Organized Criminal Gangs and Insecurity in Nairobi City County -Kenya

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Abstract
The problem of organized criminal gangs and related insecurity is a serious problem in many cities around the world. A study on organized criminal gangs and insecurity, conducted at Nairobi City County investigated factors contributing to the proliferation of criminal gangs, nature of organized criminal gang crimes, public perceptions on the policies and strategies to combat organised criminal gangs' crimes, and challenges facing elimination of the organized criminal gangs and their activities in the county. Specifically, the study was conducted in seven (7) sub-counties, namely Kawangware, Kibera, Eastleigh, Kamukunji, Makadara, Kayole, and Dandora. The study was guided by social disorganization theory and rational choice Theory, and adopted descriptive survey design. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used through the application of questionnaires and interviews with the key informants. The target population comprised of respondents who were adults who have been victims of criminal gang activities, and police officers, national government administration officers (NGAO), youth leaders, religious leaders and civil societies representatives as key informants. A sample size of 220 individuals was determined based on a table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Both purposive and simple random sampling procedures were used in selection of the participants, and a pilot study was conducted in Mukuru Kwa Njenga slums. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS software version 25, while the relationship between the variables was analysed using regression. Content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. On factors responsible for the proliferation of organized criminal gangs, a majority of the respondents at 42.9% pinpointed poverty, while the most commonly reported type of crime committed by the gangs was pick-pocketing at 52.7%. The majority of the respondents at 73.2% indicated that the level of crimes committed by organized criminal gangs has gone up in last five years. On frequency of the organized criminal gang crimes, the respondents at 65.2% indicted that gang mugging is the most frequent. On public perception of the policies and strategies used to combat organized criminal gangs' crime 42.9% rated the police responses as "poor". The established challenges facing elimination of organized criminal gangs and their activities in Nairobi are corruption in the police, and political interference among others. Among the control strategies for the problem of organized criminal gangs, the study recommends that the government should alleviate poverty, create employment opportunities for the youth, increase funding to the police and enhance its independence to curb political meddling. The Kenya police service should also improve on its public image and eradicate corruption and misconduct from its ranks. This paper is an in-depth presentation of the research findings.
Key words: *Factors responsible for Proliferation of Criminal Gangs, Nature of Criminal Gang Crimes, Nairobi City County, Kenya.*

I.   Introduction

Organized criminal gangs are serious challenges to the social, political, and economic order in many societies globally. Organized criminal gangs in many instances commit organized crimes within nation states. However, in several instances their activities may transcend boundaries, thus affecting many nations, and have negative effects on the general stability and security of states. The organized criminal gangs commit almost all manner of crimes ranging from thefts to homicides. The spillover of organized criminal gang crimes is experienced not only in the immediate safety peril it imposes. They slip into the social fabric and create an atmosphere of fear, and later on interfere with the economic development of the nations and national administrative structure as well. In 2022, the economic cost of criminal gang violence was estimated to be $14.1

trillion or 11.2% of the total Gross Domestic Product of states globally. (Institute for Economics and Peace IE, 2023).

In Kenya, high crime rate is one of the major social problems. To a larger extent, it has been attributed to proliferation of criminal gangs in cities and towns. The two vices have been exacerbated by inequality in wealth distribution, high unemployment of the youth, and inability of the police forces to curb the rising of the criminal gangs. Research commissioned by the National Crime Research Centre (NCRC) in the year 2018 established that there were approximately 326 organized criminal gangs that were active in Kenya. It was further indicated that organized criminal gang activities accounted for about 26% of all crime in the country. This demonstrates the serious security threat they pose in the country. For instance, Mwangi and Muniu (2022) established that Nakuru City and the surrounding grappled with high rates of organized criminal gang crimes, which negatively influences the city's socio-economic stability. The scholars observed that the rise of notorious gangs in the city such as 'Confirm' and 'Superpower' had led to heightened security concerns due to the rise of gang criminality in the County of Nakuru.

Nairobi City County, being the Capital City, is the hub of Kenya's commercial and administrative activities with over 4.7 million residents (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Given its socio-economic importance, it is the area where the problem of criminal gang crimes is most pronounced in the country. Examples of these organized criminal gang crimes common in the capital city are robbery, extortion, drug trafficking, and election-related violence among others (NCRC, 2018). The most brazen of the organized criminal gangs' lot are Gaza from Kayole, Superpowered from Eastleigh, and 40 Brothers from Eastlands who were established to control the crime scene in Nairobi City County (Cherono, 2020). These gangs have been involved in the most sophisticated, extreme forms of robbery, extortion, drug trafficking, and violence perpetuated in electoral processes. Moreover, the Kenya National Bureau Standards- KNBS, (2023) study showed that Nairobi County recorded the highest overall organized criminal gang crime incidences with the Nairobi City registering 60% of these criminal offenses that were reported nationally. The National Bureau statistics indicated that the crimes rate increased by 15% in three years. The study, hence, sought to investigate in detail the problem of organized criminal gangs and their crimes, and what can be done to control criminal gangs' induced insecurity in Nairobi City County.

II.   Literature Review
Selective Presentation of Global Proliferation of Criminal Gangs

Organized criminal gangs have been a mark of insecurity across the world throughout the ages with devastating consequences on socio-economic and political systems. For instance, in the United States of America, various criminal organizations, such as the Italian-American Mafia, the Russian Mob, and various street gangs like the Crips and Bloods, have wielded considerable influence on security. The gangs typically operate under a strict hierarchical structure and engage in activities such as drug trafficking, extortion, and racketeering. (Novich, 2018). In Canada, organized criminal gang crime is also prominent, with groups like the Rizzuto crime family (of Sicilian origin) and 'Ndrangheta (from Calabria, Italy) has been on the spotlight (Sergi, 2018). Motorcycle gangs such as the Hells Angels and street gangs like the Red Scorpions had also been significant contributors to the landscape of organized crime. These entities engage in illegal activities, such as drug distribution, human trafficking, and violent crimes. These organized criminal groups operate transnationally and extend their criminal activities across more than two countries, undermining law enforcement (Legrand & Leuprecht, 2021).

