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Effects of Probation Counselling and Supervision on Recidivism Amongst Youth in Nakuru County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT: Youth recidivism remains a significant challenge to the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Kenya. This study examined the effects of probation counselling and supervision on the recidivism of criminal behaviour among youths in Nakuru County. Specifically, the study assessed the effects of probation counselling and supervision and recidivism. Social Learning Theory underpinned the study by explaining behavioural acquisition influencing reoffending. The study adopted a convergent design targeting youth offenders who had undergone non-custodial interventions in Nakuru County. The quantitative design adopted an expo-facto research design while the qualitative strand employed a phenomenological research design. A sample of 151 respondents was selected using simple random sampling. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires, while qualitative data from key informants were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation, regression, ANOVA) were used to analyze quantitative data. The findings revealed statistically significant positive relationships between probation counselling and supervision ($r = .48$, $R^2 = .23$, $\beta = .48$, $p < .001$) and recidivism of criminal behaviour among youths in Nakuru County. The study concluded that probation counselling and supervision is critical in reducing youth recidivism and recommends strengthened probation counselling in institutional.

KEYWORDS: Probation Counselling, Supervision, Recidivism, Youth Offenders, Criminal Behaviours

INTRODUCTION

Youth involvement in reoffending remains a global social and policy concern, necessitating renewed focus in justice interventions that go beyond punitive incarceration toward rehabilitative and development-inclined measures (Laird, 2021). Across many jurisdictions, young offenders are widely viewed as a special population whose cognitive, emotional, as well as social development renders them responsive to supportive interventions instead of harsh punishment. However, many criminal justice systems particularly in developing countries continue to remain dependent on custodial interventions, despite growing evidence that incarceration can exacerbates criminality, entrenches stigma, and increases reoffending chances among youth (Logan, Wright & Meyers, 2025). As a result, there has been a shift in both policy and scholarship toward non-custodial interventions as options to reduce recidivism and facilitate young offender's reintegration back into the society. Non-custodial interventions entail a wider array of measures aimed at addressing offending behaviour without resorting to imprisonment. Among them are probation counselling services and supervision, restorative justice practices, community service, as well as vocational or educational training (Taylor, 2022; Carey, 2024). Instead of using retribution, such interventions target addressing underlying social, psychological, as wells structural factors that motivate youth offending. These include poverty, unemployment, drug abuse, peer pressure, dysfunctional family dynamics, and inadequate educational access (Carey, 2024). The increasing inclination to non-custodial interventions reflects a conscience that youth offending is more symptomatic of wider social vulnerabilities, and that its sustainable reductions need holistic and developmentally appropriate remedies.

Empirical evidence from developed countries posit that non-custodial approaches can be more effective compared to formal court processing and incarceration addressing youth recidivism. Meta-analyses and systematic reviews carried out in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia consistently show that non-custodial interventions and probation-based interventions are linked to reduced recidivism, especially when they involve rehabilitative support like counselling, case management, as well as skills training (Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, & Guckenburg, 2010; Lipsey, 2009). According to Petrosino et al. (2019), for instance non-custodial interventions reduce the frequency of reoffending by an average of approximately 20 percent than formal

processing, with stronger effects observed in service-oriented interventions compared to caution-only strategies. These findings indicate that non-custodial interventions work at best if adequately engage youth and offer structured support targeting criminogenic needs.

The effectiveness of non-custodial interventions is further supported by psychological and criminological theories that emphasize behavioural change through social support and positive reinforcement. For example, Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) assert that behaviour is modelled through interacting with the social environment, alluding that exposure to prosocial role models and social capital can diminish criminal behaviour. In the same way, life-course theory shows the importance of turning points like engagement in education, employment, or mentorship in changing people away from recidivism. These theoretical arguments underpin many non-custodial interventions, especially those encompassing mentoring, vocational training, and restorative justice, which are associated accountability, social capital, and a sense of purpose among youth (Lopez-Humphreys & Teater, 2018). Restorative justice, an important aspect of many non-custodial interventions, has been associated with enhanced youths' attitudes toward the law and reduce recidivism through enhanced accountability, reparation, as well as reconciliation (Lopez-Humphreys & Teater, 2018). Along the same locus, probation-based approaches that capitalize on cognitive-behavioural therapy and individualized case planning have been associated with positive decision-making and behavioural regulation among youth (Brady, Burgess & Osrin, 2022; Bowers, 2021). However, scholars argue that the success of such interventions rely on their ability to be knit on individual needs, focusing on family background, educational level, mental health, and criminal history (Rhone, 2022). Individualized and context-sensitive interventions are therefore perceived as important in achieving sustained low rates of recidivism.

