
**EFFECTIVENESS OF FOOT PATROLS AS A POLICE PRESENCE STRATEGY IN CRIME
DETERRENCE WITHIN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA**

¹Athman Idd & ² Chris Ndunda, PhD

^{1,2} Department of Security, Diplomacy, and Peace Studies, Kenyatta University, Kenya

Accepted: April 25, 2026

ABSTRACT

Police presence is a key pillar of law enforcement because it helps prevent crime, maintain public order, and build community trust. This study examined the effectiveness of foot patrols as a police presence strategy in deterring crime in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The study was guided by Crime Deterrence Theory and Routine Activity Theory and adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population included general duty police officers stationed in Nairobi County, National Government Administration Officers, Community Policing officials, Business Community officials, and Nairobi residents' association officials. Purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling techniques were used. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and key informant interview guides. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, with descriptive statistics summarizing respondents' perceptions and inferential statistics examining effectiveness of foot patrols as a police presence strategy in crime deterrence. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically to capture views on effectiveness, operational challenges, and improvement measures. The findings showed that foot patrols explained 31.6 percent of crime deterrence, indicating a strong perceived effect on crime reduction in Nairobi City County. Foot patrols were especially effective in crowded and high-risk areas because they increased police visibility, enabled direct interaction with residents, and improved informal surveillance. They were useful in deterring street-level crimes such as robbery, mugging, pickpocketing, phone snatching, drug peddling, and street harassment. Key challenges included limited resources, workforce shortages, irregular deployment, weak supervision, and poor police-community relations. The study recommends strengthening foot patrol deployment in crime hotspots, markets, transport centres, residential estates, informal settlements, and evening crime-prone areas.

Keywords: Police Presence Strategies, Crime Deterrence, Foot Patrols.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of police presence as a crime deterrent measure dates back to the early nineteenth century, mainly when the London Metropolitan Police was formed in 1829 under the leadership of Sir Robert Peel. The principles of policing proposed by Peel were crime prevention oriented, based on the idea that visible and regular police presence would prevent crime before it happens (Emsley, 2009). This philosophy has remained part of modern policing practice around the world and still forms a major component of crime prevention policy.

Police presence in modern policing refers to the active, visible, and easily accessible presence of law enforcers in communities (Swanson & Livingstone, 2020). It involves the physical presence of police officers and the tactical positioning of police resources in open areas, especially in places where crime is identified as frequent or dangerous. Police presence can be operationalized through strategies such as foot patrols, vehicle patrols, checkpoints, roadblocks, and police posts. These strategies are proactive because they aim to deter crime by increasing the perceived risk of apprehension and arrest (Braga & Weisburd, 2019).

The relationship between police presence and crime deterrence has remained an important concern in criminology and law enforcement policy. Crime deterrence refers to the use of measures that discourage people from committing a crime by increasing the perceived risks or penalties of offending (Nye, 2024). Deterrence theory explains that people are less likely to commit a crime when they believe that law enforcement is visible, alert, and able to respond quickly (Nagin, 2013). In this sense, police presence influences the decision-making process of potential offenders.

This study focused on foot patrols as one important form of visible policing. Foot patrols place officers directly within communities, streets, markets, transport centres, residential estates, and informal settlements, thereby increasing visibility, accessibility, and informal surveillance (Basford et al., 2021; Gill et al., 2014). Unlike vehicle patrols or fixed checkpoints, foot patrols allow direct interaction between police officers and residents, traders, commuters, and business operators, which can strengthen trust and improve community-based intelligence sharing (Lewis et al., 2021; Sorg, 2013). This makes them useful in deterring street-level and opportunistic crimes such as robbery, pickpocketing, phone snatching, mugging, vandalism, street harassment, and drug peddling, especially in crowded urban spaces where offenders and potential victims frequently meet (Nthiga, 2017; Muna, 2019; Kilonzo, 2021).

In Nairobi City County, foot patrols are widely used in a fast-urbanizing environment marked by high population density, socio-economic differences, and changing crime patterns. Foot patrols are intended to deter crime by increasing police visibility, strengthening community interaction, and raising the perceived risk of apprehension among offenders (Skogan, 2006). However, Nairobi continues to experience crimes such as robbery, assault, mugging, pickpocketing, phone snatching, drug peddling, and street harassment, especially in informal settlements, transport hubs, markets, residential estates, and commercial areas (Nairobi Crime Report, 2023). Although foot patrols enhance public contact and community trust, their effectiveness is limited by inadequate coverage, irregular deployment, resource constraints, and weak capacity to address organized or violent crime (Njeri, 2017).

These challenges are further affected by rapid urbanization, limited police resources, and poor police-community relations linked to mistrust and perceptions of corruption (Gicheru, 2020; Kihara, 2022). Despite the continued use of foot patrols in Nairobi, limited empirical evidence exists on their specific effectiveness in deterring particular crimes and sustaining deterrence over time. This study, therefore, examines the role of foot patrols in

crime deterrence within Nairobi City County, focusing on how their effectiveness varies by crime type, location, time, and police-community interaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review

Available empirical studies on foot patrols have examined their role as a visible policing strategy that brings officers closer to communities and places them directly within everyday public spaces where crime may occur. Foot patrols are a visible police presence strategy in which officers walk through designated areas to prevent crime, reassure the public, and maintain informal surveillance. They are linked to community policing because they emphasize prevention, legitimacy, and direct contact with citizens rather than enforcement alone (Basford et al., 2021). From a deterrence perspective, the physical presence of officers increases the perceived risk of detection and arrest, while also improving police-community relations (Gill et al., 2014).