In Australia, law enforcement and the general public had consistently raised a red flag on organized crime groups as one of the longstanding challenges. Over the years, the power distribution within Australian organized crime has shifted, resulting in the emergence of some gangs, with others growing, and eventually branching out to other crimes. Among the oldest transnational groups that have been operating in Australia are the Outlaw Biker Gangs which comprised of representatives such as Comancheros, the Rebels, and the Bandidos. As the motorcycle culture grew, the organized criminal gangs increased their operations, by engaging in activities like drug trafficking, extortion, and money laundering (Morgan et al., 2020). The street-level drug trade, particularly methamphetamine, were seized by these gangs and became one of their most profitable ventures, and has been one of the most serious public health and safety concerns.

The 'Mafia Calabrese', or 'Ndrangheta' has been a significant player in the Australian crime grounds. Italian Mafia as a criminal gang began their activities in Australia in the 1920s and they have been particularly concentrated in drug trafficking, especially in outdoor marijuana cultivation (Sergi, 2015). It is not only the ordinary Australian citizens who are affected directly due to their safety by the activities of these criminal gangs but also the country's economy due to money laundering, tax evasion, and fraud committed by these criminal gangs which cause significant fiscal losses. Moreover, the violence associated with gang turf wars and related criminal endeavours often results in innocent civilians being caught in the crossfire.

The United Kingdom, has similarly suffered from the brunt of criminal gang crimes originating both domestically and internationally. Prominent among the domestic groups is the 'Firm', based in East London. Historically linked to the Kray twins, Ronnie and Reggie, during the 1950s and 1960s, they were involved in activities like armed robbery, arson, and protection rackets (Woodiwiss & Telford, 2015). Their influence might have waned over the years, but their legacy remains. In the context of international organized criminal gang crimes, the UK has seen an influx of gangs from Eastern Europe, particularly from countries like Albania and Romania. The Albanian mafia, for instance, had established a strong presence in the UK's cocaine trade, becoming a dominant force in London's underworld (Makarenko & Mesquita, 2017). The impact of these gangs goes beyond the drugs and related disease threats; they have a large impact on social life, as they perpetrate violence in the communities. Their financial crimes also drain billions annually from the UK's economy meaning more state funds are then used to make up for the shortfall at the detriment of innocent citizens.

The continent of Africa has seen a sharp rise in organised criminal gang activities and a barrage of cross-border security threats due to its unique socio-economic conditions. According to Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GIATOC, criminal gangs have effectively taken advantage of Africa's uncontrolled borders, weak law enforcement agencies, and poor politics to set up of their operations. In Nigeria specifically, organized criminal gang crimes has earned the country much negative publicity to the point of instability. The rise of Boko Haram terrorist gang has been the main threat due to their involvement in many illegal activities such as kidnapping, drug trading and large-scale violence that has led to thousands of deaths (GIATOC, 2021).

In South Africa, organized criminal gang crimes has long been a public security threat manifested in various criminal acts including drug trafficking, human trafficking, and sophisticated robberies in addition to other offenses (Zabyelina & van Uhm, 2022). The post-apartheid era has seen a marked rise in organized crime in the country, much of which has been attributed to the subsequent political and concomitant social changes that greatly altered the then established order of the country's social structure giving rise to the entrepreneurship of underground organized criminal groups (Zabyelina & van Uhm, 2022). Also, the geo-politic position of South Africa, alongside economic inequality has caused the country to be the target of transnational criminal organizations which have assisted in the establishment of a connection between organized criminal gang crimes and negative political activities. Thus, there has been a concern that some criminal gangs have ties with the government which make the menace difficult to deal with (Ellis and Shaw, 2015). If South Africa is to fight organized criminal gang crimes, an effective law enforcement system is not the only requirement; in addition, socio-political reforms should be in place to tackle the primary reasons that are hidden behind the components that give birth to organized criminal gangs.

The East African region, with Uganda and Rwanda as case examples, have also witnessed the problem of organized criminal gangs for the last several years. The organized criminal gang networks have been involved in diverse transnational crimes such as human trafficking, narcotic trade, wildlife poaching, and other illicit operations in these countries (Ellis and Shaw, 2015). The organized crime syndicates have dominated Uganda, with their crime lines usually powered by individuals from the grassroots structure. According to Rundovger (2019), these groups take advantage of the weakness in law enforcement agencies and the courts, while social inequalities have fuelled the problem. As for Rwanda, the genocide brought about the burden of small arms and light weapons, which has made the problem of criminal gangs more intricate in country and the Great Lakes region (Ellis and Shaw, 2015).

III.   Theoretical Framework: Social Disorganization and Rational Choice Theories of Crime

The study on organized criminal gangs and insecurity in Nairobi City County was guided by social disorganization and rational choice theories of crime. The two criminological theories provided useful insights on how organized criminal gangs are created, operate, and promulgate criminal activities in Nairobi City County.

According to the Social Disorganization Theory, crime and delinquency flourish in places of social turmoil, weakened community bonds, and economic deprivation (Shaw& McKay, 1942). The study postulated that the criminal gangs' presence in Nairobi City County is a result of factors such as poverty, poor living conditions, insecure housing, and disintegration of social support networks. Social Disorganization Theory emphasizes the role of neighbourhood integration in achieving a crime free society. It explains that lack of integration is caused by weak social institutions, that gives rise to criminal gangs' formation.

