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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Criminology & Criminal Justice*

Community inclusion and victim satisfaction in restorative justice practices in Western Region, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Restorative justice is shaped by community dynamics, which can either support or hinder victim healing. This article investigates community inclusion's role in enhancing victim satisfaction in Western Kenya, using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design informed by Putnam's Social Capital Theory. The study focused on 18,284 adult victims of non-capital and non-sexual offences seeking restorative measures through National Government Administration Officer (NGAO) offices from 2022-2024, with a sample of 400 victims obtained through stratified and random sampling, yielding 349 usable responses (87.25% response rate). Qualitative data included insights from 24 NGAOs and 32 village elders through focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Data analysis utilized descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, simple linear regression, and thematic analysis. The findings indicated strong participant support for community-driven initiatives such as local counseling, legal aid, culturally sensitive services, and better police-community relationships, with mean ratings between 4.36 and 4.50. A significant positive correlation ($r = .576$, $p < .001$) was found between community inclusion and victim satisfaction, accounting for 33.1% of variance ($R^2 = .331$). Qualitative feedback revealed that community engagement fostered belonging, reduced isolation, and enhanced access to support services, although it also noted the potential lack of trauma-informed care in local support networks. The study concludes that community inclusion is crucial for victim satisfaction but requires professional support and protection from social pressures. Recommendations include funding for community education, improving support services, enhancing police-community trust, establishing structured referral systems, and ensuring post-resolution reintegration and follow-up.

KEYWORDS: Community Inclusion, Restorative Justice, Social Capital, Victim Healing, Victim Satisfaction, Western Kenya

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I. INTRODUCTION

Although it is not always limited to the victim and the offender, restorative justice is often said to be a practice between the victim and the offender. Crime impacts on the family, on neighbours, on the workplace, on churches, social groups and on local institutions. The victim is required to keep on living in these relationships after the restorative meeting. Community attitudes and resources can also contribute to healing, belonging and reintegration or exacerbate weaknesses and stigma, isolation and dissatisfaction.

The victim satisfaction in this study was defined as closure, acceptance and healing, emotional relief, open and positive communication, and consensual agreement. These outcomes may be initiated during a restorative conference but are often sustained or weakened in the victim's daily environment. Bensimon (2017) connected recovery with the development of communal compassion, while Spalek (2017) emphasised that victim experience is shaped by social and institutional context. Community inclusion is therefore not about an observer participating in a restorative meeting, but rather the degree to which victims are still included, supported, safe, and able to experience community life.

Community inclusion was explored through levels of community engagement and the engagement of victims with community support services and activities. It involved being involved in social events, meetings, volunteering, support groups, vigils, advocacy, leadership and public discourse. This also comprised counselling, legal information, housing assistance, cultural sensitivity, community communication, community education, and good relations between citizens and police.

Community inclusion may operate through social capital. Connecting with family, neighbours, members of your church and familiar elders can offer bonding support. Inter-group links can provide a tie to information, to other points of view and to broader opportunities for the victims. Linking capital to various institutions and resources through relationships with police/ administration/counsellor/legal provider can be provided for the victims. Woolcock (2001) highlighted the importance of having bonds between individuals as well as those linking individuals to institutions and resources.

The Western Region of Kenya offers a relevant setting as restorative justice is routinely delivered through National Government Administration Officers and village elders. They are tightly knit communities and often disputes are with family, neighbours, land users, business partners or individuals who share social spaces. Bwire (2019) noted that the African customary understanding contributes to the restorative justice systems in Kenya. In the same vein, Muigua (2017) argued for the incorporation of traditional dispute-resolution and community justice systems. This institutional direction was reinforced by Kenya's National Alternative Dispute Resolution Policy (Office of the Attorney General and Department of Justice, 2024).

