

# Police Intervention Strategies and Management of Land-Related Conflicts in Kilifi County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

Land-related conflicts in Kilifi County, Kenya, rooted in historical injustices and socio-economic pressures, frequently escalate into criminal acts, necessitating police intervention. This study examines the impact and efficacy of police intervention strategies in managing these disputes, focusing on their dual role in enforcement and informal mediation. Employing a mixed-methods and a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 118 respondents—police officers, local government officials, and community representatives—via questionnaires and interviews. Findings reveal that criminal arrests (41%) and eviction warrants (29%) dominate enforcement strategies, achieving moderate success in de-escalating immediate violence (e.g., 40.5% agreement on warrant execution efficacy). However, challenges such as organized crime (36.2%), resource constraints, and limited legal authority hinder long-term resolution. Mediation emerges as a vital informal strategy, fostering community trust, yet its effectiveness is curtailed by inadequate training and systemic issues. Grounded in Conflict Theory, the study highlights the need to address structural drivers (e.g., land tenure insecurity) alongside enforcement. Recommendations include enhanced police training, resource allocation, and expedited judicial processes to improve outcomes. This research contributes to understanding police adaptability in complex conflict settings, offering insights for policy reform in Kilifi County and similar contexts.

## BACKGROUND

Kenya has a long history of land-related disputes rooted in its colonial past and worsened by socio-political and economic inequalities (Onguny & Gilles, 2019). Land invasions, characterised by illegal occupation of land without authorization, involve actions that are inherently criminal, such as trespass, arson, and destruction of property (Githae, 2018). These disputes often manifest as conflicts over ownership, use, and access to land, leading to incidents of violence, displacement, and destruction of property. While some disputes are strictly civil, many land-related conflicts overlap with criminal offences, needing police intervention. As such, the role of police in managing these conflicts extends beyond routine enforcement, incorporating crime prevention strategies tailored to the unique dynamics of land-related disputes (Onguny & Gilles, 2019).

According to the National Police Service (NPS), Kilifi County recorded the highest number of land-related crimes nationwide between 2014 and 2021, with thirty-four reported land invasions and 71 related criminal offences (NPS, 2021; Njiru & Rono, 2019). In 2023, over 30,000 pleas were made to the National Assembly Public Petitions Committee concerning long-standing land disputes (Msanzu, 2023). The situation is further complicated by cultural beliefs about land ownership, high population pressure, and limited awareness of legal frameworks governing land disputes (Kariuki, 2022). Despite these challenges, police involvement is still crucial, as these conflicts often escalate into criminal acts that threaten public safety and order.

The National Police Service Act (NPS Act) delineates the role of police in handling criminal acts while limiting their involvement in civil disputes, such as those involving land ownership (Muganzi, 2022). However, the nature of land-related conflicts often blurs these boundaries, as disputes over ownership often escalate into criminal acts like violence, fraud, and property destruction (Muthama et al., 2020). In such scenarios, police are called upon to maintain peace, protect lives and property, and prevent further escalation of violence. While these actions are within their mandate, they often intersect with dispute resolution, an area traditionally outside police authority. This overlap has led to the adoption of informal strategies, including mediation, to address the

immediate needs of communities affected by land-related conflicts.

The prevalence of land-related disputes and the limited public awareness of police jurisdiction in Kilifi County have necessitated a shift in police roles. Officers frequently find themselves mediating disputes, particularly when conflicts do not fall squarely within their legal mandate. Mediation, while not formally recognized as a police responsibility, has become an essential tool in managing these disputes. This approach aligns with broader perspectives on policing, which emphasize the importance of alternative conflict resolution strategies. Braga and MacDonald (2019) argue that police effectiveness extends beyond enforcement to include discretionary measures such as mediation, which aim to de-escalate conflicts and foster community trust. In Kilifi County, mediation has proven instrumental in resolving disputes, reducing violence, and promoting social cohesion.