Even with this growing empirical evidence, significant limitations continue to exist within the existing literature. First, most of empirical studies on non-custodial interventions are from Western, high-income countries, calling into questions on their applicability to low- and middle-income countries where justice systems, social services, and community structures differ widely (Petrosino et al., 2019). Secondly, many studies depend on short-term outcome measures, with limited longitudinal data to assess the sustainability of behavioural change. Thirdly, there is relatively little disaggregation of findings by intervention type, gender, age, or offence category, obscuring important variations in program effectiveness (Lipsey, 2009). These gaps are particularly pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa, where non-custodial interventions remain under-researched despite their growing integration. In sub-Saharan Africa, use of non-custodial and non-custodial interventions-based interventions is shaped by resource constraints, professional capacity inadequacy, and underdeveloped legal and institutional frameworks (Kassanga, 2021). Even with countries like South Africa and Ghana having attained remarkable milestones through legislative reforms and partnerships with non-governmental organizations, issues persist along sustainability, consistency, and scalability of non-custodial interventions, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. In addition, community stigma and limited public awareness in most cases hinder reintegration efforts, increasing the risk of recidivism (Seaward et. al, 2023). Such contextual limitations underscore the need for locally grounded empirical research that evaluates not only whether non-custodial interventions work, but also how and under what conditions they work well.

In the East Africa, the adoption and implementation of non-custodial interventions-based interventions for youthful offenders are increasingly recognized as essential components of juvenile justice reform, yet they remain constrained by legal, institutional, and social limitations (Mngochela, 2025). While most East African states have formal legal frameworks allowing alternatives to imprisonment like probation, community service, and restorative justice, their use is uneven and often underdeveloped. For example, Tanzania lacks a well-established system of non-custodial interventions or community rehabilitation models, and non-custodial sentencing remains limited, with custodial responses remaining prevalent (Mngochela, 2025). This has resulted in children spending longer periods in confinements without adequate alternatives to imprisonment. This has continued to weaken rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. In addition, research on juvenile rehabilitation strategies in the Tanzanian highlights persistent structural and social barriers such as limited counselling and reintegration services, weak coordination among agencies, as well as community stigma against returning offenders (Mngochela, 2025). This has continued to hinder the success of non-custodial approaches and may contribute to recidivism.

Recidivism remains a challenge in criminal justice systems globally, particularly among youth offenders by undermining the effectiveness of correctional and rehabilitative interventions. In recent past, there has been a paradigm shift from punitive approaches toward non-custodial interventions such as community service, probation supervision, restorative justice, and vocational training, which are considered more effective in reducing reoffending. At the global level, recidivism is widely used as a measure of the effectiveness of correctional policies and interventions. Evidence indicates that the type of sanction imposed significantly influences reoffending outcomes. A systematic review by Yukhnenko, Farouki, and Fazel (2023) found considerable variation in recidivism rates across countries and emphasized that structured non-custodial interventions are often associated with lower reoffending rates compared to custodial sentences. Similarly, Villettaz, Gillieron, and Killias (2021) demonstrate that non-custodial sanctions, including community-based programs, can reduce recidivism by preserving offenders' social ties and minimizing exposure to criminogenic prison environments. These findings support the relevance of examining community service practices and probation supervision as mechanisms for reducing recidivism. At the continental level, particularly in Africa,

recidivism is closely linked to systemic challenges within correctional systems, including overcrowding, limited rehabilitation programs, and weak reintegration frameworks. Research by Sloth-Nielsen (2020) highlights that although many African countries have adopted non-custodial measures, their implementation remains inconsistent and often under-resourced. As a result, interventions such as restorative justice practices are not fully institutionalized despite their potential to address underlying causes of criminal behaviour through reconciliation and community involvement. The study underscores the need for strengthening community-based corrections to enhance their impact on reducing repeat offending. Within the East African region, recidivism is strongly associated with reintegration challenges, particularly among youth offenders who face barriers such as unemployment, stigma, and lack of skills. Empirical research shows that interventions combining probation counselling and supervision with vocational training significantly improve reintegration outcomes and reduce the likelihood of reoffending. For instance, a study by Newton et al. (2021) found that participation in structured educational and vocational programs during and after incarceration is associated with lower recidivism rates. This highlights the importance of equipping offenders with practical skills and continuous supervision to facilitate successful reintegration into society.