The renewed interest in foot patrols responds to the limits of motorized policing. Lewis et al. (2021) argue that vehicle patrols create social distance between officers and communities, reducing trust and weakening intelligence flows. In contrast, foot patrols allow officers to interact with residents, observe routines, and detect suspicious behavior early. Sorg (2013) also observes that foot patrols improve situational awareness and enable timely intervention, especially against opportunistic crimes.

However, evidence from the Global North presents mixed results. The Newark Foot Patrol Experiment in the United States found that foot patrols did not significantly reduce recorded crime, although they reduced fear of crime and improved police-community relations. Similarly, the National Reassurance Policing Programme in the United Kingdom showed that foot patrols increased public confidence and reduced antisocial behavior, but had a limited impact on serious crime. This suggests that foot patrols are stronger in creating reassurance and preventing low-level disorder than in reducing serious or organized crime.

Evidence from African contexts also shows both value and limitations. Burger and Adonis (2015) found that foot patrols improved visibility and trust in South African urban hotspots, but had little effect on violent and organized crimes, especially in marginalized areas. Okeke (2016) reported that foot patrols in Nigeria failed to reduce petty crime where resources, community participation, and officer training were weak. These studies show that foot patrols do not work automatically; their success depends on staffing, training, public cooperation, and the wider social environment.

Kenyan studies reflect similar patterns. Nthiga (2017) found that foot patrols in Nairobi's Central Business District discouraged petty crimes such as pickpocketing and vandalism, but had limited influence on organized and violent crime. Muna (2019) observed that foot patrols in Eastlands reduced street-level crime, yet they were less effective against organized criminal networks in informal settlements where patrols were irregular and community trust was weak. Kilonzo (2021) found that foot patrols in Nairobi's Central Business District had a measurable deterrent effect on opportunistic crime, but this declined where patrol routes became predictable and offenders shifted to less-patrolled areas.

Across the literature, one argument emerges. Foot patrols are most effective against visible, low-level, and opportunistic crimes, but less effective against serious, organized, or mobile crimes. Their deterrent value depends on regular visibility, workforce adequacy, strategic deployment, and positive community response. Where patrols are predictable, poorly resourced, or weakly supported by residents, they may displace crime rather than reduce it

(Weisburd et al., 2024). Foot patrols are also resource-intensive and may create officer fatigue when staffing is inadequate.

Despite this evidence, gaps remain in the Nairobi context. Existing studies rarely establish whether foot patrols produce long-term crime reduction or merely shift crime elsewhere. Limited attention has been given to how unemployment, informal settlements, social inequality, patrol timing, and neighborhood density influence foot patrol effectiveness. This study examines foot patrols in Nairobi City County by focusing on their effect across crime types, locations, and times.

Theoretical Review

The study applies Deterrence Theory and Routine Activity Theory to explain how foot patrols contribute to crime deterrence in Nairobi City County. Deterrence Theory, associated with Beccaria and later Bentham, argues that people are less likely to commit a crime when the perceived cost of punishment is higher than the expected benefit (Pyo, 2021; Abramovaite, Bandyopadhyay, Bhattacharya, and Cowen, 2023). In this study, the theory applies because foot patrols increase police visibility in public spaces and make offenders fear detection, arrest, and punishment. Foot patrols are especially relevant in streets, markets, transport centres, residential estates, informal settlements, and areas around businesses such as wine and spirits outlets. When officers are physically present and accessible, potential offenders may avoid crimes such as robbery, pickpocketing, mugging, drug peddling, vandalism, and street harassment. Routine Activity Theory, developed by Cohen and Felson (1979), explains that crime occurs when a motivated offender meets a suitable target without a capable guardian. Foot patrol officers act as capable guardians by disrupting crime opportunities and protecting vulnerable public spaces. Together, the two theories show that foot patrols deter crime by increasing perceived risk and reducing criminal opportunities.

Figure 1 shows the study’s conceptual framework based on the empirical and theoretical framework.

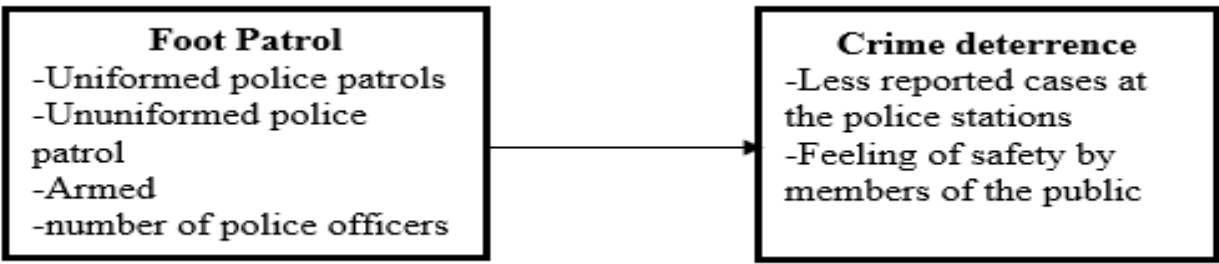


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey research design. This design was suitable because it helped the researcher collect data from different policing and community groups and examine the relationship between foot patrol as a police presence strategy and crime deterrence in Nairobi City County. The target population comprised 15,958 respondents from five sub-counties. These included 4,420 police officers, 192 National Government Administration Officers, 820 Community Policing officials, 6,166 Business Community officials, and 4,360 Nairobi Residence Association officials. The sample size was determined using Cochran’s formula at a 95 percent

confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error, producing a sample of 375 respondents. The allocated sample included 104 police officers, 5 National Government Administration Officers, 19 Community Policing officials, 145 Business Community officials, and 102 Nairobi Residence Association officials.

