

Effectiveness of Witness Protection Measures in Supporting Investigations in Mt. Elgon Region Bungoma County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the effectiveness of Witness Protection Measures (WPM) in supporting crime investigations in Mt. Elgon, Bungoma County. Recognizing the importance of effective witness protection in enhancing judicial processes, the objective was to analyze how these measures influence investigative outcomes. Employing a descriptive survey design, the research targeted residents of Mt. Elgon, with a sample size of 400, selected through multistage sampling methods. Data collection involved questionnaires and interview guides, analyzed quantitatively via descriptive statistics, and qualitatively through thematic analysis. Findings revealed low awareness levels, with 56% of participants uninformed about WPM, often due to misunderstanding and mistrust. Qualitative insights indicated skepticism toward confidentiality and trust in implementers, impacting cooperation. On empowerment strategies, relationship-building and citizen safety emerged as critical factors, scored at 76% and 70%, respectively. The study underscores that fostering trust, increasing awareness, and community engagement are vital for strengthening witness participation. It recommends a comprehensive approach involving improved measures, transparent processes, and active community involvement to bolster investigations, emphasizing that strengthening trust and knowledge can significantly support effective crime resolution in Mt. Elgon.

Keywords: Witness safety, Witness protection, investigation, public trust

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The perceived effectiveness of witness protection measures (WPM) in supporting investigations in Mt. Elgon, Bungoma County, is a critical concern given the region's complex security challenges. While witness protection programs are designed to enhance the safety and cooperation of witnesses, their true impact at the grassroots level remains poorly understood in Kenya, especially in high-risk areas such as Mt. Elgon (Wanjala, 2022). Globally, effective protection measures like relocation, anonymity, and community engagement have been instrumental in encouraging witnesses to testify, thereby enabling law enforcement agencies to dismantle criminal networks involved in organized crime, political violence, and insurgency (Conti, 2023; Martinez, 2023). However, in Bungoma, deep-rooted issues such as community mistrust, fear of retaliation, social stigma, and logistical barriers significantly undermine these efforts (Wanjala, 2023). Past conflicts, such as the activities of the Sabaot Land Defense Force and politically motivated violence during elections, have heightened fears among residents and hampered witnesses' willingness to cooperate (KNHRC, 2008). Furthermore, despite the existence of the Kenyan Witness Protection Act, there is limited awareness at the local level about the available services and their effectiveness (Kimani, 2023). This study aims to critically analyze how victims and community members perceive the impact of current protective measures on investigative processes, emphasizing that without community trust and awareness, the potential of WPM to support justice remains limited.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the Kenya's Witness Protection Agency (WPA), establishment under the Witness Protection Act No. 16 of 2006 (revised 2010), there was reluctance of residents of Mt Elgon in participating in criminal justice system despite the high criminal activities in the region. This is despite the effect of crime on their livelihood.

This withstanding there was little information on the awareness of the existence of witness protection agency and the services offered in Mt Elgon region Bungoma County Kenya.

Therefore, the problem that propelled this study was that Mt Elgon region of Bungoma County Kenya is marred by organized criminal activities undertaken in the society making it hard for members of communities to provide testimony during investigations, but the operational level WPA remains low. This has seen many cases in MT Elgon dismissed by courts as a result of non- cooperation of witness investigation and prosecution. This withstanding, few studies have been undertaken to establish the influence of Witness protection on crime investigation in Mt Elgon Sub County (JSC, 2021). It is against that backdrop that the study sought to determine the relationship between witness protection and crime investigation at Mt. Elgon in Bungoma County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Of paramount importance to the functioning of any criminal justice system is the voluntary cooperation of witnesses, whose testimonies serve as the cornerstone of successful prosecutions and, by extension, national security. To this end, witness protection agencies are tasked with the critical mission of ensuring that individuals providing evidence can do so without fear of reprisal, thereby safeguarding the integrity of investigations. A foundational measure in this endeavour is the principle of confidentiality, which Rothschild (2009) defines as an ethical concept protecting the trust a person places in having private information kept secret. This premise is vital in criminal investigations, as witnesses often hold sensitive information about perpetrators, and the unauthorized disclosure of their identity could endanger their lives. The obligation of investigators to maintain secrecy is therefore thought to significantly motivate witness cooperation. Empirical studies underscore the efficacy of this approach. For instance, Cruz (2022) evaluated a confidentiality protocol in Guadalajara, Mexico, that utilized encrypted digital profiles and courtroom pseudonyms. The study, which sampled 120 witnesses and 15 prosecutors, found a 62% increase in witness willingness to provide detailed statements and a 28% rise in case clearance rates when these measures were rigorously applied. Similarly, Nkosi (2024) investigated secure communication channels, such as one-time PINs for witness hotlines, in Cape Town, South Africa. The research, involving 85 witnesses, indicated a 55% increase in hotline engagement and a 33% reduction in witness recantations. However, both studies noted implementation challenges, including technical difficulties with encryption systems and intermittent mobile network coverage, highlighting the need for standardized training and robust technical support to realize the full potential of confidentiality measures (Cruz, 2022; Nkosi, 2024).