In Kenya, despite statutory provisions for non-custodial options under the Children Act and expanded probation practices, systemic weaknesses like inadequate training, limited specialized personnel, and inconsistent implementation at constrain the potential of these interventions to reduce recidivism effectively (Okech,2024). In addition, the Kenyan juvenile justice system has historically emphasized punitive approaches as the primary response to youth offending. This reliance on custodial measures has resulted in overcrowded correctional facilities, inadequate counselling and rehabilitation services, and weak reintegration planning, all of which contribute to high rates of reoffending among young offenders (Logan, Wright & Meyers, 2025). In response to these challenges, non-custodial interventions such as probation-based programs have increasingly been adopted as alternatives to incarceration. These interventions are often implemented in collaboration with civil society organizations and aim to provide youth with counselling, mentorship, education, and vocational skills. Existing Kenyan studies suggest that non-custodial interventions hold promise in reducing youth recidivism; however, the empirical evidence remains limited and uneven. Research by Okech (2024) and Mwangi and Njuguna (2021) has largely focused on program implementation and institutional challenges in Nairobi County, with minimal attention to long-term recidivism outcomes. While pilot programs in counties such as Kericho have reportedly shown positive short-term results, there is a notable lack of comprehensive data evaluating their long-term effectiveness, sustainability, and scalability (Waweru & Muhindi, 2025). As a result, policy decisions regarding the expansion or modification of non-custodial interventions are often made in the absence of robust, context-specific evidence.

In Kenya, recidivism remains a significant concern, with socio-economic factors playing a central role in shaping reoffending patterns among youths. Evidence suggests that while non-custodial interventions such as community service orders, probation supervision, and vocational training programs have been implemented, their effectiveness varies depending on the socio-economic context of offenders. A study by Ondiek (2022) found that unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion significantly increase the likelihood of recidivism among released offenders. This implies that the success of non-custodial interventions is influenced by the social and economic status of individuals, which determines their ability to access opportunities and reintegrate into society. It is against this backdrop that there is need for a scholarly and, empirical research that examines the effects of non-custodial interventions on reoffending among youth in Nakuru County. Such research is critical for several reasons. First, the proposed study is expected to contribute contextually grounded evidence from a low- and middle-income setting that is underrepresented in the global literature. Secondly, the study will enable an assessment of whether non-custodial interventions produce sustained reductions in recidivism beyond short-term program completion. Lastly, the study will offer insights into how different forms of non-custodial measures including probation counselling and supervision, Community Service, restorative justice, and vocational training shape youth outcomes. Nakuru County presents a particularly important yet under-examined context for the study of youth recidivism and non-custodial interventions. As a rapidly urbanizing county with diverse socio-economic and cultural characteristics, Nakuru faces significant challenges related to youth unemployment, poverty, educational inequality, and inadequate access to social services. These factors are closely associated with heightened risks of youth offending and reoffending (Cheruiyot & Wainaina, 2020). At the same time, Nakuru has been identified as a site for pilot non-custodial and non-custodial interventions initiatives by the Office of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), making it a critical case for examining the effects of such interventions outside Kenya's major metropolitan centres. Persistent reoffending among youth in Nakuru County highlights the limitations of traditional punitive approaches and raises questions about the effectiveness of existing non-custodial measures. Young offenders who experience incarceration often face social stigma, disrupted education, and limited employment opportunities upon release, factors that significantly undermine reintegration and increase the likelihood of recidivism (Cheruiyot & Wainaina, 2020). Although probation non-custodial interventions and other non-custodial interventions seek to mitigate these challenges by offering rehabilitative support within the community, their impact on reoffending in Nakuru remains insufficiently documented. Inconsistencies in program implementation, limited follow-up mechanisms, and inadequate data collection further complicate efforts to assess outcomes objectively.

