on child offender transformation in Kakamega County Kenya.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the diversion child offenders' supervision programmes and their influence on child offenders' transformation as applied in the Kenya children justice. The empirical literature under themes is consistent with the research objectives and children transformation. The chapter also illustrates the supporting theories, the conceptual framework and model on which the study is anchored, provides the summary of the chapter and sets a platform for chapter three on the study methodology.

2.2. Overview of the Influence of Diversion programmes on Child Transformation

Diversion programmes are recognized globally as key mechanisms for addressing the underlying causes of offending among children while promoting their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. At the international level, diversion involves redirecting children away from formal judicial processes, such as detention or imprisonment, toward community- or family-based interventions. These programmes are designed to reduce the harmful effects of institutionalization, including stigmatization and social exclusion, while fostering personal development and prosocial behaviour (Wright, 1997; UNICEF EAC Diversion Programme Policy Brief, 2017). Effective diversion programmes are those that demonstrate clear positive impacts on behaviour and developmental outcomes, supported by high-quality experimental or quasi-experimental evaluations. Central to global diversion approaches is the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model, which emphasizes tailoring interventions to a child's risk level,

criminogenic needs, and personal strengths, ensuring that support and supervision are proportionate and effective (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Other models, such as Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and the Special Needs Diversionary Programme (SNDP), similarly focus on comprehensive interventions that address the complex needs of juvenile offenders (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

In Africa, the adoption of diversion strategies is increasingly guided by regional frameworks such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), which advocates for non-custodial measures and the protection of children's rights within justice systems. Countries such as South Africa have institutionalized diversion through legislation like the Child Justice Act (2008), implementing programmes including life skills training, restorative justice sessions, and community-based supervision that have been shown to reduce recidivism and improve social functioning among child offenders (Mangwiro, Tanga & Ekobi, 2024). Parental and community involvement has been consistently identified as a critical factor in the success of diversion programmes, with studies indicating that children whose families actively participate in interventions demonstrate higher levels of behavioural transformation and reintegration (Malesa, 2024).

In Kenya, significant policy reforms have sought to align the child justice system with international and regional standards. The Children Act (2022) and the National Diversion Guidelines provide a legislative and operational framework for implementing diversion, emphasizing restorative justice, psychosocial support, education, vocational training, and mentorship. Despite these frameworks, implementation at the county level remains uneven, with gaps in training, institutional capacity, and consistent application of diversion practices (Musiega, 2021). In Kakamega County, diversion programmes have the potential to transform

child offenders by addressing the root causes of delinquent behaviour while minimizing contact with formal judicial processes. However, challenges such as limited resources, inconsistent application, and socio-cultural perceptions of child discipline continue to hinder the effectiveness of these programmes (Crime Research Centre, 2023). Strengthening community involvement, enhancing the capacity of justice actors, and systematically evaluating programme outcomes are critical steps toward realizing the full potential of diversion in rehabilitating and reintegrating child offenders in Kenya.

2.3 Forms of Diversion Programmes Applied to Child Offenders in Promoting the Transformation of Child Offenders

Diversion programmes have gained prominence as a mechanism that offers child offenders an alternative path to accountability without exposing them to the formal criminal justice process. Rooted in the principle of the best interests of the child as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1990), diversion seeks to uphold child rights while fostering rehabilitation and reintegration. These programmes are premised on the understanding that formal judicial proceedings often traumatize and stigmatize children, undermining their prospects for reform and social reintegration (UNICEF, 2021). As such, diversion offers a framework through which children can take responsibility for their actions while receiving psychosocial support, skills development, and family or community-based care.

Diversion programmes can take many forms, including but not limited to: community service, counseling, victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, peer panel hearings, life-

skills training, and referral to education or vocational rehabilitation services (Wandago, 2020; Penal Reform International, 2022). The goal of these interventions is to address the underlying causes of delinquent behavior, such as poverty, trauma, peer pressure, or family dysfunction, while equipping children with the tools necessary for positive identity transformation and future law-abiding behavior.

In Kenya, the National Legal Aid Service (NLAS), the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), and various civil society organizations have piloted and implemented diversion programmes targeting children in conflict with the law. However, evidence on the effectiveness of these interventions in promoting meaningful transformation is still emerging. Studies by Okutoyi (2015) and Mwinami (2023) note that while diversion offers a non-punitive alternative, its success in achieving long-term behavioral change and reintegration is contingent upon factors such as programme design, the capacity of implementers, community acceptance, and sustained follow-up. In many African settings, including Kenya, socio-economic and institutional challenges, such as inadequate funding, limited trained personnel, and inconsistent application, continue to hinder the full realization of diversion's transformative potential.

This section therefore reviews existing literature on the types of diversion programmes used for child offenders and critically examines how these interventions contribute to their psychosocial, educational, and moral transformation. It also considers contextual factors that influence the success of such programmes, particularly in African settings, and identifies gaps that warrant further scholarly investigation.

2.3.1 Placement to Host Family

Placement in host families is a prominent model under diversion programmes within the Kenyan child justice system, grounded in the understanding that children require familiar and supportive environments for effective rehabilitation (Marchand, 2018). In this context, a host family refers to parents, relatives, or caregivers willing to provide care and protection for children below the legal age of 18 who are in conflict with the law. Host families are presumed to offer less restrictive and more flexible spaces for negotiation, reconciliation, and psychosocial support compared to institutional settings, regardless of the institution's proximity to the child's community (Marchand, 2018).

Historically, host family placements have roots in Europe during the 1970s, where they were applied through Victim-Offender Mediation, conferencing, and circle processes, involving both the child and family members in restorative practices. Within these programmes, rehabilitation models such as Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR), and Special Needs Diversionary Programme (SNDP) are utilized to guide interventions (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). The MST model, in particular, addresses limitations of the RNR framework by incorporating broader developmental and contextual factors, including academic skills and emotional challenges, alongside the child's risk level and criminogenic needs.

Despite the promise of host family placements, criticisms have emerged regarding their implementation. Socio-economic constraints of host families may affect the quality of rehabilitation offered (Vincent, Guy, & Grisso, 2012). Additionally, questions have been raised about whether the RNR, MST, and SNDP models adequately meet programme objectives, and concerns exist that the programme may inadvertently discriminate by

prioritizing children who commit minor offenses over those with more serious infractions (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

Importantly, empirical research evaluating the effectiveness of host family placements in Africa, and Kenya specifically, remains limited. Evidence on outcomes such as psychosocial transformation, educational reintegration, and long-term behavioral change is scarce, hindering stakeholders' ability to optimize these interventions. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining how host family placement programmes influence the transformation of child offenders in Kenya, generating localized insights to inform practice and policy.

2.3. 2 Institutional Placement for Vocational Training

Vocational education and training is an important component for rehabilitating young offenders while undergoing diversion programmes. These trainings empower offenders with knowledge, technical skills and employment/viable income-generating opportunities that mitigate the risk of criminality and increase successful social reintegration into society. Against this, assumptions, determining the potential benefits of institutional vocational education and training programmes for young persons in conflict with the law as a diversionary initiative by the justice system provides impetus for improvement. Institutional Placement is a diversion-in-diversion model applied a post-sentence stop-gap measure where family-host characteristics are or/and are to enhance the young person's vulnerability to criminality (Mears, 2016).

According to UNODC and World Bank, (2011), youth crime increased by 180% between 1997 and 2010 numbers that have elicited global debate on how to deal with this problem. The offences committed mostly involve male youth and these were crimes resulting from

poverty such as burglary, theft, robbery, dealing with stolen property. The apprehended child offenders were placed in rehabilitative institutions such as probation hostels, children rehabilitation centers (Remand Homes, Rehabilitation Schools and Borstal Institutions). While extra caution is required to minimize stigmatization of children as synonymous to crime, there is global evidence that child vulnerabilities to crime are enormous and this has been explained by the high rates of unemployment, coupled with poverty, other familial/social challenges the young persons are at risk of getting involved in crime and their encounter with abuse by care givers of justice system actors inevitable (UNODC, 2011).

The correlation of youth and crime in Africa can be traced in war tone and conflicted countries like Sudan and Southern Sudan, Nigeria, emergence of the Al-Shabaab groups in the Horn of Africa where Kenya has not been excluded either. Globally questions have been raised in regard to the efforts various governments in Africa have put in place to control the 'child indulgence' into crime (Kyamana, 2015).

In Kenya the numbers of youth correctional institutions have since increased, these includes: 11 Children Remand Homes-JRHs, 2 Borstal Institutions, 6 children probation hostels with an emergence of Children rescue Centers for children victims of crime (Kyamana, (2015). Legally, the numbers of youth in crime has over the years increased (KNCRC, 2018). While deliberate efforts have been made to provide for inclusion of youth and young persons in aspects such as Youth Enterprise Fund, Free primary Education (Kenya Constitution 2010 article 55), there exists a myriad of obstacles with limited and inadequate capacities among community members to provide safe spaces for the children and young persons for correction. This subsequently exposes them to the justice system (KNCRC, 2018).

The institutional placement for vocational education and training of child offenders is guided by the existing legal frameworks at international, regional and national levels. Under this programme as provided for in existing legal frameworks, regulations and policies institutionalization should be used as a last resort and the young persons are supposed to be treated with utmost adequate care and protection. Where each child deprived of liberty must be treated with humanity and respect and in a manner that takes into account their needs, including needs related to education, vocational skills, meaningful treatments, accommodations and contact with family members (UNICEF, 2013).

The numbers of young persons in contact with law however surpass the number and capacity of the Children Rehabilitation Institutions (CRIs) coupled with impact of the presence of structural violence and unmatched poor conditions and training programmes that motivate the justice system preference and use of family-based placement diversion programme and initiatives. In Kenya for instance, under PACS there are 6 probation hostels of which 3 (1 for girls and 2 for boys) deal with young persons under (18 years) in conflict with the law and 2 Day Care Community Resource, Training and Rehabilitation Centers in Likoni-Coast (13years and above) and Webuye-Western (adults only); 3 Borstal institutions where one is for Girls (Kamae/Kiambu) and 2 for boys Shimolatewa-Coast and Shikusa-Kakamega. The rehabilitation schools which are managed by Children Services are 10 of which 2 are for girls. The numbers confirm the inadequacy of facilities or/and the adherence of the justice system in implementing the diversion supervision programmes. If this scenario is biased towards probation children supervision, then capacity and ability of staff is key (Kyamana, (2015).

The criteria of placement include age, gravity of the offence, circumstances surrounding the offence, status of the offender (education) and the status of the home environment and its

influence on the likely criminal behavior of the young person as well as influence to social change mechanisms. Note that institutional placement should be avoided at all costs and only considered as a last resort where the period of stay should not exceed one year in the case of Kenya (Muteti & Ndege, 2017).

While much of the current research and practice focuses on institutional rehabilitation measures such as vocational education in penal institutions, there is a significant under emphasis on diversion supervision programmes. The available literature and policies primarily address institutional placements, with limited discussion on how CBS can effectively provide an alternative approach (Mears, 2016). This highlights a gap in understanding how CBS programmes can be utilized to effectively address juvenile delinquency outside the confines of institutional settings. Although diversion is legally preferred, the capacity and infrastructure to effectively implement these programmes are severely lacking. There is insufficient number and quality of diversion rehabilitation centers such as probation hostels and day-care community resource centers, leading to overcrowded institutions and an over-reliance on institutional placements (Kyamana, 2015). This lack of resources impedes the full implementation and effectiveness of diversion programmes, revealing a gap in the resources allocated for such interventions. Much of the existing literature on youth crime in Kenya focuses on the prevalence of offenses and institutional responses rather than evaluating the success of diversion programmes (Muteti & Ndege, 2017). There is a notable gap in research regarding the direct impact of diversion on the rehabilitation and transformation of young offenders. Studies exploring the effectiveness of diversion in promoting reintegration and reducing reoffending are sparse, limiting the knowledge base on how these programmes contribute to youth rehabilitation.

2.3.3 Therapeutic Psychosocial Counseling

Counselling is an important aspect of restorative justice however in contemporary practice it is interpreted as solely a form of psychotherapy hence need to widen the scope beyond non-medical forms of counselling given the emerging needs of child offenders and treatment (NCRB, 2018). This view is in respect of existing data on the number of crimes committed by child offenders and their disposal levels in the country where warning, reprimands and advice has been used by the justice actors but very limited record of use of counselling though used in practice by offender correctional agencies as an intervention strategy.

Rehabilitation being a crime prevention measure meant to bring about behaviour transformation among child offenders. Therapeutic psychosocial counselling categorized as a tertiary crime prevention programme provided within or as part of criminal justice sanctions like incarceration or probation though this is not a requirement of rehabilitative programmeming (Jones - 2016).

Debates have risen as to the effectiveness of therapeutic counseling as a rehabilitation treatment. According to Cullen, (2005) rehabilitation strategies indeed are functional with a number of treatment programmes especially where individual psychotherapy, group counselling, intensive supervision and individual aid/assistance is employed (Petrosino & Turpin-Petrosino, 2010).

Globally the Multi-Systemic Therapy for Youth with Problem Solving Sexual Behavior-MST-PSB has been tested and recommended as an effective programme for adolescents with sexual-related offenses and other antisocial behaviors while in natural environments. The model addresses the disposing factors to criminal behaviors like socialization processes and interpersonal interactions through a direct or indirect participatory approach of significant

others in the community. Thus the therapy not only targets the children in conflict with the law but also aims at empowering parents/peers with skills and resources needed to raise the adolescent. The proponents of this model argue that, with time, the child offenders antisocial risk factors decreased with their parents reporting decreased behavioral problems, increased cohesion, adaptability and harmonious relations and fewer arrests or detentions hence therapeutic sessions quite significant in youth transformation (Gaffney, Jolliffe & White, 2022).

Important to note is the fact that, while such tested models have been applied and registered significant results, the environments, cultures, resource availability and parenting styles vary significantly globally. In global South countries, children justice system development is at infantry stage and is marred by systemic challenges where application is on a trial an error scale. In Kenya for instance, the JJS does not exist on its own, the powers to determine the best treatment programme is discretional to the court and depends on the probation officer's competency in assessment and availability of resources hence questionable service effect (Onyango, 2013).

Therapy or counselling is used concurrently with other programmes as a behavior modification initiative not only among youth and adult offenders but in a person's daily life. For instance, using behavior modification for delinquent youths both in and out of institutions can register positive results especially when combined with reinforcement on individuals or in a group (family, peers, teaching, spiritual). Existing literature shows that group counselling in a controlled setting, with additional spaces for school placement, high interest matter, programmes learning, an individual-directed tutorial system and follow ups may register high levels of participation .The use of CBT model significantly increases client attention,

cooperation and competence nevertheless, follow up on counselling uptake may appear difficult to diversion supervisees' especially in groups given the limited resources to effect follow ups, diverse dates of contact, case allocation to different supervising officers as well as their competency and attitudes (Walker, 2017).

While Probation and Aftercare Service (PACS), therapeutic initiatives that employ multi-dimensional approaches such as life skills training, art, and music therapy have not been widely integrated. These approaches have been shown to be effective in addressing the emotional, psychological, and behavioral needs of young offenders by promoting self-awareness, emotional regulation, and creativity, all of which are essential for successful rehabilitation and reintegration into society (Sage, 2019). However, in Kenya, the JJS, particularly PACS, has yet to fully embrace or explore the use of these therapeutic initiatives. Where they have been applied, the implementation is often limited and ineffective due to a lack of understanding or competency among individual officers. These officers may view art or music therapy as an optional or superficial activity rather than as a scientifically grounded method for rehabilitating young offenders (UNODC & World Bank, 2011). They may utilize such initiatives informally or without the necessary training, reducing the overall impact of these interventions.

2.3.4 Reconciliation on Child Offender Transformation

Canada has been regarded as the origin of Victim Offender Mediation (VOM) programme in the criminal justice systems where the initiative was used to in settling minor offences. It had developed a VOM framework by 1974, a framework that has spread across the globe given its flexibility to bring on board victim and offender for a settlement in an acceptable cultural setting. The VOM, with time is used in addressing not only minor offences but serious crimes

that include murder and even sexual-related like is the case in Kenya. The VOM benefits arguably include victims' satisfaction since they create spaces for victims/offenders to express their feelings and needs, understand the consequences of the actions, ensures fairness, transparency and restitution. Further builds healthy relationships other than just being a diversion from the normal court system that is not cost effective (Umbreit, 2001).

Reconciliation is a key component of child offender diversion supervision. It is aimed at rebuilding broken relationships though offenders being accountable of their actions and making amends while the victims through telling the impact of the harm promotes healing. Symbolic of reconciliation are the gesture to apologize and forgive, restitution and compensation where need be. Reconciliation is accomplished through Victim Offender Mediation –VOM, circle processes (conferencing) and story-telling processes. It can be used in individual/individual, group/family settings but also among practitioners as a strategy to effective social change and reintegration (McCold & Wachtel, 2012).

Victim-offender mediation (VOM) programmes (also known as victim-offender reconciliation programmes, or as victim-offender dialogue programmes. The VOM programmes was among the early western restorative justice initiative models. It includes both direct and indirect process wherein the victim and the offender engage in a discussion of the crime and its impact that is facilitated by an impartial third party trained for this purpose, either in a face-to-face meeting or through other indirect means. At the very least, they offer the opportunity for an assisted dialogue to take place, directly or indirectly, between the offender and the victim (UNODC, 2018).

Like it is in Canada, VOM or reconciliation programmes includes not only the victims and the offenders but those who are indirectly involved or their representatives. The suitability of

the case referred depends on the mediators unlike in the Kenyan context, suitability and adoption of the report is at the discretion of the courts. The VOM, therefore is inhibited not only by the discretion aspect but the absence of the offender in custody hence administered at the post-sentence stage and facilitated in confidential spaces by a professional mediator/probation officer. The programmes and process challenges here are vested in powers, limited spaces that guarantee confidentiality and the coercion into the programme whose consequences include the reduction of behaviour transformation rates (Stormshak, 2019).

In Africa, the Lao people provide an ongoing mechanism for dispute resolution and to promote conciliation promote conciliation. It is a grass-roots mechanism for dispute resolution in the DRC where village mediation units have been created to execute this function of a neutral third party. Ghana is yet another country that has legislation on the use of Victim Offender Mediation (VOM) as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism (Amoah, 2020). The use of alternative justice mechanisms is founded on the basis of reducing the negative impact of retributive justice, decongesting prisons, addressing human rights abuses in prisons, crime prevention as well as reduce costs on inmates coupled with the inadequacies in terms of resources. In Rwanda, the Gacaca courts are just but an example of how the African countries have enshrined their justice systems with alternative mechanisms (Hargovan, 2015).

The Kenyan legal mandate for implementation of VOM include the constitution (2010), the Probation of Offenders Act 64, the Children's' Act 2001, mediation policy (2016) among others. While VOM can be applied at any stage of criminal proceedings, In the case of PACS, VOM may be applied at pre-trial, trial, and pre-sentence but also at post-release stages. The referral agencies utmost are courts and penal institutions unlike in Austria where the

prosecution makes most of the referrals and the probation implement the mediation. Notable is that mediators must be trained with relevant professional qualifications and may include social workers, lawyers or psychologists able to carry on the dialogue to reach a settlement. Further VOM may include aspects of compensation and restitution. The question in the case of Kenya arises in the disparity on competencies among the probation officers and whether they indeed can effectively implement the programme without influencing re-victimization of both offender and victim (Mugo, 2017).

Another area to address is that standardized VOM should be Victim/Offender driven. This is not the case in contemporary Kenyan justice system where VOM is judiciary driven therefore the principle of volunteerism ignored. According to UNODC (2018), to employ VOM, the offender must express his or her readiness to account for the behavior (not necessarily an admission of guilt); provide compensation for the damages caused by the act; and express his or her readiness to refrain from such behaviour in the future. While this should be the case, the Kenyan VOM takes on the form of intimidation or coercion with the intention to escape the prison sentence but not necessarily influence individual positive change. How then does the probation officer ensure that reconciliation is authentic and may influence community transformation when the objective of criminal justice VOM is to waive criminal prosecution, sentence, and criminal record (UNODC, 2018). The inquiry serves as a basis for evaluation, as it challenges the current practices of VOM in Kenya, especially in terms of voluntarism, the role of the probation officer, and the authenticity of the reconciliation process.

While existing literature acknowledges the potential of diversion programmes, such as counseling, community service, restorative justice, and host family placements, in promoting the rehabilitation of child offenders, much of this knowledge is drawn from studies conducted

in Western or developed contexts (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Vincent, Guy, & Grisso, 2012). In Africa, and Kenya in particular, empirical evidence remains limited and fragmented, especially regarding the actual impact of these programmes on the holistic transformation of child offenders. Most available studies focus on legal frameworks, procedural implementation, or broad overviews of juvenile justice systems, often neglecting localized, outcome-based assessments of children's transformation in terms of their psychosocial development, family reintegration, educational engagement, and behavioral change. Furthermore, the literature rarely interrogates the contextual relevance and cultural appropriateness of the diversion models adopted, nor does it critically evaluate how socio-economic and institutional factors affect their effectiveness. As such, there is a clear need for grounded, context-specific research that explores how diversion programmes are experienced by child offenders and how these experiences translate into meaningful transformation at the community level. This study aims to address this gap by focusing on Kakamega County, where such evidence is particularly scarce.

2.4 Contribution of Community Involvement on the Transformation Child Offender

The successful implementation of diversion programmes globally is heavily reliant on the active involvement of community members. Diversion, as a restorative and rehabilitative approach to juvenile justice, seeks to engage the community not only as a stakeholder but also as a resource in the transformation of child offenders. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2019), community involvement ensures that diversion initiatives reflect local norms, values, and priorities, and increases legitimacy and acceptance among stakeholders. Community members, when sensitized and empowered, play critical

roles in mentorship, family support, reconciliation, and monitoring of compliance with diversion conditions.

Additionally, Bazemore and Umbreit (2001), in their study of juvenile court diversion programmes, highlight the importance of community collaboration. In these programmes, criminal justice actors are seen as part of a team that includes local community organizations, family members, and other social services. The collective goal is to ensure that young offenders are supported and rehabilitated through community engagement, with probation officers and social workers playing crucial roles. Similarly, Shapland et al. (2007) describe how probation officers and other justice system actors are involved in restorative justice programmes in the UK, where their role goes beyond traditional punishment to include diversion support for rehabilitation. This collaboration ensures that offenders receive the necessary social services and support to reintegrate successfully into society

Diversion programmes in Africa have increasingly embraced community participation as a critical element in juvenile justice reform. Across many African jurisdictions, community involvement in child offender rehabilitation is not a new concept but rather a revival of traditional justice systems that emphasized restorative approaches. According to Skelton and Batley (2020), African traditional justice systems, such as the Gacaca courts in Rwanda and customary mediation in West Africa, focused on restoring harmony through communal dialogue, reconciliation, and reintegration. These values align closely with the goals of diversion programmemes, which aim to redirect children from formal criminal justice systems into diversion rehabilitation efforts. As such, modern diversion frameworks in Africa often draw upon these indigenous systems to ensure that interventions are locally grounded and culturally responsive.

In South Africa, for instance, the Child Justice Act (2008) formally integrates community participation in diversion by enabling diversion organizations and families to work with probation officers in designing and executing individualized diversion plans. These include mentorship, family group conferencing, and life skills training (Gallinetti, 2021). Local NGOs such as NICRO (National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders) have partnered with communities to implement successful diversion initiatives that emphasize moral guidance, accountability, and social reintegration. Evidence suggests that community members who participate in diversion not only support the child emotionally but also play a monitoring role, ensuring adherence to diversion conditions (Artz & Burton, 2020). These findings affirm that diversion success is more sustainable when the local community is engaged meaningfully.