However, the benefits of community inclusion are not guaranteed. Gavrielides (2020) warned that the disconnect between restorative justice theory and practice can reduce the efficacy of victim-centered restorative justice. The community can help the victim, but can also encourage the victim to indulge in the illusion of forgiveness, to hold back in the name of family peace or to ensure that a powerful member of the community is spared. As Herman (2023) revealed, survivors might not be interested in imposing equality by other means, and rather approach justice through truth, repair, and having control over responses. There is therefore a need for community-based support which maintains the independent choice of the victim and does not substitute untrained informal care for professional and state care.

Public awareness and police-community relations are also pertinent. Victim participation will be more likely to occur in communities where there is an understanding of the restorative justice initiatives and the police officers are seen as responsive. Lack of trust, on the other hand, might make victims less likely to report incidents or even feel that restorative agreements would be honored. Nix and Pickett (2017) showed that perceptions of media and police environments were able to shape public behaviour. In this situation, police-community trust was one of a broader set of institutional supports to restorative justice.

This article is part of a larger thesis consisting of four objectives on restorative justice practices and victim satisfaction. It presents only the literature, methods, findings, qualitative themes, regression results, conclusions, and recommendations that directly addressed community inclusion in the Western Region, Kenya. No additional field data were introduced.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Community-based restorative justice should restore relationships and bring back offenders and victims into a viable social context. Accessible, accountable and community-responsive justice pathways are also highlighted as a critical issue for the Kenyan justice sector reporting (National Council on the Administration of Justice, 2023). Yet, some victims complete a restorative process without experiencing safety, a sense of belonging, access to help, or acceptance within the community. The absence of follow-up may leave victims isolated after an agreement, while stigma or negative community attitudes can prevent recovery. The victims may thus feel dissatisfaction even if the dispute itself has been settled.

Existing restorative justice studies frequently concentrate on the victim-offender meeting, facilitator behaviour, or offender remorse. Community involvement is often treated as a general background condition rather than as a measurable predictor of individual victim satisfaction. Asadullah and Morrison (2021) established the institutional importance of community centrality in restorative justice, but did not disaggregate community inclusion into engagement, support services, post-resolution activities, cultural responsiveness, public education, and institutional trust within a Kenyan setting.

The problem was, therefore, limited empirical evidence on the extent to which community inclusion influenced victim satisfaction among adults using National Government Administration Officer and elder-facilitated restorative justice in the Western Region. It was also unclear how community inclusion produced its benefits and whether it could create risks such as pressure, conflicts of interest, or inadequate trauma support. This article addressed the gap through integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence.

1.2 Research Objective

To analyse community inclusion in enhancing victim satisfaction in the Western Region, Kenya.

1.3 Research Question

How does community inclusion enhance victim satisfaction in the Western Region, Kenya?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review of Community Inclusion

Community inclusion refers to the process through which victims are actively welcomed, provided equitable access to support and resources, and enabled to participate in community activities after victimisation and restorative justice. It includes the victim's sense of safety, belonging, recognition, and social restoration. Community inclusion is broader than community attendance at a meeting. It concerns whether the victim's social environment supports recovery before, during, and after the formal restorative process.

Community engagement levels reflect participation in social events, meetings, volunteering, support groups, public dialogues, and other activities that reconnect the victim to normal social life. Paul and Borton (2021) described restorative justice as a communicative process involving justice, restoration, and community. Community activity can reduce isolation, provide opportunities for meaning-making, and enable victims to rebuild an identity that is not limited to the offence.

Engagement may also create social accountability. Community members can encourage compliance with agreements, discourage retaliation, and provide information about available support. Social visibility, however, can lead to gossip or even the expectation that the victims might excuse the perpetrators of the bullying behaviour. Crawford and Goodey (2019) warned that approaching the criminal justice/community process with an institutional focus can result in losing a victim perspective. Involving the community can then only be restorative if it is compatible and assists with the victims' choices, not if it replaces them.