In contrast, the Rational Choice Theory assumes that all individuals make conscious decisions based on cost benefit analysis, and so are those who form and or join criminal gangs, and commit criminal activities (Cornish & Clarke, 1986). In Nairobi City County, this the study argues that a person is drawn into the gangs after analysing the advantages that accrue from the criminal gang activities against the costs. Therefore, gang membership can be a rational decision for economic gain and other attendant benefits. Strengthening law enforcement and enhancing the quantum and nature of punishment awarded for criminal gang activities can

dissuade individuals from joining such gangs when factors such as certainty, alacrity and severity of the punishments are ensured.

These two theories, can guide the Kenyan government, policymakers and law enforcement agencies to come up with the most appropriate strategies to counter gangsterism. Forming social networks among the Nairobi County community members, improving the economic status of many youths, and an increase in the perceived risks of being a gang member can collectively mitigate gang crimes in Nairobi City County.

IV.   Study Area and Methodology

The study was conducted at Nairobi City County, the locale was selected because it contains the highest number of criminal gangs in Kenya estimated at more than 50 (Opala, 2023). Nairobi City is the capital of Kenya, according to KNBS (2019), it has adult population of 2.9 million residents and a diverse ethnic group that represent the population of the country. The study was conducted in Kawangware, Kibera, Eastleigh, Kamukunji, Makadara, Kayole, and Dandora sub-counties. The sub-counties have the highest concentration of criminal gang activities.

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population for the study were residents of the mentioned sub-counties who had lived in the locations for more than two years. The study also involved police officers, national government administration officers (NGAO), youth leaders, religious leaders and civil societies representatives as key informants (KI) because they are mostly engaged in combating criminal gangs by coming up with strategies and implementing them. The study participants were aged 18 years, and were from both genders. Purposive sampling method was employed to select the research participants. The researchers relied on police occurrence books (OB) at Kawangware, Kibera, Eastleigh, Kamukunji, Makadara, Kayole, and Dandora police stations to select 500 residents who had reported crimes as victims of criminal gang activities to participate in the study. The same sampling method was also used to identify 35 key informants who were police officers, national government administration officers, and civil societies representatives because they were the only ones with the information the study sought. Each of the 7 jurisdictions produced 5 key informants.

A sample size of 220 out of 500 victims of criminal gang activities was involved in the study as respondents who filled the questionnaires. This number was checked against the 217 that would have been generated had the study employed a probability-based sampling method as presented in the work of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), and was found favourable. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents, and a key informant interview guide to interview of the key informants. The illiterate and semi-illiterate respondents were assisted by the researchers and their assistant to fill in the questionnaires which were semi structured. The quantitative data obtained through the structured questionnaires were analysed using statistical techniques and expressed inform of frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency. Regression analysis was used to estimate the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. The qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions in the questionnaires and the face-to-face interviews with key informants were subjected to thematic analysis and transcribed, coded, categorized and presented into themes and sub-themes as guided by the research objectives.

On ethical considerations, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and only those who were willing participated in the study. They were provided with clear and comprehensive information about the purpose and procedures of the study and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, permission to conduct the study was sought from all relevant authorities including Kenyatta university, and National Commission for Science Innovation and Technology.

V.   Discussion of findings

The following are the research findings guided by the objectives of the study.

5.1 Response Rate and Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents
5.1.1 Response Rate

The study selected a sample of 220 respondents out of a target population of 500 residents of Kawangware, Kibera, Eastleigh, Kamukunji, Makadara, Kayole, and Dandora who had fallen victims of organized criminal gangs' activities. This number was guided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). However, as indicated in Table 5.1 below, out of the 220 respondents, only 112 accepted to be involved in the study. This is probably due to fear of the organized criminal gangs despite the promise of anonymity by the researchers. This was a response rate of 50.91%. It indicates that more than half of the invited respondents were engaged in the study and fully provided their opinions. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response of 50% is sufficient for a conclusive study.

Table 5.1 Response Rate

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Responded	112	50.19%
Declined	108	49.09%
Total	220	100

Source: (Authors, 2025)

5.1.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents
Lindgreen et al. (2021), emphasises on the need for researchers to establish the demographical data of the respondents. The authors opine that demographic data helps the researchers to comprehend the diversity among the respondents. In this case, the study explored demographical factors such as gender, age, level of education, and employment status for better contextualisation of the findings.