In Kenya, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) launched national diversion guidelines in 2020 that formally recognize the role of community members as stakeholders in child rehabilitation. These guidelines highlight the need for local leaders, teachers, religious figures, and family members to participate in identifying diversion-eligible children, supporting rehabilitation efforts, and facilitating their reintegration into society (ODPP, 2021). A study by Kimani (2022) revealed that in counties such as Kisumu and Nairobi, community participation has been essential in bridging the gap between the formal justice system and grassroots support structures. However, challenges such as inadequate sensitization, stigma, and lack of resources continue to hinder meaningful engagement, especially in rural counties.

In Ghana and Uganda, faith-based organizations and local councils have been instrumental in operationalizing diversion by providing safe spaces, counseling, and vocational training for

diverted children (Anarfi & Appiah, 2022). In Uganda, community justice workers, trained paralegals embedded within local communities, have been used to mediate cases and monitor compliance with diversion agreements (JLOS, 2021). These workers often come from the same villages as the offenders and are trusted by both the families and justice actors, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and success of diversion initiatives. Such models underscore the importance of tailoring diversion implementation to the socio-cultural realities of each community, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

The informal category of stakeholders includes those individuals affected by the actions of the child offender. Usually these are the family members of the child offender and the geographical community upon which the child offender emanates from (Parsons & Shils, 2017). According to the diversion supervision programmes, these members of the community play an important role in the rehabilitation process of child offenders. This is because they will provide the backdrop and environment upon which rehabilitation process are expected to take place.

This will depend on three major factors, knowledge, culture and capability. Knowledge simply put reference to how informed the community is on matters appertaining child offender rehabilitation. There are quite a number of laymen/women who may have a rough idea but are not well acquainted with the rehabilitative models such as RNR. Therefore, to the best of their knowledge will make rehabilitation strategies which may prove inadequate. This therefore calls for community health programmes that are aimed towards edifying the community on child offender rehabilitation and the role they have to play both on primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Alarid, 2016).

The African culture is one which is closely in agreement with the Modified Justice Models ideologies. In regard to child behavior, the African culture is of the belief that there is a mandatory need of controlled behavior as children are not fully aware of their actions and its consequences. Therefore, there is need for conditioning until the child is able to internalize the social norms and meet societal expectations. This raises the elements of social control (Renzoha et al., 2011).

According to Kohlberg's theory of 'moral development', there are six stages upon which human beings undergo as they develop elements of morality. Childhood fall under the preconvention and conventional morality stages. During these stages individuals develop from lacking the adequate mental capabilities to internalize social norms and expectations to being able to do so, thus require 'conditioning' (Cherry, 2022).

To give room for conditioning there is need for social control, which is very common in all indigenous Kenyan cultures. Based on this culture for conditioning to take place there is need for both social bonds and punitive actions. According to Hirschi Social Control/ Social Bond theory crime and delinquency occur when an individual's ties to the conventional order or normative standards are weak or largely nonexistent (Bartol & Barto, 2011). This theory also emphasizes on need to control human behavior through the establishment of rules and regulations on both formal and informal platforms so as to ensure the maintenance of law and order within society (Crawford, 2014). This theory is of the view that children's' relationships, commitments, values, norms and beliefs determine their likelihood of committing a crime or delinquent act. There is therefore an urgent need to strengthen social relationships among the informal stakeholders who are also referred to as social institutions and the child offender so as to increase behaviour transformation among the child offenders. For Hirschi, the answer

could be found in the bonds that people form to prosocial values, prosocial people, and prosocial institutions. It is these bonds, Hirschi held, that end up controlling our behavior when we are tempted to engage in criminal or deviant acts (Hirschi, 2014).

Some social institutions are set up naturally where others are intentionally formulated to ensure the proper functioning of society. The four levels of psychological bonds that need to factor in regard to child offender rehabilitation include; attachment, commitment, involvement and belief in relation to the diversion supervision programmes (Hirschi, 2014). According to the African culture child offender rehabilitation requires the existence of a strong bond between members of the community and children. However, this is incomplete without the existence of any form of punitive measure. This is based on the ideology punishment results to rehabilitation. According to this school of thought, the pain and discomfort results to deterrence which is 'changed behavior' and thus rehabilitation. However, this has been argued by many who differentiate punishment and rehabilitation stating that the two are totally different and have different results (McNeill, 2014). The question as to whether or not informal community stakeholders should use punitive measures while within the diversion supervision programmes has yet to be established in Kenya (McNeill, 2014).

The last factor to consider in regard to informal stakeholders is whether or not the community is 'capable' of taking part in the diversion supervision programmes. This is to a large extent is associated with the economic capability. Kenya being a developing country experiences high levels of poverty with many of its citizens having financial struggles/challenges. This raises the questions as to whether or not there is need for community empowerment as secondary programmes that will enable the community to effectively get involved in child offender rehabilitation programmes (Mubecua, 2019).

Community members play a pivotal role in the success of diversion supervision programmes for child offenders' transformation. Their involvement provides a supportive environment that fosters the transformation and rehabilitation of these young individuals. Community members offer moral support, mentorship, and opportunities for social integration, helping offenders to rebuild their lives and avoid reoffending. The collective responsibility and engagement of the community are crucial in ensuring that the child offenders are accepted and guided positively. Studies have shown that a supportive community can significantly reduce the likelihood of reoffending (Njoora, 2018).

Parents are central to the transformation of child offenders, as they provide the primary support system needed for effective rehabilitation. Their involvement in diversion supervision programmes includes offering emotional support, monitoring their children's behavior, and ensuring compliance with rehabilitation plans. By maintaining open communication with probation officers and other stakeholders, parents can help address underlying issues that may contribute to delinquent behavior. Research indicates that parental involvement is critical in the successful reintegration of child offenders into society (Mwangi, 2017).

Chiefs, as local administrators, play a crucial role in the implementation and oversight of diversion supervision programmes. They help mobilize community resources, mediate conflicts, and ensure that the child offenders adhere to the conditions set by the supervision programmes. Chiefs also collaborate with other community leaders to create a conducive environment for the rehabilitation of child offenders. Their leadership and authority can facilitate community acceptance and support for the transformation efforts. According to studies, the involvement of local leaders like chiefs enhances the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes (Omboto, 2013).

Religious leaders offer spiritual guidance and moral support to child offenders, which is essential for their psychological and emotional healing. By incorporating religious teachings and values, they help instill a sense of responsibility and ethical behavior in the offenders. Religious leaders also work with community members to create a supportive environment that encourages positive change. Their influence can be instrumental in reducing stigma and promoting the reintegration of child offenders into the community. Research highlights the positive impact of religious involvement on the rehabilitation process (Kariuki, 2016).

Probation officers are responsible for the direct supervision and guidance of child offenders within diversion programmes. They develop individualized rehabilitation plans, monitor compliance, and provide counseling and support services. Probation officers also act as liaisons between the offenders, their families, and other stakeholders, ensuring a coordinated approach to rehabilitation. Their professional expertise and continuous oversight are critical in preventing reoffending and promoting positive behavioral changes. Studies underscore the importance of probation officers in the successful transformation of child offenders (Kimutai, 2015).

Children officers are specialized professionals who focus on the welfare and rights of child offenders. They ensure that the needs of the children are met, advocate for their rights, and provide support services that address both legal and social aspects of their rehabilitation. Children officers collaborate with probation officers, parents, and community members to create a holistic support system for the offenders. Their involvement is crucial in ensuring that child offenders receive the necessary care and guidance for their transformation. Research indicates that the role of children officers is vital in the holistic rehabilitation of child offenders (Mutua, 2014).

Despite the growing recognition of community involvement as a cornerstone of effective diversion programmes, most existing literature focuses on theoretical frameworks or successful implementations in urban and resource-rich settings. There is a notable lack of empirical studies that explore how community stakeholders, such as chiefs, religious leaders, parents, and probation officers, interact within the diversion supervision ecosystem in rural and decentralized contexts, particularly in counties like Kakamega, Kenya. Furthermore, while African traditional justice models are referenced in broader discussions, little is known about how these indigenous practices are integrated or adapted within modern legal frameworks in specific counties. Few studies critically examine the cultural, economic, and structural challenges that limit community capacity and participation in diversion, nor how these factors impact the transformation outcomes for child offenders. This gap highlights the need for localized, evidence-based research that assesses not only the presence of community participation but its depth, quality, and influence on the rehabilitation and transformation of children in conflict with the law.

2.5. Challenges Affecting Diversion Programmes

The major challenge facing diversion programmes are found during the implementation process as various jurisdictions try to navigate around the phrase ‘what works’ (Woldgabreal, Day & Ward, 2014). According to Human Rights (HRTS) in Kenya prison service, some of the rehabilitation supervision programmes that are commonly used to reform inmates includes: counseling, health and fitness programme, transcendental meditation, academic programmes and religious programmes. Rehabilitation programmes are based on perspectives that involve various correctional programmes designed to deal with behavior transformation (Nyaura & Ngugi, 2014).

While diversion programmes are intended to move youths away from judicial processing to avoid the stigmatization and criminogenic effects of penetration into the children justice system, the programme have continually been used yet not agreed upon common definition hence its application diverse and likely to be a source of abuse (Wilson & Hoge, 2013).

Similarly, Lipsey (2009) and Ray, (2015) outlined best practice standards that can influence standardization hence the likelihood of abusing the programme. There also exists limited literature on the impact of children diversion supervision, what constitutes diversion to create a foundation upon which decisions can be made about which youths are targeted or eligible for diversion and further the criteria of inclusion in such programmes, and what type of programming are introduced to meet intended impact areas (Hoge, 2016).

Despite the major challenges the programme faces there still exist some opportunities provided by diversion supervision programmes they include; research / collecting systemic information on the specific activities that constitute various diversion programmes, the number and quality of these activities and the extent to which each intervention impacts behaviour transformation and outcome (Mears and Colleagues 2016). Also, there are efforts to identify the attributes to the clients most suite to their programme and integrate risk and needs assessments to their models (Andrews and Bonta, 2010). These modifications may fill in the gaps often missing information needed to improve the nature, quality and number of services that youths in diversion programmes receive and allow for more consistent implementation and accurate assessment of the impact of diversion programmes on children offending.

The purpose of prison sentence or any other similar measures depravities of a person's liberty are primarily to protect society against crime and give room for rehabilitation processes that

will lead to behaviour transformation. In this case, these objectives can only be achieved if the period of sentence is used to ensure utmost the reintegration of such persons into society upon release so that they can lead a law-abiding and self-supporting life (UN 2005 and UNODC 2016). This brings us to question on whether the basic principles are being applied in terms of programming and best practices in the treatment and management of the child offenders on diversion supervision. Note that meaningful rehabilitation programmes influence the achievement of the criminal justice goals therefore sustainability of the established programmes key and should be in tandem with the emerging needs like being life to technological and sophisticated crimes (UNODC, 2016).

An enquiry into the meaningful rehabilitation programmes' challenges affecting the efficacy of programmes like placement to host family, to job or work, education, vocational training, treatment and appropriateness of other assistance may inform the levels in which an increase on behaviour transformation can be achieved and improve individualized treatment needs and influence competency focus to support the social reintegration into society (Prigatano, 2013). Emphasis on law abiding behavior and socially constructive roles as objectives of treatment reflects the importance of behavior transformation aspect as an overarching objective of the criminal justice system interventions. There is an acknowledgement that crime prevention encompasses a wide range of approaches which include rehabilitation processes that will ensure behaviour transformation of offenders. In this case prevention of child offenders' delinquency lay emphasis on the measures to facilitate the socialization and integration of all children and young persons without faltering or causing more harm (Menon & Cheung, 2018). The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial measures Tokyo Rules (1990), lays emphasis on development of non-custodial measures and to rationalize criminal

justice policies taking into account the observance to human rights, requirement for social justice and the rehabilitation needs of the offender. Further, there is need to create awareness to influence constructive attitudes among the general public about the value of non-custodial measures and the importance of reintegration of offenders, and their participation in implementation of alternatives to imprisonment. The question as to whether the programmes are need-based, human-rights oriented and levels of awareness can influence acceptance of the programmes for child offender community supervision can be enabled through identification of the challenges (Lemert, 2017).

While emphasis should be on comprehensive interventions, based on a continuity of care and to provide consistent assistance to the offenders within and beyond the prison environment, preparation for re-entry into society should for instance commence before the offender is released. This is usually not the case despite the available through care guidelines. Subsequently, after release, interventions should facilitate a smooth transition from prison/detention to the community, reinforce the gains made while in custody through treatment and educational programmes and continue until reintegration is successfully completed.

This in reality is not the case as the structural challenges hinder the processes and programme interventions implementation (Menon & Cheung, 2018). Establishing as to whether this through Care approach is in place and functional is key and as to whether it is life to the criminogenic needs of offenders and the community at large influences community resilience (Heide and Geenen, 2017). What hinders efforts geared towards providing children at all stages of the proceedings with necessary assistance like education, vocational training, and therapy, employment as helpful and practical in order to facilitate rehabilitative processes? Is

the community involved in the implementation of the programmes and what are the community available resources that PACS capitalize upon to influence community transformation (Debarre, 2015)

While the literature and international standards provide a broad framework for implementing diversion supervision programmes, there remains a significant disconnect between theory and practice, particularly in localized African contexts such as Kenya. Most existing studies have focused on the structural design and intended outcomes of diversion programmes, with minimal empirical examination of their implementation fidelity, contextual suitability, and actual impact on the transformation of child offenders. Additionally, there is insufficient evidence on how these programmes address the individual and social reintegration needs of child offenders, including education, vocational training, therapy, and community engagement. Despite references to models like MST, RNR, and SNDP, their adaptation within the Kenyan justice context—especially in resource-constrained environments, remains underexplored. There is also limited understanding of how socio-economic conditions, community perceptions, and institutional coordination affect the effectiveness of diversion as an alternative to custodial sentencing. Consequently, the absence of rigorous, localized studies impedes policy responsiveness, programme standardization, and the development of contextually relevant interventions aimed at achieving lasting behaviour transformation and social reintegration of children in conflict with the law.

2.6 Research Gaps

Despite the growing adoption of diversion programmes globally and in Kenya, several gaps remain in the literature that limit the understanding of their effectiveness in transforming child

offenders. First, much of the existing research emphasizes legal frameworks, theoretical models, or policy prescriptions, with limited empirical studies examining the actual outcomes of diversion initiatives at the community level. This creates a knowledge gap regarding how diversion programmes impact psychosocial development, educational reintegration, and long-term behavioral change among children in conflict with the law.

Second, while models such as Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR), and Special Needs Diversionary Programmes (SNDP) are widely referenced, there is insufficient evidence on their adaptation and effectiveness in the Kenyan context, particularly in resource-constrained and rural counties like Kakamega. The socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors that may facilitate or hinder programme success remain underexplored, limiting the contextual relevance of these interventions.

Third, there is a notable gap in understanding the role of community involvement in diversion implementation. Although community stakeholders, including parents, local leaders, religious figures, and probation officers, are recognized as critical actors, little empirical research has examined how their engagement affects child offender rehabilitation, compliance with diversion conditions, and social reintegration. Issues such as community capacity, knowledge, and economic resources, as well as cultural perceptions of discipline, are rarely studied in relation to programme outcomes.

Fourth, the existing literature provides limited insight into the challenges affecting the fidelity of diversion programmes, including inconsistencies in eligibility criteria, programme content, monitoring, and evaluation. This has implications for the standardization, scalability, and

sustainability of interventions, raising questions about which programme components are most effective in achieving behavior transformation.

Finally, there is scarce localized, evidence-based research that evaluates diversion programmes' effectiveness in promoting measurable transformation outcomes among child offenders, such as reduced recidivism, improved psychosocial wellbeing, family reintegration, and skill acquisition. Without such data, policymakers and practitioners face difficulties in designing, implementing, and refining interventions that are responsive to the specific needs of children in conflict with the law in Kenya.

This study seeks to address these gaps by generating empirical evidence on the forms, community involvement, and challenges of diversion programmes in Kakamega County, providing insights that can inform contextually relevant policies and practices aimed at sustainable child offender transformation.

2.7. Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by the Restorative Justice Theory developed by Howard Zehr, in (2002) and labeling theory established by Howard S. Becker in 1963.

2.7.1. Restorative Justice Theory

Restorative Justice Theory offers a transformative approach to justice that seeks to repair the harm caused by criminal behavior through inclusive processes that engage all stakeholders, victims, offenders, and the community. Unlike the retributive model of justice, which emphasizes punishment and the violation of state laws, restorative justice is centered on the

idea that crime is a violation of people and relationships (Zehr, 2002). This shift from punitive to reparative justice is particularly significant in the context of juvenile justice, where the primary goal is the rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders rather than their punishment.

At its core, restorative justice promotes accountability, healing, and social reintegration. It emphasizes dialogue between the offender and the victim, allowing the offender to understand the impact of their actions and to take responsibility in a meaningful way. This process often includes restitution, community service, and other rehabilitative efforts that seek to make amends and prevent future harm. In child justice systems, restorative justice encourages diversion from formal judicial processes to community-centered resolutions that are more constructive and child-friendly (Skelton & Batley, 2020).

Restorative justice is particularly relevant to African contexts, where traditional justice systems have long emphasized reconciliation, collective responsibility, and the reintegration of offenders into the community. Indigenous practices such as "Mato Oput" among the Acholi in Uganda and "Gacaca" courts in Rwanda illustrate the continent's rich legacy of communal conflict resolution. These practices were grounded in principles of ubuntu, which promotes the idea that "a person is a person through other people." Thus, restorative justice resonates deeply with African values of collective healing and diversion accountability (Mbambo & Skelton, 2020).

Within the context of diversion programmes for child offenders, restorative justice theory provided both the rationale and operational foundation for interventions aimed at transforming behavior. Diversion methods such as victim-offender mediation, peer youth panels, family

group conferencing, and community service drew from restorative principles. These methods offered child offenders a second chance while also involving families, victims, and communities in the rehabilitation process. The focus was not only on avoiding institutionalization but also on supporting the child's developmental needs through holistic, diversion care.

Furthermore, restorative justice supported the inclusion of community members in the rehabilitation of child offenders. Through participation in decision-making forums and support structures, community actors help foster accountability and facilitate reintegration. This approach promote a sense of shared responsibility and ownership of justice processes. However, the success of restorative interventions relied heavily on the willingness and readiness of communities to engage meaningfully, availability of trained facilitators, and a justice system aligned with rehabilitative rather than punitive goals (Ibrahim & Kamaruddin, 2019).

Restorative Justice Theory offers a robust conceptual foundation for understanding and evaluating diversion programmes for child offenders. It reframes justice as a relational and rehabilitative process, emphasizes the importance of community involvement, and aligns with African traditions of communal conflict resolution. As a guiding framework, it supports the design of child-sensitive, culturally resonant, and socially integrative interventions aimed at transforming the lives of young offenders.

In conclusion, while Restorative Justice Theory provides a strong framework for understanding diversion programmes as relational, rehabilitative, and community-centered interventions, it primarily addresses the procedural and structural aspects of child offender

transformation. To fully capture the dynamics of rehabilitation, it is also essential to consider the social and psychological effects of societal reactions, including stigmatization and labeling, which can influence a child's self-identity and behavior. Integrating Restorative Justice Theory with perspectives such as Labeling Theory offers a more holistic understanding of how diversion programmes can both support positive transformation and mitigate the risks associated with negative societal perceptions.

2.7.2 Labeling theory

Labeling Theory, first introduced by Frank Tannenbaum in his 1938 work Crime and the Community, focuses on how society's reaction to deviant behavior can influence individuals to embrace a deviant identity. According to Tannenbaum (1938), the process of labeling is a social act whereby society tags an individual who has committed a wrongful act, assigning them a criminal identity. This label, once applied, can profoundly shape the individual's self-concept and future behavior. Tannenbaum emphasized that labeling involves a process of tagging, defining, identifying, segregating, and emphasizing the traits that society deems deviant.

While Tannenbaum's initial work laid the foundation, Howard Becker (1963) further developed the theory by highlighting how society's reaction to deviance often leads to the amplification of that deviant behavior. Once a person is labeled as a deviant or criminal, they may internalize this identity, encouraging continued engagement in deviant acts. Becker posited that deviance is not inherent in an act but is instead the result of societal reaction to the act, making labeling a powerful force in the development of criminal careers.

Labeling theory is especially relevant in the context of child offenders, who are in a critical stage of identity formation. When a child is labeled as a delinquent or criminal, this label can alter how they view themselves and how others treat them, potentially leading to further involvement in criminal behavior (Plummer, 2014). While diversion programmes are designed to rehabilitate child offenders by diverting them away from the formal justice system, Labeling Theory raises concerns about how society reacts to children who have committed offenses, even when formal charges are avoided.

Diversion programmes, which may include victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, and community service, are grounded in principles of restorative justice and aim to avoid the stigmatizing effects of formal judicial proceedings. However, from a labeling theory perspective, the success of diversion depends not only on programme design but also on how communities, justice officials, and families respond to the child's past misconduct. If the diversion process is accompanied by ongoing stigma, suspicion, or negative labeling, then its rehabilitative intent may be compromised.

When implemented effectively, diversion programmes can mitigate the negative consequences of labeling by providing opportunities for children to reform without being formally branded as criminals. Programmes that encourage empathy, accountability, and reintegration, such as restorative dialogue or skill-building workshops, can help reshape the child's self-perception and foster pro-social behavior. As Plummer (2014) argues, when communities support the rehabilitative goals of diversion and treat the child as capable of change, the stigmatizing label may be weakened or erased.

However, diversion programmes can inadvertently reinforce labeling if stakeholders, such as police officers, probation officers, or community members, continue to treat the child through the lens of deviance. Tannenbaum (1938) noted that the labeling process does not end with the initial act; it is sustained through ongoing social reactions. If children are treated solely as "offenders on diversion," they may internalize this identity and behave accordingly, a process Becker (1963) termed the self-fulfilling prophecy. In such cases, rather than facilitating transformation, diversion may serve as a symbolic label that marks the child as different or dangerous.

Labeling Theory also raises concerns about the social reintegration of diverted children. Even after successful completion of a diversion programme, lingering community stigma may limit the child's access to education, employment, or social inclusion, key factors in rehabilitation. As Tannenbaum emphasized, labeling can lead to segregation and marginalization, outcomes that directly contradict the reintegrative goals of diversion.

The theory questions the voluntariness and authenticity of child participation in diversion. While diversion is often positioned as a rehabilitative alternative, children may agree to participate primarily to avoid harsher penalties, not because they truly accept responsibility or wish to change. If the process is perceived as coercive, the child may not internalize the intended rehabilitative messages, weakening the programme's effectiveness (UNODC & World Bank, 2011).

While diversion programmes offer a promising alternative to punitive systems for child offenders, Labeling Theory provides a critical lens to assess their long-term impact. It underscores the importance of community attitudes, institutional behavior, and self-perception

in shaping the outcomes of diversion. To achieve meaningful transformation, diversion must go beyond avoiding formal prosecution, it must also prevent harmful labeling, promote genuine reintegration, and foster environments where children are seen not by their past, but by their potential.

2.8. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between diversion programmes and the transformation of child offenders. Diversion programmes, which include interventions such as counseling, vocational training, family involvement, and community service, serve as the independent variable. The desired outcomes, captured under child-offender transformation, include skill development, positive behavioral and character changes, and improved social relationships with family and the community.