The study used a multi-stage sampling technique involving purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select police managers for interviews because of their supervisory and decision-making roles. Stratified and simple random sampling were used to select general duty police officers and other respondent groups from each stratum. Data were collected using questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. Quantitative data were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, summarized the responses. Ordinal logistic regression tested the relationship between foot patrol as a police presence strategy and perceived crime deterrence, while qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are based on the results from the data gathered from 302 questionnaire responses and 20 interviews.

Descriptive Statistics and Thematic Analysis

The objective of the study involved testing the effect of police foot patrols on crime deterrence in Nairobi City County. The findings are presented in terms of the main dimensions of the use of foot patrols, such as the extent of use, implementation ways, perceived effectiveness, the type of crimes that they deter, time of the day and location where they perform effectively in deterring crimes. Challenges faced in their applications, and recommendations to increase their effectiveness in deterring crimes.

Utilization and Conduct of Police Foot Patrols

This part dealt with the use and application of foot patrols in Nairobi. Since the two aspects were the key to the assessment of their role in crime deterrence. The levels of adoption, mode of operation, and implications of foot patrols were theoretically measured with the help of quantitative and qualitative data.

In order to measure utilization, respondents were requested to state whether police foot patrols were actively performed in their areas of jurisdiction, and the options of answers were represented as Yes, No, and Not Sure.

Table 1: Utilization of police foot patrols

Response Option	Assigned value	Percentage (%)
Yes	3	67.5%
No	1	20.7%
Not Sure	2	11.8%
Total		100.0%

Based on the findings provided in Table 1, 67.5 percent of the respondents agreed on the usage of foot patrols within their areas. Conversely, (20.7) percent cited no usage of foot patrols, and (11.8) percent were not sure. The categories of responses were given the numerical values: Yes (3), Not Sure (2), No (1). The average number of responses was 2.47 with a standard deviation of 0.81.

The 67.5% utilization showed that foot patrol as a police presence method was used extensively and enhanced the perceived potential of capture and deterrence of opportunistic offenders. The average of 2.47 further supported the fact that patrols, on average, were used in all the neighborhoods. In contrast, the standard deviation of 0.81 emphasized variability, thus showing there were areas that were under-patrolled. This can be attributed to understaffing and resources, which resulted in less coverage of the neighborhoods, which can be the reason behind the continued high crime rates within Nairobi.

Sherman and Weisburd (1995) also reported the above results as they observed that visible foot patrols increased informal social control and lowered crime in Kansas City. On the same note, Newham (2005) and Alemika and Chukwuma (2004) concluded that frequent foot patrols limited criminal behaviour in urban communities. At the local level, the National Police Service Strategic Plan (2019-2023) highlighted foot patrols as one of the key tactics to enhance visibility, reassure the population, and engage with the community.

Qualitative results supported these observations, according to a key informant (KI1), foot patrols were considered as normal aspects of the day-to-day work of the police.

“Foot patrols were made every day, particularly in the mornings and evenings, to keep order in the places of congestion, and to demonstrate that the police were on the move.”

To the general point of view, one of the inhabitants remarked:

“In my estate, the police officers used to be visible walking around the area during the night, and this gave the residents the impression that the place was under surveillance.”
(KI2)

These observations were of the opinion that visible foot patrols not only augment actual surveillance, but also the perceived surety of apprehension, an essential agent by which deterrence functions.

Theoretically, the use of foot patrols was a demonstration of the deterrence theory since the habitual presence of officers increased the risk calculations by offenders, as there was a high probability they would be caught. Simultaneously, the results were consistent with the routine activity theory because officers on foot patrol served as effective guardians in open areas, and the chances of committing a crime were minimized because motivated criminals and appropriate targets could not meet.

To analyze how the foot patrols were conducted to deter crime, the respondents were required to answer the questions about the typical state of the foot patrol teams and how the frequency of the foot patrols took place in their residential areas, whether it was a regular, irregular, or in some other pattern.

Table 2: How Foot Patrols Are Conducted

How Conducted	Percentage (%)
One officer per patrol	30.5%
Two officers per patrol	39.2%
More than two officers per patrol	, 21.8%
Regular/scheduled patrols	50.1%
Irregular/random patrols	37.0%
Accompanied by community policing	24.0%
Other	4.4%

The results detailed in Table 2 revealed that most patrol formations were two officers in a patrol (39.2%), one officer in a patrol (30.5%), and a higher number of officers than two per patrol (21.8%) regarding frequency. 50.1% of the respondents said that foot patrols were regularly used, 37.0% said that they were irregularly used, and 4.4% said that they were done differently. With the addition of numerical values (Regular = 3, Irregular = 2, other = 1), the mean score was 2.37 with a SD of 0.74.