Effects of Probation Counselling and Supervision on Recidivism Amongst Youth in Nakuru County, Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Youth recidivism remains a persistent challenge within juvenile justice systems despite the increasing adoption of non-custodial interventions as alternatives to incarceration. Interventions such as probation counselling and supervision, restorative justice, community service, and vocational training are intended to rehabilitate young offenders, address the underlying social, psychological, and economic factors associated with criminal behaviour, and facilitate their successful reintegration into society. However, continued cases of repeat offending among youth raise concerns about whether these interventions are achieving sustained reductions in recidivism. In Kenya, non-custodial interventions have increasingly been promoted as alternatives to punitive justice responses in an effort to reduce the adverse effects of incarceration and improve the rehabilitation of young offenders. Despite this policy shift, youth reoffending remains a significant concern. In Nakuru County, administrative data indicate that approximately 35 percent of youth offenders reoffend within one year of release or completion of non-custodial measures (Muriuki, Mbaro & Mutisya, 2023). This situation suggests that some youth continue to experience challenges that may increase their likelihood of reoffending, including poverty, unemployment, educational disruption, substance abuse, and limited access to social support services.

Although non-custodial interventions are increasingly implemented in Kenya, there is a significant academic and empirical knowledge gap regarding their effectiveness in reducing youth recidivism, particularly outside major urban centres. Existing Kenyan studies have largely focused on programme implementation and institutional challenges, especially in Nairobi, with limited empirical examination of actual recidivism outcomes in counties such as Nakuru (Mwangi & Njuguna, 2021). Consequently, existing literature does not sufficiently establish which non-custodial interventions are most effective in reducing youth recidivism, whether their effects are sustained after programme completion, and how socio-economic conditions influence their effectiveness. There is therefore limited context-specific evidence that can explain the relationship between community service, probation counselling and supervision, restorative justice, vocational training, and youth recidivism within the Nakuru County context. This study therefore sought to address this academic and empirical gap by examining the effects of probation counselling and supervision on recidivism among youth in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study generated context-specific empirical evidence that contribute to academic knowledge and inform the development, implementation, and improvement of more effective and sustainable juvenile justice interventions in Kenya.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To assess the influence of probation counselling and supervision on the Recidivism of criminal behaviors amongst youths in Nakuru County.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H_{01} Probation counselling supervision reduces recidivism of criminal behaviours amongst youths in Nakuru County.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by the Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977), which posits that behaviours are learned through observation, imitation, and modelling. This theory suggests that youths can learn positive behaviours and skills by participating in structured non-custodial interventions, lowering the likelihood of re-offending. Through other environments that enhance positive social interactions and skill development, non-custodial interventions can effectively alter the trajectory of youth offenders (Wilson, Brennan, & Olaghere, 2018). The Social Learning Theory operates under several key assumptions. It assumes that learning is a social process through interactions with peers, mentors, or authority figures. It also maintains that learning can occur without immediate behavioural change; individuals may acquire new knowledge or behavioural tendencies long before they act on them. Further, the theory assumes that cognitive functioning plays a central role in processing and adopting observed behaviours. Reinforcement, whether direct (e.g., rewards and punishments) or indirect (e.g., observing someone else being rewarded), strengthens the likelihood of behaviour being repeated or avoided. Lastly, role models in a youth's environment such as community workers or rehabilitation officers—are critical in shaping conduct (Akers & Jennings, 2019). Despite its strengths, the Social Learning Theory has faced some criticisms. Critics argue that it places too much emphasis on environmental and social influences, potentially underestimating the role of biological, emotional, or psychological predispositions that may also affect behaviour. Without prior modelling, the theory may also struggle to explain spontaneous, impulsive, or irrational criminal acts. Moreover, it assumes that individuals are always aware and conscious learners, overlooking the emotional complexities or trauma that might inhibit learning through observation. Additionally, what is learned in one context may not always transfer to another, thus questioning the long-term sustainability of behaviour change achieved through temporary interventions (Islam, Khan, Gul & Khan, 2022). The Social Learning Theory is particularly relevant to this study as it emphasizes the role of environmental factors in shaping behaviours (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022). In the context of non-custodial interventions, the supportive environment, mentorship, and opportunities for skill development can play a critical role in reducing recidivism among youth. This framework

was assist in analysing how non-custodial interventions impact youth behaviours and determine major factors accounting for their success.