Gender Distribution of the Respondents
The gender distribution of the respondents is outlined in figure 5.1 below. The participants that identified as male constituted 62.5% while their female counterparts were 37.5%. This breakdown indicates a higher representation of male participants compared to female participants, and this may have been as a result of different factors, but it basically implies that more male has been victims of criminal gang attacks. Further, gender disparities are also attributable to social dynamics such as access to resources which exposes more men to criminal gang crimes compared to women. It may also point to the fact that less men compared to females feared to be involved in the study. However, the study is in concurrence with Valcore et al. (2021) on involvement of both gender in criminology research on the fact that it helps to promote inclusivity and diversity. As such, it is evident that the opinions regarding the dynamics of criminal activities in Nairobi City County came from different gender representations.
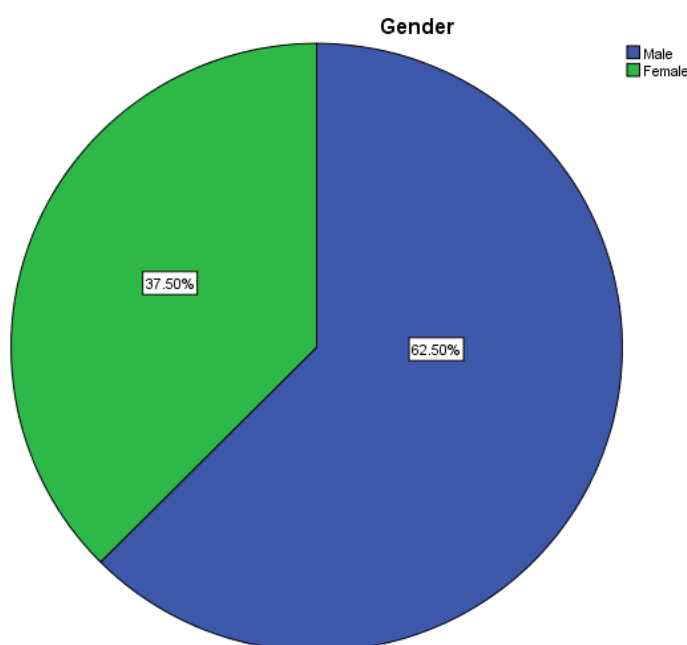

Figure 5.1 Gender Representation
Source: (Authors, 2025)

Age Distribution of the Respondents
The study requested the participants to state their age and the distribution is presented in the figure 5.2 below.
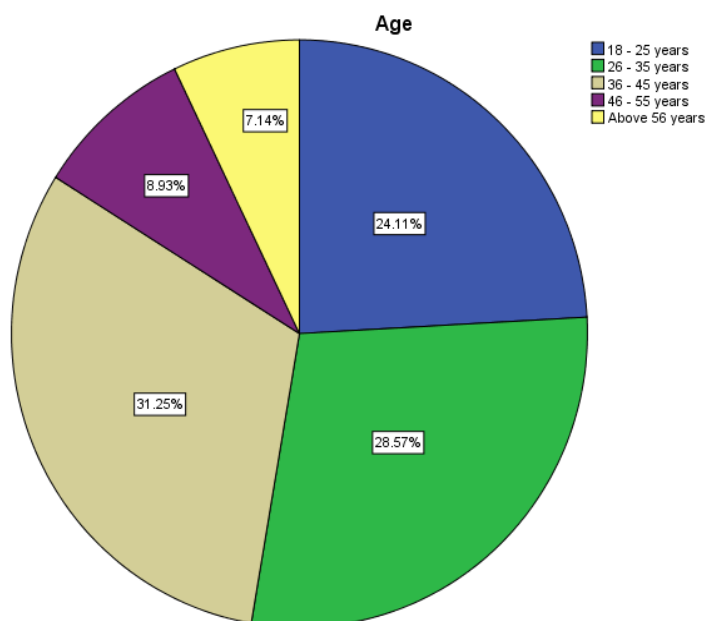
Figure 5.2 Age Distribution
Source: (Authors, 2025)

The results in Figure 5.2 above indicate that majority of the respondents were within the age of 36 to 45 years representing approximately 31.3% of the sample. This cohort was closely followed by those within the 26-35-year age bracket, which represented 28.6% of the respondents. Other age brackets included 18 – 25 years, 46 -55years, and above 56 years which accounted for 24.1%, 8.9%, and 7.1% of the total sample respectively. Maddi and Gingras (2021) noted that establishing that the respondents come from different age groups is essential in eliminating biases that may arise from age related variation and responses. Therefore, with most age groups represented, the researchers got a representative opinion of all ages on the study's areas of interest. However, the findings also mean that the age bracket of 36 to 45 years at 31.3% is the most affected by crimes from the criminal gangs in Nairobi. This is the age at which individuals are most involved in economic ventures to support their families and loved ones thus may be vulnerable to meet the criminal gangs.

Level of education of the Respondents
Understanding the educational background of the respondents was also crucial to the study. On that note, Figure 5.3 below highlights the distribution of levels of education among the respondents.
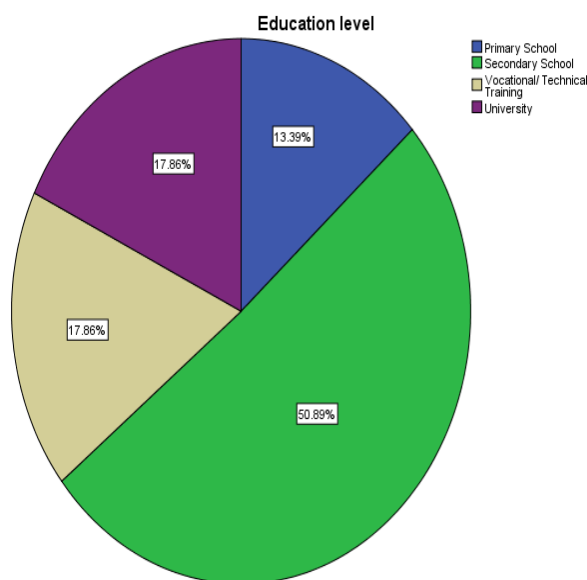

Figure 5.3 Education level
Source: (Authors, 2025)

From the figure above, majority of the respondents completed secondary education (50.9%), closely followed by those with vocational training and university graduates each at 17.9%. On the other hand, people with primary school level of education comprised of 13.4% of the total sample. The data findings above indicate that a significant portion of the surveyed population possessed at least a basic level of education needed to understand, and respond to the issues of criminal activities in their area. The diversity in education level demonstrates that the responses pertaining to criminal activities in Nairobi County were not tied a group with a specific education level. But, of greater importance to the study is that those who have been victims of criminal gang crimes or criminal activities are individuals who based on their education level are empowered to be involved economic ventures that may have made them attractive to the criminal gangs.