The analysis in Table 4.10 showed that there were significant trends in the composition and frequency of police foot patrols in Nairobi County. Concerning composition, two-officer patrols (39.2%) prevailed, and they were the most preferred since officers were comfortable working in pairs to foster officer safety, mutual support and operational efficiency in covering bigger areas. Depending on the level of crime risks and the number of staff per neighborhood, single-officer patrols (30.5%) and multi-officer patrols exceeding two officers (21.8%) were used. This difference in patrol size enabled the police to strike a balance between covering, safety and responsiveness.

As for frequency, regular or scheduled patrols (50.1%) were the most common, with irregular or random patrols (37.0%) coming out second. The mean score obtained was 2.37, and a standard deviation of 0.74 revealed that a significant portion of the foot patrols were accomplished in routines that were predictable; still, there was a certain deviation across sub-counties. This implied that there were places that were probably understaffed and they had fewer or less frequent patrols, thus leaving them more vulnerable to opportunistic crime.

The above results indicated that frequent foot patrols, even in pairs, could have led to a higher risk perception by potential offenders, which could have lowered the opportunity to commit opportunistic crimes, such as petty theft, muggings and harassment. On the other hand, patrol irregularities that might be attributed to a lack of workforce might have predisposed a higher crime rate in the areas, which means that more regular deployment would have enhanced the deterrence effect of the police presence strategies in the entire Nairobi City County.

These deterrent mechanisms were also depicted through qualitative data. One of the key informants (KI1) gave an operational justification of the patrol composition and scheduling:

“Foot patrols were primarily operated in pairs as it was safer, and they were performing regular evening timetables in the locations with heavy human traffic.”

The deterrent effect of regular patrols was also pointed out by another important informant (KI2):

“People would not create trouble, particularly in the evenings when patrols were regular and officers were visible walking around.”

Theoretically, the behaviour of foot patrols accorded to the deterrence theory in the sense that it maximized the perceived threat and likelihood of being caught through visible patrols, frequent and high-staffed patrols. It was also based on routine activity theory, as paired and scheduled patrols enhanced guardianship in crime-prone areas, disrupted potential crime opportunities and limited access of offenders to viable targets. Together, the results revealed that the degree of use, as well as the way in which the foot patrols were performed, had direct effects on crime deterrence in Nairobi.

Effectiveness of Foot Patrols in Deterring Crime across Temporal and Spatial Contexts

This section tested the efficiency of the foot patrols in deterring crime in the Nairobi City County by combining an evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the patrols by the respondents and the variations that were observed over time and place.

In an effort to determine the effectiveness of foot patrols as a police presence measure, the respondents were first requested to indicate the level of effectiveness of foot patrols in crime deterrence within Nairobi County. Table 3 below presents the findings.

Table 3: Effectiveness of Foot Patrols in Deterring Crime

Response Option	Percentage (%)
Very Effective	21.9%
Effective	28.9%
Moderately Effective	25.8%
Less Effective	15.6%
Not Effective at All	7.8%
Total	100.0%

Table 3 presents the results, as 21.9% of the respondents rated foot patrols as very effective and 28.9% rated them as effective. Another 25.8% found foot patrols to be moderately effective. Conversely, 15.6 per cent perceived foot patrols as less effective and 7.8 per cent of them found it not to be effective at all. When the reaction was recorded using numbers (Very Effective = 5, Effective = 4, moderately Effective = 3, Less Effective = 2 and Not Effective at all = 1), the mean score calculated was 3.42 with a SD of 1.21.

The spread of the responses indicated that foot patrols were mainly seen as a good crime deterrent measure in the Nairobi City County. A total of 50.8 percent of respondents said either was very effective or effective. This positive perception was supported by the mean score of 3.42, which was above the middle of the scale. Nevertheless, 25.8% considered foot patrols as moderately effective, and 23.4% considered them less effective or not practical at all, which implied unequal distribution throughout the city of Nairobi. These data showed that in certain places, foot patrols might have been uneven or inadequate because of workforce limitations, and this might be the reason that crime was still rising in specific neighborhoods in spite of the application of these measures.

Other empirical studies corroborated these observations. Sherman and Weisburd (1995) conducted the Kansas City Foot Patrol Experiment, which revealed that regular foot patrols caused crime and fear of crime at the street level to decrease through the increase of police visibility. Alike results were also obtained by Weisburd et al. (2015), who discovered that foot patrols that were implemented on a regular basis in the crime hotspots had a measurable deterrent impact. Regionally, Newham (2005) found that robbery and assault had decreased after an increase in foot patrols in Johannesburg, whereas Alemika and Chukwuma (2004) also discovered the same to be true in Lagos. These papers were on the side of the argument that foot patrols worked when applied continuously, which echoed the Nairobi observations.

The qualitative data further supported these results. According to one of the key informants (KI 2),

“When the officers were going through estates and trading centres, the offenders were too scared to act since they would easily be detected and arrested.”

The other important informant (KI 6) observed that:

“Foot patrols worked only when they were regular, and crime rose approximately during those times when officers were hardly visible on the street.”

These word-to-letter reports pictured the influence of visibility and frequency on the actions of criminals, as well as the safety perceptions of the populace.

The results were consistent with the deterrence theory since the visible presence of officers on patrol enhanced the perceived degree of apprehension and deterred the possible criminal players. The use of regular foot patrols increased the visibility of the police both in the open and residential neighborhoods, which indicated that the police are active in the implementation and raised the perceived costs of offending.