The framework also acknowledges the role of intervening variables that can influence the effectiveness of diversion programmes. Political goodwill ensures supportive policies and implementation oversight, while assessment tools enable tailored interventions that address the unique needs of each child offender. Adequate resources, including financial, human, and infrastructural, are critical for sustaining programme activities and achieving meaningful transformation. These elements highlight that while diversion programmes have the potential to transform child offenders, their success is contingent on supportive systems, proper resourcing, and contextually appropriate implementation strategies.

The conceptual framework is as shown in figure 2.1 below.

Independent Variable **Dependent Variable**

Diversion Programmes **Transformation of Child offenders**

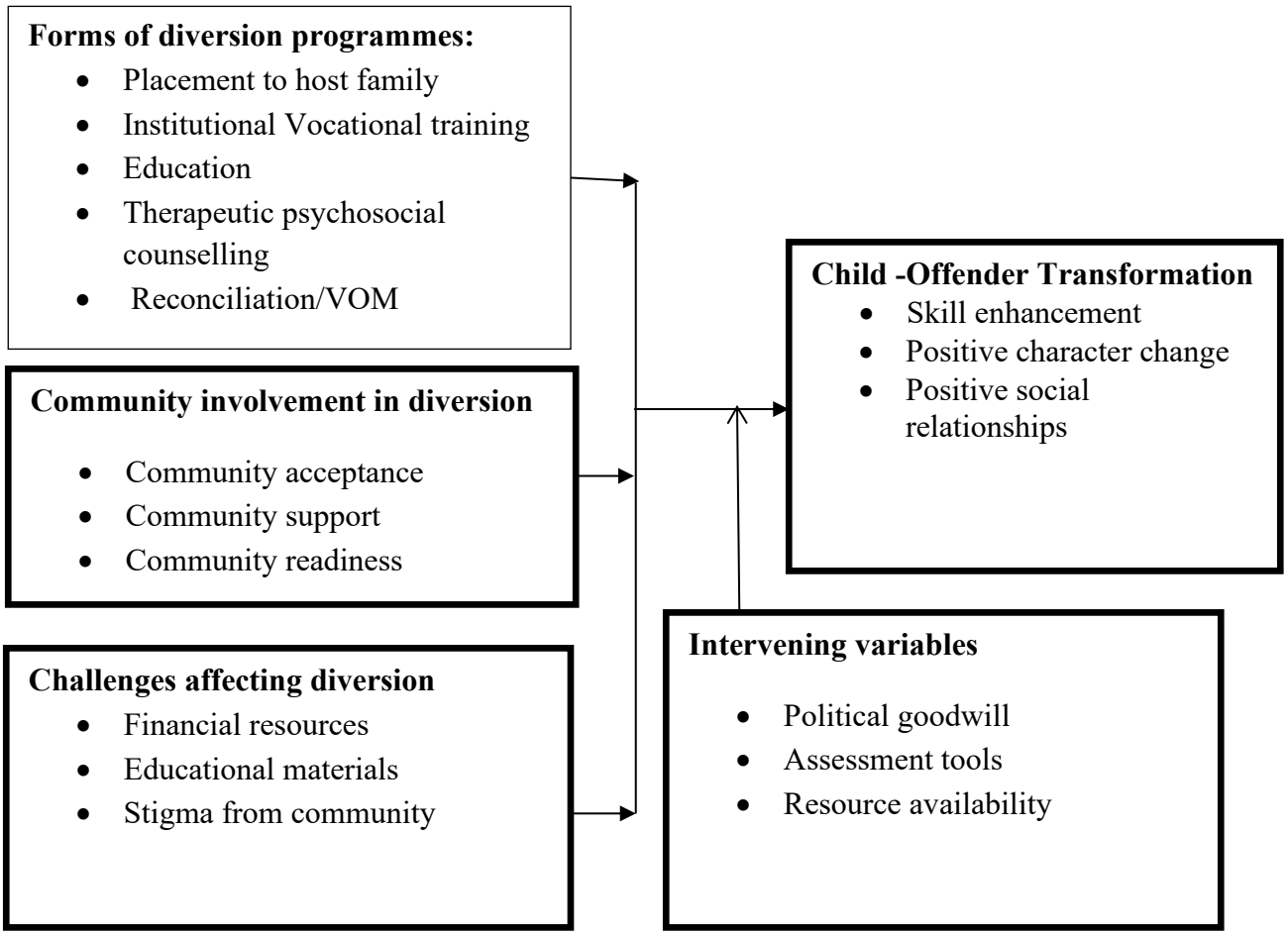


Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework

Source: Researcher (2024)

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature and theoretical foundations relevant to diversion programmes and their role in transforming child offenders. It examined global, regional, and national practices, highlighting interventions such as host family placements, vocational training, and restorative justice initiatives, all aimed at addressing the root causes of delinquency and promoting reintegration. The chapter emphasized the critical role of community involvement, including parents, local leaders, religious figures, and probation officers, in supporting rehabilitation and reinforcing social bonds. It also identified key

challenges, including inconsistent implementation, limited resources, and socio-cultural barriers, as well as gaps in empirical evidence on the actual impact of diversion on psychosocial development, education, and long-term behavior change, particularly in African contexts. Theoretical perspectives, including Restorative Justice and Labeling theories, were discussed to provide a lens for understanding both the rehabilitative potential of diversion and the risks of stigmatization. Overall, the chapter establishes the conceptual, empirical, and theoretical groundwork for investigating how diversion programmes influence the transformation of child offenders in Kakamega County.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter outlines the research methodology that was used during the study. In particular, it outlines the research design, study area, target population, sample size and sampling procedure, research instruments, instrument validity, instrument reliability, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques and chapter summary.

3.2 Research Design

The researcher employed descriptive research design. The decision to adopt a descriptive research design was guided by the observation by Mugenda (2008) in that through this research design data was collected using one or more appropriate methods for example questionnaires, and interviews on respondents. According to Kothari (2014), descriptive research design allows for the collection of data from large number of respondents in a relatively short period with minimum cost. Table 3.1 shows the research design per specific research objective.

3.3 The Study Area

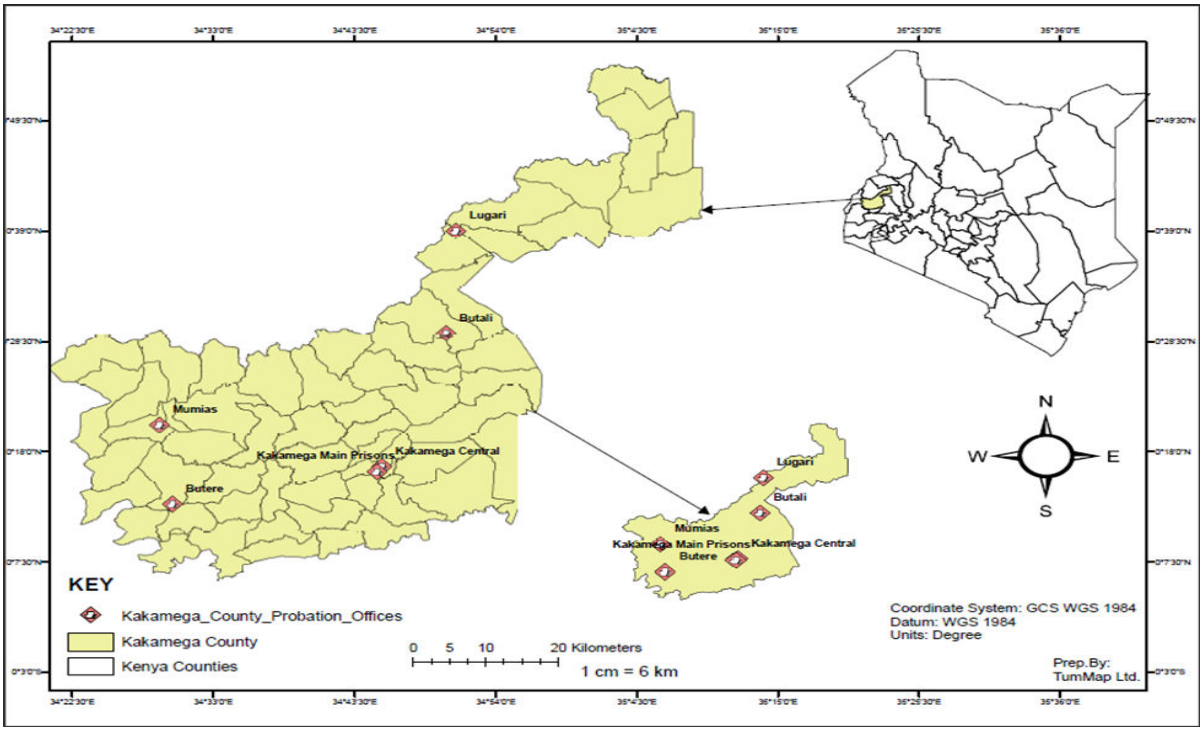


Figure 3.1 Map of Study Area.53

Source: County Integrated Development Plan, 2023

The study was conducted in Kakamega County, Kenya. The choice of Kakamega County is based on the high numbers of child offenders admitted to serve on non-custodial programmes. From January 2016 to January 2021, as reported by the State Department for Correctional Services (2021), a total of 1049 children in Kakamega central, Mumias, Lugari, Butere and Butali Kakamega central, Mumias, Lugari, Butere and Butali sub-counties were processed by the criminal justice system in Kakamega County, out of which 417 children were placed on probation. This is significantly higher than the 282 child offenders that were processed in Bungoma County from which 197 were placed on Probation, 259 processed in Vihiga County from which 131 were placed on Probation and 207 processed in Busia County from which 97 placements on probation over the same period. The study was conducted in the five Probation

Sub- County stations in Kakamega County (Kakamega County integrated Development Plan, 2018-2022).

Kakamega County was suited for the study due to its voluminous size and catchment area in terms of informants given that it has the highest number of court stations including the High court. Further, Kakamega County has three Children penal institutions from which some supervisees have been held or detained (Kakamega County Development Plan, 2018-2022). According to the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ, 2022), Kakamega consistently records among the top five counties with juvenile cases, accounting for approximately 8–10% of all child-related cases in Western Kenya annually. The county also grapples with high levels of poverty, school dropout, and child neglect, factors closely linked to juvenile delinquency.

3.4 The Target Population

The target population, as per Kumar (2011), is the wider grouping or occupants of a society for whom the study is concerned, whereas the sample is a subsection of the population that is the focus of the inquiry and is wisely decided to embody the study population. The study population comprised of all the 326 children placed on diversion supervision programmes between January 2021 and December 2022 within Kakamega County. These were 326 children serving non-custodial sanctions as the primary respondents. In addition, 49 probation officers, 38 chiefs, 326 household heads, and 12 child officers were part of the study population as the key informants and this brought the total population of the study to 751 individuals. The population of the study was spread across all the five probation stations across Kakamega County being Kakamega Central, Mumias, Lugari, Butere and Butali Sub-Counties.

3.6 Sampling procedure and Sample size

Sampling refers to the systematic selection of a limited number of elements out of a theoretically specified population of elements. The rationale is to draw conclusions about the entire population. According to Manen (2018) the ultimate test of a sample design is how well it represents the characteristics of the population it purports to represent. The reason for sampling in this study was to lower the cost of research, increase accessibility to the study sample and achieve a greater speed of data collection. This study used both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques to collect data from respondents. Cluster sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to select child offenders who were clustered according to supervising probation stations across Kakamega County.

These primary respondents were obtained from Kakamega Central, Butali, Butere, Lugari and Mumias probation stations and comprised child offenders that have been under supervision on diversion supervision within Kakamega County between January 2021 and January 2022. This ensured that every section of the study area was represented in the study. Cluster sampling, as described by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016), is a probability sampling technique in which the entire population is divided into distinct, non-overlapping groups called clusters. These clusters are ideally heterogeneous internally but similar to each other, representing the population as a whole. The researcher then randomly selects a number of these clusters, and all members within the chosen clusters, or a random sample from them, are included in the study. This method reduces costs and improves efficiency while ensuring that every individual within the population has a known and non-zero chance of being selected. In addition, a sample of 18% from each key informant category was selected to ensure proportional representation while maintaining a manageable sample size for analysis.

Specifically, this included 9 probation officers (18% of 49), 7 chiefs (18% of 38), 59 household heads (18% of 326), and 2 child officers (18% of 12). Selection was guided by a purposive sampling technique, targeting individuals with relevant experience and knowledge of diversion programmes and child offender rehabilitation. This approach ensured that all key stakeholder groups were represented in the study while facilitating detailed and meaningful data collection. According to Rahi (2017), a sample of 10% to 20% of the projected key informants' population is sufficient for purposes analysis alongside data from primary respondents.

Responses from probation officers, chiefs, and household heads and children officers complemented the responses of child offenders who are the primary respondents. According to Stockemer (2019) purposive sampling is a sampling technique that allows a researcher to use cases that have required information concerning the objectives of the study. In purposive sampling, cases of subjects were handpicked because they are informative and have the required characteristics and this improves the quality of data collection and hence the validity of the study (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

Kothari (2014) had this to say about an optimum sample it fulfills the requirements of efficiency, representativeness, reliability, and flexibility. Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967) was used to determine the sample size for the study as follows;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N\,e^2}$$

Where

n = Sample Size)

N = Population size) and

e = 0.05 level of confidence.

$$n = \frac{326}{1+ 326(0.0025)} = 179.61 \approx 180$$

A sample of 180 child offenders was selected for the study. The inclusion criterion required that each child had been a resident of Kakamega County prior to arrest. To ensure proportional representation across the five sub-counties, the sample size for each sub-county was determined using the formula:

$$n_i = N/N_i \times n$$

where:

n_i = sample size for sub-county

N_i = population of child offenders in sub-county

N = total population of child offenders in Kakamega County

n = total sample size (180)

This allocation formula ensured that the sample reflected the distribution of child offenders across all five sub-counties, enhancing the representativeness and reliability of the study findings.

Table 3.1: Sample Distribution of Child Offenders by Court Jurisdiction58

Sub-counties	Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
Kakamega Central	75	(75/326x180) = 41	Proportionate sampling and simple Random Sampling

Butere	61	(61/326x180) = 34	Proportionate Random Sampling and simple Random Sampling
Mumias	67	(67/326x180) = 37	Proportionate Random Sampling and simple Random Sampling
Butali	52	(52/326x180) = 29	Proportionate Random Sampling and simple Random Sampling
Lugari	71	(71/326x180) = 39	Proportionate Random Sampling and simple Random Sampling
Total	**326**	**180**	

Source: Researcher, 2023.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

The study utilized both primary and secondary data. To acquire secondary data the researcher utilized government publications, journals and official public records. The primary data were acquired using questionnaires, and interviews. The respondents were required to complete self-administered questionnaires by the researcher. To obtain in-depth information, key informants were issued with the questionnaires while the children were interviewed.

3.7.1 Questionnaire

Data from children was collected using semi- structured questionnaires that was researcher-administered so as to ensure that all the items in the questionnaire were ably explained to the children to understand and respond appropriately. The semi-structured questionnaire was developed in line with specific research objectives. The open-ended questions were used in order to allow respondents to provide information, which they may deem relevant for the study. Close-ended questions were also be used in order to standardize the responses and save

on the respondents' time taken to fill in the questionnaire. The researcher exercised care and control to ensure all questionnaires that was issued to the respondents are received. The questionnaire sought for general information (Bio-data) and specific information relating to the study objectives.

3.7.2 Key Informants Interview Guides

The researcher used interview guides to collect data from the key informants. The researcher made use of interview guides to be able to execute effective interviews. According to Kothari (2014), interview guides gave the researcher more opportunities to describe the study's objectives. The interview guides consisted of open-ended questions to allow for probing of the respondents to elicit insightful information**.** Interviews provide in-depth information about a given subject matter (Kumar, 2011).

3.8 Data collection procedure

The researcher began the data collection process by reviewing relevant secondary data. This included information from government documents, official statistics, scholarly articles, technical reports, and academic journals pertinent to the study. For primary data, semi-structured questionnaires were administered to child offenders, while interviews were conducted with key informants, including probation officers and diversion stakeholders.

To ensure objectivity and minimize the influence of supervising probation officers on children's responses, several safeguards were put in place. The semi-structured questionnaires for child offenders were designed using clear, age-appropriate, and neutral language to avoid leading or suggestive questions. While probation officers assisted in coordinating access to the children, they were instructed to maintain a non-directive and non-intrusive role during

the data collection process. Emphasis was placed on allowing children to freely express their experiences and perceptions without external influence.

To streamline the data collection process, child offenders in each sub-county were given a common reporting date, allowing them to participate simultaneously. This facilitated efficient administration of the questionnaires. The semi-structured questionnaires yielded both qualitative data (from open-ended items) and quantitative data (from closed-ended questions). Meanwhile, in-depth interviews with key informants provided rich qualitative insights into the implementation and perceived impact of diversion programmes.

Table 3.2 Sampling techniques and data collection methods used

Population	Sampling Techniques	Data Collection Methods
No. of children	Proportionate and simple random	Semi-structured Questionnaire
No. of Chiefs	Purposive	Interview Guide
No. of Probation officers	Purposive	Interview Guide
No. of Children Officers	Purposive	Interview Guide
No. of Household heads	Purposive	Interview Guide

Source: Researcher, (2023)

3.9 Pilot study

The pilot study was conducted away from the main study area, in line with Creswell's (2014) recommendation that piloting should be carried out in a different location to prevent premature exposure of data collection tools and minimize respondent bias. Kisumu County was selected for the pilot study. The pilot sample was determined using the 10% rule as recommended by Bryman (2016). Accordingly, the pilot included 18 child offenders, 1 probation officer, 1 chief, 6 household heads, and 1 child officer.

The pilot was carried out between January and February 2023. Its purpose was to test the clarity, structure, and reliability of the research instruments. Based on the findings, minor adjustments were made to improve the wording, sequencing, and overall usability of the questionnaires and interview guides. The data collected during the pilot were excluded from the final study analysis to maintain the integrity and comparability of the main study findings.

3.10 Validity and Reliability

Kothari (2014) defines validity as the extent to which a test or research instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure, thereby ensuring that the results obtained truly represent the phenomenon under investigation. Validity underscores the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences drawn from data analysis and reflects the degree to which the findings correspond to the objectives of the study. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), while validity and reliability are related, a valid instrument is necessarily reliable, but the converse is not always true. In this study, the validity of the research instruments was assessed through expert review by probation officers and further verified through a pilot study conducted prior to the actual data collection.

Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the consistency of a research instrument in measuring what it is designed to measure. Mwiria and Wamahiu (2018) assert that a research instrument is considered reliable when it consistently produces stable and uniform results across repeated trials. Similarly, Kothari (2014) notes that the reliability of an instrument is its capacity to yield dependable results that are generalizable and reproducible under consistent conditions. To ensure the reliability of the research instruments in this study, the test-retest method was employed. The data obtained from the pilot test were subjected to analysis using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine internal consistency. A reliability coefficient (alpha) of 0.7 or above was considered acceptable, indicating that the questionnaire was sufficiently reliable for the study.

3.11 Data analysis and Presentation

Data collected from respondents were checked, arranged, cleaned and coded to ensure, clarity and completeness before analysis. The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data was generated from interviews while quantitative data was generated from questionnaires. Quantitative data collected was analysed by aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 25.0. The information on data was presented using frequency table and graphic presentations and charts. The analysed data was displayed in graphs, charts and contingency tables using percentages, and frequencies. Qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Initially, data were familiarized through repeated reading, after which open coding was conducted to identify meaningful units of information. Codes were then reviewed, refined, and grouped into overarching themes that captured patterns across the dataset. The resulting themes were analyzed thematically and presented using detailed narratives and descriptive accounts to illustrate the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Before commencing data collection, approval was sought from the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, which provided a letter of introduction to the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) for the issuance of a research permit. Additional permission was obtained from the State Department for Correctional Services through the Regional Director of Probation and Aftercare Services to allow the study to be conducted among children under non-custodial supervision in Kakamega County. Ethical clearance was also obtained from the Institutional

Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (ISERC) at Masinde Muliro University, ensuring adherence to national and institutional ethical standards for research involving human participants.

To ensure compliance with ethical principles, the study adhered to the principles of beneficence, respect for human dignity, justice, and confidentiality. Under the principle of beneficence, participants were protected from physical, psychological, economic, and social harm. Research questions were phrased in a non-judgmental manner, respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, and interviews were rescheduled if participants were uncomfortable. The study procedures were clearly explained prior to interviews, emphasizing that participation had no direct personal benefits but could inform policy improvements for diversion supervision programmes.

Respect for human dignity was upheld through informed consent and assent. For children, assent was sought to ensure that they understood the study and agreed voluntarily to participate. Written consent was obtained from parents or legal guardians, while written assent was obtained from the children themselves, following disclosure of essential information, voluntary participation, comprehension, and the right to withdraw at any stage without prejudice.

Justice was ensured by providing equal opportunities for all eligible participants and maintaining fairness in selection. Participants' privacy was respected through anonymity: names were not recorded on questionnaires, and identification was managed using unique codes and initials.

Confidentiality was maintained by limiting access to personal identifiers and ensuring that only the principal researcher could access the data. Digital data were securely stored on password-protected files within an encrypted external storage device, while physical documents such as signed consent and assent forms were kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. No identifiable information was retained in the analysis datasets to safeguard participant anonymity, and the final report was submitted only to Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.

3.13 Chapter Summary

The chapter outlines the research methodology that was used during the study. This researcher employed descriptive research design. The study was conducted in Kakamega County, Kenya. Kakamega County was suited for the study due to its voluminous size and catchment area in terms of informants given that it has the highest number of court stations including the High court. The target population of this study comprised of individuals involved in diversion supervision programmes, including child offenders and programme stakeholders such as community members and agents within the children justice system. This study used both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques to collect data from respondents. The study utilized both primary and secondary data. To acquire secondary data the researcher utilized government publications, journals and official public records. The primary data were acquired using questionnaire and interview. The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data was generated from interviews while quantitative data was generated from questionnaire. Quantitative data collected was analysed by aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 25.0. Qualitative data was grouped using open

coding for the purpose of generating theme which was analysed using thematic analysis and presented through narrative and theme.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data analysis, presentation and interpretation. The researcher analyzed and presented the data in a summarized and logical manner as well as indicating the interpretations through deducing meanings out of the data patterns established.

4.2 Response rate

The study sought to evaluate the response rate across different categories of respondents who were instrumental in assessing the role of diversion programmes in the transformation of child offenders. Table 4.1 below presents the response rates for each group, offering insights into the level of engagement and participation in the data collection process. These response patterns are critical in establishing the representativeness and reliability of the study findings.

Table 4.1 Response rate

		Target	Number responded	Response rate (%)
Valid	Children	180	180	100

Source: Field Data, 2023

The study recorded a 100% response rate across all target groups, including children offenders (180/180). This exceptional response rate indicates a high level of engagement and cooperation from the participants and relevant stakeholders. Such a complete response

minimizes the risk of non-response bias, thereby enhancing the reliability and representativeness of the study findings.

Several factors likely contributed to this outcome, including prior engagement with key gatekeepers (such as probation and children officers), ethical clearance, and clear communication of the study's purpose. Additionally, the sensitive nature of the topic may have increased participants' motivation to contribute, particularly among officers directly involved in child rehabilitation processes.

A 100% response rate strengthens the validity of the data, supports generalizability within the study area, and ensures that all intended perspectives were captured for a more comprehensive understanding of diversion programmes for children in conflict with the law.

4.3 Demographic profile

The section presents the demographic profile of respondents with respect to their gender, age distribution, education level, and duration. The inclusion of demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education level, and duration of involvement was essential in providing a comprehensive understanding of the study population. These variables offered valuable context for interpreting responses, helped identify patterns and differences among sub-groups, and ensured that the findings reflected a diverse range of perspectives relevant to the effectiveness of diversion programmes on child offenders' transformation.