Employment Status
Examining the employment status of the respondents is essential in understanding the socioeconomic dynamics that may influence perceptions on the criminal activities in different areas within Nairobi City County, and also attractiveness to criminal gang activities. Table 5.2 below, illustrated the data research findings employment status.

Table 5.2 Employment Status of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Self -employed	37	33.0	33.0	33.0
Employed	19	17.0	17.0	50.0
Unemployed	56	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	**112**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: (Authors, 2025)

The above data reveals that majority of the respondents at 50% were unemployed though they had been victims of criminal gang crimes. This number constitutes half of the total sample. Also, the study findings reveal that 33% of the respondents were self-employed while only 17% were employed. As such, the findings underscore the significance of socioeconomic factors, such as employment status and the security level of an area. Jonathan et al. (2021) notes that high prevalence of unemployment among people lead to social exclusion, and economic marginalisation thereby increasing susceptibility to criminal activities. On that note, it is important to point out that half of the respondents in the Nairobi City Sub-counties where the study was conducted were unemployed which is a pointer to the unemployment problem in Kenya. For the few that are employed, the low level of education presented earlier does not provide adequate job security. In the end, their livelihood chances may be jeopardised thereby leaving them more vulnerable, and thus the possibility of themselves turning into criminals for the sake of survival, just like the gangs who perpetuated crimes against them cannot be ignored. On the flipside, the fact that 50% of the respondents were self-employed and employed may have made them susceptibility to organized criminal gang activities in Nairobi City Sub-counties where unemployment and poverty is rife.

5.1.3 Factors Contributing to the Proliferation of Criminal Gangs in Nairobi City County
The first objective of the study sought to analyse the factors contributing to the proliferation of criminal gangs in Nairobi City County. Table 5.3 below provides a summary of the findings expressed in five-point-Likert scale.

Table 5.3 Factors Contributing to Proliferation of Criminal Gangs in Nairobi City County

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
Poverty is a significant driver behind the involvement of youth in criminal gang activities.	5.4	9.8	18.8	23.2	42.9	3.88	1.221
Lack of educational and employment opportunities increases susceptibility to gang recruitment.	11.6	12.5	20.5	32.1	23.2	3.43	1.292
Inadequate social support systems contribute to the resilience and persistence of criminal gangs in Nairobi City County.	8.9	17.9	19.6	26.8	26.8	3.45	1.300
Instances of police corruption or misconduct undermine public confidence in law enforcement's ability to tackle gang-related issues thus responsible for persistence of organized criminal gangs.	0.0	0.0	8.9	21.4	69.6	4.61	.649

Source: (Authors, 2025)

In light of Table 5.3 above, the descriptive data that pertains to the objective were presented in percentages, means, and standard deviation. Notably, the responses ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), on a five-point Likert Scale. To begin with, when asked whether poverty is a significant driver behind the involvement of youth in criminal gang activities, majority of the respondents (42.9%) strongly agreed with varied opinions (std dev. = 1.221 and mean = 3.88). The data suggest that majority of the respondent perceive poverty as a significant driver behind youth involvement in criminal organized gang activities. This perception aligns with that of Kazeem (2020), that highlighted the correction between social-economic deprivation and susceptibility to criminal behaviour. Tying this to the demographical data, it is evident that majority of the people in Nairobi are unemployed or struggling in self-employment ventures that may not yield much due difficult economic circumstances. Further, Opongo (2022) pointed out that in the past few years, the cost of living in Kenya has been increasing exponentially alongside the high rate of unemployment. On that note, scarcity of opportunities for education, employment and social mobility may compel youth to turn to criminal gangs as a means of survival which made the respondents to be their victims.

Majority of the respondents (32.1%) agreed that lack of education and employment opportunities increases susceptibility to gang recruitment (mean = 3.43, std. dev = 1.292). The findings underscore the perception among respondents that lack of educational employment opportunities increases susceptibility to gang recruitment. Wainaina et al. (2021) noted that limited access to basic needs intensifies social exclusion and marginalisation among the youth in low-income settlements. For this reason, these individuals become more vulnerabilities to recruit by criminal gangs. As such, that there is need to invest in education and vocational training programs and create job opportunities that can equip young people to be self-sustainable.

When asked whether Inadequate social support systems contribute to the resilience and persistence of criminal gangs in Nairobi City County, majority of the respondents 26.8% agreed (mean = 3.45, std dev = 1.300). The data suggests that inadequate social support systems contribute to the resilience and persistence of criminal gangs in Nairobi City County. Precisely, a study by Hesketh and Box (2020) established that issues such as weak social support networks, coupled with limited access to community resources and services are some of the reasons that responsible for gang recruitment and membership. This emphasises on the need to develop strong support systems that help the youth navigate mental health issues, substance abuse, and other social problems. With strong ties, the youth develop a sense of belonging which is essential in helping them resist the allure of gang membership.

Lastly, 69.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that instances of police corruption or misconduct undermine public confidence in law enforcement's ability to tackle gang-related issues thus responsible for persistence of organized criminal gangs (mean = 4.61, std. dev = .649). In light of this data, an overwhelming majority of the respondents believed that corruption within law enforcement agencies erodes trust, compromises the effectiveness of anti-crime efforts and perpetuates a culture of impunity.