Local support services available to people include counselling, legal, advocacy and housing assistance, financial aid and referral to specialist services. Spalek (2017) explained that victims need support that responds to both practical and psychological consequences of crime. Nascimento et al. (2023) similarly reported on the need for support and its quality, noting that psychological outcomes of restorative justice are based on this. Emotional support can be provided through informal networks, depending on the type of trauma, legal proceedings, and ongoing risk to safety, which can warrant professional help.

Culturally sensitive services are important as it is through social and cultural meanings that victims make sense of the need for harm, forgiveness, accountability and healing. Bryant-Davis (2019) noted that healing in trauma needs to be expressed in a cultural framework. Language, belief, family and local practice are all respected in community support, which makes it more acceptable. Cultural responsiveness also cannot excuse coercing, discriminating, or perpetuating silence for the victims.

Victim engagement in community activities after restorative justice may be a distinct phase of recovery. Victims can return to normal social life through the presence of support during events such as meetings, church gatherings, women's groups and youth groups, as well as harambees and village meetings. Bensimon (2017) linked victim recovery to compassion in the community. These can be activities that can bring back purpose, but should not include a public forum to show the victim forgiveness or satisfaction.

Institutional dimensions of inclusion include community education and the police-community relationships. Public education can dispel myths, educate about victim rights, and popularise support. Maryfield et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of education and implementation quality in restorative justice practice. Gradually, good police relations can lead to greater safety and trust that the restorative processes are linked to legitimate justice systems. If there is little trust, victims may believe that informal approaches fail to keep offenders accountable, or they cannot access justice via informal channels.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The study was guided by Putnam's Social Capital Theory. Social capital is networks, norms, trust and reciprocity that help people work together for a shared purpose. Putnam (2000) stated that civic involvement and social ties are assets that people can access. These resources can be trusted elders, supportive neighbours, religious communities, local groups, police contacts, counsellors and referral institutions, in restorative justice.

Three types of social capital are distinguished: bonding, bridging, and linking. Bonding capital is within close-action relationships, like a family, neighbours or familiar community groups. It might serve as emotional support and force offenders to comply, but it also could result in conformity or insulation. The practice of bridging capital extends victims' access to others and other points of view, and linking capital extends victims' access to organisations that hold authority and resources. Woolcock (2001) pointed to the significance of these vertical institutional linkages for those 'in disadvantaged situations'.

The theory suggested that when victims had developed an embeddedness in supportive and trusted community network systems, they would be satisfied, as they would have access to information, emotional support, resources and chances for reintegration. It also foresaw that community awareness and building police-community trust would help contribute to the understanding and security of restorative justice. Asadullah and Morrison (2021) argued for the importance of communities in the operation of restorative justice, but their study was on institutional development, rather than individual victim satisfaction.

The Social Capital theory needed to be critically qualified. Not all networks are positive. This tight relationship can exclude outside people, solidify inequalities in power or force victims to agree on an agreement due to harmony. This means that the process of community inclusion must be taken into account not only in terms of the accessibility of the networks, but also in terms of the quality of the networks' support. The qualitative strand of the study was essential to ensure that identification of the times of healing in social capital did not turn into coercion or limited support.

2.3 Empirical Review and Knowledge Gap

Victims' understanding of what harm and repair mean has been found to be shaped by social context in the research of restorative justice. Strang et al. (2013) claimed that under conditions of acknowledgement and supported participation, restorative conferences lead to an increase in victims' satisfaction. Daly (2016) posited that restorative justice is not just one process, as it will depend on other social and institutional contexts. These findings substantiate an examination of the after-conference life of the victim.

Support from the community can enhance recovery through better social support and access to resources. Herman (2023) defined repair as a survivor-led process of truth, recognition and social response. Bensimon (2017) connected the dots between self-compassion and communal compassion following victimisation experiences. Such views suggest that reintegration of the victim into the rest of life is integral to the justice process, not a

detached matter of welfare.