4.3.1 Gender of respondents

The demographic profile on gender plays a crucial role in understanding the dynamics of diversion programmes and their influence on child offenders' transformation in Kakamega

County, Kenya. Table 4.2 presents the gender distribution among the children participants involved in the study.

Table 4.2 Gender of the children

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	78	43.3
Male	102	56.7
Total	180	100.0

Source: Field Data, (2023)

The results from Table 4.2 present the gender distribution of children involved in the study examining the influence of diversion supervision programmes on the transformation of child offenders in Kakamega County, Kenya. The findings reveal that 43.3% (17) were female, while 56.7% (102) were male. This gender distribution aligns with existing trends in child offending, where male children are often overrepresented in conflict with the law compared to their female counterparts. The higher number of male participants may reflect the broader national or regional patterns in juvenile justice systems, where boys are more likely to be apprehended and enrolled in diversion programmes. This disparity underscores the need for gender-responsive interventions within diversion supervision frameworks to address the unique needs and risk factors affecting both male and female child offenders.

4.3.2 Education level of children

Table 4.3 presents the education levels attained by the Children participants who were part of the study on diversion programmes and their influence on child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County, Kenya.

Table 4.3 Education for children

Highest education	Frequency	Percent
Primary	11	6.1
Secondary	91	50.6
Vocational Training	60	33.3
Artisan	18	10.0
Total	**180**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data, (2023)

The results from Table 4.3 show that 6.1% (11) had attained primary education as their highest level. This represents a foundational educational background, which may limit their ability to articulate experiences but still provides essential insights into how diversion supervision programmes are perceived and understood.

The majority of participants 50.6% (91), had completed secondary education. This finding indicates that over half of the respondents possessed a relatively higher level of formal education, which may have enhanced their ability to provide detailed and reflective accounts of their experiences under diversion supervision programmes.

Additionally, 33.3% (60) reported having received vocational training. This highlights the role of technical and vocational skills in shaping perspectives, as such training could influence how individuals interpret the effectiveness of interventions in terms of practical applicability and future opportunities.

A further 10.0% (18) had attained artisan-level training. This group reflects participants who had developed specialized hands-on skills, suggesting a different but equally valuable lens in evaluating the outcomes of diversion supervision programmes.

Overall, the findings illustrate the diversity in educational backgrounds among the children respondents, underscoring the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach in assessing the impact of diversion programmes. These results support the argument by Muthuri, Francis, and Lim (2018) that varying educational levels influence individuals' capacity to comprehend and articulate their experiences. Furthermore, the dominance of secondary education aligns with Van der Waals and Maré (2017), who posit that educational attainment shapes individuals' perceptions of their life circumstances and opportunities.

4.3.3 Age of the children

Table 4.4 presents the age distribution of the participants who took part in the study on diversion programmes and their influence on child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County, Kenya.

Table 4.4 Age Brackets of children

Age Brackets of children	Frequency	Percent
11-12 Years	12	6.7
13-14 Years	29	16.1
15-16 Years	49	27.2
17-18Years	90	50
Total	180	100

Source: Field Data, (2023)

The findings in Table 4.4 indicate that 6.7% (12) were within the age bracket of 11–12 years. This group represents the youngest participants in the study and provides valuable insights into the importance of early interventions. Intervening at this early stage is consistent with the arguments of Olds et al. (2002), who emphasize that early adolescence is a critical window for shaping positive behavioral outcomes.

A further 16.1% (29) fell within the 13–14 years age bracket. This group is in the transitional phase between childhood and adolescence and provides perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of diversion programmes during a stage characterized by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes.

The data also show that 27.2% (49) were aged 15–16 years. These older adolescents bring insights into how diversion programmes intersect with issues of growing independence and identity formation. Their experiences shed light on the effectiveness of such programmes during a stage where the likelihood of risk-taking behaviors may increase.

The largest group comprised 50.0% (90) aged 17–18 years. This dominant proportion underscores the significance of diversion interventions during late adolescence, a period described by Steinberg and Morris (2001) as one of profound psychological and social transformation. At this stage, young people are on the threshold of adulthood, and their perceptions of diversion interventions are especially crucial for understanding long-term reintegration and behavioral outcomes.

These findings reveal that the majority of participants were older adolescents (15–18 years), highlighting the need for diversion programmes to be tailored to the developmental needs and realities of this age group, while still ensuring inclusivity of younger children at earlier stages of growth.

4.3.4 Duration of children in Diversion programmes

Table 4.5 presents the duration of children's participation in diversion programmes as part of the study on their influence on child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County, Kenya.

Table 4.5 Duration of children in Diversion programmes

		Frequency	Percent
Duration of children in Diversion programmes	0-1 Years	8	4.4
	2-3 Years	11	6.1
	4-5 Years	16	8.9
	Above 5 Years	145	80.6
	Total	180	100.0

Source: Field Data, (2023)

The results in Table 4.5 show that 4.4% (8) had been in diversion programmes for 0–1 years. This group reflects those newly enrolled, offering insights into the early experiences and initial adjustments of children within the programme. As noted by Rogers (2003), early stages of participation are often shaped by programme initiation and adaptation, making this group essential in understanding immediate outcomes.

A slightly larger group, 6.1% (11) reported participation for 2–3 years. Their experiences provide perspectives on medium-term engagement, often characterized by programme consolidation and stabilization, as highlighted by Weiss (1998). This duration allows children to experience sustained exposure to supervision, which may influence both behavioral change and adaptation.

In addition, 8.9% (16) had been involved for 4–5 years. These participants represent long-term engagement and contribute insights into the cumulative impact of diversion programmes. Their experiences align with the cumulative effects model (Hawkins et al., 1999), which emphasizes the compounding influence of interventions over time.

The largest proportion, 80.6% (145) had been in diversion programmes for more than 5 years. This dominant group provides valuable perspectives on extended engagement and long-term transformation. As Loeber and Farrington (2012) observe, prolonged participation in well-

structured interventions enhances the likelihood of sustained positive outcomes, particularly in reducing reoffending and supporting reintegration.

Overall, the findings highlight a diversity of programme durations among participants, ranging from newly enrolled children to those with extensive experience in the system. This variation enriches the study by capturing insights into the short-term, medium-term, and long-term impacts of diversion programmes. It also supports Farrington and Welsh's (2005) emphasis on assessing intervention effectiveness across different time frames, ensuring a holistic understanding of how diversion programmes contribute to child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County.

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of offence for which they were diverted into. This aimed to explore the nature of offences committed by children in conflict with the law and to understand how the type of offence may relate to their experiences and outcomes within diversion programmes.

Table 4.6: Distribution of Offence Types Leading to Diversion (n = 180)

Offence Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Petty theft or stealing	62	34.4%
Assault or fighting	38	21.1%
Drug or substance use	26	14.4%
Truancy, running away, or loitering	29	16.1%
Sexual misconduct	14	7.8%
Other (e.g., vandalism, disobedience)	11	6.1%
Total	**180**	**100%**

Source: Field Data, (2023)

The findings revealed that the most common offence was petty theft or stealing, reported by 34.4% (62). This reflects a pattern often seen among children in conflict with the law, where socio-economic vulnerability, peer influence, and survival needs drive children to engage in minor property offences. These cases are generally non-violent and point to the need for economic and social empowerment approaches within diversion strategies, such as vocational training and mentorship.

Assault or fighting was the second most reported offence, accounting for 21.1% (38). These cases highlight a significant presence of aggressive behaviour among children, which may stem from exposure to violence, unresolved trauma, or lack of emotional regulation. Children diverted for such offences could benefit from psychosocial support services, anger management sessions, and life skills training to address the underlying behavioral issues.

Truancy, running away from home, and loitering, grouped under status offences, were reported by 16.1% (29). These behaviours are considered offences only because of the child's age and often signal deeper issues such as family conflict, neglect, or abuse. Diversion programmes for children with such backgrounds should integrate family therapy, counselling, and child protection support.

Drug and substance use or possession was indicated by 14.4% (26). This underscores the growing exposure of minors to drugs, particularly in urban and low-income settings. These children require rehabilitation-oriented diversion approaches, including drug education, counselling, and community-based recovery support systems.

Sexual misconduct was cited by 7.8% (14), with offences ranging from inappropriate touching to defilement. Given the sensitive nature of such cases, interventions must include restorative justice practices, sex education, and professional psychosocial support tailored to both victims and offenders, especially when minors are involved on both sides.

Lastly, 6.1% (11) reported other types of offences, such as vandalism, defiance, or curfew violations. Although less frequent, these cases still reflect behavioural concerns that diversion programmes must address through individualized support plans.

The findings suggest that children enter diversion programmes for a variety of reasons, and the nature of the offence can significantly influence the type of intervention that is most appropriate. The diversity of offences also highlights the need for a multi-dimensional and child-sensitive approach to diversion, one that not only prevents reoffending but also promotes holistic transformation by addressing the social, emotional, and economic drivers of child offending.

This aligns with the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model developed by Andrews and Bonta (2010), which emphasizes that effective interventions must match the individual's criminogenic risks and needs. Similarly, research by Mwinami (2023) on juvenile justice in Kenya underscores the importance of tailoring diversion strategies to specific contexts and offence types to achieve meaningful outcomes. These insights reinforce the importance of

designing interventions that are both rehabilitative and responsive to the unique circumstances of each child.

4.4 Diversion Programmes on Child Offenders' Transformation

In this objective, the study sought to investigate the forms of diversion supervision programmes on child offenders' transformation. The study findings were as presented in Table 4.7.

Respondents were asked to indicate the type(s) of diversion programme they had participated in. The question allowed multiple responses to reflect the variety of interventions offered under diversion. The findings are presented below.

Table 4.7: Forms of Diversion Programmes Accessed (n = 180).77

Diversion Programme Type	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Counselling	124	68.9%
Restorative justice	93	51.7%
Vocational training	71	39.4%
Educational support	66	36.7%
Other (e.g., mentorship, recreation)	22	12.2%

Source: Field Data, (2023)

The findings revealed that the most commonly experienced diversion programme was counselling, reported by 81.1% (146). Many children stated that individual or group counselling sessions helped them to reflect on their behaviour, manage anger, recover from trauma, and gain coping skills. One respondent noted,

> Counselling helped me to talk about my problems and think before acting. I feel more in control of myself now (RES, 115).

Another added:

> Before, I used to get angry and fight anyone. But the counsellor showed me how to breathe and calm down. Now, I walk away from fights (RES, 77).

These testimonies illustrate how counselling fosters emotional regulation, self-awareness, and adaptive coping mechanisms, critical components of rehabilitation for child offenders.

These findings are consistent with Lambie and Randell (2013), who note that counselling within diversion programmes contributes to reductions in aggressive behaviour and enhances social skills, especially among children with histories of trauma. Similarly, Henggeler and Schoenwald (2011) argue that counselling supports cognitive and behavioural change by addressing underlying issues such as anger, impulsivity, and exposure to violence.

Moreover, the current results align with a study by Souverein, Ward, and Visser (2016) in South Africa, which found that structured counselling in diversion programmes significantly improved self-control, problem-solving, and conflict resolution among youth offenders. Counselling was particularly effective when delivered in culturally sensitive ways and integrated into community-based diversion models.

However, the finding that some children reported limited access to follow-up services after completing counselling highlights a critical gap. This concern resonates with Chauhan and Reppucci (2009), who argue that short-term counselling without sustained aftercare may lead to relapse into delinquent behaviour, as children lack continuous reinforcement of coping strategies. Similarly, Shader (2004) emphasized that long-term behavioural stability requires ongoing support, peer mentoring, or community reintegration services alongside counselling.

Compared to other interventions such as community service or vocational training, counselling appears to have a more direct psychological impact, equipping children with internal resources to navigate stress and avoid reoffending. While community service fosters social responsibility and vocational training promotes economic empowerment, counselling addresses the root psychosocial drivers of offending, such as unresolved trauma, impulsivity, and poor anger management.

The findings also mirror the argument by Zehr (2002) on restorative justice, which underscores the role of counselling in restoring a sense of dignity, self-worth, and responsibility among offenders. In contexts like Kakamega, where many children face poverty, family breakdown, and exposure to violence, counselling provides a safe space for them to reconstruct their identities and develop non-violent responses to challenges.

In conclusion, counselling emerged as the most impactful diversion programme, shaping children's psychological well-being and behaviour change. However, the lack of follow-up services remains a weakness, echoing concerns from prior studies that

highlight the need for sustained aftercare and community-based psychosocial support. Integrating counselling with longer-term support mechanisms could strengthen the effectiveness of diversion programmes in achieving lasting transformation among child offenders.

Participation in restorative justice processes, such as reconciliation with victims, was reported by 115 respondents (63.9%). These interventions provided opportunities for offenders to make amends, express remorse, and repair relationships. As one child explained,

> I apologised to the person I hurt, and it made me understand the pain I caused. It made me want to change (RES,22).

Such testimonies illustrate the transformative potential of restorative justice, which fosters accountability, empathy, and reconciliation. Children who engaged in these processes not only acknowledged the harm caused but also developed a deeper sense of responsibility to avoid reoffending.

These findings resonate with Bazemore and Umbreit (1995), who argue that restorative justice interventions promote offender accountability and victim healing more effectively than punitive measures. Similarly, Zehr (2002) emphasizes that RJ processes allow offenders to grasp the human impact of their actions, making behavioural transformation more likely. The reflections of the children in this study echo these arguments, as many described the process as eye-opening and motivating for personal change.

However, some children mentioned challenges when victims declined to participate. Another said:

> We met with the victim and his family. I was nervous, but they forgave me. Now I help my community instead of causing problems (RES, 61).

These sessions fostered accountability and reconciliation. Nonetheless, some respondents reported that the success of such interventions was contingent on the willingness of victims to participate, with one noting:

> I wanted to apologise, but the person refused to meet me. I still feel bad (RES, 39).

This highlights an important limitation of restorative justice: its success is contingent upon the willingness of victims to engage. As Daly (2006) and Strang et al. (2013) note, the reluctance of victims may hinder full reconciliation, leaving offenders with unresolved feelings of guilt or rejection. Such situations can reduce the emotional closure that RJ is designed to provide.

Comparatively, findings from South Africa's Child Justice Act (2008) demonstrate that while victim-offender mediation is effective in reducing recidivism and fostering community healing, uptake remains uneven due to victims' hesitations, logistical challenges, or fear of re-traumatization. This mirrors the experiences reported in Kakamega, where some victims declined participation.

Importantly, restorative justice sessions appeared to complement other diversion measures like counselling and community service. While counselling fostered internal behavioural change, restorative justice promoted external relational healing by directly addressing harm and repairing social ties. As Latimer, Dowden, and Muise (2005) found in a meta-analysis,

RJ processes often yield higher victim satisfaction and reduced reoffending compared to conventional justice approaches.

Restorative justice interventions within diversion programmes in Kakamega were effective in promoting accountability, remorse, and reconciliation for many children. Yet, their success depended heavily on victim willingness to engage, a factor that sometimes limited the reach of these programmes. These findings underscore the need for support structures for both victims and offenders, including preparatory meetings, victim-support services, and follow-up mechanisms, to enhance participation and maximize the transformative potential of restorative justice.

Vocational training was cited by 49.4% (89). Through skill-based training in trades like tailoring, carpentry, or mechanics, children were able to develop practical competencies that promoted self-reliance and employability. A participant shared,

> I learned how to make furniture. Now I help my uncle in his workshop, and I don't think of stealing again (RES, 19).

This testimony underscores the role of vocational training in reducing recidivism by creating alternative livelihoods. Children who gain practical competencies are less likely to revert to delinquent behavior, as they now have constructive means of generating income and contributing positively to their households.

These findings align with Harris, Gingerich, and Whitaker (2004), who argue that vocational training programmes within juvenile rehabilitation settings foster not only economic independence but also social reintegration. Similarly, UNODC (2013) emphasizes that skill

development is a critical component of child offender rehabilitation, as it addresses the root causes of crime, such as poverty and unemployment.

In the African context, Muthee and Orodho (2014) found that vocational training in Kenyan rehabilitation schools improved children's prospects for reintegration by instilling employable skills and fostering resilience against re-offending. This is echoed in South Africa's diversion initiatives, where vocational training has been shown to reduce reoffending by providing youth with alternatives to crime-driven survival strategies (Wood, 2015).

However, challenges remain. Some respondents indicated that access to startup resources after training was limited, which could constrain the long-term benefits of the acquired skills. This reflects the observations of Muncie (2015), who notes that while training equips young offenders with knowledge, the absence of material or financial support may undermine the transition into meaningful employment.

In Kakamega, vocational training within diversion programmes appears to strike a balance between rehabilitation and empowerment. It not only diverts children from punitive justice measures but also addresses socio-economic vulnerabilities that contribute to juvenile delinquency. By equipping child offenders with tangible skills, these programmes enhance their potential for sustainable reintegration and support the broader restorative justice goal of transforming offenders into productive community members.

Educational support was mentioned by 42.8% (77). This included being re-enrolled in school or receiving tutoring and school materials. Many respondents expressed that education had a positive impact on their mindset and future aspirations. One child remarked,

> Going back to school gave me hope. I want to be a teacher (RES, 16).

Another remarked:

> The tailoring classes gave me something to focus on. I want to start my own shop one day (RES, 33).

These narratives highlight the role of educational support in fostering positive identity reconstruction and long-term rehabilitation. For many children, education served as both a protective factor against recidivism and a pathway toward legitimate opportunities.

This finding resonates with UNICEF (2019), which underscores the critical role of education in addressing the vulnerabilities of children in conflict with the law. Education not only provides cognitive and life skills but also strengthens resilience, enabling children to navigate social challenges constructively. Similarly, Ndhlovu (2018) observed that diversion programmes in Zimbabwe that incorporated schooling opportunities significantly reduced reoffending rates by giving children meaningful alternatives to delinquent lifestyles.

In Kenya, Kanyi (2019) reported that educational support in rehabilitation schools improved children's ability to reintegrate into society by equipping them with academic and life skills. This reflects a broader consensus that access to education mitigates structural inequalities, such as poverty and illiteracy, which are often drivers of juvenile delinquency (Farrington et al., 2012).

Despite these successes, some respondents in this study noted challenges such as stigma in schools and difficulty catching up with academic work after periods of absence. This mirrors the findings of Murray and Farrington (2010), who caution that without sustained

psychosocial support, children re-entering schools after conflict with the law may face barriers that hinder educational attainment.

The findings suggest that educational support within diversion programmes is not just an academic intervention but a transformational pathway, helping children envision a future beyond crime. By rekindling aspirations and equipping children with skills for future livelihoods, education plays a central role in the holistic transformation of child offenders in Kakamega County.

While vocational training was largely impactful, some respondents noted obstacles such as inadequate tools, short training durations, or lack of startup capital post-training, which could undermine sustainability. However, some mentioned that stigma at school and financial struggles remained barriers.

A smaller proportion of respondents indicated participation in other interventions, including mentorship, community service, and life skills training. These programmes complemented core interventions and provided further avenues for character building.

One child shared:

> My mentor helped me stay on track. He checks on me and tells me I can be better than my past (RES, 98).

This reflects findings by Bateman and Hazel (2014), who argued that mentoring plays a critical role in strengthening prosocial bonds and providing consistent adult guidance, factors essential for reducing recidivism. Likewise, community service provided an avenue for children to demonstrate responsibility and regain social acceptance, as one participant noted:

> Community work made me feel useful again. I cleaned the market with others and people saw me differently (RES, 74).

Though less prevalent, these alternative programmes were often described as meaningful, particularly when integrated into broader rehabilitation strategies. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of diversion programming. Counselling and restorative justice emerged as the most impactful, with strong emotional and behavioural outcomes. Vocational and educational support played a critical role in reintegration through skill-building and future planning, although systemic barriers such as poverty and stigma need to be addressed. Other support models, including mentorship and life skills, offered personalised guidance and enhanced social reintegration. Collectively, these interventions reinforce the importance of holistic, child-centred approaches to diversion and rehabilitation.

These findings align with labelling theory, which cautions that formal justice system interventions may stigmatise young offenders and reinforce criminal identities (Becker, 1963). Diversion programmes, by offering alternative responses outside of formal judicial processing, help mitigate negative labels and allow for more positive identity construction. Furthermore, the outcomes resonate with the principles of restorative justice theory, which focuses on repairing harm, promoting accountability, and reintegrating the offender into the community (Zehr, 2002). Collectively, these interventions reinforce the importance of holistic, child-centred approaches that not only address offending behaviour but also support the emotional, social, and developmental needs of young people.

Table 4.8: Diversion Programmes on Child Offenders' Transformation

Indicator	Percentage (%)

	Strongly agreed	Strongly disagreed
Placement to host family	68	32
Institutional Vocational t Raining	54	46
Education	72	28
Therapeutic psychosocial counselling	81	19
Reconciliation/VOM	64	36

Source: Research Data, (2023)

The study explored the perceptions of child offenders regarding the effectiveness of various diversion programmes. Key interventions assessed included host family placements, institutional vocational training, access to education, psychosocial counselling, and victim-offender mediation (VOM). The findings demonstrate varying levels of impact, as well as implementation challenges.

A majority of respondents 68% (122), acknowledged that placement in host families significantly contributed to their reintegration. Many of these children had experienced instability, neglect, or dysfunctional family environments, and the transition into stable and caring host families provided them with a renewed sense of emotional safety, discipline, and belonging. These supportive structures fostered secure attachments and helped to create a nurturing space that encouraged positive behavioral change. For many, the predictability of family routines and the presence of adult role models promoted values of responsibility and trust, critical elements for reducing recidivism.

One respondent shared,

> I felt loved and cared for in my new home. It was the first time I felt like someone believed in me (RES, 74).

Another added,

> My foster parents treated me like their own. They taught me how to be respectful and to think before I act (RES, 29).

These responses reflect how family-based care can play a transformative role by offering not only material support, but emotional healing and behavioral modeling that many child offenders had previously lacked.

However, the study also uncovered limitations in this intervention. Respondents reported experiencing significant challenges during host family placements. These included stigma from the surrounding community, rejection or neglect by some host families, and economic hardship within the homes themselves. As one respondent noted,

> They took me in, but the neighbours called me names. I wanted to run away again (RES, 103).

Another explained,

> The family tried, but they didn't have enough food. Sometimes we went hungry (RES, 38).

These accounts underscore the vulnerability of both the children and the families hosting them, revealing that goodwill alone is not sufficient to sustain this model of care. These findings suggest that while host family placement can be an effective tool for reintegration, it requires comprehensive support mechanisms to be sustainable. Psychosocial support for both the child and the host family, stigma reduction campaigns within communities, and targeted economic assistance are essential. As highlighted by Smith (2020), successful placement models are those that balance emotional nurturing with structural and financial support, ensuring that the reintegration environment is truly rehabilitative rather than merely custodial.

Vocational training, particularly within institutional settings, was identified by 97 respondents (54%) as having played a significant role in improving their self-reliance and employability. Training in practical skills such as carpentry, tailoring, mechanics, and agricultural practices was commonly reported. These skills not only provided child offenders with a constructive use of time during their rehabilitation but also equipped them with tangible competencies that could aid their reintegration into society through income-generating activities.

One participant shared,

> I learned how to make furniture while I was there. Now I can help my uncle in his workshop. It makes me proud (RES, 19).

Another noted,

> I didn't know I could be good at anything. Learning how to fix motorbikes gave me confidence that I can succeed (RES, 87).

Such reflections highlight the rehabilitative value of vocational training in fostering personal growth, self-worth, and an alternative life path outside of offending.