Police effectiveness in managing land-related conflicts can be measured through various metrics, including arrest rates, case clearances, and the successful execution of eviction warrants (Dau et al., 2021). However, in the context of Kilifi County, informal strategies like mediation and community engagement have emerged as critical components of police intervention. Studies have highlighted the importance of evaluating police performance not only through traditional metrics but also by examining their ability to adapt to complex, community-specific challenges. This includes their capacity to mediate disputes, prevent violence, and foster constructive relationships with local communities (Maslov, 2015; Osse, 2016). While existing studies have explored various aspects of land-related conflicts in Kenya, there has been limited focus on the role of police in mediating these disputes. This study aims to address this gap by examining the effectiveness of police intervention strategies in Kilifi County, with particular emphasis on their role as mediators. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of how police can adapt to the complex realities of land-related conflicts in Kenya and beyond.

The complex nature of these disputes oscillates between land ownership and crime ranging from trespassing, assault, and destruction of property (Kariuki, 2022). The Commission for Administrative Justice reported that part of the land disputes in the county emanate from maladministration practices in local land offices (CAJ, 2017). However, the police are the first interface where most of these disputes and petitions – both criminal and non-criminal nature – are first reported. While interventions within the mandate of the NPS have been deployed before, officers are sometimes forced to resort to interventions outside their mandate such as mediation to resolve these disputes. However, the interventions that officers make in response to these reports have hardly been examined to gauge their dynamism and effectiveness. The loss of life and damage to property that emanate from these invasions, and the need to create lasting cohesion in Kilifi County necessitate that the efficacy of interventions and police responses is studied to ensure persistent prevention of these conflicts. A USAID report on police accountability suggests that examining effectiveness of police interventions is vital to continually fill in potential gaps among the police service including soft skills and police-civilian communication (USAID, 2019). This study aims to examine impact and efficacy of police intervention strategies in the management of land-related conflicts in Kilifi County.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Land-related conflicts remain a persistent challenge in many parts of the world, particularly in regions where land is a critical socio-economic and cultural asset. In Kilifi County, Kenya, these conflicts are exacerbated by historical injustices, land tenure disputes, and political incitement, often requiring police intervention to restore order. This literature review examines the impact and efficacy of police intervention strategies in managing land-related conflicts in Kilifi County, drawing on recent studies to assess their effectiveness, limitations, and broader implications. The review prioritizes journal articles published after 2019 for credibility and relevance, with select earlier works included where they provide foundational insights.

Land disputes in Kilifi County are deeply rooted in historical land injustices, insecure tenure systems, and socio-economic pressures. Mambo (2019) conducted a study in Kilifi South Sub-County, identifying landlessness, poor land management systems, and political incitement as primary drivers of private land invasions by marginalized communities. The study employed a descriptive survey design, revealing that the absence of clear land policies and political exploitation intensify conflicts, often necessitating police involvement. Similarly, Boone et al. (2016) explored land politics under Kenya's devolved governance, noting that Kilifi County's

coastal location and tourism potential amplify land value, fueling disputes between locals and investors. These studies underscore the complex socio-political context in which police interventions occur, suggesting that effective strategies must address underlying structural issues beyond immediate conflict resolution.

Police intervention in land conflicts typically involves maintaining public order, enforcing court rulings, and mediating disputes. Onguny and Gillies analyzed (2019) examined police roles in land disputes across Kenya's coastal region, including Kilifi County, highlighting strategies such as rapid response units, community policing, and collaboration with local administrators. The research, based on qualitative interviews, found that rapid response units effectively de-escalate violent clashes, but their reliance on force often alienates communities, reducing long-term efficacy. In contrast, community policing—where officers engage with local leaders—showed promise in building trust, though its success depends on consistent implementation (Onguny & Gillies, 2019).

Internationally, comparative insights can inform Kilifi's context. Kansanga et al. (2019) investigated customary land boundary conflicts in Ghana, where police adopted a hybrid approach combining enforcement with negotiation. Their findings, derived from ethnographic fieldwork, suggest that integrating traditional dispute resolution mechanisms with formal policing enhances legitimacy and reduces recurrence of conflicts. While Ghana's context differs, the emphasis on hybrid strategies aligns with calls in Kenyan literature for police to adapt to local customs in Kilifi County (Mambo, 2019).