Community education and culturally appropriate support can help to minimise the stigma and enhance the capacity for relatives, leaders, and providers to respond to such situations. Bryant-Davis (2019) highlighted the role of cultural context in trauma recovery, and Nascimento et al. (2023) showed that the psychological after-effects are dependent on implementation and support. This is important as well-meaning community actors may not have competency in the simulation of severe trauma, risk management and/or appropriate referral of a victim.

Police-community relations can impact a victim's decision to employ restorative justice. Nix and Pickett (2017) demonstrated that perceptions of policing affect behaviour, and there is a loss of confidence. Within community-managed justice contexts, positive police connections can contribute to linking capital; suspicious police connections can result in diminished reporting, enforcement, and trust in agreements. Community inclusion, therefore, connects social support with institutional legitimacy.

The literature nevertheless left a gap in measuring community inclusion as a combined predictor of satisfaction. Few studies integrated community activities, local support services, cultural responsiveness, public education, community attitudes, and police-community relationships within one model. The present study addressed that gap among a representative sample of adult victims in four counties and used qualitative evidence to explain the observed statistical relationship.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design that integrated a correlational design for the quantitative component and an exploratory design for the qualitative component (Babbie, 2020). The quantitative strand measured the relationship between the selected restorative justice practice and victim satisfaction as it naturally occurred. At the same time, interviews and focus group discussions generated contextual explanations of how the practice was implemented and experienced. The two strands were analysed separately and integrated during interpretation so that statistical patterns could be compared with the experiences of National Government Administration Officers and village elders.

3.2 Study Area

The research was undertaken in the Western Region of Kenya, covering Kakamega, Bungoma, Busia, and Vihiga counties. The region was selected because National Government Administration Officers and village elders routinely handled non-capital and non-sexual offences through community-based restorative processes. The area also presented a varied caseload involving assault, domestic disputes, theft, malicious damage, trespass, and land-boundary disagreements. Its agrarian and closely connected communities provided an appropriate setting for examining victim-centred justice, procedural practice, community support, and the achievement of closure.

3.3 Target Population and Eligibility

The target population comprised 18,284 adult victims of non-capital and non-sexual offences who sought resolution assistance from National Government Administration Officer offices between January 2022 and December 2024. Victims were included when they were aged 18 years or older and had voluntarily used an informal restorative process. Minors, victims of capital offences, and victims of sexual offences were excluded because such cases require different statutory, child-protection, and trauma-informed safeguards. The qualitative population comprised Assistant County Commissioners, Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs, and village elders who facilitated or supported restorative justice processes.

3.4 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

Taro Yamane's finite-population formula produced a survey sample of 400 victims at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The sampling frame was stratified in two stages, by county and then by year of registration of the cases. Proportionate allocation resulted in a sample of 126 victims in Kakamega, 122 in Bungoma, 85 in Busia, and 67 in Vihiga. Simple random sampling without replacement was used within each stratum. Among the respondents, 24 National Government Administration Officers and 32 village elders were

selected to be interviewers by using purposive sampling because the two were information-rich persons in the implementation of restorative justice in the national government and in the villages. The elders participated in four focus group discussions, one in each county.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

Quantitative data were gathered using a structured questionnaire with a Likert scale and multiple-choice items for the victims. A National Government Administration Officers(NGAO) semi-structured interview guide and a Village Elders Focus Group Interview (FGI) guide were used to collect data from the NGAOs and Village Elders, respectively. The interviews and focus group discussions explored how restorative justice was being worked, how safe and/or community were around the victim's engagement and what increased or hindered satisfaction. The data collection was from April to June 2026. With informed consent, interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded and supported by field notes. The names of participants were coded to ensure confidentiality between the identity of the respondents and the researcher.