5.1.4 The Nature of Organized Criminal Gangs' Crimes

On the nature of organized criminal gangs' crimes or types of criminal activities committed by organized criminal gangs in Nairobi city county, Kenya, the researchers presented a series of five questions to the participants, whose responses are illustrated here below. To begin with, the respondents were asked whether they have ever experienced any form of crime committed by organized criminal gangs in their respective residential areas in the past seven months. As indicated by figure 5.4 below, majority of the respondents (75%) confirmed that they had experienced some form of criminal activities committed by organized criminal gangs in their residential areas. On the other hand, only 25% indicated to had never encountered any crime incident committed by organized criminal gangs in seven months. This finding highlights the persuasive nature of criminal activities committed by organized criminal gangs within Nairobi city county and also the widespread implication that it has on the people and communities.
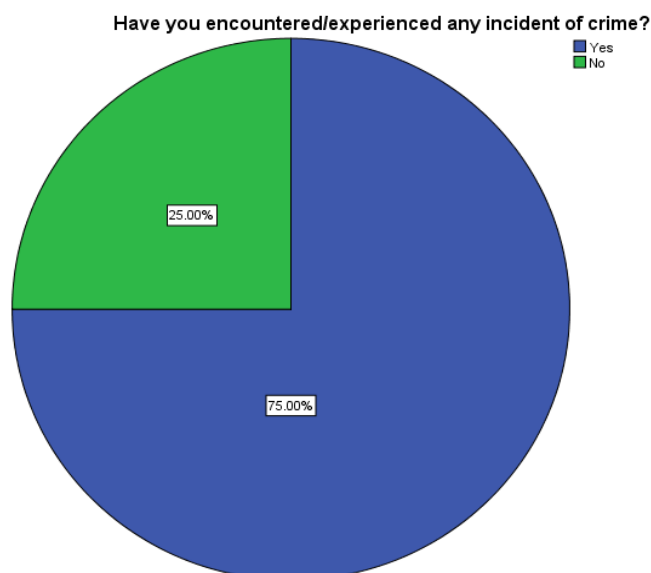
Have you encountered/experienced any incident of crime?

Figure 5.4 Encounter with Crimes Committed by Organized Criminal Gangs in the Past Seven Months.
Source: (Authors, 2025)

The next question sought to identify the specific crimes committed by organized criminal gangs that the respondents have been exposed to during their stay in Nairobi city county. Table 5.4 below presents the findings.

Table 5.4 The crimes committed by organized criminal gangs

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Burglary	13	11.6	11.6	11.6
Armed Robbery	22	19.6	19.6	31.3
Pick-pocketing	59	52.7	52.7	83.9
Mugging	18	16.1	16.1	100.0
Total	112	100.0	100.0	

Source: (Author, 2025)

In light of the data above, it is evident that the crimes committed by organized criminal gangs as reported by respondents are pick-pocketing at 52.7%, armed robbery 19.6%, mugging 16.1%, and burglary 11.6%. Nicholas and Muna (2021) highlights that pickpocketing, established to be the most common is the process through which people steal valuable goods from individual's pockets, wallets or bags without their knowledge. The distribution of the reported crime types highlights the multifaceted nature of criminal activities committed by organized criminal gangs within Nairobi County.

The respondents were also asked to assess the rate of criminal activities committed by organized criminal gangs over the past 5 years. As indicated in Figure 5.5 below, majority of the respondents (73.2%) indicated that the level of crimes committed by organized criminal gangs in last five years has gone up. This indicated that majority of the respondents were aware of the crime incidents committed by organized criminal gangs in the area. For this, the authors attribute the high awareness of the criminal cases to increased digitalisation among the people in Nairobi County. This observation aligns with Ruffio and Hubé (2022) who highted the role of digitalisation in crime reporting. On the other hand, only 26.8% of the respondents perceived the rate of crimes committed by organized criminal gangs as having declined. While this cohort is smaller compared to those that have the contrary opinion, it is imperative to an appreciation of the effectiveness of current initiatives such as improvement of public safety infrastructure and community-based initiative to subvert crimes committed by organized criminal gangs.
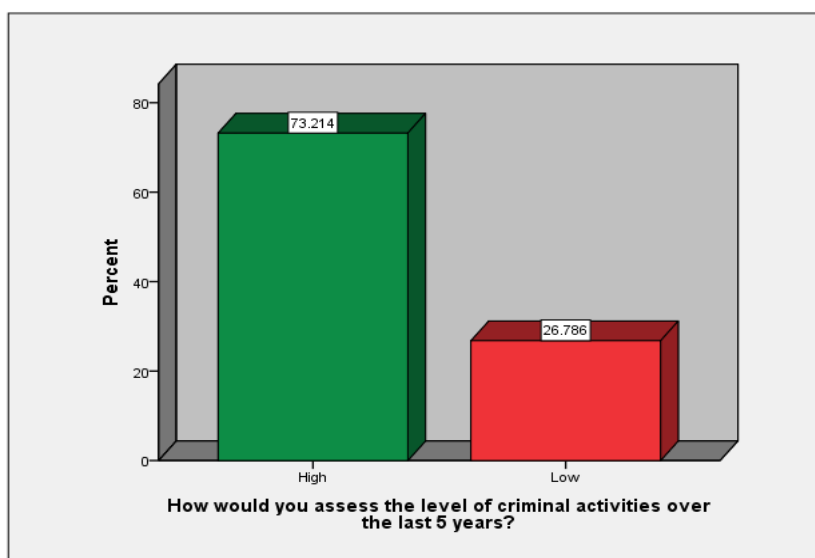
Figure 5.5 Rate of Criminal Activities committed by organized criminal gangs in the Last 5 years.
Source: (Authors, 2025)

The last question aimed to identify the most frequently committed crime by organized criminal gangs in Nairobi City County according to the respondents. The responses are as indicated in table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5 The most frequent crime committed by organized criminal gangs in Nairobi City

Frequency	Gang mugging	Pick – pocketing	Burglary	Assault
Least Frequently	0	6.3%	5.4%	13.4%
Less Frequently	0	8%	17.9%	28.6%
Moderately	11.6 %	9.8%	27.7%	41.1%
Frequent	23.2%	35.7%	38.4%	10.7%
Very Frequently	65.2%	40.2%	10.7%	6.3%

Source: (Authors, 2025).