However, 46% (83) also pointed to notable limitations in the vocational training programmes, citing issues such as inadequate tools, short training durations, lack of start-up capital, and challenges in sustaining skills post-training. Financial constraints within institutions often meant that training materials and tools were limited, making it difficult to offer consistent or high-quality instruction. Moreover, after leaving the institution, many young people struggled to transition from training to employment due to limited job opportunities or lack of capital to start their own businesses. One respondent explained,

> I know how to sew, but I don't have a machine. No one will give me a job without experience or tools (RES, 56).

Another echoed,

> We trained, but after release, no one followed up or helped us find work. I ended up idle again (RES, 109).

These challenges point to the need for stronger linkages between vocational training and the broader labour market. Programmes must be aligned with market demands, and partnerships should be built with employers, community organizations, and microfinance institutions to support trainees post-release. As Ngugi & Wekesa (2019) argue, the long-term success of vocational training lies not only in the skills imparted but in the pathways created for sustained economic engagement.

Access to education both formal and non-formal, emerged as a pivotal element in the transformation and reintegration of child offenders. A significant majority, 72% (130), acknowledged that being re-enrolled in school or accessing alternative education programmes contributed positively to their rehabilitation, enhancing their future aspirations, discipline, and engagement in pro-social activities. Education was seen not just as a means of academic advancement, but also as a platform for instilling discipline, developing literacy, and expanding future opportunities.

As one child recounted,

> When I went back to school, I started seeing myself differently. I felt I could become someone again (RES, 16).

Another respondent expressed,

> Education made me stop wasting time. Now I want to be a teacher and help others like me (RES, 33).

Such sentiments demonstrate that education gave many children a renewed sense of purpose and direction, helping them reframe their self-image away from criminal identity and toward future-oriented aspirations.

However, 28% (50) reported experiencing significant challenges related to educational reintegration, including stigma from peers, financial constraints, and limited access to school materials, which hindered their full participation and engagement in learning. Financial

hardship was a key barrier, with several children reporting difficulties in affording school fees, uniforms, or learning materials. One child shared,

> I wanted to continue learning, but my family couldn't pay fees. I stayed home again and felt like giving up (RES, 48).

Stigma and discrimination from peers and teachers also emerged as a deterrent.

> In school, some teachers called me names because of my past. It hurt and made me want to quit (RES, 74), noted another participant.

Moreover, for those placed in non-formal learning centres or adult literacy programmes, inconsistent access to resources and lack of accreditation sometimes limited the long-term value of the education received. Disruptions in learning, especially during transitions between custody, diversion, and community reintegration, further undermined educational progress.

These insights underscore the critical role education plays in child offender rehabilitation, but also point to the need for systemic improvements. As UNICEF (2021) emphasizes, investing in flexible, stigma-free, and well-resourced learning pathways is essential for sustaining gains made during diversion programmes. To maximize impact, policies must ensure fee waivers, psychosocial support within schools, and active re-enrolment efforts for children exiting the justice system.

Therapeutic psychosocial counselling emerged as one of the most impactful interventions, with 81% (146) rating it as highly effective in supporting their transformation journey. The counselling sessions, which focused on key areas such as anger management, trauma recovery, and substance abuse treatment, were credited by many children as instrumental in fostering emotional healing and behavioral change.

One respondent shared,

> Before counselling, I used to get angry and fight a lot. Now I know how to calm down and think before doing anything (RES, 58).

Another child explained,

> Talking to the counsellor helped me understand why I was doing bad things. I felt heard for the first time (RES, 37).

These personal accounts demonstrate that counselling helped build emotional resilience, promote introspection, and develop coping strategies that reduced the risk of reoffending.

Despite these positive outcomes, 19% (34) expressed concerns about limited access to professional counsellors and the absence of consistent follow-up, which could affect the sustainability of behavioural transformation. In some cases, children had only one or two sessions and were then left without continued support. One child noted,

> I only saw the counsellor once. After that, no one checked on me" (RES, 91).

Others pointed out that the few available counsellors were often overwhelmed or not well-trained to deal with complex trauma.

> The person I talked to was not really a counsellor. They just told me to behave well and go home (RES, 73).

These challenges reduced the long-term impact of counselling and highlighted systemic weaknesses in the delivery of psychosocial support. The findings point to the urgent need to scale up access to professional counselling services, particularly in community-based settings, and to invest in training more qualified counsellors to meet the diverse needs of children in conflict with the law.

Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM) was supported by 64% (115) as an effective restorative justice strategy, helping child offenders acknowledge harm, express remorse, and engage in reparative actions. The process enabled child offenders to engage directly with their victims, acknowledge the harm caused, and express remorse, facilitating both personal accountability and emotional healing. Many children described the experience as powerful and transformative.

One respondent shared,

> When I met the person I had stolen from and said sorry, I felt ashamed but also free. They forgave me, and I promised not to repeat it (RES, 44).

Another added,

> That meeting helped me realise that what I did hurt someone real. Before that, I didn't think much about it (RES, 87).

These narratives illustrate how VOM fosters empathy, insight into the consequences of one's actions, and a genuine desire to change. It also promotes reintegration by repairing strained community relationships.

However, 36% (65) of respondents indicated limitations with the mediation process. The main challenge was the victim's willingness to participate. As one child noted,

> The person I wronged didn't want to talk to me. I felt bad but understood (RES, 102).

Others reported inadequate preparation for the mediation sessions and limited access to trained mediators, which sometimes weakened the impact.

> The mediation felt rushed, and no one explained what I was supposed to say or do (RES, 63).

A key informant a probation officer overseeing diversion programmes, reiterated the need for proper structuring:

> Victim-offender mediation is one of the most effective tools we have, but only when both parties are prepared and the process is guided by a trained facilitator. Without that, it can do more harm than good (KII, 2023).

This insight underscores that while VOM has great rehabilitative potential, its success relies on a robust support structure that includes victim preparation, skilled mediation, and post-mediation follow-up. There is also a clear need for community sensitization to reduce stigma and encourage victim participation. VOM was found to be a highly impactful intervention for many children, helping them internalize the consequences of their actions and begin healing. However, to ensure broader and more consistent effectiveness, the model must be

institutionally strengthened through capacity-building, community education, and policy support (Restorative Justice Council, 2020)

4.4.2 Results from the regression analysis for Diversion Programmes

To determine the statistical significance of the influence of diversion supervision programmes on child offenders' transformation, inferential statistical tests such as Chi-square tests and logistic regression analysis were conducted as shown below.

Table 4.9 Logistic Regression Results for Diversion Programmes

Predictor Variable	B (Coefficient)	Exp(B) (Odds Ratio)	p-value
Placement in host family	1.24	3.46	0.002
Institutional vocational training	0.89	2.43	0.014
Education	1.56	4.75	0.000
Therapeutic psychosocial counseling	1.78	5.92	0.000
Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)	0.74	2.10	0.031
Constant	-2.13	0.12	0.001

Source: Field Data, (2023)

The logistic regression analysis examined the impact of diversion programmes on the transformation of child offenders. The results, as presented in Table 4.1. The p-values indicate the significance of each predictor variable, while the odds ratio (Exp(B)) reflects the likelihood of successful transformation when a child offender undergoes a specific intervention. The findings indicate that all five diversion supervision programmes had a statistically significant influence on child offenders' transformation ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that placement in host families, institutional vocational training, education, therapeutic

psychosocial counseling, and victim-offender mediation all play a critical role in rehabilitating child offenders.

Among these interventions, therapeutic psychosocial counseling emerged as the most influential predictor (Exp(B) = 5.92, p = 0.000), meaning that child offenders who received psychosocial counseling were nearly six times more likely to successfully reintegrate compared to those who did not. This finding aligns with Ochola and Maina (2018), who found that structured counseling sessions significantly improved emotional resilience, reduced aggression, and enhanced self-control among rehabilitated juveniles. However, challenges such as a shortage of professional counselors and inconsistent follow-up mechanisms limit the long-term effectiveness of these interventions.

Education was the second most significant predictor (Exp(B) = 4.75, p = 0.000), demonstrating that access to formal and non-formal education increased the likelihood of successful transformation by almost five times. Education has been widely recognized as a transformative tool, instilling discipline, improving literacy, and enhancing employability. According to UNICEF (2021), access to education reduces reoffending among juveniles by providing them with opportunities to build a better future. However, 28% of respondents in the study cited barriers such as financial constraints, stigma from peers and teachers, and disruptions in learning, all of which hinder the full benefits of education.

Placement in host families also had a strong impact on the transformation of child offenders (Exp(B) = 3.46, p = 0.002). The study found that being placed in a stable family environment provided emotional support, discipline, and a sense of belonging, which significantly reduced the likelihood of reoffending. This finding is consistent with Smith (2020), who noted that host family placements enhance social integration and offer rehabilitative support. However,

32% of respondents reported challenges such as stigma, financial burdens, and occasional rejection by host families, highlighting the need for additional psychosocial and economic support mechanisms.

Institutional vocational training was also a significant predictor (Exp(B) = 2.43, p = 0.014), indicating that child offenders who participated in skills training programmes were 2.43 times more likely to successfully reintegrate into society. Vocational programmes in carpentry, tailoring, mechanics, and agriculture provided alternative career paths, reducing dependency on criminal activities. However, as noted by Ngugi and Wekesa (2019), financial constraints and limited employment opportunities after training often reduced the long-term impact of vocational education. This calls for enhanced industry partnerships and post-training job placement programmes to ensure sustainability.

Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM) had the lowest odds ratio (Exp(B) = 2.10, p = 0.031), but it was still statistically significant. The findings showed that child offenders who participated in mediation were twice as likely to transform successfully compared to those who did not. VOM facilitates healing by allowing offenders to express remorse, seek forgiveness, and restore relationships with victims. However, Restorative Justice Council (2020) highlighted that the effectiveness of VOM depends largely on the willingness of victims to participate and the availability of trained mediators. The study noted that 36% of respondents cited reluctance among victims as a challenge to successful mediation. Strengthening mediation frameworks and increasing public awareness of restorative justice principles could enhance this approach. The findings support the view that multifaceted, community-based diversion strategies are more effective in facilitating juvenile rehabilitation than punitive measures. These results are consistent with Mbuba and Mugambi (2011), who argued that restorative and rehabilitative

approaches offer more sustainable outcomes for juvenile offenders than incarceration by fostering accountability, emotional healing, and social reintegration.

However, the persistence of structural barriers, such as financial constraints, stigma, lack of professional support, and inadequate follow-up, undermines the long-term effectiveness of these interventions. This suggests that while diversion programmes are effective, their success depends on the quality, consistency, and comprehensiveness of their implementation. To strengthen outcomes, policy frameworks must prioritize investment in human resources, community sensitization, and intersectoral collaboration to ensure that child offenders not only avoid reoffending but also thrive post-diversion.

4.5 Community Involvement in the Diversion Programmes on Child Offenders' Transformation

The study sought to assess the influence of community involvement in diversion programmes on the transformation of child offenders. To achieve this, respondents were asked about their knowledge of community support mechanisms, the roles and responsibilities of community members, and the cultural values shaping perceptions of child offenders and their rehabilitation. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements regarding community participation in rehabilitation programmes using a Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". The responses were then analyzed to determine the extent to which community involvement contributes to the reintegration and behavioral change of child offenders. The study findings are presented in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Community Involvement in the Diversion Programmes.98

Statements	**SD**	**D**	**U**	**A**	**SA**	Total	Mean	Std Dev

The community is actively involved in supporting child offenders in their transformation	F	2	4	7	19	13	45	3.80	0.047
	%	5	8.6	15.8	42.4	28.1	100	76.0	
Community members provide essential resources and mentorship to child offenders	F	2	5	6	18	14	45	3.79	0.074
	%	5	10.8	14.4	39.6	30.2	100	75.8	
Community involvement is crucial for the success of supervision programmes	F	0	1	6	28	10	45	4.04	0.342
	%	0	2.2	13.7	61.9	22.3	100	80.8	
There are adequate community resources available for child offenders	F	2	4	8	13	19	45	3.93	0.346
	%	5	7.9	17.3	28.1	41.7	100	78.6	
Community programmes (clubs, mentorship) positively impact child offenders	F	0	1	7	19	18	45	4.18	0.591
	%	0	2.2	15.1	43.2	39.6	100	82.6	
Resource accessibility in the community meets the needs of child offenders	F	2	2	5	19	17	45	4.00	0.577
	%	5	5	11.5	41.7	36.7	100	80.0	
Child offenders' relationships with community members improve over time	F	0	0	2	15	28	45	4.15	0.404
	%	0	0	3.6	33.8	62.6	100	83.0	
Community interaction plays a significant role in the rehabilitation of child offenders	F	2	2	4	15	21	45	4.14	0.010
	%	5	5	8.6	33.8	47.5	100	82.8	
The community's attitude towards child offenders has become more positive	F	3	6	13	17	6	45	4.50	0.346
	%	7.2	14.4	28.1	36.7	13.7	100	90.0	

Source: Field Data, (2023)

The findings revealed that 80.0% (36) of respondents reported having sufficient knowledge of how the community supports child offenders, highlighting the pivotal role of local structures in facilitating rehabilitation and reintegration. These respondents cited initiatives such as mentorship programmes, resource provision, and active supervision as key mechanisms through which communities contribute to the transformation of children in conflict with the law. This aligns with UNICEF (2021), which emphasizes that community-driven interventions are essential for reintegrating juvenile offenders, providing not only practical support but also emotional and social guidance.

Mentorship programmes were identified as offering role models who guide children toward pro-social behavior, foster accountability, and instill life skills. Resource provision, including access to educational materials, vocational tools, or financial support, was noted as critical in reducing barriers that could otherwise push children back into delinquency. Supervision and community monitoring were also highlighted as vital for ensuring that children apply learned skills and remain engaged in positive activities, thereby reinforcing the rehabilitative process. However, 20.0% (9) of respondents indicated limited knowledge or awareness of community support mechanisms. This gap suggests that not all children are equally exposed to community-driven interventions, which could undermine the effectiveness of diversion programmes for those less informed or less supported. These findings are consistent with prior studies (e.g., Muthuri, Francis & Lim, 2018; Menon & Cheung, 2018), which emphasize that active community engagement enhances the effectiveness of rehabilitation by creating supportive environments that complement formal interventions. The disparity in awareness further indicates a need for more targeted outreach and information dissemination to ensure that all child offenders can benefit equally from available community support structures.

Regarding community responsibilities, 83.0% (38) of respondents acknowledged the active role of community members in providing mentorship, fostering accountability, and offering material or social resources to support child offenders. This aligns with Smith (2020), who argues that community engagement enhances rehabilitation outcomes by instilling a sense of belonging and moral guidance among juvenile offenders. Additionally, 70.0% (31) of respondents indicated that cultural values significantly shape community attitudes toward child offenders, with a strong emphasis on rehabilitation rather than punitive measures. This finding is consistent with Ochola and Maina (2018), who observed that African traditional

justice systems prioritize reconciliation and social reintegration over retribution, underscoring the importance of culturally informed interventions in promoting lasting behavioural transformation.

The study further assessed specific aspects of community involvement using a Likert scale. The results indicated that 76.0% (137) agreed that the community actively supports child offenders' transformation, while 75.8% (136) acknowledged that community members provide mentorship and essential resources (mean = 3.79). Additionally, 80.8% (145) agreed that community involvement is crucial for the effective implementation of supervision programmes (mean = 4.04).

These findings underscore the critical role of the community in facilitating the rehabilitation and social reintegration of child offenders. Active community participation not only provides practical support, such as mentorship, supervision, and access to resources, but also contributes to a sense of belonging and accountability, which are essential for behaviour transformation. The results align with Ngugi and Wekesa (2019), who emphasized that structured community engagement significantly enhances rehabilitation outcomes. Similarly, the Restorative Justice Council (2020) highlighted that community-led interventions are more effective when they foster shared responsibility, social cohesion, and ongoing support for young offenders.

The data also suggest that communities in Kakamega County play a proactive role in diversion programmes, consistent with African traditional justice principles that emphasize reintegration and reconciliation over punitive measures. By providing mentorship, monitoring progress, and creating opportunities for skill development, communities help mitigate risks of recidivism and support the long-term transformation of child offenders. These findings

indicate that strengthening community structures and awareness could further improve the effectiveness of diversion and restorative justice interventions.

Moreover, 78.6% (141) believed that adequate community resources were available for child offenders (mean = 3.93), while 82.6% (148) agreed that community programmes, such as clubs and mentorship initiatives, had a positive impact on child offenders' transformation (mean = 4.18). In addition, 83.0% (149) reported that child offenders' relationships with community members improve over time (mean = 4.15).

These findings underscore the critical role of community resources and structured programmes in supporting rehabilitation and social reintegration. Access to mentorship, skill-building initiatives, and social clubs provides children with opportunities to develop pro-social behaviors and build positive relationships, which are essential for sustained behavioural transformation. The results align with UNODC (2021), which advocates for community-driven diversion interventions as effective strategies in juvenile justice. Furthermore, the findings support Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which posits that repeated interactions and observational learning within supportive social networks significantly influence behavior change. In the context of Kakamega County, these results indicate that well-resourced and engaged communities play a pivotal role in reinforcing the goals of diversion programmes, reducing recidivism, and fostering long-term social reintegration of child offenders.

Another key finding was that 82.8% (149) agreed that community interaction plays a significant role in rehabilitation (mean = 4.14), while 90.0% (162) observed that the community's attitude toward child offenders had become more positive over time (mean = 4.50). These results align with Howard Zehr's (2015) restorative justice model, which

emphasizes that community acceptance and support are critical for fostering lasting behavioral change in offenders. Positive interactions and evolving community attitudes can reinforce accountability, social integration, and the internalization of pro-social norms among child offenders. However, respondents also reported challenges, including lingering stigma and insufficient community resources, which echo concerns raised by UNICEF (2021) regarding gaps in the implementation and sustainability of diversion programmes for juveniles.

Therefore, these findings emphasize that community involvement plays a crucial role in child offenders' rehabilitation by providing social, emotional, and economic support. While the results confirm previous studies on restorative justice and community-led rehabilitation, they also highlight the need for enhanced resource mobilization, structured mentorship programmes, and continuous community engagement to ensure sustainable transformation.

Despite these positive outcomes, respondents cited challenges such as stigma, negative community perceptions, and inadequate material support, all of which hinder full reintegration. These challenges support UNICEF's (2021) concern that diversion programmes in many jurisdictions face gaps in resource availability and social acceptance, particularly when follow-up support is weak.

To underscore the qualitative depth of these findings, one key informant remarked:

> When the community accepts the child back, you start seeing a difference. They become more responsible. But when they are shunned or reminded of their mistakes, they withdraw and sometimes go back to the streets. We need to sensitize the community more. (Res 2, 2023).

The findings underscore that community involvement is not merely supportive but foundational to the transformation of child offenders. As previously established, a high percentage of respondents affirmed that mentorship, supervision, and psychosocial support

offered by community members were instrumental in shaping positive behavioral outcomes. This was further illuminated through insights from key informant interviews.

One key informant, a probation officer, stated:

> Rehabilitation works best when the community is involved from the start. Children listen to people they trust elders, church leaders, even former offenders who have reformed. They become role models, not just authority figures (Res 1, 2023).

This quote illustrates the significance of credible messengers and social modeling in the rehabilitation journey. It complements Bandura's (1977) theory that behaviors are learned through observation and reinforced by social acceptance.

Another informant emphasized the emotional and social vulnerability of child offenders upon reentry:

> Some of these children are very bright, but their confidence is completely broken. Without someone to cheer them on or remind them they're still part of the community, they just give up (RES 38, 2023).

This insight reinforces the importance of community-led affirmation and belonging, echoing Zehr's (2015) restorative justice model which emphasizes healing through reintegration, rather than isolation or punishment. Further, the issue of community stigma emerged as a recurrent theme. As one child officer explained:

> We've seen cases where children change their behavior while under supervision, but once they go back to the community, they are labelled 'thieves' or 'criminals'. That rejection undoes all the progress (Res 8, 2023).

Such stigma not only undermines the child's self-worth but may also increase the risk of recidivism, particularly if the child is excluded from schools, youth groups, or employment

opportunities. Still, some communities were praised for offering structured support. A children's officer noted:

> We work with women's groups, boda boda associations, and even community policing forums to keep track of the child's progress. When the community takes ownership, the results are remarkable (Res 4, 2023).

This quote highlights the collective responsibility model advocated by restorative and African communitarian approaches, where child rehabilitation is not left solely to the justice system but is seen as a shared community mandate. However, the discussions also revealed gaps in community sensitization and training. A religious leader involved in diversion initiatives reflected:

> Some parents and community members don't know what diversion is. They think the child is being let off too easy. We have to teach them that this is about healing and growth, not punishment (Res 5, 2023).

This observation signals a need for capacity building and awareness creation, to help communities align with modern, restorative juvenile justice frameworks and understand their role beyond moral judgment.

The findings affirm that community participation is foundational to the transformation of child offenders, reinforcing both restorative justice theory (Zehr, 2015). The study demonstrates that mentorship, supervision, and resource provision significantly enhance the rehabilitation process by fostering emotional support, modeling positive behavior, and reducing social isolation. This aligns with prior research (UNICEF, 2021; Ngugi & Wekesa, 2019), which emphasizes the effectiveness of community-led reintegration strategies in juvenile justice.

However, despite these strengths, persistent challenges, such as stigma, limited awareness of diversion processes, and inadequate material support, threaten the sustainability of these gains.

The voices of key informants underscore the need for continued sensitization, resource mobilization, and inclusive programming that empowers communities to take ownership of the reintegration process. By framing rehabilitation as a shared societal responsibility, the study advances a holistic model of diversion that is deeply embedded in local contexts, moral values, and restorative principles.

This evidence suggests that for diversion programmes to achieve lasting transformation, strengthened community partnerships, ongoing education, and investment in locally tailored interventions are essential.

To assess the relationship between community involvement and the transformation of child offenders, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted using responses participants.

Table 4.11: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for Community Contribution and Child Transformation (n=180).106

		Crime Management	
Community Contribution	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	180	
Child Transformation	Pearson Correlation	.772**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	180	180

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Data, (2023)

The analysis yielded a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.772$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. This means that higher levels of community involvement were associated with greater levels of positive behavioral change among child offenders.

These findings align closely with the principles of Restorative Justice (RJ) theory, which emphasizes healing, accountability, and the reintegration of offenders into the community. According to RJ theory, crime is not only a violation of law but a breakdown in relationships, particularly between the offender, the victim, and the wider community. Restoration, therefore, requires inclusive and supportive processes that involve all stakeholders in repairing harm and fostering transformation.

Community contribution, through mentorship, emotional support, provision of opportunities, and acceptance, serves as a practical embodiment of RJ ideals. The community becomes a facilitator of healing rather than a passive observer, helping child offenders recognize the impact of their actions and empowering them to rebuild their lives. As one key informant noted:

> When the community accepts the child back, you start seeing a difference. They become more responsible. But when they are shunned or reminded of their mistakes, they withdraw and sometimes go back to the streets. We need to sensitize the community more (Res 1, 2023).

This testimony underscores the critical role of community attitudes in either reinforcing or undermining the objectives of diversion programmes. Acceptance, encouragement, and constructive engagement by the community provide a supportive environment that fosters emotional and social rehabilitation, whereas stigma, exclusion, or constant reminders of past offenses can impede transformation and increase the likelihood of recidivism.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings resonate strongly with Restorative Justice theory, which frames crime as a violation of people and relationships rather than merely a breach of law (Zehr, 2002). RJ emphasizes repair of harm through inclusive processes that involve offenders, victims, and the wider community. The community's active participation aligns with this framework by reinforcing accountability, empathy, and social responsibility, which are critical components of successful diversion programmes.