The efficacy of police interventions in Kilifi County varies depending on strategy, community perception, and resource availability. Onguny and Gillies analyzed police responses to land conflicts in Kenya's coastal region, including Kilifi, using a mixed-methods approach. They found that while police successfully quelled immediate violence in 68% of documented cases between 2018 and 2020, only 34% of these interventions led to sustainable resolutions (Onguny & Gillies, 2019). The authors attribute this gap to a lack of training in conflict mediation and over-reliance on coercive tactics, which often escalate tensions rather than resolve root causes.

Similarly, Habel et al. (2023) assessed the impact of police interventions in Kilifi County's Kaya forests, where land disputes intersect with cultural preservation. Their quantitative analysis of incident reports from 2019 to 2021 revealed that police presence reduced violent incidents by 45%, but community distrust persisted due to perceived bias toward powerful landholders. This suggests that while police can deter violence, their efficacy in fostering equitable resolutions is limited without addressing legitimacy concerns (Habel et al., 2023).

Police interventions face significant challenges in Kilifi County, including resource constraints, political interference, and community resistance. According to Kanyinga (2013), police in Kilifi lack adequate personnel and equipment to manage widespread land conflicts, often responding reactively rather than proactively. Their qualitative analysis of police reports and stakeholder interviews highlighted that political elites sometimes influence police actions, undermining impartiality. This politicization echoes findings by Boone et al. (2016), who noted that devolution in Kenya has intensified local power struggles, complicating police roles in land disputes.

Moreover, community perceptions of police as outsiders or oppressors hinder cooperation. Boone et al. (2016) explored this dynamic in a study of Kilifi's informal settlements, using focus groups to reveal that residents view police as agents of eviction rather than mediators. This perception, rooted in historical mistrust from colonial policing legacies, reduces the effectiveness of interventions, as communities withhold information or resist engagement (Boone et al., 2016). These findings align with Gerber et al. (2021), who argue globally that police legitimacy is critical to successful conflict management, a principle highly relevant to Kilifi. Traditional elders and land councils play a prominent role in Kilifi's dispute resolution. Kansanga et al. (2019) found that incorporating traditional institutions in Ghana reduced land conflict recurrence, a lesson applicable to Kilifi.

The literature suggests that while police interventions in Kilifi County can mitigate immediate violence, their long-term impact on land conflict resolution remains limited. Studies consistently call for integrating police efforts with broader land reform policies, such as those recommended in Kenya's Ndung'u Report (Mambo, 2019). However, few articles evaluate specific training programs or technological tools (e.g., mapping systems) that could enhance police efficacy, representing a gap in current research.

## Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in Johan Galtung's Conflict Theory, which provides a structured understanding of police interventions in land-related conflicts in Kilifi County by highlighting both the operational and systemic dimensions of conflict management. Galtung's ABC triangle model is applied to better understand mediation's role, focusing on Attitudes (community distrust), Behaviours (land invasions), and Contradictions (land ownership claims). Police mediation aims to adjust hostile attitudes and behaviours without always resolving the contradiction, which lies in historical dispossession. The conflict theory distinguishes between visible conflict symptoms (direct violence or illegal actions) and the underlying structural and cultural causes of conflict (Galtung, 1996). This theory argues that sustainable conflict resolution requires addressing not just illegal behaviours like trespassing, land invasions, and property destruction, but also the deep-rooted historical injustices, socio-economic inequalities, and political dynamics that fuel these disputes. In the case of land-related conflicts in Kilifi County, Galtung's framework suggests that while police enforcement efforts (arrests, evictions, and intelligence operations) are necessary, they only tackle the beginning—the immediate, visible conflicts. However, the deeper structural issues, such as historical land dispossession, political manipulation of land grievances, economic desperation, and corruption, must also be addressed for long-term stability.