Beyond mere confidentiality, the establishment of genuine trust between witnesses and law enforcement is another critical pillar of an effective protection strategy. As Paliszkievicz (2013) observes, trust is essential for successful cooperation and organizational effectiveness, as it facilitates negotiations and human understanding. Similar views were expressed by Onyango (2020) who underscored the value trust in interagency approach in addressing social evils such as corruption. Onyango (2020), emphasized the critical role of administrative trust arguing that when citizens lose faith in government institutions, they may not cooperate, limiting the government ability in achieving their mandate in the society, including combating criminal activities. Relatedly, Hannan (n.d), reflecting on Kenya case at International criminal court (ICC) observed that witnesses who had agreed to testify against the accused, subsequently withdrew their cooperation with the Court citing intimidation, social isolation and threats to their lives. The ruptured trust between the ICC and witness led to the collapse of the cases demonstrating the value of trust in witness protection.

The value of trust in the context of witness protection, is twofold: witnesses must believe not only in the investigators' ability to ensure their physical safety but also in their ethical commitment to using the provided information for its intended purpose. This is particularly crucial when witnesses are providing evidence against members of their own community.

Research demonstrates that deliberate trust-building initiatives yield substantial benefits. Rahman (2021) analyzed such efforts in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where community liaison officers mediated between witnesses and investigators. Surveying 100 witnesses, the study reported a 33% increase in testimony follow-through and a 25% boost in perceived police integrity scores, though 15% of witnesses remained skeptical due to past

corruption scandals. In a more innovative approach, Njoroge (2023) piloted a “ride-along” program in Nairobi, Kenya, allowing witnesses to join police patrols before trial. This initiative led to a 40% rise in witness collaboration and a 22% reduction in pre-trial drop-outs among the 50 participants, despite some reporting safety concerns during the patrols. These findings suggest that proactive efforts to build rapport and demonstrate transparency are indispensable for fostering the witness cooperation necessary for effective crime investigations (Rahman, 2021; Njoroge, 2023).

For witnesses facing the most severe and imminent threats, more intensive and disruptive measures, such as physical relocation and identity change, become necessary considerations.

As Dedel (2016) notes, witness intimidation is a prevalent tactic used to undermine justice, and in such cases, support must be provided to help individuals overcome this particular obstacle. Relocation, often within a state or further away, involves severing all ties with a witness’s past life to ensure their safety and well-being. However, as Kramer (n.d.) avers, this measure, particularly international relocation and identity change, should be a last resort due to the profound hardship it imposes on witnesses. Bellucci (2023) examined safe-house relocations in Rome, Italy, finding that relocated witnesses had a 48% lower attrition rate and a 36% higher testimony completeness score, though 26% reported significant psychological strain from the process. When relocation is insufficient, a more extreme measure is the change of identity. Mack (2014) states that this involves creating a completely new personal history and providing new identity documents to prevent third parties from tracing the witness. This process, supported by international guidelines (Ilić, 2006; UN, 2008), requires the witness to surrender all original identifying documents and necessitates ongoing support for adaptation. A related measure is the concealing of information about property ownership, which involves creating temporary records with altered information to eliminate the risk of a witness being discovered through asset tracing (Demir, 2018; Ilic, 2006). The application and effectiveness of these profound measures in specific jurisdictions, such as Kenya’s Mt. Elgon region, remain areas requiring further research to understand their full impact on investigations.