The above distributions illustrate the perceived frequency levels of different types of criminal activities committed by organized criminal gangs within Nairobi locality as reported by respondents. From the table above, it is evident that gang mugging is perceived to be very frequent (65.2%) followed by pick-pocketing (40.2%) and burglary (38.4) as frequent. The findings are in line with Nelson (2023) who appreciates the fact that criminal gangs are the source of many crimes in many societies. Bosibori (2021) notes that the number of gangs in Kenya rose from 33 in 2010 to 326 by 2017 and so is the crimes they commit. Further, a study by Ambe (2024) indicated that the crime rate orchestrated by criminal gangs in low-income estates of Nairobi had surged since 2020. Over the years, the trend and nature of these organized criminal gangs continue to change with gangs such as Mungiki, Gaza, and Chinkororo continuing to emerge and spread.

On the other hand, pickpocketing which came second as the most frequent is a form of crime where suspects steal from unsuspecting individuals without being noticed. In this case, it is among the organized criminal gangs' crimes that have been very frequent in the low-income areas of Nairobi City County. The high rate of occurrence this crime aligns with the findings by Omboto, Wairire, & Chepkong'a (2020) who opined that majority of the inmates in prisons in Nairobi were under the petty offenses. This demonstrates the truth in the prevalence of pick-pocketing which is a petty crime.

Simukonda and Kamwela (2021) defines burglary as the unlawful entry into a building with the intention of committing crime therein. At 38.4%, majority of the respondents believed that burglary as a crime committed by organized criminal gangs was frequent in their residential areas. Notably, these findings align with Sila and Masiga (2023) who revealed that burglary and theft rose by around 2% for every 1% in individual spending. This indicated that burglary is among the most common types of crimes in Nairobi targeting individuals of all ages, business premises, M-Pesa operators and residential homes.

Lastly, organized criminal gangs associated assault was also reported to be prevalent in Nairobi. Sutton et al. (2023) defines assault as intentional affliction of physical harm through acts of violence or aggression. Assault may range from minor altercations to more serios incidents involving weapons and bodily harms. In Nairobi, the current study established that gang-related assault cases have fluctuated over the years. On that

note, there are still cases of assaults linked to criminal gang activities in Nairobi, with many resulting into deaths where bodies are dumped in rivers or forests.

5.1.5 Perceptions on Policies and Strategies to Combat Organised Crime in Nairobi City County
The other objective sought to examine the public perception on the policies and strategies used to combat organized criminal gangs' crime in Nairobi City County. Table 5.6 below provides a summary of the finings expressed in five-point-Likert scale.

Table 5.6 The public perceptions on policies and strategies in place to combat organized criminal gangs' crimes in Nairobi City County

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
The police response to organized criminal gangs' activities in my neighbourhood is prompt and effective.	28.6	42.9	15.2	9.8	3.6	2.17	1.064
Law enforcement agencies are perceived as trustworthy and reliable in combating organized criminal gangs.	7.1	25.9	0.0	47.3	19.6	3.46	1.266
Residents feel safe and protected due to the presence of police in areas with high organized criminal gang activities.	1.8	2.7	5.4	62.5	27.7	4.12	.768
Instances of police corruption or misconduct undermine public confidence in law enforcement's ability to tackle organized criminal gangs -related issues.	0.0	0.0	8.9	21.4	69.6	4.61	.649

Source: (Authors, 2025)

In light of Table 5.6 above, the descriptive data are presented in percentages, means, and standard deviation. Notably, the responses ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), on a five-point Likert Scale. To begin with, when asked whether the police response to organized criminal gang activities in their neighbourhood is prompt and effective, majority of the respondents at 42.9% disagreed while 28.6% strongly disagreed, with the mean of 2.17. These opinions were however varied as demonstrated by the standard deviation of 1.064. Malik and Qureshi (2021) had earlier pinpointed that poor police responses to organized criminal gang related activities could be alluded to various factors such as inadequate resources, corruption or lack of proper training.

On whether the law enforcement agencies in Nairobi City County are perceived as trustworthy and reliable in combating organized criminal gangs, 47.3% of the respondents agreed (mean = 3,46, std dev = 1.266. Similarly, Onyango (2022) established that while there is a degree of confidence in law enforcement's ability to maintain public safety, there is also a significant concern regarding their effectiveness and trustworthiness when combating organised crimes. Also, the study exposes the general perception that some law enforcements are corrupt thereby affecting the efforts to combat criminal gangs in Nairobi County. This aligns with the study by Kochel and Skogan (2021) which emphasised on the need for transparency, accountability, and integrity within law enforcement institutions.

On the other hand, 62.5% of the respondents unanimously agreed (std dev. = .768) that residents felt safe and protected due to the presence of police in areas with high organized criminal gang activities. The findings indicate a positive perception among residents regarding their safety and protection due to the presence of police in areas with high criminal activities. As established by Cheruiyot and Kipchumba (2021), the positive perceptions regarding the presence of police in high organized criminal gang activity areas indicate the importance of community policing and proactive law enforcement strategies in fostering public trust and ensuring community safety.