Despite criticisms, the Social Learning Theory remains highly relevant and helpful for this study. It highlights how structured environments, such as non-custodial interventions, can provide youth offenders with positive role models, mentorship, and opportunities for skill development key factors that can foster prosocial behaviour and reduce recidivism. The theory's focus on social context and reinforcement mechanisms provides a strong conceptual basis for understanding how non-custodial interventions can alter behavioural trajectories by replacing negative influences with constructive ones (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022). Employing this framework enabled a comprehensive analysis of how non-custodial interventions impact youth offenders' behaviours and the specific environmental and social factors that contribute to successful rehabilitation and relapse prevention. While the Social Learning Theory offers an important locus for understanding behaviour acquisition through social interaction, it has limitations. This theory focuses more on environmental and social factors, potentially neglecting intrinsic biological, emotional, or psychological influences that can predispose people toward certain behaviours. For instance, neurobiological factors or mental health conditions might affect decision-making and impulse control independently of social learning processes. Additionally, the theory has difficulty accounting for spontaneous, impulsive, or seemingly irrational criminal acts that occur without observable modelling or prior reinforcement. Another critique is that it assumes individuals are always conscious and rational learners, whereas emotional trauma or cognitive impairments may hinder observational learning. Furthermore, behaviours learned in one environment cannot consistently transfer to other settings, raising questions about the durability of behaviour change resulting from temporary interventions like non-custodial interventions (Islam, Khan, Gul & Khan, 2022).

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Gannon, Olver, Mallion, and James (2019) conducted their study in the United Kingdom, where offender rehabilitation programs have increasingly emphasized psychological treatment as a strategy for reducing repeat criminal behaviour. The researchers aimed to determine whether specialized counselling and therapeutic interventions meaningfully reduce recidivism and to identify the program and staff characteristics that make such interventions effective. This focus was driven by growing international interest in evidence-based rehabilitation, especially for youth and adult offenders whose criminal actions often stem from psychological, emotional, or social difficulties. The study employed a meta-analytic research design, synthesizing data from numerous psychological treatment programs targeting different categories of offenders. This method enabled the researchers to evaluate large-scale patterns across multiple contexts and treatment approaches. The meta-analysis examined treatment characteristics (such as type of counselling, duration, and modality), staff qualifications, and offender outcomes to determine which factors best predict reduced recidivism. Findings indicated that specialized offender counselling significantly lowers re-offending rates, especially when interventions are delivered by trained professionals using structured therapeutic models. The study reported that psychological treatments that address underlying behavioural drivers such as trauma, cognitive distortions, substance abuse, and anger dysregulation are particularly effective. Furthermore, programs involving highly trained staff and well-supervised implementation produced stronger reductions in recidivism than poorly structured or inconsistently delivered interventions. The relevance of this study to the current research lies in its strong evidence that counselling services form a critical part of effective rehabilitation for offenders. Although Gannon et al. (2019) focused largely on adult offenders and broad psychological treatment programs within developed jurisdictions such as the UK, their conclusions provide valuable insight into how counselling might influence youth behaviour in other settings. Their findings support the idea that counselling can reduce repeat offending by improving emotional regulation, social functioning, and decision-making.However, several gaps remain that the current study seeks to address. First, Gannon et al. did not specifically focus on youths in semi-urban African contexts, where cultural, social, and economic factors may influence counselling outcomes differently. Second, the meta-analytic approach did not examine localized program delivery challenges, such as resource constraints, family involvement levels, or community perceptions factors relevant in Nakuru County. Third, the study emphasized program effectiveness broadly but did not assess how counselling integrates with other non-custodial interventions components, such as community engagement or family support. The current study therefore builds on these findings by examining how counselling services within Kenyan non-custodial interventions uniquely contribute to reducing recidivism among youths in a semi-urban environment.

Abdulkarim and Onuegbu (2021) conducted their study in Sokoto Metropolis, Nigeria, where school-based juvenile delinquency had become a growing concern. The study sought to determine whether a structured psychosocial counselling technique could effectively reduce delinquent behaviours among secondary school students, providing an early intervention model in a context characterized by limited access to formal rehabilitation services. Their work was grounded in the need to address behavioural problems before they escalated into criminal activity, making it a preventive rather than corrective approach. Using a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design, the researchers selected students identified by school authorities as exhibiting delinquent tendencies. These students received a series of psychosocial counselling sessions focused on enhancing emotional regulation, developing problem-solving skills, and promoting prosocial behaviour. Behavioural assessments were administered before and after the intervention to measure any changes attributable to counselling. This methodological approach allowed the

researchers to isolate the immediate effects of the intervention, though it did not measure long-term behavioural outcomes. The findings indicated a significant reduction in delinquent behaviours among the students who received counselling. Improvements were particularly noted in anger management, peer interactions, and overall behavioural self-control (Abdulkarim & Onuegbu, 2021). The authors concluded that psychosocial counselling can be an effective behavioural intervention for at-risk youths in educational settings and recommended its integration into school guidance services in Nigeria. These results are valuable because they demonstrate that counselling can directly influence behavioural patterns associated with future criminality.