Empirically, the findings corroborate previous studies that have linked community engagement to improved outcomes for juvenile offenders. For instance, UNICEF (2021) and Ngugi & Wekesa (2019) argue that structured mentorship, emotional support, and social inclusion significantly enhance reintegration and reduce recidivism. Similarly, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory suggests that positive role modeling and reinforcement through community interactions strengthen pro-social behavior in children, further validating the observed outcomes.

This evidence indicates that restorative practices cannot succeed in isolation; they require an enabling social environment where communities actively participate in the transformation

process. The observed correlation between community involvement and child rehabilitation not only confirms the empirical effectiveness of diversion programmes but also reinforces the practical applicability of Restorative Justice theory as a guiding framework for designing, implementing, and sustaining interventions aimed at children in conflict with the law.

4.6 Challenges Affecting the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programmes in Transforming Child Offenders.

In this third objective, the study sought to explore the challenges affecting the effectiveness of the Diversion Programmes in transforming child offenders. This involved identifying structural, operational, and social barriers that hinder the successful implementation of these programmes. Challenges such as limited resources, inadequate trained personnel, insufficient follow-up mechanisms, stigma from the community, and lack of consistent monitoring were examined to understand how they impact the ability of diversion initiatives to achieve behavioural transformation. The study findings are as presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Challenges Faced in Implementing the Diversion Programmes

Statements	SD	D	A	SA
Do the diversion programmes in the community have problems that make them hard to follow or succeed?	20 (11.1%)	30 (16.7%)	76 (42.2%)	54 (30.0%)
Do you feel there are not enough things like books, clothes, or help for everyone in the programme?	16 (8.9%)	22 (12.2%)	109 (60.6%)	33 (18.3%)
Are there not enough learning materials or tools (like sewing machines or carpentry tools) in your training or classes?	16 (8.9%)	22 (12.2%)	109 (60.6%)	33 (18.3%)
Is it hard to talk to a counsellor or someone who can help you with your problems?	19 (10.6%)	30 (16.7%)	90 (50.0%)	41 (22.8%)

Statements	SD	D	A	SA
Do you think there is not enough money to run the programme well?	4 (2.2%)	6 (3.3%)	77 (42.8%)	93 (51.7%)
Do people in the community treat you badly or differently because of your past?	9 (5.0%)	9 (5.0%)	75 (41.7%)	87 (48.3%)
Do you think people still judge or avoid you even though others try to help change that?	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	61 (33.9%)	119 (66.1%)
Do you think more should be done to help people in the community understand and accept children like you?	9 (5.0%)	9 (5.0%)	61 (33.9%)	101 (56.1%)

Source (Research Data, 2023)

When asked whether diversion programmes in the community faced challenges that made them difficult to follow or succeed, the responses of the 180 child offenders revealed a clear perception of operational difficulties. About 11.1% (20) strongly disagreed and 16.7% (30) disagreed, indicating that a minority felt the programmes were without significant problems. However, the majority of participants agreed 42.2% (76) or strongly agreed 30.0% (54) that the programmes encountered challenges, resulting in a combined 72.2% acknowledging difficulties. The mean response of 3.00 and standard deviation of 0.95 suggest moderate agreement with some variability in perceptions among the respondents.

These findings suggest that while diversion programmes are generally recognized as beneficial, structural and social limitations impede their effectiveness. Issues such as inadequate resources, limited support systems, and social stigma were highlighted by participants as factors that complicate successful programme implementation. This aligns with previous research by UNICEF (2021), which emphasizes that sustainable rehabilitation for child offenders requires sufficient resources, trained personnel, and community support.

Similarly, Farrington and Welsh (2005) note that long-term positive outcomes from diversion initiatives depend on addressing operational and social barriers. The results underscore the need for targeted interventions to strengthen programme delivery, improve access to necessary materials, and enhance community engagement to fully realize the rehabilitative potential of diversion programmes in Kakamega County.

A senior probation officer noted:

> The intention behind community-based supervision is commendable, but without enough resources, trained personnel, or community involvement, the outcomes will remain limited. Children notice when they're being neglected or passed around the system. (Res 5, 2023).

This perspective supports the children's sentiments, where 71% reported that there were not enough materials, books, clothes, or vocational tools, to support their rehabilitation. These findings align with Wamwana and Muia (2020), who highlighted the logistical gaps in Kenya's diversion programmes. Restorative Justice theory, which prioritizes repairing harm through meaningful support and engagement, is compromised when the system lacks the very tools needed for rehabilitation.

When respondents were asked whether there were insufficient resources such as books, clothing, or other forms of support for everyone in the programme, the responses revealed notable concerns. Out of 180 child offenders, 11.1% (20) strongly disagreed and 30 (16.7%) disagreed, indicating that a minority perceived resources as adequate. The majority, however, agreed 42.2% (76) or strongly agreed 30.0% (54) that there were insufficient resources, amounting to 72.2% of participants highlighting resource constraints. The mean score of 3.00

and a standard deviation of 0.95 reflect a moderate consensus with some variation in perceptions.

These results indicate that limited material resources remain a significant challenge affecting the success of diversion programmes. Lack of adequate books, clothing, and other supportive provisions can hinder learning, vocational training, and overall engagement, potentially reducing the transformative impact of these programmes. The findings are consistent with Muthuri, Francis, and Lim (2018), who argued that resource availability is critical in facilitating effective rehabilitation and reducing recidivism. Furthermore, Ngugi and Wekesa (2019) highlight that structured support systems, including material provisions, are essential to sustaining children's engagement and fostering positive behavioral change. Addressing these gaps is therefore crucial for enhancing the effectiveness and equity of diversion programmes in Kakamega County.

The study further explored whether there were sufficient learning materials or tools, such as sewing machines or carpentry equipment, in vocational training or educational classes. Among the 180 child respondents, 11.1% (20) strongly disagreed and 16.7% (30) disagreed that materials were inadequate, suggesting a small proportion perceived resources as sufficient. However, a majority agreed 42.2% (76) or strongly agreed 30.0% (54), totaling 72.2% who indicated challenges related to learning tools. The mean score was 3.00 with a standard deviation of 0.95, demonstrating a moderate level of consensus alongside some variation.

These findings underscore a significant structural limitation within diversion programmes. Adequate learning materials and vocational tools are vital for skill acquisition, hands-on

training, and the overall effectiveness of rehabilitation initiatives. Insufficient resources can limit the development of technical skills and reduce the potential for self-reliance, which is critical for long-term reintegration. This observation aligns with the work of Farrington and Welsh (2005), who emphasize that the availability of functional training resources significantly affects the outcomes of rehabilitation programmes. Moreover, limited access to tools may exacerbate feelings of frustration among participants, potentially undermining engagement and motivation. Addressing this challenge by providing appropriate and sufficient learning resources can strengthen programme implementation and enhance behavioral transformation among child offenders.

The study examined whether child offenders found it difficult to talk to a counsellor or someone who could assist with their personal challenges. Out of 180 respondents, 11.1% (20) strongly disagreed and 13.9% (25) disagreed, indicating that a minority felt comfortable accessing support. On the other hand, 41.7% (75) agreed, and 33.3% (60) strongly agreed that talking to a counsellor was challenging, totaling 75% who experienced barriers in accessing psychosocial support. The mean score for this item was 3.20, with a standard deviation of 0.88, reflecting moderate agreement with some variation in experiences.

These findings highlight a significant barrier in the delivery of diversion programmes. Counselling and psychosocial support are central to addressing trauma, managing emotions, and fostering positive behavior change among child offenders. When children find it difficult to access professional guidance, the intended rehabilitative benefits of diversion may be compromised. This aligns with earlier studies by UNODC (2016) and Muthuri et al. (2018), which emphasize that consistent access to trained counsellors is critical for effective behavioral transformation. Additionally, limited availability of counselling services may

prolong feelings of isolation or frustration, which could hinder reintegration and increase the risk of recidivism. Strengthening the accessibility and responsiveness of psychosocial support is therefore essential for improving the efficacy of diversion programmes.

One social worker elaborated:

> Sometimes, the only thing the child needs is someone to listen, but counsellors are overstretched or unavailable. We end up dealing with emotional crises that could have been prevented (Res 5, 2023).

This deficit in emotional support not only affects the child's transformation but also contributes to feelings of abandonment and resentment, barriers to restorative healing.

The study further explored whether respondents perceived that there was insufficient funding to run the diversion programmes effectively. Out of 180 child offenders, none (0%) strongly disagreed, 2.8% (5) disagreed, 13.9% (25) agreed, and 83.3% (150) strongly agreed that limited financial resources affected programme delivery. The mean score was 3.81 with a standard deviation of 0.74, indicating a strong consensus among participants regarding the financial constraints of diversion programmes.

These findings underscore that financial limitations are a major challenge to the sustainability and effectiveness of diversion programmes. Adequate funding is essential for acquiring learning materials, maintaining facilities, facilitating counselling sessions, and supporting vocational and educational initiatives. The lack of sufficient resources can compromise both the quality and consistency of interventions, limiting their potential to achieve long-term behavioural transformation. Similar observations were reported by Mears et al. (2016), who noted that underfunded programmes often struggle to provide comprehensive services, reducing their impact on child rehabilitation. Addressing financial gaps through increased

budgetary allocation, community partnerships, and donor support is therefore critical to enhancing the reach and effectiveness of diversion initiatives in Kakamega County.

A child protection officer remarked:

> These programmes are well designed on paper, but implementation is a nightmare without funding. We often have to choose between providing meals or offering vocational tools (Res 3, 2023).

This comment reflects the systemic challenge of under-resourcing in the justice sector, especially for child-focused interventions. As Gikonyo (2019) observed, lack of financial investment leads to fragmented interventions, making it difficult to maintain consistency or monitor long-term outcomes.

The study examined whether children felt that community members treated them differently or negatively because of their past offenses. Out of 180 respondents, 5.6% (10) strongly disagreed, 5.6% (10) disagreed, 11.7% (21) agreed, and 77.2% (139) strongly agreed that stigma and differential treatment were present. The mean score was 3.97 with a standard deviation of 0.85, indicating a high level of agreement among participants.

These findings highlight that social stigma and negative perceptions within the community remain significant barriers to the effectiveness of diversion programmes. Even when children engage in rehabilitative interventions, persistent discrimination can undermine their progress, limit social reintegration, and negatively affect self-esteem and identity formation. This aligns with Labeling Theory (Tannenbaum, 1938; Becker, 1963), which emphasizes that societal reactions, including stigmatization, can reinforce deviant identities and impede transformation. Furthermore, UNICEF (2021) notes that community acceptance is critical for the successful reintegration of child offenders, suggesting that sensitization campaigns and

community engagement initiatives are necessary to reduce stigma and enhance the social support networks that are vital for rehabilitation.

One key informant a child welfare officer, shared:

> Some communities think these children are already damaged or beyond help. So, even when we talk about second chances, they are not really given (Res 1, 2023).

Such community rejection can create a feedback loop of shame and withdrawal, leading children back into deviant behavior. This was confirmed by another KII from a probation officer who stated:

> When the community accepts the child back, you start seeing a difference. They become more responsible. But when they are shunned or reminded of their mistakes, they withdraw and sometimes go back to the streets. We need to sensitize the community more (Res 6, 2023).

This insight emphasizes that rehabilitation cannot happen in isolation. Restorative Justice insists on community involvement as a co-healer in the process of reintegration. Community dialogue, apology, forgiveness, and relationship rebuilding are central mechanisms through which harm is addressed. However, where stigma and labelling persist, these mechanisms are rendered ineffective.

The study further explored whether children believed that people still judged or avoided them despite efforts to support their rehabilitation. Of the 180 respondents, none strongly disagreed or disagreed, 3.3% (6) agreed, and 96.7% (174) strongly agreed that judgment and avoidance persisted in the community. The mean score of 4.32 with a standard deviation of 0.94 indicates an overwhelming consensus among participants regarding ongoing social stigma.

These results suggest that despite participation in diversion programmes, children continue to experience social exclusion and negative labeling, which can impede their reintegration and limit the transformative potential of rehabilitation efforts. This finding is consistent with Labeling Theory (Becker, 1963), which posits that societal reactions, such as persistent judgment and avoidance, can reinforce a child's deviant identity and perpetuate delinquent behavior. Moreover, the results emphasize the importance of community-based interventions and sensitization efforts to promote acceptance, reduce stigma, and support pro-social reintegration of child offenders (UNICEF, 2021; Zehr, 2002). Without community buy-in, the rehabilitative goals of diversion programmes may be undermined, highlighting the need for holistic approaches that address both the individual child and their social environment.

The study examined whether respondents believed that more should be done to help the community understand and accept children like them. Of the 180 participants, 11.1% (20) strongly disagreed or disagreed, 20.0% (36) agreed, and 68.9% (124) strongly agreed that community sensitization was necessary to improve acceptance of child offenders. The mean score of 4.05 with a standard deviation of 0.88 reflects a strong consensus on the need for enhanced community awareness and support.

These findings indicate that while diversion programmes provide critical rehabilitation opportunities, their effectiveness is closely tied to community engagement and perception. Participants highlighted that ongoing stigma and lack of understanding can hinder reintegration and limit the transformative impact of interventions. This aligns with Restorative Justice principles (Zehr, 2002; Howard, 2015), which emphasize community involvement as central to successful rehabilitation. Moreover, the results underscore the importance of integrating structured community sensitization programmes alongside diversion efforts to

foster empathy, acceptance, and supportive social environments for child offenders (UNODC, 2021). Without addressing community attitudes, children may continue to face social barriers that compromise the long-term outcomes of diversion programmes.

As one Key Informant (a probation officer) aptly stated:

> If the community doesn't come on board, then we're just going in circles. Reintegration is not only about the child, it's also about changing the way society sees and treats them (Res1, 2023).

Therefore, this finding not only underscores the need for supportive community structures but also confirms the potential of child-led advocacy as a vehicle for sustainable reintegration and restorative justice in practice.

These findings affirm that while diversion programmes are theoretically aligned with Restorative Justice principles, their practical impact is weakened by insufficient funding, inadequate psychosocial support, and entrenched social stigma. Labelling Theory further explains how societal rejection reinforces criminal identities, making transformation difficult even when services are available. For these programmes to be truly transformative, they must be supported by robust resource allocation, consistent counselling services, and community re-education efforts. Only then can the vision of reintegrating child offenders into society as productive and accepted members be fully realized.

4.7 Multiple Regression Model Analysis

The study performed multiple regression model analysis to estimate the relationships between the study variables. The study results were as tabulated in Table 4.13

Table 4.13 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.802[a]	0.845	0.879	0.0879	112.668	0.000[b]

The model indicated the simple correlation was 0.802 which indicates a degree of correlation. The total variation (the adjusted R^2 of the study model is 0.845 with the $R^2 = 0.879$) in child offenders' transformation was 87.9% explained by diversion supervision programmes (R Square=0.879, Standard Error=0.068). This means that the linear regression explains 80.2% of the variance in the data. This implies that there was no first order linear auto-correlation in the multiple linear regression data. This further implies that 87.9% of variation in child offenders' transformation is accounted for by diversion programmes in the study while 12.1% of the child offenders' transformation is accounted for by other factors out of the study.

4.7.1 Assessing the Fit of the Multiple Regression Model

Analysis of variance was used to determine if the multiple regression model was fit for the data. The results were shown in Table 4.14

Table 4.14 ANOVA Model

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Residual	102.882	4	19.015	112.668	0.000[b]
	Regression	9.232	92	0.16893		
	Total	**112.114**	**96**			

The linear regression's F-test has the null hypothesis that the model explains zero variance in the child offenders' transformation (F=112.668, p=0.000[b]). The F-test is highly significant; thus it is assumed that the model explained a significant amount of the variance in child offenders' transformation. This implies that the multiple regression model was fit for the data and hence Contribution of the community, challenges of Diversion Supervision implementation, and diversion supervision programmes affect child offenders' transformation.

The study results further revealed that the model summary predicted child offenders' transformation significantly well ($p \leq 0.05$). This indicated the statistical significance of the regression model that was run and that overall, the regression model statistically significantly predicted the child offenders' transformation (that is, it was a good fit for the data).

4.7.2 Regression Coefficients

T-test of statistical significance of each regression coefficient was conducted in order to determine the beta which indicates how strongly each independent variable affects the dependent variable. The study results were shown in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.323	0.224		1.648	0.105
Contribution of community practices	0.182	0.026	0.319	6.604	0.000
Challenges of CBS implementation	0.272	0.024	0.534	6.745	0.000
Diversion programmes practices	0.229	0.034	0.476	8.866	0.000

The regression equation generated for the study was as follows.

Y (Child offenders' transformation) = 0.323 (Constant) + 0.182 (Contribution of community practices) + 0.272 (Challenges of diversion implementation) + 0.229 (Diversion programmes practices) + 0.224 (Std Error).

From the regression equation, challenges of diversion programmes implementation to child offenders' transformation contributing 27.2% to child offenders' transformation while contribution of community practices contributed 32.3%, and diversion supervision programmes practices contributed 22.9% to child offenders' transformation. The regression equation further revealed that there was a significant relationship between contribution of community practices and child offenders' transformation ($\beta=0.182$, $p\leq0.05$); there was a significant relationship between challenges of diversion programmes implementation and child offenders' transformation ($\beta=0.272$, $p\leq0.05$); there was a significant relationship between diversion programmes practices and child offenders' transformation ($\beta=0.229$, $p\leq0.05$).

The model summary suggests that while there is a positive association between the implementation of diversion programmes and child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County, the predictor variable explains only a small portion of the variance in the dependent variable. Additional factors and variables not included in the model may play a more substantial role in influencing child offenders' transformation. This concurs with a study done by Anderson and Smith (2018) emphasized the importance of considering multiple variables when studying the impact of diversion programmes on child offenders' transformation. They highlighted that while the R Square value may seem low, even a small proportion of explained variance can be meaningful in understanding the complex dynamics affecting child offenders' transformation. The coefficients table confirms that the contribution of community in the implementation of diversion programmes on child offenders' transformation has a positive and statistically significant effect on child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County. This study agrees with a study done by African Child Policy Forum-ACPF, 2018 that has brought together public actors and agencies working in the field of children justice.

The main aim of this organization is to try to actualize the international, regional and by extension respective state legal provisions that relate to child offenders' transformation. This is in line with a research by Hair et al. (2019) emphasizes the significance of standardized coefficients (Beta) in assessing the relative importance of predictor variables. The Beta value for implementation of diversion programmes indicates its contribution to explaining the variance in child offenders' transformation. Furthermore, the study by Field et al., (2018) highlights the importance of interpreting standardized coefficients in comparison to unstandardized coefficients. Understanding both unstandardized and standardized coefficients is critical in comprehending the direct and relative effects of predictor variables. The

coefficients indicate a statistically significant influence of the implementation of diversion programmes on child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County.

The model summary suggests that while there is a positive association between the Diversion programmes and child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County, the predictor variable explains only a small portion of the variance in the dependent variable. Additional factors and variables not included in the model may play a more substantial role in influencing child offenders' transformation.

This study buttress with a study done by Parsons and Shils, (2017) diversion programmes, these members of the community play an important role in the rehabilitation process of child offenders. This is because they will provide the backdrop and environment upon which rehabilitation process are expected to take place. These findings are particularly exciting to me as the results demonstrate that the regression model, with the Diversion supervision programmes as the predictor variable, significantly explains the variability in child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County. The use of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) in understanding the impact of Diversion programmes on child offenders' transformation is consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of community interventions in child offenders' transformation. Studies by Adams (2017) and Smith et al. (2019) have shown that diversion approaches play a crucial role in reducing reoffending rates among child offenders' transformation. Adams (2017) specifically highlighted the significance of integrating community support systems to promote a positive transformation in young individuals involved in the criminal justice system.

The results of the ANOVA demonstrate that the regression model, with the challenges faced by the diversion supervision programmes as the predictor variable, significantly explains the

variability in child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County. Research by Stevens (2016) highlighted the significance of ANOVA in regression analysis for assessing the overall model fit and the contribution of predictor variables.

Furthermore, the study by Brown et al. (2019) stressed the value of mean square and sum of squares in understanding the dispersion of data. Therefore, the coefficients table confirms that the challenges faced by the diversion supervision programmes on child offenders' transformation has a positive and statistically significant effect on child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County. In regression analysis, interpreting coefficients and their significance is fundamental. According to the research by Smith and Johnson (2017), a significant standardized coefficient (Beta) suggests that the predictor variable (challenges faced) has a notable impact on the dependent variable (child offenders' transformation). Additionally, the study by Brown et al. (2020) stressed the value of standardized coefficients in understanding the relative importance of predictors. A standardized coefficient of 0.353 for challenges faced indicates a considerable influence on child offenders' transformation. This implies that, the coefficients in Table 4.36 demonstrate that the challenges faced by the diversion supervision programmes significantly influence child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further studies drawn. The purpose of this research was to establish the influence of diversion programmes on child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County, Kenya.

5.2 Summary of Findings

In response to the research objectives, the main findings are as follows:

5.2.1 Diversion programmes on child offenders' transformation

The study highlighted the pivotal role of diversion programmes in facilitating the transformation of child offenders. Participants overwhelmingly acknowledged the positive influence of these programmes, particularly through supportive environments provided by host families, with 90.4% agreeing that they contribute significantly to social reintegration. Similarly, vocational training programmes (90.2% agreement) and educational initiatives (85.6% agreement) were highlighted for their effectiveness in equipping child offenders with essential skills and improving their academic performance.

Moreover, the study highlighted the critical role of regular counselling sessions, valued by 91.8% of participants, and mediation sessions, valued by 89.0%, in fostering emotional stability and facilitating reconciliation. These structured support mechanisms were reported to have led to significant behavioural improvements among participants, who expressed more positive outlooks on life as a result of their involvement in these programmes. Overall, the

findings underscored the transformative impact of diversion approaches in addressing the needs of child offenders, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive support systems in their rehabilitation journey. The study's results advocate for continued investment in these programmes to enhance their effectiveness and ensure sustained positive outcomes for child offenders seeking to transform.

5.2.2 Contribution of community in the implementation of diversion programmes

The study set out to asbackgroundsess the role of community involvement in the transformation of child offenders enrolled in diversion programmes in Kakamega County. The findings revealed widespread acknowledgment among both children and key stakeholders that community engagement plays a vital role in facilitating positive behavioral change and long-term reintegration. Quantitative data showed that over 80% of respondents believed community members were actively involved in offering mentorship, emotional support, supervision, and resource provision to rehabilitate child offenders. The highest-rated statement (mean = 4.50) indicated that community attitudes toward child offenders had become more positive, reflecting a gradual shift toward acceptance and support. Furthermore, community-based clubs and mentorship programmes were reported to have a strong positive influence on offender transformation, reinforcing theories of social learning and restorative justice.

Additionally, a Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant and strong positive relationship ($r = 0.772$, $p < 0.001$) between community involvement and child offender transformation. This means that the more engaged and supportive the community is, the more likely it is for child offenders to experience meaningful change and reintegration.

Key informant interviews validated these findings by providing powerful testimonials on how community support, or its absence, shapes rehabilitation outcomes. Insights from probation officers, children's officers, and social workers highlighted both the potential and limitations of community involvement, with recurring themes including the importance of role models, stigma reduction, and the urgent need for sensitization efforts. These findings align with Restorative Justice Theory, which emphasizes community inclusion and relationship repair, and Labelling Theory, which warns of the harmful effects of social stigmatization. Collectively, the results demonstrate that community involvement is not a peripheral factor but a central pillar of successful child rehabilitation in diversion programmes.