Tightly associated with this deterrence impact, the results also represented the routine activity theory, as the foot patrol officers acted as effective guardians in the areas where inspired offenders and an adequate target had a likelihood of being present in the same place. Foot patrols interrupted the opportunities for crime and strengthened informal social control by keeping a constant presence and direct interaction with the community.

To determine the time aspect of the effectiveness of foot patrols, the respondents were requested to state the time of the day when the foot patrols were the most effective in preventing crime in Nairobi City County. Table 4.12 below shows the results.

Table 4: Time of Day When Foot Patrols Are Most Effective

Time of Day	Percentage (%)
Early morning (6 a.m.–10 a.m.)	15.2%
Midday (10 a.m.–2 p.m.)	17.3%
Afternoon (2 p.m.–6 p.m.)	21.9%
Evening (6 p.m.–10 p.m.)	26.1%
Night (10 p.m.–6 a.m.)	19.5%
Total	100.0%

As depicted in Table 4, the evening period (6.00 pm-10.00 p.m.) had the highest percentage of responses (26.1%), meaning that the most effective time when foot patrols were considered to be effective was during the evening. This implied that visibility of the police when the daylight was shifting to the night was of paramount importance in preventing crimes, especially when people were commuting, and business operations were still at their peak. The afternoon (2.00 p.m.-6.00 p.m.) was chosen by 21.9% of the respondents and underscored the relevance of patrols at the schools during the discharge of students and when the businesses are most active.

Nighttime patrols (10.00 p.m.- 6.00 a.m.) were considered by (19.5%) of the respondents, and, therefore, were relevant in controlling crimes that are related to low visibility, nighttime activities, and having more people staying in their homes, which exposes them to threats. Smaller percentages at midday (17.3) and early morning (15.2) indicated that these times were considered to be relatively safe because of the normalcy of social functioning and improved natural surveillance. Generally, the response distribution showed that the deterrent effect of foot patrols was strongly associated with the time aspect, and inadequate implementation during the high-risk times could have undermined the crime prevention initiatives in Nairobi.

These temporal explanations were reinforced by evidence from past studies. Weisburd et al. (2012) showed that concentrated police patrols when the number of people moving increased resulted in a greater deterrent effect as

compared to evenly distributed patrols. Braga and Welsh (2013) noted that foot patrols that were applied in late afternoon and evening hours interrupted opportunistic crimes by enhancing the guardianship during the high-risk time. In East Africa, it was found that criminal acts in Kampala were greater in the evening hours and that patrols of 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. in Mombasa markets and transport corridors effectively minimized robbery and pick pocketing (Tumwine and Kafeero, 2020 and Mugambi, 2021). These findings supported the significance of matching patrol schedules with times of crime.

These results were further supported by the qualitative information of the study. One of the key informants (KI 10) clarified that.

“Evening patrols were significant because that is when the citizens were heading home, and criminals exploited the fact that people could not see them; walking on foot would lead the criminals to second thoughts.”

Another key informant (KI 11) also reported that:

“When police presence was evident during the late afternoon and early evening, the citizens felt safer on the streets since they were most likely to be attacked when there were no police.”

Conceptually, the results were in accordance with the fundamental assumptions of the deterrence theory since the visible presence of the foot patrols at the time when crimes are at their highest resulted in the perceived positive assurance of being caught, which further discouraged the offenders from committing crimes. Simultaneously, the findings were in tandem with those of the routine activity theory, which elaborates on how foot patrols augmented competent guardianship at open areas where capable criminals and appropriate targets were most apt to meet. Based on the association between foot patrol presence and times of high risk and hotspots, the study proved that the greater the guardianship and improved perceptions of enforcement, the lower the chances of crime were, thus enhancing crime deterrence overall in Nairobi.

The research also aimed at establishing the areas where the foot patrols were considered the best in preventing crime in Nairobi. The respondents were requested to state the areas where they felt the presence of foot patrol was most effective in preventing crime. Table 5 below presents the results.

Table 5: Locations Where Foot Patrols Are Effective (Multiple Responses Allowed)

Location	Percentage (%)
Markets/trading centers	62.0%
Public transport stations	54.5%
Residential estates	52.3%
Informal settlements	41.4%
School zones	39.2%
Other	7.6%

The findings indicated the most common (62.0%) location at which foot patrols had an effect was the markets and trading centres, followed by the public transport stations (54.5) and residential estates (52.3). Other spaces,

including recreational parks, religious grounds and event venues, were also reported in a small percentage (7.6 per cent). The overall mean of all sites was 2.77, with a standard deviation of 1.12, and this was a moderate to high agreement on the effectiveness of foot patrols in various urban settings. Still, the variation was significant depending on the nature of the location type.

The statistics indicated that foot patrols were highly appreciated in places where social and economic life was high. To illustrate, high frequency in the markets and trading centres (62.0%) showed that visible policing in such places might help to discourage opportunistic crimes like pick-pocketing, small-scale theft, and harassment. On the same note, the distinctiveness of transport stations (54.5%) and residential estates (52.3%) indicated how people perceived foot patrols in enhancing guardianship where the mass population or where residential areas were highly populated, thus reducing the probability of robbery and assault. The smaller percentages in informal settlements (41.4%) and school zones (39.2%) suggested that patrols remained important, but the constraints on resources or uneven coverage could be the reason why perceived coverage was lower in areas with a high risk of crime. These results implied that strategic distribution of foot patrols in crowded and susceptible areas had the potential to improve crime prevention in Nairobi.