Complementing these physical protections are procedural and technological innovations designed to create distance between the witness and the accused. Testimony via video-link is a prime example, a practice endorsed by Kenyan high court ruling in 2011. This strategy shields the witness from direct confrontation and intimidation, providing an environment where they feel safe enough to testify. The technology can be enhanced with techniques such as image blurring, pixilation, voice distortion, and cryptographic encryption to ensure privacy, confidentiality, and integrity of the testimony (Rastoceanu, 2022; Koshimizu, 2006; Xiezhang, 2021). A less technologically demanding but equally important measure is the use of pseudonyms. This allows a witness to be identified by a false name throughout the investigative and pre-trial phases, significantly reducing the risk of threat and intimidation (Ariz, 2017; Paunovic, 2013). The overarching framework for implementing these measures in Kenya is guided by the Witness Protection Act (2006), which provides for proceedings to be held *in camera* and for the assessment of witnesses for inclusion in the formal program. Ultimately, the goal of all these measures from confidentiality agreements and trust-building patrols to secure video testimony and full relocation is to overcome the pervasive fear of retaliation that can otherwise silence witnesses and cripple the pursuit of justice. As the various studies illustrate, while each strategy presents its own implementation challenges, their collective and thoughtful application is indispensable for effective crime investigation.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), which was introduced by (Rogers, 1975) and further revised in 1983 (Rogers, 1983) to explain the impact of persuasive communication on behaviours, with an emphasis on cognitive mechanisms underpinning the rationale to follow or not to follow a recommended behaviour. The theory was originally conceptualized for the utilization in the healthcare context (Conner & Norman, 2015). PMT is based on expectancy value (Rogers 1975) suggesting that individual will engage in a behaviour based on the expected desired outcome. To this end the expected value of the behaviour is based on the subjective evaluation of individuals to inform their decisions to engage in a behaviour. In the revision of the theory (Rogers, 1983) Coined five key areas that guide behaviour. These include self-efficacy,

threat vulnerability and threat severity, and the negative function of response cost (Rogers, 1983). The inclusion of self-efficacy improved the predictive power of the model, as the construct was confirmed to be the strongest predictor of behavioural intention. Accordingly, individuals believe in their capability of the task in relation to recommended behaviour, the expected rewards and the cost of protective behaviour strongly influences decision making. Specifically, self-efficacy has been found to be the greatest motivator towards engaging in behaviour change (Bandura, 1980)

In relation to this study, engaging in witness protection programme would be informed by the expected outcomes and the value they carry. For example, understanding the value of WPA, the citizens may realize that their safety is taken care of and therefore choose to participate in the programme. This could be mediated through appraising the possible end results of prosecution such as security in the community, reducing fear of crime that would lead to progress in the communities. Specifically fear appeals may trigger reflexivity on the information communicated through awareness creation that would lead community members who witness crimes to participate in the programme. In addition, learning about the different approaches employed by WPA can build confidence in the citizens to take advantage of the programme to help the community fight crime in the society

Protection Motivation Theory provides a psychological blueprint for understanding witness behaviour in legal contexts. By analyzing how witnesses perceive threats and evaluate protective measures, policymakers can design more effective witness protection programs (WPPs). The theory highlights that fear alone is not enough to deter cooperation; instead, witnesses must believe that protective measures are both available and effective.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted descriptive survey research design which was used to establish the effect of witness protection programs on crime investigation in among residents of Bungoma County .The target population were adults of over 18 years of age from 172, 377 persons in mt. Elgon region (Cheptais, Kopsiro and Mt. Elgon sub counties) as per the data posted by Kenya Bureau of Statistics 2019 who have lived in the area for the last 10 years.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The study targeted adults of over 18 years of age from 172, 377 Mt. Elgon region population, as per Kenya Bureau of Statistics 2019. To determine the sample, the study used Yamane formula to obtain a sample size of 400 participants. The study employed a multi-stage sampling procedure. Mt. Elgon region was purposively selected and then clustered into administrative wards as follows: Cheptais Ward, Chesikaki Ward, Kapsokwony Ward, Kaptama Ward and Elgon Ward. To obtain the participants for the study, the population in each ward was clustered in different groups by gender and age to ensure that the sample was representative of the population in Mt Elgon region. In each cluster proportionate simple random sampling was employed to obtain participants for the study. Additionally, 10 key informants were selected using purposive and stratified random sampling, with Creswell's 30% criterion applied to ensure representativeness from various stakeholder groups. These approaches yielded a representative sample to respond to the concerns of the study