3.6 Validity, Reliability, and Data Analysis

The conceptual framework and reviewed literature were used to develop the questionnaire and strengthen the content validity by conducting an expert review. Construct validity was assessed through exploratory factor analysis (Field, 2018). A pilot study was carried out with 40 victims in Kisumu County, out of the focus area, but with relevant socio-cultural and administrative characteristics. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all main constructs were greater than the .70 considered acceptable (Tavakol et al., 2011). The quantitative data were analysed in SPSS 31 using analysis of variance, correlation study of Pearson, mean, standard deviation and regression test. Qualitative data were analysed thematically using the following strategies: familiarisation, coding, theme development, review and definition (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The last interpretation consisted of a comparison between the quantitative and qualitative strands.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, and a research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation. Administrative authorisation was obtained before fieldwork. The participants were informed about the study, and their participation was voluntary after proper informed consent. Confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and the right to withdraw were respected. Trauma-sensitive questioning was utilised as the majority of participants had been victimised, and counselling support was provided when needed. Physical records were kept in a locked cabinet, and digital data was password-protected.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate and Measurement Quality

The study obtained 349 usable victim questionnaires from the targeted 400 respondents, resulting in an 87.25% response rate. The survey evidence was supplemented by interviews with 24 National Government Administration Officers and four focus group discussions with 32 village elders. The combination allowed the article to compare victims' ratings with the experiences of persons who administered and supported restorative justice.

The community inclusion construct demonstrated strong measurement quality. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was .941, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant, $\chi^2(91) = 3987.654$, $p < .001$. One component was extracted, with loadings ranging from .838 to .954. The strongest loading was access to local support services (.954), followed by facilitator quality and skill (.940) and culturally sensitive services (.939). The reliability coefficient for community inclusion was $\alpha = .726$, which exceeded the .70 threshold.

Table 1: Measurement Quality of the Community Inclusion Construct

Indicator	Result	Interpretation
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure	.941	Excellent sampling adequacy
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2(91) = 3987.654, p < .001$	Items were sufficiently correlated
Factor-loading range	.838–.954	Strong single-factor structure
Cronbach's alpha	.726	Acceptable internal consistency
Usable victim questionnaires	349 of 400 (87.25%)	Adequate survey response

Source: Field Data (2026).

The factor results supported the treatment of community inclusion as a coherent construct rather than a collection of unrelated activities. The high loading for support services showed that victims regarded community inclusion as more than social visibility. It included access to practical and professional resources. The strong loadings for facilitator quality, cultural sensitivity, communication, and community attitudes also showed that inclusion involved the quality of the environment in which restorative justice occurred.

4.2 Victims' Assessment of Community Inclusion

Table 2 presents the fourteen community inclusion statements. The agreement combines the strongly agree and agree categories. Mean scores ranged from 4.36 to 4.50, showing broad support for community engagement, services, awareness, communication, cultural responsiveness, institutional trust, and public education. The results also contained a consistent minority of disagreement on several practical support items, indicating that inclusion was positively valued but not uniformly experienced.

Table 2: Victims' Ratings of Community Inclusion (N = 349)

Community inclusion statement	Agreement (%)	Mean	SD
Active involvement in events, meetings, and volunteering promoted healing	88.5	4.39	0.942
Ongoing community involvement after the process promoted acceptance	88.0	4.38	0.941
Local counselling or legal aid supported closure	87.4	4.36	0.972
Advocacy, development, or leadership roles supported healing	86.8	4.36	0.998
Community safety promoted open engagement and closure	87.4	4.38	0.950
Community awareness of restorative justice supported healing	90.8	4.46	0.835
Facilitator quality and skill promoted healing	89.4	4.46	0.852
Clear, timely, and respectful communication promoted healing	90.6	4.47	0.839
Community attitudes supporting healing and accountability encouraged RJ	90.6	4.49	0.812
Support events and groups promoted closure	88.8	4.46	0.839
Culturally sensitive and inclusive services supported closure	88.9	4.43	0.896
Positive community-police relations improved safety and support	90.2	4.50	0.866
Community resources such as counselling or housing promoted healing	90.6	4.46	0.846
Community education reduced stigma and supported healing	91.4	4.50	0.794

Source: Field Data (2026).