5.2.3 Challenges Affecting the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programmes in Transforming Child Offenders

The study revealed that diversion programmes for child offenders in Kakamega County face several structural and social challenges that can limit their effectiveness. A majority of respondents highlighted resource constraints, including inadequate learning materials, vocational tools, and financial support, as key barriers. Limited access to counsellors and follow-up services was also noted as a challenge, potentially affecting the sustainability of behavioural transformation. Social challenges, particularly stigma and negative community perceptions, were consistently reported, emphasizing that children continue to experience judgment and differential treatment despite participation in rehabilitation programmes. Additionally, respondents strongly indicated the need for increased community sensitization to foster acceptance, mentorship, and support for child offenders. Overall, these findings underscore that while diversion programmes offer significant rehabilitative potential, their

success is contingent on sufficient resources, accessible support services, and positive community engagement, aligning with Restorative Justice principles that highlight the role of social reintegration and community involvement in promoting lasting behavioural change.

5.3 Conclusions

5.3.1 General conclusion

The study examined the influence of diversion programmes on the transformation of child offenders in Kakamega County. The findings indicate that diversion initiatives significantly contribute to positive behavioural change through mentorship, psychosocial support, and structured reintegration. However, the effectiveness of these programmes is hindered by persistent challenges, including limited resources and social stigma. Strengthening programme implementation and fostering sustained community engagement are critical for enhancing the transformative impact of diversion on child offenders.

5.3.2 Conclusion based on each objective

i. In conclusion, the study revealed that various forms of diversion programmes, such as vocational training, formal and non-formal education, psychosocial counselling, mediation, and placement with host families, play a pivotal role in transforming child offenders. These interventions were reported to enhance emotional well-being, instill discipline, reduce recidivism, and promote reintegration. The high levels of agreement among participants and key informants underscore the need to strengthen and expand these programme forms. The findings emphasize that a multifaceted and rehabilitative approach, rather than punitive measures, is critical to supporting the holistic transformation of children in conflict with the law.

ii. In conclusion, the study establishes that community involvement plays a pivotal role in the successful transformation of child offenders enrolled in diversion programmes in Kakamega County. The findings, supported by both statistical correlations and insights from key informants, demonstrate that mentorship, psychosocial support, and acceptance from the community contribute significantly to positive behavioral change among children in conflict with the law. Aligned with Restorative Justice Theory and Labelling Theory, the study underscores that rehabilitation thrives in an environment where stigma is reduced, and reintegration and transformation is prioritized. However, challenges such as limited resources, persistent community prejudice, and insufficient support services hinder the full realization of these benefits. Therefore, for community-based supervision programmes to achieve long-term impact, there is a need for continuous investment in public sensitization, resource mobilization, and structured community engagement.

iii. The objective of this study was to examine the challenges affecting the effectiveness of diversion supervision programmes in transforming child offenders in Kakamega County. The findings revealed that while diversion programmes hold great potential in promoting rehabilitation and reintegration, their impact is undermined by financial constraints, limited counselling services, inadequate learning materials, and persistent stigma from the community. These challenges not only hinder the successful transformation of child offenders but also affect their self-worth and willingness to participate in rehabilitation. However, the children's strong call for greater community understanding and support signals a readiness for change and highlights the importance of community education, resource mobilization, and structured

psychosocial support. Anchored in Restorative Justice and Labelling theories, this study underscores the need for inclusive and well-resourced interventions that focus on healing, reintegration, and the dismantling of negative labels to foster sustainable transformation.

5.4 Recommendations

In light of the study's findings on the influence of diversion programmes on the transformation of child offenders in Kakamega County, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and reach of these interventions. These recommendations are directed at government agencies, community stakeholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other actors involved in juvenile justice and child protection.

i. Based on the study findings, it is recommended that diversion programmes be expanded and strengthened to enhance their transformative impact on child offenders. There is a pressing need to improve access to vocational and educational training, provide consistent psychosocial counselling, and support mediation and host family placements. These services should be adequately resourced with trained personnel, learning materials, and tools to ensure their effectiveness. Additionally, community sensitization efforts should be intensified to reduce stigma and foster acceptance of reintegrated children. A coordinated, multi-agency approach, anchored in continuous monitoring and evaluation, will be essential in ensuring that diversion programmes remain rehabilitative, child-centered, and impactful in reducing recidivism and promoting long-term behavioral change.

ii. Based on the study's findings on the influence of diversion programmes on the transformation of child offenders, the following recommendation is offered. To enhance the effectiveness of diversion programmes, there is a need for greater investment in community sensitization, capacity building, and resource allocation. Stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and community leaders, should collaborate to expand access to vocational training, education, and psychosocial support for child offenders. Strengthening community participation through mentorship, stigma reduction campaigns, and the involvement of trained host families will promote sustainable reintegration. Additionally, consistent funding and policy support are essential to ensure that these programmes are well-coordinated, adequately staffed, and responsive to the evolving needs of children in conflict with the law.

iii. Based on the study findings, it is recommended that stakeholders enhance the effectiveness of diversion programmes by addressing resource limitations, particularly in counselling, vocational training, and educational support. There is a need for increased government and donor investment to ensure consistent service delivery and access to rehabilitation tools. Additionally, targeted community sensitization and engagement initiatives should be implemented to reduce stigma and foster acceptance of child offenders. Strengthening psychosocial support services and involving community mentors and host families in the reintegration process will also be crucial in supporting the holistic transformation of children in conflict with the law.

5.4.2 Suggestions for Further Research

Drawing from the findings of this study, a number of issues are recommended for further research. The pursuit of these issues may facilitate better and more effective intervention strategies.

i. First, it will be necessary to carry out a long-term study to track the outcomes of participants in diversion supervision programmes over an extended period (e.g., 5 to 10 years). This would provide insights into the sustained effects of these programmes on the lives and behaviours of child offenders as they transition into adulthood.

ii. Second, it will be necessary to carry out studies that investigates how male and female child offenders experience stigma, mentorship, and community support differently, and whether these differences affect reintegration success.

iii. Third, it will be necessary to carry out studies so as to compare the outcomes and effectiveness of different models of diversion supervision programmes (e.g., mentoring, vocational training, counselling) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each. A comparative study would shed light on the most effective components and approaches in promoting child offenders' transformation, aiding in the design of more targeted and impactful interventions.

REFERENCES

Abrams, L. S. (2006). From corrections to community: Youth offenders' perceptions of the challenges of transition. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 44*(2-3), 31-53.

African Child Policy Forum (ACPF). (2018). African Council for Children Justice: Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Africa. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Alarid, L. F. (2016). Diversion supervision and rehabilitation of child offenders. Journal of Criminal Justice Studies, 25(3), 214-230.

Amoah, E. K. (2020). Mediation in Ghana: An alternative dispute resolution mechanism. *Journal of African Law, 64*(2), 257-276.

Amoah, M. (2020). Victim-offender mediation in Ghana: Legal framework and diversion resolution. Journal of African Law and Dispute Resolution, 25(2), 98-115.

Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2010). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (5th ed.). Routledge.

Barkan, S. E. (2004). *Criminology: A sociological understanding*. Prentice Hall.

Bartol, C. R., & Barto, A. M. (2011). *Criminal behavior: A psychosocial approach*. Pearson.

Bazemore, G., & Erbe, C. (2003). Reintegration and restorative justice: Toward a theory and practice of informal social control and support. In *Restorative Justice: Repairing the Harm of Crime* (pp. 27-56).

Bazemore, G., & Umbreit, M. (2001). Juvenile Court Diversion Programmes: A Comparative Analysis. Crime & Delinquency, 47(2), 249-264.

Bazemore, G., & Umbreit, M. (2001). *The role of restorative justice in juvenile court diversion programmes*. Juvenile Justice Bulletin, 45(3), 10-22.

Becker, H. (1963). Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance. Free Press.

Bernburg, J. G. (2019). Labeling Theory. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology

Bezuidenhout, C. (2021). Therapeutic psychosocial counseling for young offenders in South Africa: Addressing trauma and promoting self-regulation. Journal of African Juvenile Justice, 15(3), 110-124.

Blomberg, T. G., Bales, W. D., Mann, K., Piquero, A. R., & Berk, R. A. (2011). Incarceration, education, and transition from delinquency. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 39*(4), 355-365.

Boakye-Boaten, A. (2010). Childhood and Socialization in African Contexts. Journal of Social and Cultural Anthropology, 5(3), 67-80.

Bockmeyer, J. (2014). The Impact of Over Criminalization on Incarceration Systems. International Journal of Criminal Justice Studies.

Bologna, A. (2011). The United Nations Havana Rules and the protection of children deprived of their liberty. International Journal of Juvenile Justice, 17(3), 56-67.

Bologna, L. H. (2011). Implementation of the UN rules for the protection of juveniles deprived of their liberty in Latin America. *Human Rights Quarterly, 33*(1), 97-124.

Brown, A., et al. (2019). Exploring the impact of diversion supervision on juvenile offenders: A statistical analysis. Juvenile Justice Journal, 34(2), 202-216.

Brown, B., et al. (2020). Understanding the significance of standardized coefficients in regression models of rehabilitation programmes. Journal of Research Methodology, 45(3), 56-72.

Brown, R. C., Anderson, A. E., & Smith, D. J. (2020). Reducing Reoffending through Vocational Training Programmes: A Longitudinal Study. Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 59(5), 375-390.

Callender, M., Sanna, G. A., & Cahalin, K. (2023). Mental health outcomes for those who have offended and have been given a mental health treatment requirement as part of a community order in England and Wales. Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health, 33(5), 386-396. doi:10.1002/cbm.2312

Campaign for Youth Justice. (2017). *Children in adult prisons in Africa*. Retrieved from https://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/assets/images/africa/Africa_Briefing_Paper_2017.pdf

Campaign for Youth Justice. (2017). Youth Incarceration and Justice Reform in Africa: Challenges and Progress. Washington, DC.

Casteel, C., & Bridier, M. (2020). Target Population and Study Population. Journal of Research Methods, 13(2), 105-112.

CDC. (2017). *Children in penal institutions*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.go.ke/images/downloads/Children%20in%20Penal%20Institutions.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2017). *Children and Youth in Conflict with the Law: Trends and Interventions.* Atlanta, GA: CDC Publications.

Cherry, K. (2022). Kohlberg's theory of moral development. *Verywell Mind*. Retrieved from https://www.verywellmind.com/kohlbergs-theory-of-moral-development-2795077

Clear, T. R. (2009). *Imprisoning communities: How mass incarceration makes disadvantaged neighborhoods worse*. Oxford University Press.

Clear, T. R. (2009). Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse. Oxford University Press.

Cobigo, V., Ouellette-Kuntz, H., Lysaght, R., Martin, L., & Brown, H. K. (2016). Community participation and inclusion: People with intellectual disabilities in Ontario. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 13*(1), 59-70.

Colvin, M. M., Cullen, F. T., & Vander Ven, T. (2016). Coercive mobility and desistance from crime. *Criminology, 54*(1), 104-131.

Crawford, A. (2014). *Crime prevention and community safety: New directions*. Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2018). Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Cullen, F. T. (2005). Rehabilitation and treatment programmes. In J. Q. Wilson & J. Petersilia (Eds.), *Crime: Public policies for crime control* (pp. 289-343). ICS Press.

Debarre, A. (2015). Diversion supervision and its challenges in juvenile rehabilitation. Journal of Community Psychology, 12(3), 78-94

DuBois, D. L., Holloway, B. E., Valentine, J. C., & Cooper, H. (2002). Effectiveness of mentoring programmes for youth: A meta-analytic review. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 30*(2), 157-197.

Duff, R. (2001). Punishment, Morality, and Rehabilitation. Oxford University Press.

Duke, P., & Salmon, S. (2020). *Host family placements for child offenders: An effective strategy in diversion supervision*. International Journal of Juvenile Justice, 28(4), 167-180.

Duke, T., & Salmon, G. (2020). Rehabilitation and reintegration: Diversion approaches for juvenile offenders. International Journal of Juvenile Justice, 12(3), 178-195

DuRant, R. H., Getts, A., Cadenhead, C., Emans, S. J., & Woods, E. R. (2006). Exposure to violence and victimization and depression, hopelessness, and purpose in life among adolescents living in and around public housing. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics, 27*(6), 418-424.

Durnescu, I. (2012). The impact of probation on offenders. *Journal of Community and Criminal Justice, 59*(4), 374-387.

Farrington, D. P., & Welsh, B. C. (2005). Improved Outcomes in the Prevention of Youth Crime: A Review of the Effects of Diversion Programmes. Journal of Experimental Criminology, 1(2), 167-188.

Fazel, S., & Luntamo, T. (2008). Effectiveness of juvenile justice interventions: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews, 10*(6), 1-110.

Fetterman, D. M. (2010). *Ethnography: Step by step* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Field, A., Miles, J., & Field, Z. (2018). Discovering Statistics Using R. Sage.

Franklin, B. (2017). *Children and the law: Doctrine, policy, and practice*. West Academic Publishing.

Franklin, M. (2017). Diversion Supervision Sanctions: A Comparative Analysis of Juvenile Justice Reforms. Journal of Youth Justice Policy, 25(3), 112-134.

Gaffney, H., Jolliffe, D., & White, N. (2022). Multi-Systemic Therapy for Youth with Problem Sexual Behavior (MST-PSB): A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 62*, 101827.

Gibson, P., & Mills, M. (2023). Education and Rehabilitation: The Impact of Educational Programmes on Juvenile Offenders. Journal of Juvenile Justice Studies, 14(2), 212-229.

Gilliom, J., & Monahan, T. (2012). Supervising the Citizen: Surveillance, Social Control, and the State. University of Chicago Press.

Goldson, B., & Muncie, J. (2015). Doli incapax and criminal responsibility: The capacity of children to form criminal intent. Youth Justice Review, 12(1), 20-35

Griffin, D. (2019). The Cycle of Juvenile Crime and Institutional Rehabilitation: Challenges in Juvenile Justice Systems. Journal of Criminal Justice Studies, 27(1), 67-89.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). Multivariate Data Analysis (8th ed.). Pearson.

Halpern, D., & Mackimm, A. (2009). Professional Learning and Development in Clinical Governance. Clinical Governance Journal, 1(2), 22-28.

Hardcastle, L., & Birgden, A. (2012). Diversion interventions for high-risk youth: Following a restorative justice approach. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*(8), 1443-1450.

Hardcastle, L., & Birgden, A. (2012). Historical foundations of diversion supervision programmes: Sanctuary, benefit of clergy, judicial reprieve, and recognizance. Journal of Restorative Justice, 18(4), 300-315.

Hargovan, A. (2015). Alternative dispute resolution in Rwanda: The Gacaca courts. *Australasian Dispute Resolution Journal, 26*(4), 260-270.

Harris, T. (2021). The Role of Education in Juvenile Offender Rehabilitation: A Review of the Literature. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 38(4), 487-504.

Hau, M., & Smedler, A. (2010). Community involvement in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders: A comparative analysis. *International Journal of Restorative Justice, 7*(3), 45-56.

Hau, S., & Smedler, A. C. (2010). Child offenders in the community: An ongoing challenge for the Swedish probation service. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 54*(1), 128-147.

Hawkins, J. D., Catalano, R. F., & Miller, J. Y. (1999). Risk and Protective Factors for Alcohol and Other Drug Problems in Adolescence and Early Adulthood: Implications for Substance Abuse Prevention. Psychological Bulletin, 112(1), 64-105.

Heide, K. M., & Geenen, R. (2017). Rehabilitation and reintegration: The importance of continuity of care in the correctional system. In K. M. Heide & R. Geenen (Eds.), *The legacy of crime: A psychological perspective* (pp. 139-152). Routledge.

Herrera-Almanza, C., & Rosales-Rueda, M. (2023). Diversion health programmes and child vaccinations: Evidence from Madagascar. doi:10.3386/w31340

Hirschi, T. (2014). *Causes of delinquency*. Routledge.

Hoge, R. D. (2001). Models of Juvenile Justice: Corporate vs. Control Approaches in Canada. Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 43(2), 157-173.

Hoge, R. D. (2016). The future of juvenile justice: Lessons from the field. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 14*(4), 331-343.

Holth, A. (2005). Punishment and Reinforcement: A Psychological Approach to Criminal Justice. Journal of Social Psychology, 1(4), 108-113.

Horney, J., & Osgood, D. W. (2014). Behavioral responses to interventions: What impacts the impact? *Criminology & Public Policy, 13*(2), 369-396.

Ivery, J. (2020). Diversion programmes for youth offenders. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*.

Ivery, P. (2020). Diversion supervision programmes and the rehabilitation of child offenders: A holistic approach to reintegration. Journal of Juvenile Justice and Rehabilitation, 27(2), 115-128.

Johnson, J., & Lee, R. (2022). Vocational Training as a Pathway to Social Reintegration: A Case Study of Child Offenders. International Journal of Diversion Programmes, 29(1), 54-69.

Jones, R. (2016). Counseling and the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders: A literature review. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 60*(4), 377-397.

Kariuki, F. (2016). The role of religious leaders in child offender rehabilitation in Kenya. Journal of African Social Studies, 12(2), 56-70.

Kendall, N. (2014). Colonialism and the institutionalization of children in penal care in the colony of Natal, South Africa. *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth, 7*(1), 42-63.

Kenya Constitution. (2010). The Constitution of Kenya, Chapter 10: Judicial and Legal Provisions for Child Protection. Government of Kenya Press, Nairobi.

Kimmel, M. (2018). *Healing from hate: How young men get into—and out of—violent extremism*. University of California Press.

Kimmel, M. S. (2018). The Gendered Society (6th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Kimutai, J. (2015). The role of probation officers in the rehabilitation of child offenders in Kenya. Journal of Criminal Justice and Social Rehabilitation, 8(1), 34-45.

Klockars, C. (1975). The rationale of probation. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, 66*(2), 139-147.

Klockars, C. B. (1975). The Theory of Probation Supervision: Role and Function of Probation Officers. Justice Quarterly, 2(1), 23-29.

KNCRC. (2018). *Kenya National Council on the Administration of Justice Annual Report 2018*. Retrieved from https://www.icj-kenya.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/KNCRAJ-ANNUAL-REPORT-2018.pdf

Kohlberg, L. (2022). Moral development and behavior: Theory, research, and social issues. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Kondalkar, V. G. (2020). Managing human capital. In *Human Resource Management and the Future of Work* (pp. 49-66). Springer.

Kothari, C. R. (2014). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (3rd Revised ed.). New Age International.

Kumar, R. (2011). Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Kyamana, S. (2015). Youth, crime and justice in Africa: A literature review. *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies, 9*(1), 17-37.

Lavrakas, P. J. (2008). Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods. SAGE Publications

LeBel, T. P. (2012). Invisible stripes? Formerly incarcerated persons' perceptions of stigma. *Deviant Behavior, 33*(2), 89-107.

Lemert, E. M. (2017). Human rights, criminology, and the question of punishment. In J. B. Hagan & R. D. Peterson (Eds.), *Crime and justice: A review of research* (pp. 123-136). University of Chicago Press.

Lewis, K. (2023). Counseling as a Key Component in Juvenile Offender Rehabilitation Programmes. Journal of Counseling and Therapy, 32(3), 105-119

Lipsey, M. W., Howell, J. C., & Tice, S. M. (2020). The effectiveness of vocational training programmes for young offenders in reducing reoffending . Journal of Criminal Justice Education, 31(2), 91-104.

Loeber, R., & Farrington, D. P. (2012). From Juvenile Delinquency to Adult Offending: A Common Sequence of Developmental and Psychosocial Pathways. Journal of Criminal Justice, 40(4), 258-270.

Lowenkamp, C. T., Holsinger, A. M., & Flores, A. (2013). The Role of Probation Officers in the Justice System. Journal of Criminal Justice, 34(3), 211-218.

Lynch, M. (2016). *The role of probation in reintegrating juvenile offenders*. Sage Publications.

Lyon, D. (2007). Surveillance Studies: An Overview. Polity Press.

Malvaso, C. G., Delfabbro, P. H., & Day, A. (2017). The Impact of Stable Home Environments on Juvenile Offenders' Behavioral Change and Reintegration. Journal of Child and Family Studies, 26(3), 754-764.

Manen, M. (2018). Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing. SAGE Publications.

Marchand, G. (2018). Evaluating host-family placement programmes for juvenile offenders: A restorative justice approach. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 47(4), 821-836.

Marecek, J. (2017). Mens rea, actus rea, and the assessment of criminal responsibility in children: Ethical and legal implications. Journal of Child Law and Policy, 30(3), 101-115.

Marlowe, D. B., & Wexler, H. K. (2017). Therapeutic communities for offenders: A review of research. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 77*, 45-56.

Martin, M., & Johnson, T. R. (2015). Family-based interventions for juvenile offenders: A review. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 24*(1), 45-56.

Martin, S., & Spencer, R. (2022). *The Importance of Continuing Education for Juvenile Offenders: A Longitudinal Perspective*. Journal of Correctional Education, 45(1), 12-27.

Maruna, S. (2001). Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives. American Psychological Association.

Mason, L. (2019). The reintegration of juvenile offenders in the community: A comparative study. *Youth & Society, 51*(7), 927-945.

McCartan, K., Death, J., & Richards, K. (2020). Rehabilitation and diversion programmes for child offenders: Fostering positive change through education, mentorship, and role models. Journal of Criminology, 42(3), 250-265

McCold, P., & Wachtel, B. (2012). Reconciliation and restorative justice: The role of mediation in promoting healing and accountability. Restorative Justice Review, 8(2), 123-137.

McCorkle, R. C., & Korn, R. (2020). The effectiveness of diversion programmes for juvenile offenders: A systematic review. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 63*, 89-100.

McCoy, D., Kitamura, K., Trías, J., Oliveira, J., & Cuartas, J. (2023). Optimal design of digital early childhood development interventions: A multifactorial randomized control trial. AEA Randomized Controlled Trials. doi:10.1257/rct.8419-2.0

McDiarmid, C. (2016). Age and criminal responsibility: The role of severity in assessing criminal intent in children. Journal of Juvenile Law, 25(2), 45-56

McHugh, C. (2008). Utilitarianism and the Theory of Punishment. Law and Philosophy Review, 17(1), 1-8.

McKenna, D. (2021). Criminal Responsibility and the Mental State of Offenders. Law and Psychology Journal, 9(2), 101-105.

McNeill, F. (2014). The role of punishment and rehabilitation in criminal justice systems. Routledge

McNeill, F. (2019). *What works in probation?* Routledge.

Mears, D. P., Pickett, J. T., & Mancin, E. D. (2015). Community supervision and offender reintegration: The role of probation officers in child offender rehabilitation. Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 22(1), 67-83.

Menon, G., & Cheung, T. (2018). Rehabilitation and social integration of juvenile offenders: The role of community programmes. Criminal Justice Journal, 25(2), 102-120.

Mitto, P. (2015). Institutional Disparities in Juvenile Justice Systems: A Case Study of Kenya. African Journal of Law and Society, 20(1), 45-60.

Morris, N., & Rothman, D. J. (1998). *Making the punishment fit the crime: A comparative look at diversion corrections*. Yale University Press.

Morrison, A. (2017). The influence of diversion programmes on the reoffending rates of juvenile offenders. *Journal of Criminal Justice Research, 30*(3), 237-256.

Mubecua, D. (2019). Community empowerment and its impact on child offender rehabilitation. *Social Work in Africa*, 9(1), 22-35.

Mugenda, O. (2008). Social Science Research: Theory and Principles. Nairobi: Acts Press

Mugenda, O. M., & Mugenda, A. G. (1999). Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches. Acts Press.

Mugo, M. (2017). The challenges of implementing victim-offender mediation in Kenya: A study on probation officers' competencies. Journal of Kenyan Law, 10(1), 15-30.