Methods of Data collection and Analysis

Closed ended Questionnaires were used as the main tool for quantitative data collection, but also incorporated open ended questions to allow participants in-depth reflection on the influence of witness protection program on crime investigation. To supplement findings, Key informant interviews discussions was held with 6 representatives from the following groups; senior Gazetted officers from NPS, Religious leaders, elected leaders and officers from the office of ODPP. The findings from the two different sources were triangulated to provide robust results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to analyze the witness protection measures and their implication on crime investigations in the Mt Elgon region of Bungoma county This was important because the residents of Mt Elgon may have varying perceptions that may influence the uptake to support crime investigations. The participants were presented with a Likert scale table with items on witness protection measures to rate their availability and the extent to which they support investigations The response was as given in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 The Witness Protection Measures for Successful Crime Investigation

	SD%	D%	N%	A%	SA%	M	Std.Dev
I am satisfied with the type of witness protection measures applied in Mt. Elgon	26.1% (n=85)	28.4% (n=92)	14.2% (n=46)	11.4% (n=37)	19.9% (n=64)	1.25	1.22
Different types of witness protection measures applied in our area have enhanced crime investigation for the active cases	22.2% (n=72)	33.5% (n=109)	12.8% (n=41)	18.7% (n=61)	12.8% (n=41)	1.14	0.85
Employing different names for witnesses (Pseudonym) non-disclosure is effective and can conceal the witness enabling them to support crime investigations without fear in Mt. Elgon Bungoma County	29.2% (n=95)	25.4% (n=82)	11.7% (n=38)	20.0% (n=65)	13.7% (n=44)	1.97	1.02
Confidential as a witness protection measure is effective and police use it to encourages participation as witness in crime investigation	28.4% (n=92)	32.1% (n=104)	9.8% (n=32)	17.5% (n=57)	12.2% (n=39)	1.88	1.55
There is supervision of the criminal investigation department, the witness is able to make alternative arrangements for his /her safety without remaining on the program	32.4% (n=105)	27.6% (n=89)	14.3% (n=46)	19.7% (n=63)	6% (n=21)	1.96	1.05
The criminal department effectively protects the identity of the witness through voice distortion and concealed identity, this helps encourage witness participation	29.8% (n=97)	24.1% (n=78)	10.2% (n=33)	15.7% (n=51)	20.2% (n=65)	1.78	1.44
In Bungoma Witnesses can sometimes be relocated from their homes and resettled when they are in danger of retaliation, this has had good effect on witness participation helping in clearing cases	27.4% (n=89)	25.5% (n=83)	19.2% (n=62)	21.3% (n=69)	6.6% (n=21)	1.98	0.88
Change of identity to conceal protect a witness and this encourages cooperation of witness with authorities	35.3% (n=114)	28.1% (n=91)	9.1% (n=29)	15.7% (n=51)	11.8% (n=39)	1.65	1.56
Use of video link court processes has encouraged the witnesses to come forward and support investigations investigation	29.5% (n=96)	25.4% (n=82)	12.3% (n=40)	22.8% (n=74)	10.3% (n=32)	1.47	0.82
Overall mean						1.88	1.14

The study findings on Table 1.1 indicate that majority of the respondents are not satisfied with the type of witness protection measures applied in Mt. Elgon as given by 26.1% on strongly disagree and 28.4% on disagree in comparison with 31 % who agreed. The study also indicates that the respondents disagreed that the types of witnessed protection measures applied in their area have enhanced crime investigation for the active cases as given by 22.2% for strongly disagree and 33.5% for disagree against 31.5% who agreed. As relates to confidentiality, the participants disagreed at 60% that the police investigators are good at confidentiality as compared to 25. 6 % who agreed. The respondents disagreed that the use of pseudonym non-disclosure has helped improve in crime investigation by the Police in Mt. Elgon Bungoma County as given by 29.2% for strongly disagree and 25.4% for disagree. The respondents further disagreed with the statement that the identity of the witness is changed to protect the witness as indicated by 35% for strongly disagree and 28.1% for disagree, in relation to the use of video link, the participants disagreed it was applied to encourage witness participation.

The overall mean score for the response on application of different types of witness protection measures to support crime investigation was 1.88 that represents disagreement response based on a scale of 0-5. The mean score results therefore indicate that the respondents are in disagreement with the statements on witness protection measures taken by the crime investigation agencies in Mt. Elgon Bungoma County. This is not surprising given that the majority of the respondents had low awareness of the existence of the programmes. The minority who indicated that different programmes available supported investigations may be the police officers' administrators and a few who might have interacted with the police officers in the course of being victims of crime or still witness but perhaps discovering the value of witness protection by coincidence.