Note. Agreement combines “strongly agree” and “agree” responses on a five-point Likert scale.

Community education and positive community-police relationships recorded the highest means, each at 4.50. Public education was endorsed by 91.4% of victims, while 90.2% agreed that constructive police-community relations improved safety and support. Community attitudes favouring healing and accountability also received a high mean of 4.49. These results showed that victim satisfaction was linked not only to private support but also to the norms and institutional relationships surrounding restorative justice.

Access to counselling or legal aid and participation in advocacy or leadership recorded the lowest means, although both remained high at 4.36. Disagreement reached 11.5% and 12.0%, respectively. The minority response was important because it indicated unequal availability, suitability, or trust in community resources. The result supported the need to distinguish between the existence of a community network and its ability to meet a victim's particular needs.

4.3 Community Engagement, Belonging, and Identity

The qualitative evidence accounted for the community support of healing. Participation correlated with less isolation, improved reputation, reconstitution of identity, and seeing things from a different perspective. One Assistant County Commissioner talked about the value of effective community participation in the process of restoring a sense of place:

“When victims engage in constructive community activities such as support groups, dialogue forums and barazas, they often regain that sense of belonging to a certain community. This eliminates that feeling of isolation, stigma or fear of vulnerability which may arise after an offence.” (Assistant County Commissioner [ACC-INT-01], personal communication, 20 April 2026).

The account demonstrated how the experience of community inclusion could move the person being hurt from a ‘Damaged identity’ to a ‘Contributing and Socially included identity’. This mechanism was in line with a Social Capital Theory since participation provided reciprocal recognition and access to relationships. It also affirmed Bensimon’s (2017) description of communal compassion as a healing tool during the recovery process. A village elder explained that through active involvement, victims were able to put the offence in a wider social context:

“Those that actively engage in diverse activities in the community tend to forgive and forget because they highly interact with the community members and therefore look at a broader picture than the offence only.” (Village Elder FGD [VE-FGD-03], personal communication, 14 April 2026).

The statement did not imply that community involvement was a key to forgiveness. Instead, engagement proved to offer an opportunity for alternative understandings, needed supports, and future-oriented activities. 88.5% indicated that events, meetings, and volunteering proved to be catalysts to acceptance and healing. The qualitative evidence provided the explanation for this trend, that social participation led to a decrease in withdrawal and a reintegration into communal life.

The evidence also revealed that the community visibility was twofold. Transparency could bring about responsibility, peace and tranquillity, but at the same time the reputational pressure. A victim may look appeased when his/her relatives, elders or neighbours require forgiveness. This finding was used to triangulate the positive quantitative findings that inclusion required voluntary participation and protection from community coercion. The restoration of belonging to the community was beneficial only if it also presented opportunities, and did not restrict options for the victim.

4.4 Access to Local Support Services

Community inclusion was supported by local support services. Encouragement from relatives or elders was not enough for victims. They may require counselling, legal, advocacy, safety, financial, housing or referral to specialist services. An Assistant County Commissioner linked those services directly to emotional and legal preparedness:

“The victim requires counselling, legal aid and victim advocacy services which promotes their satisfaction. These services help process trauma and also understanding the fundamental rights that are enshrined in law. Additionally, it enables the victim know the implications of any agreements reached between them and the offender.” (Assistant County Commissioner [ACC-INT-01], personal communication, 20 April 2026).

The quotation illustrated linking social capital as access to the community, which allowed victims to access persons and institutions with specific knowledge. Counselling supported the victims in managing emotional distress, and legal support provided an understanding of their rights and the implications of agreements. This is consistent with Spalek’s (2017) perspective that there should be a combined approach addressing both practical and psychological consequences of victimhood.