As concerns whether instances of police corruption or misconduct undermine public confidence in law enforcement's ability to tackle organized criminal gang-related issues, majority of the respondents at 69.6% unanimously agreed (std. dev = .649). The data highlights a significant concern among the public regarding instances of police corruption or misconduct and their impact on public confidence in law enforcement's ability to tackle organized criminal gang related activities. This aligns to Kochel and Skogan (2021) who opines that given the fact that they are the initial faces of law enforcement, the police have to ensure that they uphold credibility. Without which, it can destabilise the legitimacy of the government. The study further proposes the need to embrace a wholistic approach in addressing cases of corruption within the security forces.

5.1.6 Challenges Facing Elimination of Criminal Gangs and their Activities in Nairobi City County
The last objective aimed to establish the challenges facing elimination of criminal gangs and their activities in Nairobi City County. As such, the researcher reached out to the respondents and key informants to shed light on the challenges.

To begin with, the respondents were asked how coordination among law enforcement agencies could be improved on to enhance the fight against organized criminal gang networks. Based on the feedback, there were several suggestions that emerged include enhanced communication and information sharing, community engagement in policing and grassroot involvement in eradication of the gangs. With regard to enhanced communication and information sharing, the respondents emphasised on the importance of establishing effective communication channels to share intelligence among law enforcements formations. For instance, a police officer who was a key informant, and another key informant from the NGO observed that:

"Through improved communication channels and regular joint operations between the   different branches of police dealing with crime, it would be easy to eradicate the   criminal gangs in Nairobi".
The NGO representative noted that,
"Establishing a centralised database for intelligence sharing among the law enforcement would facilitate better coordination needed to address gang-related crimes."

This feedback aligns with Zolotukhin et al. (2021) who emphasised on the role of effective communication among law enforcement agencies in the quest to combat crime activities. Over the last few years, Kenya has made drastic efforts to boost intelligence sharing within its security forces. Unfortunately, despite these efforts, a study by Kamau et al. (2021) on the National Police Service in Kenya established improper communication flow and uncoordinated information sharing systems. Further, the respondents emphasised on the significance of community-based approaches and grassroot involvement in identifying and addressing gang related issues. This was echoed by a youth leader who noted that:

"Implementing regular meetings with the community will help develop community-based task forces which comprise of all stakeholders. This will help gather more insights on the challenges and issues that pertain to crime in a   specific area."

On how corruption by government officials impeded the efforts to curb organized criminal gang related activities, a religious leader explained:
 "We have seen many politicians and people of influence get away with serious offenses such as murder, theft and drugs just because they can corrupt the law enforcement officers. When ordinary people see this happen, they fail to trust our law enforcement agencies, and may not cooperate with them to fight organized criminal gangs who the public believe also bribe them to ignore their operations."

This was also the opinion of another key informant, as a youth leader from Kayole who intimated that corruption in the police service facilitates organized criminal gang networks. According to her, corruption enables gangs to bribe officials and leave custody before being taken to courts of law thereby affecting the efforts to fight against organized criminal gang crimes. According to Kamau et al. (2021) given the fact that the police are the initial faces of law enforcement, they must uphold credibility, without which the public trust in government institutions will be eroded.

The respondents were further prodded on how the interventions targeting organized criminal gangs can be made more effective despite the limitation of funding and other resources. The majority of the respondents recommended the need for community engagement and early intervention approaches to prevent formation and recruitment of the youth into the organized criminal gangs. A similar opinion was given by a key informant who is a pastor, he emphasised the need for community empowerment in form of anti-gang initiatives and fostering partnerships with local organisations. The pastor opined that:

"Involving the youth in the design and implementation of interventions is crucial. By empowering young people with leadership roles and providing opportunities for skill development and positive engagement, we can create sustainable solutions to address gang-related issues, despite the limited resources".

These sentiments align with Arisukwu et al. (2020) who suggested that engaging the community members as active participants in intervention programs can enhance the fight against crimes perpetrated by organised criminal gangs. Other recommendations from the respondents were the need to invest in education, mentorship, and positive youth development programs to break the cycle of involvement violent organized criminal gang activities.

The key informants offered various strategies that can be used to address community reluctance to cooperate with law enforcement officers. The strategies include building trust and transparency, implementation of witness protection programs, community education, sensitization and awareness creation, improving police-community relations, and engaging community leaders and opinion shapers in all approaches targeting eradication of organized criminal gangs and their activities.

VI.   Conclusions and Recommendations
 Based on the study findings, it is concluded that, one, poverty, lack of education and employment opportunities, and inadequate social support systems are the main factors responsible for proliferation of organised criminal gangs and their activities in Nairobi City County. Two, the crimes committed by organized

criminal gangs in Nairobi City County in the last five years has gone up, and the most common are gang mugging, pick-pocketing, thefts and burglary incidents. Three, majority of the public perceive police response to organized criminal gang activities as poor and ineffective due to corruption and their misconduct which does not inspire public confidence. Fourth, and lastly the most serious challenges in curbing organized criminal gang related activities are corruption within the police, political interference, lack of community engagement, and limitation of resources to the law enforcement agencies.

To control organized criminal gang activities, it is recommended that the Kenyan government should alleviate poverty, and create employment opportunities in the country. The public should also be sensitized on the increased criminal gang activities and the nature of crimes perpetrated so as to take necessary caution, and corporate with law enforcement agencies to fight the menace. Further, the Kenya police service should improve on its public image and eradicate corruption and misconduct from its ranks to earn respect and trust from the public, this will bring about positive police-community relations and enhance collaboration in the fight against criminal gangs. Lastly, given that political interference, and inadequate resources to the law enforcement agencies are part of the major challenges negating elimination of organized criminal gangs and their activities in Nairobi City County, the government should increase funding to the police and enhance its independence to curb external meddling in their crime fighting operation.

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