From the table participants are not satisfied with the type of witness protection measures in place. Satisfaction is an important aspect in any social program as it is deemed to indicate the value placed in the client. Accordingly, social programs are supposed to be consumed by those it serves hence the importance of client-centered practice (Wu, 2013). To this end, any successful social programme can be judged by the satisfaction of the clients. Many factors facilitate perceptions of satisfaction. These include quality of the service provided, the program's outcomes, and the overall client experience. When witness feel that the quality of services provided meet or exceed their expectation, they are more likely to utilize the services and recommend the services to others with similar needs. Aspects such as staff friendliness, respect for the witness as well as to security of the witness contributes to positive experiences that could enhance uptake of the service. This aligns with a study published by Girsang & Faadhil, (2025) on customer satisfaction. Positive experiences will also lead to trust building which is a key factor in witness protection.

Low self awareness as earlier highlighted could be a result lack of experience which suggests that participants had not interacted with the service providers who would help them learn the value of the Witness protection program. Therefore, although the program exist, it may remain in policy form but without clear mechanisms of implementation. Onyang (2020) observed that implementation of policy is a factor that challenge many organizations. This seems to be the case with WPP, which although anchored into law, it is yet to be fully implemented to support the criminal justice system. That the majority of the participants were not satisfied with witness protection program, is an indication that there is minimal cooperation of the community in Mt Elgon in support of crime investigations. This may spell doom for crime investigators and the criminal justice system in general.

Low satisfaction could also be attributed to low confidence in the programme as well as lack of trust in the organization running the programmes among other factors. As seen from the findings, more than 60% of the participants disagreed that the Kenya police officers are good at holding confidentiality. The findings were supported with views from qualitative data as exemplified below

We do not trust our police. Sometimes residents offer information, then you hear it is out there, can you try to work with the officers again. The residents feel betrayed, so cooperation is difficult

This has the implication that the image of police officers in Kenya is dented making it difficult for the public to trust them. Vigoda-Gadot & Cohen (2014) observed that image of an organization is critical in obtaining loyalty and support from the public. Accordingly, citizens construct the image of an organizations based on the interactions they have had with the organization. As such it appears that residents of Mt Elgon region in Bungoma have had bad experiences regarding witness cooperation. To this end, although confidentiality is one of the most important codes in encouraging opening up, breaching of the code seems to encouraged skepticisms among the residents of Mt Elgon region of Bungoma. Surmiak (2019) observed that Confidentiality represents a core principle in protecting informants. Breaching confidentiality may not only expose informants to harm but also reduces the trust that is required when working with witnesses. Protecting the privacy of the witnesses not only addresses their rights, but also enhances credibility of the law enforcement officers. To the contrary a breach of confidentiality exposes the witness to harm creating fear and not cooperation.

Overall, the breaches as relates to confidentiality ruptures the relationship between the investigators and witness increasing vulnerability of witness to harm by perpetrators. Hannan (n.d) observed that witness protection should be concern with the risk of serious harm and the sanctity of life of the witness. Therefore,

feeling that their lives are at risk, they may not be forthcoming to work with the police investigators. The safety of witnesses is a key factor in encouraging witnesses to support for police investigators. Flawed process will therefore prevent witness participation denying the system from achieving its intended purpose.

Further, it will be recalled that failure to cooperate is related to fear of reprisal, therefore if the police officers are not able to hold information given by the witness in confidence, then the citizens will not only be dissatisfied but also fail to cooperate. According to the Protection Motivation theory that that informed this study, fear is a key factor that mediate the adoption of desired behavior. However, this is often moderated by self-efficacy. With sensitization individual may build strategies to allay fears associated with providing evidence to help crime investigations. Bandura (1977) argued that other than innate features, development of self-efficacy is facilitated by sociocultural environment. As seen from the findings, the environment under which WPP operates in Kenya is suspicious with far reaching effects on possible outcomes. Suspicious, compromise trust, instills fear, undermining the likelihood of citizen participation in the programme. The study aligns CHRIPS (2014) observation that many police officers in Kenya, lack accountability and engage in malpractices such as interfering in criminal cases to influence the outcome. Similar views were fronted by IPOA, (2024) that reported many complains of the citizen in relation to police officer's accountability. Although IPOA did not list the complains leveled against the police officers on accountability, it is possible that they engage in malpractices. In addition, unverified reports from media have shown that some witnesses in high profile cases have been harmed to prevent them from giving evidence. Therefore the dissatisfaction seen in the findings is not unfounded. The findings of this study mirror that of Wu (2013) who observed that the image of the service provider influences the consumer satisfaction