Counselling was further used by village elders to calm victims in cases where big decisions had to be made:

“Counseling is important as it makes the victim to be stable and think broadly about the issue in a more sober manner. When the victim is stable, it is easy to make informed decision. It also helps the victim to know their rights and be ready to be supported by the family members, friends, and the community at large.” (Village Elder FGD [VE-FGD-03], personal communication, 13 April 2026).

The evidence explained why local support services had the strongest factor loading (.954). Wemmers et al. (2023) also highlighted the need for support in facilitating meaningful involvement and confidence in the process in victim-centred restorative practice. They helped the victim to make community participants rather than to simply be in the community, to be informed and sustainable. The study also established some constraints of informal networks, however. Family members, elders, churches and neighbours may not be trained in how to respond to trauma; they may have an interest in the situation, or they may value harmony over the victim's health. Thus, there was a need for a clearly organised referral to professional counselling services as well as legal and protection services.

4.5 Community Activities and Post-Resolution Reintegration

The findings showed that community inclusion continued after the restorative agreement. Group meetings, church activities, and involvement in public dialogue and community development enabled the victims to get back to their social roles. A Chief stated that community activity promotes social support, decreased isolation, leads to purpose and resilience:

“Engagement in community activities is important because it helps the victims to achieve closure more easily as a result of social support and reduction of isolation. Community involvement also encourages positive coping skills, restores a sense of purpose, and strengthens resilience.” (Chief [CH-INT-01], personal communication, 16 April 2026).

The account supported the high ratings for community activities, support events, and culturally inclusive services. It also enthroned the concept of closure. When the parties signed an agreement, it does not necessarily mean closure happened. It emerged by victims regaining the ability to participate in society without any stigma, fear or ongoing conflict.

An Assistant County Commissioner distanced the temporal viewing by mentioning participation after the act of reconciliation:

“When victims are involved in communal activities like harambees, church gatherings or village meetings following reconciliation, they are able to move on with the incident. Social connection encourages peace building and helps both criminals and victims reintegrate into the community and enables the victim to attain closure.” (Assistant County Commissioner [ACC-INT-01], personal communication, 27 April 2026).

This finding led to the emergence of the theme that reintegration after resolution was a separate part of the restorative justice process. The original conceptual framework included a continuum of inclusion, but qualitative evidence revealed that the post-formal resolution phase needs attention. Continuing access to support, opportunities for safe social involvement, follow-up and agreement monitoring were therefore sustainable elements of victim satisfaction.

4.6 Relationship between Community Inclusion and Victim Satisfaction

Victim satisfaction was modelled using simple linear regression to see if there was a significant association between community inclusion and victim satisfaction. These model and coefficient statistics are presented in a condensed form in Table 3. Reported values are extracted from the thesis analysis.

Table 3: Regression of Community Inclusion on Victim Satisfaction (N = 349)

Statistic	Value	Interpretation
Pearson R	.576	Moderate positive relationship
R ² / Adjusted R ²	.331 / .329	33.1% of satisfaction variance explained
Standard error of estimate	6.109	Average prediction error
ANOVA	F(1, 347) = 171.865, p < .001	Regression model was significant
Unstandardised coefficient	B = .407, SE = .031	Positive change in satisfaction
Standardised coefficient	β = .576, t = 13.110, p < .001	Significant predictor
Constant	B = 6.664, p < .001	Intercept was significant

Source: Field Data (2026).

There was a moderate positive correlation with community inclusion and victim satisfaction ($r = .576$, $p < .001$). The R² value indicated that satisfaction could only be predicted by community inclusion at 33.1%. The model was statistically significant, $F(1, 347) = 171.865$, $p < .001$. The unstandardised coefficient suggested that being included in a community raised victim satisfaction by .407 units for every unit increase in community inclusion. The outcome offered empirical evidence to support the Social Capital Theory. Both networks and norms, trust and institutional connections and community resources were not only background elements but measurable contributors to closure and healing. This finding was the same as that of Asadullah and Morrison (2021), who positioned the community at the epicentre of restorative justice praxis. It also confirmed Woolcock's (2001) claim that bonding capital brings the vulnerable people to institutions and resources which will help to enhance outcomes.