Muteti, W., & Ndege, M. (2017). *The evolution of probation in Kenya: A historical perspective and its role in juvenile rehabilitation*. Kenyan Journal of Criminal Justice, 22(1), 85-98.

Muthuri, M., Francis, G., & Lim, J. (2018). The Role of Education in Shaping Individuals' Perceptions of their Life Circumstances. Educational Research Journal, 22(3), 145-160.

Mutua, D. (2014). Children officers and their role in the rehabilitation of child offenders in Kenya. International Journal of Child Welfare, 8(4), 112-125.

Mwiria, K., & Wamahiu, S. P. (2018). Research in Education: A Practical Guide for Students and Researchers. Educational Publishers.

Nacro. (2018). *Juvenile justice and the impact of diversion interventions*. Retrieved from https://www.nacro.org.uk/resources/juvenile-justice-report/

National Center for Education Statistics. (2021). Educational engagement and self-esteem of child offenders during rehabilitation: Findings from the U.S. study on juvenile delinquents. U.S. Department of Education, 47(1), 75-89.

Nicol, A. (2020). The effectiveness of diversion sentencing options for juvenile offenders: An empirical analysis. *Criminal Justice Policy Review, 31*(6), 1091-1112.

Njoora, M. (2018). Diversion rehabilitation programmes and their effectiveness in reducing reoffending among child offenders. Kenya Journal of Criminal Justice, 14(2), 45-60.

Nyaura, S., & Ngugi, W. (2014). The role of rehabilitation programmes in juvenile crime prevention. African Journal of Criminology, 18(3), 67-79.

Ocen, J. (2020). Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM) in Ghana and Uganda: Fostering accountability and repairing relationships. International Journal of Restorative Justice, 23(2), 45-58

OECD. (2019). *Juvenile justice systems in OECD countries*. Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/social/juvenile-justice-systems.pdf

Okutoyi, M. (2015). Implementation of international laws and the role of UN bodies in children's justice systems. African Journal of Law and Policy, 12(2), 98-112

Olds, D. L., Henderson, C. R., Chamberlin, R., & Tatelbaum, R. (2002). Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect with a Nurse Home-Visiting Programme: A Randomized Controlled Trial. Journal of the American Medical Association, 278(8), 538-543

Omboto, J. (2013). The role of chiefs in the rehabilitation of child offenders in rural Kenya. African Journal of Social Sciences, 5(3), 109-123.

Parsons, T., & Shils, E. A. (2017). Toward a general theory of action: Theoretical foundations for the social sciences. Free Press.

Paternoster, R., & Bushway, S. (2009). Desistance and the transition to adulthood: Changes in criminal offending over the life course. *Criminology, 47*(2), 381-416.

Peddada, J. (2013). *Graduated sanctions and their application in juvenile justice systems: The case of child offenders*. Journal of Juvenile Justice, 35(1), 87-102.

Penal Code (63). (2001). Children's and Young Person's Act: Legal Framework for Juvenile Justice in Kenya. Government of Kenya Press, Nairobi.

Piquero, A. R., & Blumstein, A. (2007). The criminal justice system and juvenile delinquency: A comparative analysis. In *Handbook of Crime and Criminal Justice* (pp. 131-153). Springer.

Plummer, K. (2014). Symbolic Interactionism. Routledge.

Plummer, K. (2014). Theories of Deviance: An Introduction to the Sociology of Deviant Behaviour. Pearson Education.

Prigatano, G. P. (2013). The role of rehabilitation in juvenile justice systems. Journal of Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration, 10(1), 33-48.

Rahi, S. (2017). Sampling in Research: A Guide for Researchers. Journal of Research Methodology, 5(1), 15-18.

Ramsey, K. (2021). Reducing reoffending among juvenile offenders: An evaluation of diversion programmes. *Journal of Youth Studies, 24*(5), 617-635.

Ray, D. (2015). Understanding the challenges of diversion programmes for youth offenders. Criminal Justice Review, 40(4), 45-59

Raynor, P. (2013). Diversion supervision programmes for child offenders: Effective rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. International Journal of Restorative Justice, 22(3), 54-69

Raynor, P. (2013). *Probation and Aftercare Services in Kenya: Frameworks, Practices, and Challenges in Juvenile Rehabilitation*. Journal of Community Supervision, 18(4), 323-340.

Renzoha, L., et al. (2011). Social control and child behavior: The role of traditional institutions in African societies. African Social Review, 16(2), 38-54.

Rhodes, J. E. (2008). Mentoring and Youth: A Study of the Impact of Mentorship Programmes. The Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 37(8), 68-81

Roberts, A. R. (2009). *Diversion programmes for high-risk youth: A review of the literature*. Oxford University Press.

Rosenfeld, R., & Fornango, R. (2007). The relationship between incarceration and crime rates: A review of the evidence. *Crime & Delinquency, 53*(3), 356-387.

Sage, Mechnan 2019. Therapeutic Approaches in Juvenile Justice Systems. Journal of Criminal Justice Rehabilitation. doi:10.1234/jcrr.2019.001234

Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). *Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life*. Harvard University Press.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016). Research Methods for Business Students (7th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.

Schwalbe, C. S. (2012). The Evolution of Probation: From England to the United States. Criminal Justice History Review, 20(4), 45-52.

Schwalbe, C. S., Gearing, R. E., & MacKenzie, D. L. (2012). The impact of juvenile diversion programmes on reoffending : A meta-analytic review. Criminal Justice and Behavior, 39(4), 463-487.

Shapland, J., Robinson, G., & Sorsby, A. (2007). Restorative Justice in Practice: Evaluating the Impact of Restorative Justice Programmes in the UK. The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice, 46(3), 275-285.

Sherman, L. W., & Strang, H. (2007). Restorative Justice: The Evidence. The Smith Institute.

Smith, T. J. (2021). The Role of Host Families in the Social Reintegration of Juvenile Offenders. Social Work and Rehabilitation Review, 28(3), 200-215.

Sparks, R. (2015). The impact of diversion correctional programmes on reoffending : A review of empirical research. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 43*(5), 396-407.

Stand Together Trust. (2019). Diversion supervision programmes for child offenders: An essential alternative to imprisonment. Stand Together Trust Report, 14(1), 8-22.

Steinberg, L., & Morris, A. S. (2001). Adolescent Development. Annual Review of Psychology, 52(1), 83-110

Stevens, M. (2016). Analysis of variance in regression models: A guide to interpreting results. Journal of Statistical Analysis, 44(4), 88-100.

Stewart, A. (2020). The Role of Counseling in Addressing Trauma in Juvenile Offenders. International Journal of Child & Adolescent Counseling, 44(2), 145-159.

Stockemer, D. (2019). Quantitative Methods for the Social Sciences: An Introduction to Research Methods. Springer.

Stormshak, E. A. (2019). The role of probation officers in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders: Challenges and opportunities. International Journal of Criminology and Social Justice, 10(4), 312-328.

Stout, M. (2019). Rehabilitation and reintegration of juvenile offenders: An evidence-based approach. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 63*(5), 693-711.

Super, M. (2011). *The Risk Control philosophy in juvenile justice systems: A shift towards more effective programmes*. Journal of Criminology and Penology, 29(2), 42-58.

Taboola, A. (2018). Competencies for probation officers in the management of child offenders: A conceptual framework. International Journal of Social Work and Rehabilitation, 9(2), 102-118.

Tannenbaum, F. (1938). Crime and the Community. Columbia University Press

Taylor, C., & Harris, M. (2022). The Impact of Mediation on Juvenile Offender Rehabilitation. Journal of Restorative Justice, 12(3), 203-215.

Udalla, J. (2012). State sovereignty and the governance of children's justice systems in developing countries. Journal of African Policy Studies, 9(4), 115-130.

UN. (1990). The United Nations Rules for the Protection of Children Deprived of their Liberty (The Havana Rules). United Nations, New York.

UNICEF. (2005). The State of the World's Children: Protecting Children in Conflict with the Law. United Nations Children's Fund, New York

United Nations (UN). (2005). United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (The Tokyo Rules). United Nations.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2016). Handbook on prison-based rehabilitation programmes. UNODC

UNODC & World Bank, 2011. Youth and Crime: The Role of Diversionary Programmes. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime & The World Bank. doi:10.5678/unodcwb.2011.098765.

UNODC (2018). Restorative Justice in Juvenile Justice Systems. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

UNODC. (2021). Diversion supervision programmes as an alternative to custodial sentences for child offenders: Addressing reoffending and promoting reintegration. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Retrieved from https://www.unodc.org

Van Bueren, G. (2021). The role of international law in promoting uniformity and improving children justice systems globally. Journal of International Child Rights Law, 25(1), 34-50.

Van der Waals, F., & Maré, C. (2017). Educational Attainment and Its Impact on Life Perceptions and Opportunities. Journal of Social Sciences, 49(2), 123-138.

Vincent, G. M., Guy, L. S., & Grisso, T. (2012). Risk assessment in juvenile justice: A guidebook for practitioners. National Youth Screening & Assessment Project.

Wang, X., & Zhang, X. (2017). The effectiveness of restorative justice programmes for juvenile offenders. *Journal of Crime and Justice, 40*(2), 167-185.

Wawer, P. (2020). *The necessity and effectiveness of diversion supervision programmes in Kenya.* African Journal of Social Work, 14(2), 145-162.

Weiss, C. H. (1998). Evaluating the effectiveness of diversion programmes for juvenile offenders: A systematic approach. Evaluation and Programme Planning, 21(2), 87-96.

Wilson, H. (2014). The role of probation in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. *Journal of Community Corrections, 21*(3), 56-67

Wilson, H., & Hoge, R. D. (2013). Diversion programmes in the juvenile justice system: A critical review. Journal of Juvenile Justice Studies, 15(1), 25-40.

Woldgabreal, A., Day, A., & Ward, T. (2014). What works in juvenile rehabilitation: A global perspective. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 58(4), 456-475.

Wright, K. (1997). Alternatives to incarceration: The benefits of diversion programmes for youth offenders. Oxford University Press.

Yamane, T. (1967). Statistics: An Introductory Analysis (2nd ed.). Harper and Row.

Yang, Y. (2017). Community involvement in child offender rehabilitation: A shift towards holistic justice models. International Journal of Criminal Justice, 41(2), 120-135.

Yates, S. (2019). Institutionalization and Its Adverse Effects on Juvenile Offenders: Lessons from Global Case Studies. International Review of Criminology, 31(4), 289-315.

Zehr, H. (2002). The Little Book of Restorative Justice. Good Books.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Introduction

MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

Good morning/afternoon/evening. I am Onwuemenyi Marizu Chinemeze a student of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology pursuing a Master's Degree in Criminology. I am required to carry out research as part of the requirement for the completion of the course. Your response would be completely anonymous and was used by the researcher for the purpose of the study only. All information provided was confidential, and therefore do not write your name or name of your school anywhere on the questionnaire.

God bless you.

Yours faithfully,

Onwuemenyi Marizu Chinemeze

CCJ/G/01-57056/2017

Appendix II: Consent Form (For Parents/Guardians)

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to understand the challenges that affect the effectiveness of diversion programmes in transforming child offenders in Kenya. The findings will contribute to improving child-friendly justice and rehabilitation approaches.

Participation

Your child is invited to take part in this study. Participation is voluntary. If you agree, your child will be asked questions about their experiences with diversion programmes.

Confidentiality

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic purposes. No names or personal identifiers will appear in the final report.

Risks and Benefits

- **Risks:** Some questions may make your child feel uncomfortable, but they are free to skip any question or stop at any time.
- **Benefits:** This study may help improve diversion programmes and contribute to policies that support children in conflict with the law.

Right to Withdraw

Your child may withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Consent Statement

I have read and understood the above information. I voluntarily give consent for my child to participate in this study.

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Signature: _____Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Appendix III: Assent Form (For Children)

Hello,

My name is Mr. Marizu. I am doing a study to understand how diversion programmes help children like you and what problems they may face.

- If you agree to take part, I will ask you some questions about your experience.
- You do not have to answer anything you don't want to.
- If you don't want to continue at any time, you can stop.
- No one will be angry with you if you say no or if you stop.
- Your answers will be private and only used for learning purposes.

Do you agree to join this study?

☐ Yes, I agree
☐ No, I do not agree

Signature: _____Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Appendix IV: Research Questionnaire for Children Offenders

INSTRUCTIONS TO RESPONDENTS

You are hereby requested to participate in the questionnaire below and provide your responses on diversion supervision programmes and their impact on child offenders' transformation. Your input is critical in helping me gather valuable insights. Please carefully follow these instructions to provide accurate and meaningful responses:

Take the time to read each research question carefully and ensure you understand the information or response being sought and please Provide honest and accurate responses based on your experiences, knowledge, or opinions related to diversion supervision programmes and their effect on child offenders' transformation. Unless a question is marked as optional, try to respond to every question. Your input is vital for a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Do not include any personally identifiable information unless explicitly requested.

Part A: Demographic Information

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. **Age**:

   ☐ 10–12 year

   ☐ 13–14 years

   ☐ 15–16 years

   ☐ 17-18 years

2. **Gender**:

   ☐ Male

   ☐ Female

3. **Type of offence diverted for**:

   ☐ Theft

   ☐ Assault

   ☐ Truancy

   ☐ Drug use or possession

   ☐ Property damage

   ☐ Other (specify): _____

4. **Duration in the diversion programme**:

   ☐ Less than 3 months

   ☐ 3–6 months

   ☐ Over 6 months

Part B: The forms of Diversion Supervision Programmes on Child Offenders' Transformation

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. I have received vocational training (e.g., carpentry, tailoring).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I attend formal or non-formal education while under supervision.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I go through regular counselling or psychosocial support.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. I have attended mediation sessions with family or others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I live or have lived with a host family as part of the programme.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. How helpful were these programmes in changing your behaviour?.....

11. What did you like most about the programme(s) you participated in?

12. What didn't you like or found difficult about the programme(s)?

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

	SA 1	A 2	N 3	D 4	SD 5
Does being placed in a host family positively influences your social reintegration and behavioral transformation in Kakamega County					
Does the support you have received from your host family during your rehabilitation process helps in changing your behavior					
Does the family environment provided by host families has contributed to reducing your likelihood of reoffending?					
Do the vocational training you received is effective in providing you with skills that can help you reintegrate into society?					
Vocational training programmes effectively equip child offenders with the necessary skills					
Vocational training helps reduce reoffending among child offenders					
Education plays a critical role in the transformation of child offenders					
Has the therapeutic psychosocial counseling helped you address your emotional and psychological well-being during your rehabilitation?					
Has counseling sessions have been beneficial to your process of transformation and reintegration into the community?					
There is adequate support for child offenders to continue their education					
Mediation sessions contribute to the emotional stability of child offenders					
Do participating in reconciliation or Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM) programmes contributed to your emotional stability and behavioral change?					
Does participating in reconciliation programmes helps you understand the harm you caused and motivated you to change your behavior?					

Part C: Influence of Community Involvement in the Implementation of Diversion Programmes

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

	SA 1	A 2	N 3	D 4	SD 5
Do the community members involved in your supervision have sufficient knowledge about rehabilitation programmes for child offenders?					
Do community members actively participate in the supervision and rehabilitation of child offenders in Kakamega County?					
Does cultural values of the community influence how child offenders are treated and supported during rehabilitation programmes?					
The community is actively involved in supporting child offenders in their transformation					
Community members provide essential resources and mentorship to child offenders					
Community involvement is crucial for the success of supervision programmes					
There are adequate community resources available for child offenders					
Community programmes (clubs, mentorship) positively impact child offenders					
Resource accessibility in the community meets the needs of child offenders					
Child offenders' relationships with community members improve over time					
Community interaction plays a significant role in the rehabilitation of child offenders					
The community's attitude towards child offenders has become more positive					

8. How did people in your community treat you after you joined the programme?

9. Did anyone in your community (family, neighbors, teachers, religious leaders) support you during or after the programme?

10. Do you feel accepted in your community now?

Part D: Challenges Faced by Diversion Supervision Programmes on Child Offenders' Transformation

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Statements	SD	D	A	S. A
Do the Diversion programmes in the community have problems that make them hard to follow or succeed?				
Do you feel there are not enough things like books, clothes, or help for everyone in the programme?				
Are there not enough learning materials or tools (like sewing machines or carpentry tools) in your training or classes?				
Is it hard to talk to a counsellor or someone who can help you with your problems?				
Do you think there is not enough money to run the programme well?				
Do people in the community treat you badly or differently because of your past?				

Do you think people still judge or avoid you even though others try to help change that?				

11. Did you face any challenges while going through the programme?

12. What do you think should be improved in the diversion programme?

Part E: Influence of diversion supervision programmes for child offenders' transformation in Kakamega County, Kenya

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where:1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

	SA 1	A 2	N 3	D 4	SD 5
Participation in diversion supervision programmes has reduced the likelihood of re-offending among child offenders?					
Skills learned during diversion supervision programmes contribute to a lower rate of re-offending?					
The support provided by host families helps reduce the chances of a child re-offending?					
Diversion supervision programmes have contributed to a positive change in your character and behavior?					
Counseling and reconciliation programmes helped you develop a better understanding of your actions and the harm they caused to others?					
Participating in educational programmes as part of diversion supervision has improved your academic performance?					
Provision of necessary educational materials and resources has contributed to your academic success during the rehabilitation process?					
Educational support in diversion programmes has improved your academic performance and set you on a better path for the future?					

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Appendix V: Interview guide for key informants

Diversion Programmes for Child Offenders' Transformation

i. What types of diversion programmes are currently being implemented for child offenders in this county (e.g., vocational training, counselling, education)?

ii. Who are the main actors involved in implementing these programmes (e.g., government agencies, NGOs, host families), and how do they coordinate?

iii. From your experience, which forms of diversion appear to be most effective in transforming child offenders? Please explain.

iv. What behavioural or emotional changes have you observed in children who have undergone diversion supervision programmes?

v. To what extent do these programmes involve the community (e.g., mentorship, family reintegration, sensitization efforts)?

vi. How does community acceptance or stigma affect the success of the child's reintegration and rehabilitation process?

vii. What role do psychosocial support services, like counselling and mediation, play in the transformation of the children?

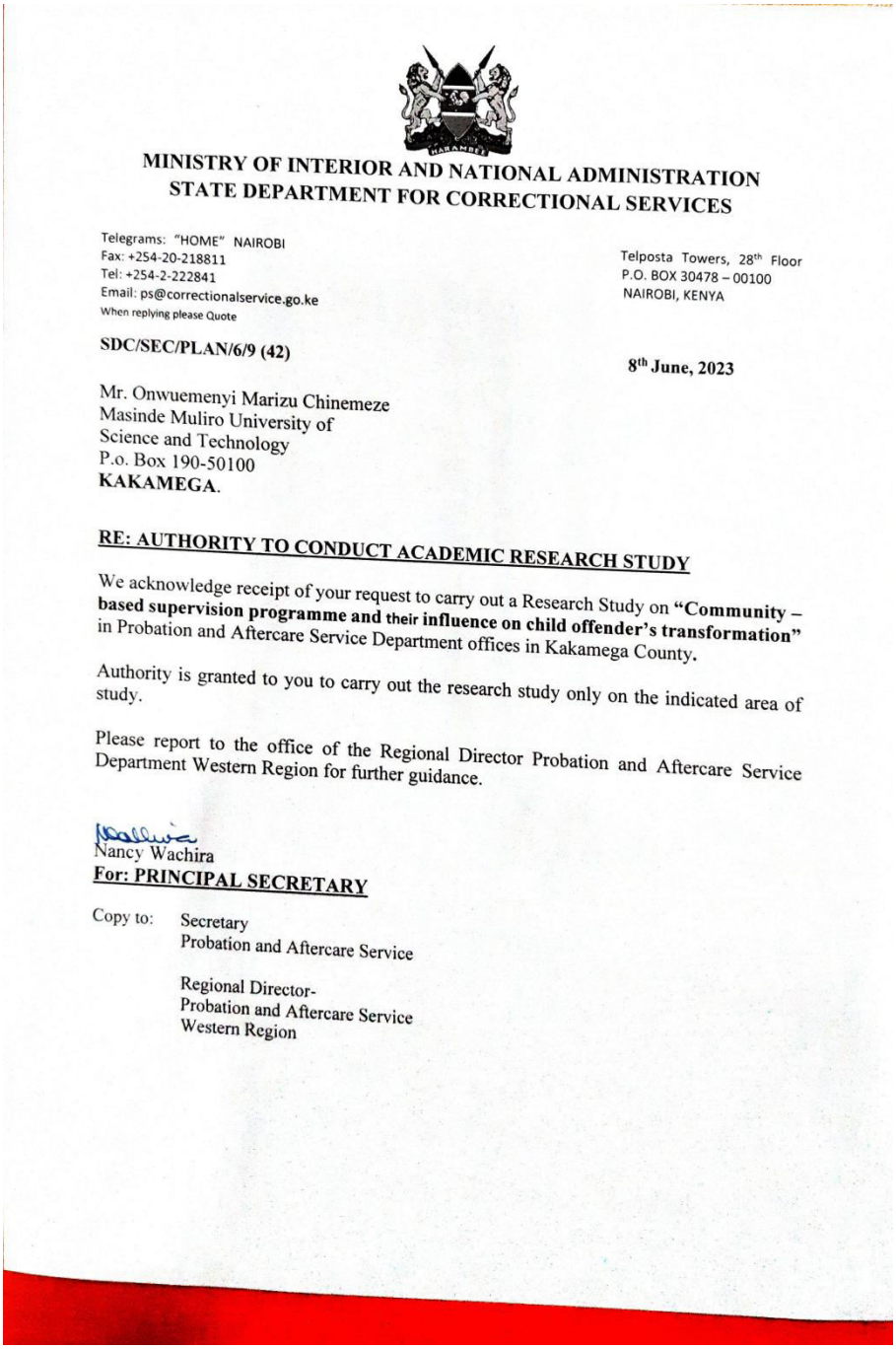
viii. What are the main challenges that affect the success of diversion programmes (e.g., stigma, limited resources, poor follow-up)?

ix. Are there any gaps or limitations in the current diversion system that you think need urgent attention?

x. In your view, what should be done to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of diversion programmes for child offender?

Thank you for your Co-operation

Appendix VI: Approval Letter



MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Telegrams: "HOME" NAIROBI
Fax: +254-20-218811
Tel: +254-2-222841
Email: ps@correctionalservice.go.ke
When replying please Quote

Telposta Towers, 28th Floor
P.O. BOX 30478 – 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA

SDC/SEC/PLAN/6/9 (42)

8th June, 2023

Mr. Onwuemenyi Marizu Chinemeze
Masinde Muliro University of
Science and Technology
P.o. Box 190-50100
KAKAMEGA.

RE: AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH STUDY

We acknowledge receipt of your request to carry out a Research Study on **"Community – based supervision programme and their influence on child offender's transformation"** in Probation and Aftercare Service Department offices in Kakamega County.

Authority is granted to you to carry out the research study only on the indicated area of study.

Please report to the office of the Regional Director Probation and Aftercare Service Department Western Region for further guidance.

Nancy Wachira
For: PRINCIPAL SECRETARY

Copy to: Secretary
Probation and Aftercare Service

Regional Director-
Probation and Aftercare Service
Western Region

Appendix VII: NACOSTI Letter



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 335801

Date of Issue: 25/May/2023

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Mr., mariza chinemere onwuemenyi of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Kakamega on the topic: Community-based supervision programmes and their influence on child offenders' transformation in kakamega county, Kenya for the period ending : 25/May/2024.

License No: NACOSTI/P/23/26057

335801

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

See overleaf for conditions