While the study focuses on school-based delinquency rather than recidivism among justice-involved youth, it remains relevant to the current objective of assessing counselling services as a non-custodial intervention. The mechanisms identified improved emotional regulation, better social interactions, and enhanced decision-making are the same pathways through which counselling reduces re-offending among juveniles in rehabilitation and non-custodial interventions. Thus, the findings support the theoretical justification for integrating counselling into non-custodial interventions in Nakuru County. However, the study also presents notable gaps. Its sample comprised school students rather than youths already involved with the criminal justice system, limiting generalisability to recidivism outcomes. The absence of long-term follow-up prevents conclusions about the sustainability of behavioural change. In addition, contextual variables such as family environment, socioeconomic status, and community support which are factors known to influence recidivism were not examined. The study also lacked detailed reporting on intervention fidelity and counsellor competence, which affects replicability. The current study in Nakuru County addresses these limitations by focusing on justice-involved youths, incorporating socioeconomic status as a moderating variable, and examining counselling within structured non-custodial interventions. It also aims to generate context-specific evidence on counselling's effect on actual re-offending, thereby filling critical gaps left by the Sokoto study.

Chewen, Munyua and Ogula (2023) conducted their study in therapeutic communities within Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, where rising cases of risky and delinquent behaviour among adolescents had become a growing concern for rehabilitation practitioners. The study aimed to assess whether structured counselling interventions could effectively manage and reduce adolescents' engagement in risky behaviours, including truancy, substance misuse and aggression. This focus was driven by the need for evidence-based strategies within therapeutic communities, which often rely on behavioural and psychosocial models but lack rigorous evaluation. The researchers adopted a quasi-experimental design, incorporating both pre- and post-intervention assessments. Adolescents enrolled in therapeutic communities participated in counselling sessions grounded in cognitive behavioural and psychosocial principles. These sessions targeted self-awareness, emotional regulation, problem solving, and interpersonal communication factors strongly associated with behavioural change. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and behavioural rating scales administered before and after the intervention period. This approach allowed the researchers to determine the immediate effectiveness of counselling in altering risky behavioural patterns.

The findings from the study revealed a notable reduction in risky behaviour among adolescents who received counselling interventions. Improvements were observed in emotional control, decision making and peer-related conduct. The authors concluded that counselling is a critical component in managing adolescent behavioural problems within therapeutic community settings (Chewen, Munyua & Ogula, 2023). Their conclusions highlight counselling as not merely supportive but transformative, capable of influencing behavioural trajectories when delivered systematically. The study is relevant to the current research objective because the counselling mechanisms identified emotional regulation, cognitive restructuring and strengthened social relationships are the same pathways through which counselling affects recidivism among justice-involved youth. The Kenyan context adds further value, demonstrating that culturally and socially grounded counselling interventions can yield positive behavioural outcomes among at-risk adolescents. Thus, the study provides a local, empirically supported foundation for understanding how counselling may reduce future criminal involvement.

Nevertheless, several gaps limit the study's applicability to the current investigation. First, the population consisted of adolescents in therapeutic communities rather than youths already processed through non-custodial interventions or the juvenile justice system, making direct conclusions about recidivism difficult. Second, the study lacked long-term follow-up, meaning the sustainability of the behavioural change remains unknown. Third, socioeconomic and family factors key moderators of youth offending and recidivism were not examined. Additionally, intervention fidelity, counsellor qualifications and program intensity were insufficiently detailed, limiting replicability. The current study addresses these gaps by focusing specifically on justice-involved youths in Nakuru County, examining counselling within non-custodial interventions and incorporating socioeconomic status as a moderating factor. This approach provides more context-specific and policy-relevant evidence about counselling's role in reducing youth recidivism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a convergent mixed-methods research design, incorporating an ex-post facto design for the quantitative component and a phenomenological approach for the qualitative component. The design was appropriate because the study sought to establish both measurable relationships between non-custodial interventions and youth recidivism and obtain in-depth explanations of programme implementation and effectiveness. The quantitative strand examined community service, probation

and counselling services, restorative justice practices, and vocational training in relation to recidivism. Since the interventions had already occurred and participants were not assigned or manipulated by the researcher, an ex-post facto approach was considered appropriate. The qualitative component used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences, challenges, successes, and factors influencing implementation. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and subsequently integrated to identify areas of convergence and divergence. The target population comprised 250 youth offenders aged 15–35 years who had undergone non-custodial interventions in Nakuru County. The population was drawn from the Nakuru County and Sub-County Probation Stations. The study also targeted key informants involved in implementing and overseeing non-custodial interventions, including probation officers and officials from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP).