The full multiple-regression analysis in the thesis revealed that when controlling for victim participation, the preexisting victim offender relationship and procedural safeguards, community-inclusion variables retained statistical significance ($B = .101$, $\beta = .142$, $p = .006$). The effect of its uniqueness was minor compared to the effects of all the relational and procedural variables but still had meaningful value. This bolstered an alternate interpretation that started to take shape before us: community inclusion did not supplant the benefits, and without the opportunity of participation and fair process, community inclusion would not exist.

4.7 Integrated Interpretation and Contribution

The evidence was combined and indicated community inclusion functioning on several mechanisms. Engagement restored belonging and identity. Local services linked to counselling, legal literacy, advocacy and material assistance were provided to victims. Stigma decreased as a result of public education. Safety and institutional confidence were enhanced through improved relationships between the police and the community. Post-resolution activity allowed the victim to proceed with the process of agreement completion towards sustained social reintegration.

The qualitative evidence also prevented an uncritical celebration of community. Although visibility may help to establish accountability, it can also put the victim in the spotlight. There may be informal networks that can assist immediately, but may not have the skills and expertise. Community harmony can be restorative, but it also can be an impetus to the speed of forgiveness. A professional referral, informed choice, confidentiality and a permanent right to formal protection were therefore needed in a victim centred approach.

The article's contribution is the proof of a measurable link between community inclusion and individual victim satisfaction in a community-run restorative justice system. It also highlighted that post-resolution reintegration is a very specific process which should be planned and assessed. This builds on Social Capital Theory in that it demonstrates that the value of community ties hinges on the extent to which they offer safe, competent, and victim-centred support.

V. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there was a significant improvement in community satisfaction in the Western Region, Kenya. Victims appreciated services that encouraged community involvement, counselling and legal resources, culturally competent services, community education, respectful communication, positive community attitude and constructive interactions between police and the community. Community inclusion accounted for a third of

the variance in victim satisfaction, and it was significant in the broader model of restorative justice.

The impact of community inclusion was considerable but limited. Communities facilitated healing by decreasing isolation, rebuilding a sense of belonging, linking victims to services, and allowing for safe reintegration. They might have risked satisfaction if they had extended forgiveness too early, extended protection to important actors, or provided informal supports that were insufficient for dealing with trauma. The most acceptable conclusion was that victim-inclusion should be formalised as social and professional support services, rather than being left to informal pressure for reconciliation.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

National and county governments need to provide a specific budget for community education about restorative justice, rights of victims, resources available for them, and the distinction between voluntary reconciliation and coerced forgiveness.

National Government Administration Officers should have up-to-date registers of contacts and established links with organisations that provide counselling, legal aid, health services, protection, housing and/or social-support services. The blend of informal support within the community should complement professional services.

There should be a structured post-resolution stage in the restorative justice programme, involving follow-up meetings, checking on the agreement, review of safety, ongoing counselling and support for the voluntary reintegration of the victim in community activities.

There is a need to enhance police-community partnership programmes to enhance safety, reporting confidence and institutional trust. Where victim participation is impeded in formal protection or court procedures in breach of agreement or in cases of intimidation, access to formal protection procedures shall continue.

Training for elders and administrators, as well as religious figures and community volunteers, should be focused on trauma recognition, confidentiality, power imbalance, referral, and the importance of letting the victim decide. Forgiveness of victims and their involvement in public forums should not be coerced by community actors.

Monitoring should measure incumbent victim satisfaction, stigma, the extent of the use of the services, community engagement, safety, level of agreement compliance and unintended pressure after the process of restitution has been implemented, along with the number of cases settled.

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