The observations were observed to be in line with previous empirical research. At an international level, Piza and O'Hara (2014) discovered that foot patrol in dense urban centres such as markets and transport centres had a high rate of street-level crime suppression. On the same note, Tuffin et al. (2006) found that community-based patrols enhanced security in residential estates and school areas because they led to public reassurance and reduced antisocial behaviour. Omari and Ochieng (2020) recorded decreases in petty crime in the Kisumu markets and informal settlements with foot patrol implementation, whereas Mwangi (2023) reported that foot patrols reduced drug-related crimes and youth offences in Nairobi school areas and transport hubs.

The results were further supported by the qualitative responses of respondents. One key informant (KI 20) noted:

“Foot patrols have been effective in our marketplaces and matatu stages since this is where most robberies and thefts occur. When the officers are in the street, such criminals pull away.”

One more crucial informant (KI 19) stressed the stress of safety in the residences and asserted that:

“Patrols are most required in schools and informal places. These are areas with a high number of youths who can easily be drawn into crime, and the patrols are used to maintain order.”

The findings were also in line with routine activity theory because the presence of visible foot patrols in areas with high opportunity enhanced guardianship and decreased the association of motivated offenders with the availability of appropriate targets that facilitated criminal activities, thus curbing crime opportunities. They were also representative of the deterrence theory, as the presence of officers increased the perceived likelihood of apprehension within markets, transport centres and residential places, deterring would-be offenders from committing. Foot patrols augmented actual and perceived surveillance by patrolling the streets and breaking the habits of violators. This, therefore, was an indication that the strategic location of the foot patrols in risky areas and high traffic in the City County of Nairobi was the key to effective crime deterrence.

Crimes Deterred by Foot Patrols

In this section, the study reveals the results of crimes perceived to be deterred by foot patrols in Nairobi. The respondents were given an opportunity to provide various categories of crime that they thought were affected by foot patrols. Table 6 summarizes the results.

Table 6: Crimes Deterred by Foot Patrols (Multiple Responses Allowed)

Type of Crime	Percentage (%)
Pickpocketing/petty theft	63.3%
Mugging and assaults	56.3%
Drug peddling	45.6%
Burglary/housebreaking	39.1%
Street harassment	43.8%
Other	5.5%

The results indicate that most crimes that were prevented by foot patrol were pickpocketing and petty theft (63.3%). Mugging and assaults were next at 56.3, meaning that foot patrols have the most significant effect on opportunistic and interpersonal crimes in the crowded public areas like markets, bus stops, and pedestrian paths. The ability to interfere with illicit acts and protect the vulnerable members of communities by disrupting drug peddling (45.6%) and street harassment (43.8%) was also quite discouraged. Burglary and housebreaking (39.1%) were less commonly reported, but the most notable one indicates that patrols in the residential areas help to decrease property crimes. Also, vandalism, Illegal Street vending, and loitering comprise the category of Other (5.5%), and these elements demonstrated a wider effect of foot patrols on the overall order.

By deciphering these numbers, it can be seen that foot patrols are most effective in high-profile crimes on the street, where officers are able to be directly seen by the criminal and the potential victims. The pickpocketing and mugging percentage is higher, implying that conspicuous guardianship does not encourage criminals to attack crowded or busy places. Reduced but significant percentages of burglary and housebreaking suggest that patrols also have a preventive influence in residential areas, but it is dependent on the frequency and coverage of patrols. On the whole, these findings suggest that foot patrol can improve the safety of the population by decreasing the risk, as well as the opportunity of crimes, which happen in both commercial and residential premises.

Previous studies confirm these findings. Weisburd and Eck (2004) carried out international research, which revealed that visible crimes like pick pocketing, assaults and drug-related crimes were highly reduced in high pedestrian traffic areas with foot patrols. The Philadelphia Foot Patrol Experiment (Ratcliffe et al., 2011) illustrated the negative impact of violent and property offences in the neighborhoods and suggested the application of foot patrols to reduce them. Sekhonyane and Louw (2002) also indicated that these foot patrols reduced petty theft, street harassment, and drug use in the inner-city areas of Johannesburg. Mutuma (2018) found in Kenya that foot patrols in the CBD of Nairobi caused the decline of mugging, pickpocketing, and harassment at the matatu stages and markets.

These patterns were also supported by the qualitative feedback of respondents. A key informant (KI 22) noted:

“We have seen that on days when the officers take regular walks around estates and trade areas, incidences of phone snatching and pickpocketing reduce tremendously. The criminals are aware that someone is monitoring them, and the population feels safe.”

On the same note, another key informant (KI 4) stated:

“Foot patrols do work, especially in regard to harassment and petty theft. In the presence of the officers, young men who typically bother people are scared away.”

These direct quotations highlight the psychological and preventive influence of visible foot patrols on offenders.

The results were in line with the routine activity theory, which placed greater importance on the capability of effective guardianship in crime prevention. Foot patrols made the police more visible and present in the areas; they broke the coexistence between the motivating factors and the appropriate target, especially in the highly prone areas, as well as when the people would be more active. Officers minimized the chances of opportunistic and street-level crime by having easy access and being conversant with local settings. The offender would not want to be in an area that they perceive to be under active patrol.

The results were also indicative of the deterrence theory that emphasizes the role of the perceived reality of being caught or not in shaping criminal behaviour. There was an increased perception of on-the-spot capture and arrest by offenders, particularly in high-risk areas with high population density. This perceived risk deterred crime by increasing the cost of offending, which was punishment.