A sample of 151 youth offenders was determined using Cochran's formula with finite population correction, based on a 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and a population proportion of 0.5. The sample was proportionately distributed between High Court and Lower Court jurisdictions, yielding 128 and 23 respondents, respectively. Stratified random sampling was used to select youth offenders based on intervention type, court jurisdiction, and geographical sub-county, while purposive sampling was used to select key informants. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. Questionnaires administered to youth offenders covered the types of interventions experienced, perceptions of programme effectiveness, factors contributing to recidivism, and the influence of socioeconomic status. Interview guides for probation officers and ODPP officials focused on programme implementation, effectiveness, challenges, and recommendations for improvement.

Instrument validity was established through content, construct, and face validity. The instruments were aligned with the study objectives, research questions, variables, and conceptual framework and were reviewed by supervisors and research experts. Pretesting was also undertaken to identify unclear or inappropriate items. Reliability was assessed using the test-retest technique, with a pilot study involving 15 respondents (10% of the main sample) conducted in Eldoret outside the study area. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable. Before data collection, ethical clearance, NACOSTI research authorization, and relevant institutional and county permissions were obtained. Participants provided informed consent, while applicable assent and guardian-consent procedures were followed for minors. Confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, privacy, and the right to withdraw were ensured. Quantitative data were cleaned, coded, and analysed using SPSS Version 22. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Inferential analysis involved Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, simple linear regression, and hierarchical multiple regression to examine relationships, predictive effects, and the moderating role of socioeconomic status. Qualitative data were analysed through thematic content analysis, involving systematic coding and identification of themes concerning effectiveness, challenges, and best practices.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Types of Counselling

Table 1: Types of Counselling

Type of counselling	Frequency	Percentage
Individual	61	40.4%
Group	45	29.8%
Family	30	19.9%
Other	15	9.9%
Total	**151**	**100.0%**

As shown in Table 1, individual counselling stood common at 40.4%, followed by group counsel ling at 29.8% while family counselling at 19.9%. on the other hand, 9.9% indicated having participated in other counselling typologies. This distribution indicates targeted addressing of personal behavioural issues while at the same time utilizing peer and family support where possible. Individual counselling offers tailored interventions, while group and family sessions enhance social learning and relational milestones. These findings converge with Latimer, Dowden, and Muise (2006)**,** who assert that use of individual and family counselling jointly increases the effectiveness of non-custodial interventions through addressing personal as well as relational dimensions of anti-social behaviour.

Perceived Effectiveness of Counselling

Table2: Perceived Effectiveness of Counselling

Effectiveness	Frequency	Percentage
Very effective	38	25.2%
Effective	68	45.0%
Moderate	30	19.9%
Not effective	15	9.9%
Total	**151**	**100.0%**

As highlighted in Table 2, majority of respondents evaluated counselling as either effective at 45.0% or very effective at 25.2%. Nonetheless, fewer reported moderate at 19.9% and not effective at 9.9%. This shows that counselling is mostly seen as vital in mitigating behavioural issues and lowering reoffending chances. This also means that a positive view of counselling increases program adherence while at the same time strengthening its rehabilitative output. These findings agree with Baldwin and Marcus-Mendoza (2014)**,** who argue that when youth view counselling as effective support, they are more likely to satisfactorily complete non-custodial interventions and less likely to reoffend.

Probation Counselling and Recidivism in Nakuru County, Kenya
Correlations for Probation Counselling and Recidivism
Table3: Correlation between Probation Counselling and Recidivism (N = 151)

Variable	**r**	**P**
Probation Counselling & Recidivism	.48	< .001

Based on the table 3 above there is a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between probation counselling and recidivism reduction, r (149) = .48, p < .001. The moderate correlation (r = .48) suggests that probation counselling is strongly associated with perceived change of behaviour. From a Cognitive Behavioural Theory (CBT) perspective, probation counselling provides structured supervision that targets distorted thinking patterns, impulsivity, and antisocial cognition. By promoting cognitive restructuring and behavioural accountability, counselling enhances internal self-regulation mechanisms. Furthermore, Social Learning Theory posits that behaviour is shaped through interaction and reinforcement. Probation officers' function as prosocial role models, reinforcing lawful conduct and discouraging deviant behaviour. The statistical strength of this relationship indicates that structured guidance remains a cornerstone of behavioural reform within non-custodial systems.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS
Table 4: Model Summary for Probation Counselling