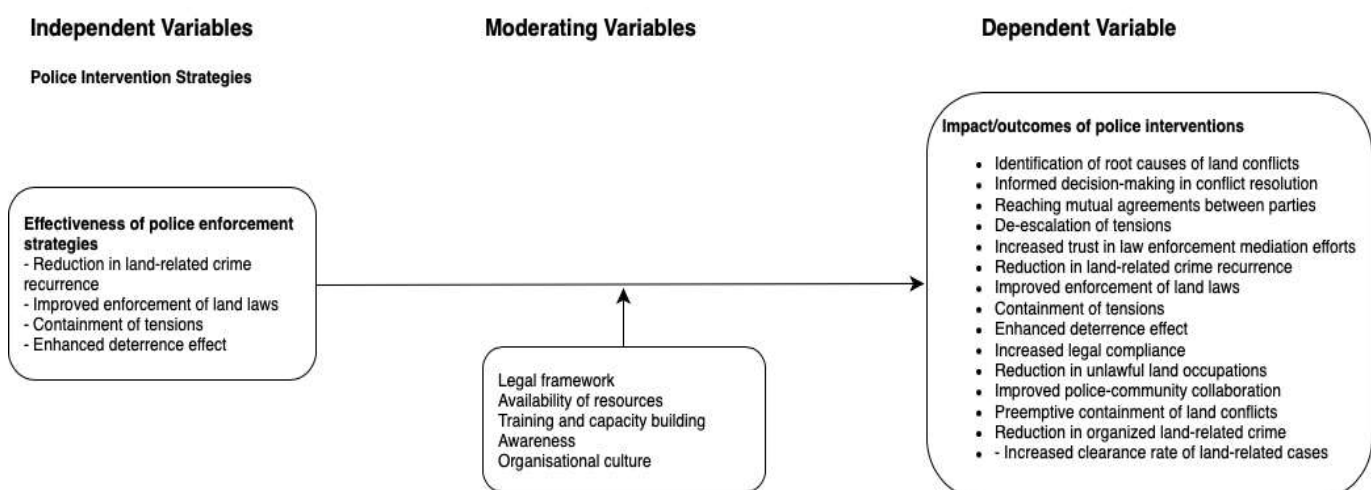
## Conceptual framework

The study investigates how police intervention strategies influence the management of land-related conflicts in Kilifi County, considering moderating factors and diverse outcomes. The conceptual framework integrates the independent variable (police intervention strategies), moderating variables (legal framework, resource availability, training, awareness, and organizational culture), and the dependent variable (impact/outcomes of police interventions). This framework, grounded in Conflict Theory, posits that effective police strategies can transform conflict dynamics, but their success depends on contextual enablers and constraints.

*Independent variable:* Police intervention strategies are operationalised through measurable indicators that include a reduction in land-related crime recurrence, improved enforcement of land laws, containment of tensions, and enhanced deterrence effect. These reflect proactive and reactive policing approaches.

*Moderating variables:* The efficacy of these strategies is moderated by the legal framework (clarity and enforcement capacity), availability of resources (personnel, equipment), training and capacity building (skills in mediation and conflict resolution), awareness (community and police understanding of land issues), and organizational culture (values shaping police behavior).

*Dependent variable:* The impact/outcomes of police interventions encompass informed decision-making, mutual agreements, de-escalation of tensions, and broader effects like reduced crime recurrence, improved law enforcement, increased legal compliance, and enhanced police-community collaboration. The interaction between these variables is presented in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

The framework illustrates a dynamic interplay where police strategies drive conflict management outcomes, moderated by systemic and operational factors. For instance, robust training may enhance de-escalation and collaboration, while resource scarcity could limit deterrence and case clearance rates. This model guides the study by highlighting how structural and relational elements shape police efficacy, offering a basis for empirical testing and policy recommendations in Kilifi County.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey design was utilized because it allows the researcher to explore statistical trends and personal experiences related to land conflicts (Turner et al., 2017; Vogt et al., 2014). This design allows a comprehensive snapshot of the dynamics within land-related conflicts and the role of police interventions, capturing perspectives from various stakeholders, including community members, police officers, and local officials (Sharma et al., 2023). This study adopted a mixed-methods approach because it allows for integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods, which is critical to understanding the compound issues surrounding land-related conflicts, such as those experienced in Kilifi County (Haq, 2015).

The study integrated responses from police officers, local officials, and community members to triangulate the findings. Quantitative survey results were cross-compared with qualitative themes emerging from key informant interviews. For instance, enforcement efficacy ratings were complemented by narratives describing political interference and community resistance. This approach enhanced internal validity by corroborating numerical trends with experiential insights.