Challenges Faced in Implementing Foot Patrols

Although generally foot patrol was considered to be useful in crime deterrence, respondents and key informants pointed out that there were a number of challenges that persist to compromise their full potential. The issue of insufficient police officers to maintain visible and continuous patrols in different neighborhoods was one of the major concerns. Such a shortage of workforce usually results in a selective patrolling whereby only some parts are covered frequently, mostly high-profile or central areas.

A key informant (KI 8) noted:

“You never see officers on foot in the estates; they pay attention to the main highway and to the busy stage areas, but the inner parts are unguarded.”

Also, there were extortion and corruption fears, especially among bar owners, illegal brew dealers and drug peddlers. Some officers, it was said, have regular patrol zones, and the local criminals know this, where they are bribed not to be scrutinized, and they leave the rest of the areas without police to keep watch.

As one of the key informants (KI 10) noted:

“Some patrols are merely about picking up kitu kidogo of changaa peddlers. When that occurs, the patrol moves in another direction without taking into consideration other crime hotspots.”

The problem of predetermined paths not only restricts the geographic areas but also reveals foreseeable policing methods that can be used by criminals. Another important informant (KI 13) elaborated:

“The criminals exactly know the time and places where the police pass, thus they would only need to wait until the officers pass before they start carrying on with their operations.”

Other issues mentioned were the absence of proper supervision that helps lower accountability and performance, and insufficient communication equipment, such as handheld radios, which affect successful coordination and prompt reaction during the process of foot patrol.

One more informant (KI 11) who participated in the interview in Eastleigh commented:

“We do not always have radios or other communication devices, and so we go around with no clue where to go and fail to react fast when any incident occurs around us.”

These issues indicate the structural and operational drawbacks undermining the general performance of the foot patrols in Nairobi.

Enhancing Foot Patrol Effectiveness

The respondents and key informants came up with a number of recommendations to effectively curb the challenges revealed to enhance the effectiveness of foot patrols as a crime deterrence strategy. The recruitment of officers and redistribution to guarantee sufficient officers to cover a broader and more regular area of patrol was also called upon consistently, especially in crime-prone and underserved areas.

One of the key informants (KI 14) highlighted:

“Had more officers been walking around, particularly in the estates, mugging and house break-ins would be cut down to a bare minimum.”

Another factor noted by the respondents is the value of randomizing the patrol routes in order to minimize predictability and reduce the chances of collusion or bribery. Another informant (KI 15) stated:

“Police should continue to alternate routes so that the criminals are never aware of when and where the police will come.”

Another essential suggestion to improve accountability and discipline in the conduct of foot patrol consisted of the improvement of supervisory supervision and the use of digital reporting instruments to make inspections unannounced.

A key informant (KI 15) explained:

“Patrol teams would respect their work and perform more responsibly if they knew that their actions were being partially watched in real-time.”

It was also highly recommended that all the foot patrol officers be equipped with functional communication radios in order to enhance coordination, reporting of incidents, and quick response. Lastly, the respondents demanded greater integration of foot patrol and community policing arrangements, such as periodic interactions with the residents and leaders of the local communities.

A key informant (KI 17) stated:

“The officers are likely to get people to share more information with them about criminals when they patrol with community leaders or frequently meet the people.”

As a whole, these steps were regarded as essential towards the improvement of the credibility, responsiveness and deterrent effect of foot patrols throughout Nairobi.

Inferential Statistics

The inferential results showed that foot patrols had a strong and statistically significant effectiveness in deterring crime in Nairobi City County. The ordinal logistic regression results indicated that foot patrols were statistically significant, with an odds ratio of 1.36 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that every increase in foot patrol deployment increased the likelihood of higher crime deterrence ratings by 36 percent. Therefore, foot patrols had a strong and positive relationship with crime deterrence.

The comparative analysis also showed that foot patrols explained 31.6 percent of the variation in perceived crime deterrence. This was higher than mobile patrols and static police presence, showing that foot patrols had the greatest deterrent value among the three strategies. Their effectiveness was linked to high visibility, direct interaction with residents, and their ability to operate in crowded urban spaces.

Foot patrols were especially useful in deterring street-level and opportunistic crimes such as petty theft, mugging, pickpocketing, street harassment, and drug peddling. The findings also showed that foot patrols were most effective in marketplaces, transport centres, residential estates, and other high-density areas where offenders and potential victims often meet.

The results further indicated that foot patrols were more effective during evening hours, when public movement is high and the risk of crime increases. These findings support Deterrence Theory because visible officers increase the perceived risk of arrest. They also support the Routine Activity Theory because foot patrol officers act as capable guardians who reduce opportunities for crime.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that foot patrols play an important role in deterring crime in Nairobi City County. Foot patrols had strong deterrent value because they increased police visibility, supported direct interaction between officers and residents, and improved informal surveillance in high-density urban areas. Their presence made offenders more aware of the risk of detection and arrest, especially in crowded places such as markets, transport centres, residential estates, and informal settlements. The study further concluded that the effectiveness of foot patrols depends on time and location. Foot patrols were more effective during evening hours, when public movement is high and the risk of street crime increases. They were also more useful in crime hotspots where offenders are likely to meet suitable targets. These findings show that foot patrols are most effective when they are regular, visible, and strategically deployed according to local crime patterns. Deterrence Theory and Routine Activity Theory were useful in explaining the findings. Foot patrols increased the perceived risk of apprehension and acted as capable guardians who reduced opportunities for crime in public spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the National Police Service should strengthen foot patrols by increasing the number of officers deployed in high-crime and high-density areas. More officers should be assigned to markets, transport centres, residential estates, informal settlements, entertainment zones, and business areas where street-level crimes are common. Foot patrol deployment should also be guided by crime patterns. Patrols should be concentrated in known hotspots and during high-risk hours, especially in the evening and at night, when criminal activities are more likely to occur. Special attention should be given to areas around wines and spirits outlets, bars, nightclubs, restaurants, and late-night trading centres because these places often attract large crowds and may create opportunities for theft, assault, drug peddling, disorder, and harassment. Patrol routes and schedules should be