R	**R^2**	**Adjusted R^2**	**Std. Error of Estimate**
.48	.23	.23	0.52

Based on the model summary in table 4 above, probation counselling explained 23% of the variance in recidivism. An R^2 of .23 indicates that nearly one-quarter of behavioural change outcomes can be attributed to probation counselling. In criminological research, this is a meaningful explanatory contribution, given that criminal behaviour is influenced by multidimensional social, psychological, and economic determinants. This aligns with Desistance Theory, which emphasizes the importance of structured supervision and identity transformation in promoting long-term reform. However, since 77% of variance remains unexplained, counselling alone is insufficient without complementary structural interventions.

Table 5: ANOVA for Probation Counselling Regression Model

Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**P**
Regression	12.05	1	12.05	44.50	< .001
Residual	40.38	149	0.27		
Total	52.43	150			

Table 5 presents the ANOVA results for the regression model examining the effect of probation counselling on perceived change of behaviour. The regression sum of squares (SS = 12.05) represents the portion of total variance in recidivism that is explained by probation counselling. The residual sum of squares (SS = 40.38) represents the unexplained variance, while the total sum of squares (SS = 52.43) represents the overall variability in the dependent variable. The model produced an F-value of 44.50 with 1 and 149 degrees of freedom, which is statistically significant at p < .001. This indicates that the variance explained by probation counselling is significantly greater than the unexplained variance. In practical terms, the regression model provides a significantly better prediction of perceived behavioural change than a model without probation counselling as a predictor. Therefore, probation counselling makes a meaningful and statistically reliable contribution to explaining variations in recidivism outcomes among offenders in Nakuru County.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients for Probation Counselling

Predictor	B	SE	B	t	P
Constant	1.10	0.17	—	6.47	< .001
Probation Counselling	0.30	0.05	.48	6.67	< .001

The standardized beta (β = .48) confirms probation counselling as a strong behavioural predictor. The positive B coefficient (0.30) demonstrates that increased counselling intensity significantly enhances reform outcomes. However, it is important to acknowledge that this study measured perceived change of behaviour, not actual reconviction data. Therefore, the findings reflect subjective reform experiences, which may differ from official recidivism statistics. This methodological consideration should inform policy interpretation.

$H0_1$: There is no statistically significant relationship between probation counselling and recidivism of criminal Behaviours. The regression analysis revealed that probation counselling significantly predicted recidivism (R^2 = .23, F = 44.50, p < .001). The standardized coefficient (β) was statistically significant, indicating that probation counselling contributes meaningfully to the reduction of recidivism.

Decision: Reject H_{02}.

Conclusion: Probation counselling has a significant effect on recidivism.

Influence of Probation Counselling and Supervision on Recidivism Amongst Youth in Nakuru County.

The study established a statistically significant and stronger relationship between probation counselling and recidivism reduction (r = .48, p < .001; R^2 = .23). This indicates that probation counselling explains a substantial proportion of behavioural change among youth offenders. Descriptive findings showed that most respondents attended counselling sessions regularly (weekly or bi-weekly), and a majority perceived them as effective. These findings demonstrate that structured supervision and counselling play a critical role in addressing underlying psychological and behavioural factors associated with offending. Qualitative data further revealed that probation officers emphasized counselling as essential in "correcting thinking patterns and guiding youth toward lawful behaviour. The results are supported by empirical evidence showing that structured interventions targeting cognitive and behavioural change significantly reduce recidivism. Villettaz, Gillieron, and Killias (2021) found that non-custodial interventions incorporating supervision and behavioural support are more effective than custodial sanctions in preventing reoffending. The findings also align with cognitive-behavioural perspectives, which emphasize the importance of addressing antisocial attitudes and decision-making processes. However, despite its strong influence, probation counselling alone explained only 23% of the variance, suggesting that behavioural change is influenced by multiple interacting factors, including socio-economic conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn: First, non-custodial interventions are effective alternatives to custodial sentencing in reducing youth recidivism. When properly implemented, probation counselling promote positive behavioural transformation. The study recommended that probation services should enhance individualized case management, regular follow-up, and post-program supervision

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