Other than satisfaction, the participants seem not be aware of the effectiveness of measures used in the region to conceal the identity of the witness. Identity change is one of the measures that could be applied to ensure the safety of the witness. According to UNDOC (2008), this is an exceptional measure given the psychological effects the witnesses may encounter the change of identity involves change of personal profile with an aim of concealing not only the identity of the individual. The aim is to minimize the risk of exposure inherent in providing a new personal history and to facilitate ownership of the new identity by the witness. This could help the witness gain courage, knowing that they will not be harmed.

especially with this criminal gangs, may be if you change your name and be taken very far away and if you can be supported, this can work. But again, leaving your people and community is not simple. (M3)

As can be seen from the quote, there is some consent that identity concealment with proper support can be effective. However, the leaving the people and community is seen to present challenges. This is not surprising as a community provides individuals with a sense of belonging. Accordingly, residents of a place possess cognitive and affective ties provide security for individuals. In relation to this view, community attachment has been found to predict social capital. This has the implication that communities support members. This service could be missed, though the individual will be safe. The findings align with the views of Hannan (n,d) who observed that witness relocation often involves the removal of basic rights, like freedom of movement, speech, and the right to family life that could be traumatizing.

Notated however, is that though relocation could work as seen from the findings the 53 % respondents disagree that this is done. Only a minority represented by 35 % seemed to agree, raising questions whether the residents of Mt Elgon are aware of the approaches used and the expected value of WPP. According to PMT that informed this study expectancy and value are the two factors that motivate behavior (Marikyan, & Papagiannidis, 2023). Therefore, if the citizens are not aware of the expected outcome, then they are unlikely to cooperate and assist the police in investigations.

From the data, there seems to be no effort in concealing the identity of the witnesses as revealed by those in disagreement at over 72 %. Unsure that you will not be harmed you may not be willing to cooperate with the police. As one key informant said

Sasa, nikisema intaeinda wapi nafamilia. Kesho nitakutana nahuyo muhalifu is ataniumiza (so when I give information, where will I go. the next day I will meet the criminal, he will finish me off

The quote demonstrates the fear of being identified as a sellout. The fear makes individuals not to cooperate since they do not know that there is any form of protect. Reflecting on PMT that informed this study without expecting any form of protection, the residents may not risk their lives. To this end, it can be argued that the identity protection is perceived as effective measure despite the emotional effect attached to relocation.

Other than, concealing of identity through relocation, the use video link seems not to be clearly understood suggesting that use of technology is low in the sub-County. This may not be surprising as rural areas in most part of western Kenya lack infrastructure that support technology. Mabele (2019) observed that there is very low internet connectivity in rural areas of Kenya. It is therefore possible that most locals do not understanding how video links work so they may not be in a position to comment.

In general, residents seem to have mixed feelings about the strategies employed for witness protection. Accordingly, strategies to protect the witness, may be effective but the residents are skeptical about the police investigators who implement them. The low trust in police investigators seems to act as a barrier towards embracing witness protection measures. The implication is that it is not the protection measure, but the way they are implemented seem to be problematic. The findings of this study suggest that police organization need to address systemic failures associated with professionalism of the investigating officers that discourage cooperation of the residents

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the current witness protection measures in the region are not well known by the majority of respondents. Lack of awareness of the programs acts as a barrier towards participation of witnesses in crime investigation. Despite the feasible strengths of various protective strategies, such as witness relocation, use of pseudonym, and identity concealment, the majority of participants lacked knowledge to comprehend their effectiveness. This is further compounded by the lack of trust in the implementors. The residents perceived the officers not to be principled in the way they handled evidence shared and therefore could not be trusted. This weakened the relationship between the officers and residents undermining the cooperation spirit.

Based on the findings, empowering witnesses in various ways was seen to be one way through which residents of Mt Elgon region would learn to collaborate with crime investigative officers. On the other hand, police organization needs to work on organizational culture and ethics and build trust that could encourage citizen participation in the program. Therefore, a more comprehensive approach involving improved protection measures, transparent processes, integrity of the investigating officer and increased community engagement, is required to enhance witness participation and improve crime investigation success rates in the area. Addressing these concerns will be vital for the long-term success of the witness protection program and crime investigation outcomes in Mt. Elgon.

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