varied regularly to reduce predictability and prevent offenders from studying police movement patterns. Regular foot patrols in markets, transport stages, residential estates, informal settlements, and wines and spirits outlets would increase visibility and reduce opportunities for opportunistic crime.

The study further recommends improved supervision and accountability among officers assigned to foot patrol duties. Digital patrol logs, regular supervisory checks, and clear performance targets should be used to monitor patrol coverage, officer conduct, response time, and community engagement. Community involvement should also be strengthened. Residents, business owners, community policing groups, local leaders, and operators of wines and spirits outlets should work closely with foot patrol officers by sharing timely information on crime trends, suspicious activities, and unsafe locations. The study also recommends a change in public attitude toward officers on foot patrol. Citizens and the business community should adopt more respectful and supportive engagement with officers on foot patrol. Respectful communication, cooperation during patrols, appreciation of their work, and participation in community safety initiatives can improve police morale and strengthen crime deterrence.

REFERENCES

- Alemika, E. E. O., & Chukwuma, I. C. (2004). *Crime and policing in Nigeria: Challenges and options*. CLEEN Foundation.
- Basford, L., Sims, C., Agar, I., Harinam, V., & Strang, H. (2021). Effects of one-a-day foot patrols on hot spots of serious violence and crime harm: A randomized crossover trial. *Cambridge Journal of Evidence-Based Policing*, 5, 119–133. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41887-021-00067-2>
- Braga, A. A., Turchan, B., Papachristos, A. V., & Hureau, D. M. (2019). Hot spots policing of small geographic areas affects crime. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 15(3), e1046. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1046>
- Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American Sociological Review*, 44(4), 588–608. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2094589>
- Emsley, C. (2009). *The Great British Bobby: A history of British policing from the 18th century to the present*. Quercus.
- Gatoto, D. M. (2013). *Influence of police patrol on crime reduction in Imenti South District, Meru County, Kenya* [Master's project, University of Nairobi]. University of Nairobi Digital Repository.
- Gill, C., Weisburd, D., Telep, C. W., Vitter, Z., & Bennett, T. (2014). Community-oriented policing to reduce crime, disorder and fear and increase satisfaction and legitimacy among citizens: A systematic review. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 10(4), 399–428. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-014-9210-y>
- Ileri, J. K. (2025). *Community policing and crime management in Mathare North informal settlement in Nairobi City, Kenya* [Master's project, Kenyatta University]. Kenyatta University Institutional Repository.
- Muia, D. (2019). *Analysis of community contribution towards community policing in Makina Village of Kibra Sub County, Nairobi County* [Thesis, University of Nairobi]. University of Nairobi Digital Repository.
- Nagin, D. S. (2013). Deterrence in the twenty-first century. *Crime and Justice*, 42(1), 199–263. <https://doi.org/10.1086/670398>

- Okwoyo, C. G. (2022). *Community policing in crime management in Ongata Rongai Sub-County, Kenya* [Master's project, Kenyatta University]. Kenyatta University Institutional Repository.
- Piza, E. L., & O'Hara, B. A. (2014). Saturation foot-patrol in a high-violence area: A quasi-experimental evaluation. *Justice Quarterly*, 31(4), 693–718. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2012.668923>
- Ratcliffe, J. H., Taniguchi, T., Groff, E. R., & Wood, J. D. (2011). The Philadelphia Foot Patrol Experiment: A randomized controlled trial of police patrol effectiveness in violent crime hotspots. *Criminology*, 49(3), 795–831. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2011.00240.x>
- Sherman, L. W., & Weisburd, D. (1995). General deterrent effects of police patrol in crime hot spots: A randomized controlled trial. *Justice Quarterly*, 12(4), 625–648. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418829500096221>
- Skogan, W. G. (2006). *Police and community in Chicago: A tale of three cities*. Oxford University Press.
- Swanson, C., & Livingstone, K. (2020). Situational crime prevention and crime prevention through environmental design. In A. Burrell & M. Tonkin (Eds.), *Property crime: Criminological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 203–219). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315208237-13>
- Tuffin, R., Morris, J., & Poole, A. (2006). *An evaluation of the impact of the National Reassurance Policing Programme*. Home Office Research Study 296. Home Office.
- Weisburd, D., & Braga, A. A. (Eds.). (2006). *Police innovation: Contrasting perspectives*. Cambridge University Press.
- Weisburd, D., & Eck, J. E. (2004). What can police do to reduce crime, disorder, and fear? *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 593(1), 42–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203262548>
- Weisburd, D., Groff, E. R., & Yang, S. M. (2012). *The criminology of place: Street segments and our understanding of the crime problem*. Oxford University Press.