### Study Area

The study was based in Kilifi County, located in Kenya's coastal region. The county was selected due to its history of unresolved land injustices and frequent land conflicts requiring police intervention (Koissaba, 2016). Bordered by the Indian Ocean (140 km coastline) and Tsavo National Park, it features a county police command overseeing seven sub-county commands and eleven police stations, alongside two courts (High Court in Malindi, magistrate court in Kilifi).

### Target population and sampling

The target population comprised 168 individuals: 46 police officers handling land-related crimes, 44 local government officials, and 78 community representatives (victims and perpetrators identified from police records) as shown in Table 3.1. The accessible population included sub-county police commanders (SCPCs), criminal investigating officers (SCIOs), station commanders (OCSs), crime officers, and community members affected by land invasions. The researcher projected the accessible population, that is, the portion that was reachable within available time and resources from which the study sample was generated.

**Table 3.1:** Target Population

Category	Population		Sample	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Police Officers	46	27.4	32	27.4%
Local government officials	44	26.2	31	26.2%
Community representatives	78	46.4	55	46.4%
Total	168	100	118	100.0%

**Source:** Records from Police Head Quarters in Kilifi County (2022)

The study adopted a purposive sampling with strata method to ensure that only personnel involved in the resolution of land-related disputes participated in the study. This approach helped to ensure that only those with

firsthand experience in land-related conflicts and interactions with police interventions were included, providing relevant insights into the dynamics at play. The sample size was determined using the Cochran's Formula, which is a common formula for determining sample size in finite population as shown below (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

$$n = \frac{N \cdot Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{\epsilon^2 \cdot (N - 1) + Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}$$

Where:

- N=168 (total population)
- Z=1.96 (for 95% confidence level)
- p=0.5 (assumed proportion)
- $\epsilon$ =0.05 (5% margin of error)

$$n = \frac{168 \cdot 1.96^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2 \cdot (168 - 1) + 1.96^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1 - 0.5)}$$

$$n = \frac{161.3472}{1.3779}$$

$$n = 118$$

Based on the Cochran's formula, a sample size of 118 individuals was derived from the population with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Arithmetically, this represents seventy percent of the population, a value that was used to determine the ideal sample size per category of respondents. This was determined to include thirty-two police officers, thirty-one local officials, and 55 community representatives. The distribution of the sample size of this study is shown in Table 1.

## Data collection

Data for the study was collected using structure questionnaires and open-ended interview guides. Self-administered, close-ended questionnaires gathered quantitative data from all 118 respondents on demographics, conflict causes, police responses, and investigation success. Open-ended interviews with key informants (e.g., police officials, community leaders) provided qualitative insights. Primary data collection occurred in three stages: (1) distributing questionnaires to police and officials, (2) arranging and conducting interviews with community representatives, and (3) retrieving questionnaires. Secondary data (e.g., police reports, journals) was sourced from government offices and online portals.

## Data Analysis and Presentation

Quantitative data from questionnaires were sorted, coded, and entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages, were generated to summarize trends such as land-related crime recurrence, case clearance rates, and eviction order execution for 2022. These findings were presented in tables, bar charts, and line graphs to illustrate the magnitude of land conflicts, temporal patterns (e.g., comparing 2019–2022), and police intervention success. Qualitative data from interviews was transcribed, organized into themes like causes of land invasions, types of conflicts, efficacy of police strategies), and analyzed using content analysis to identify recurring patterns and stakeholder perspectives. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative results ensured a robust interpretation of police intervention impacts. Secondary data from police reports and publications was summarized in tables to contextualize primary findings. All respondents were assigned pseudonyms like “Police Officer A, Kilifi Sub-County”) to maintain anonymity in the presentation of results. Themes such as 'trust in police', 'perceived fairness', and 'structural drivers' were compared with survey data like enforcement success rates and recurrence

levels, allowing for cross-validation of emerging patterns.

### Ethical Considerations

Research approvals were obtained from the ethics committee of Kenyatta University and the National Council of Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), with consent from Kilifi County officials. Participation was voluntary, confidentiality was assured (no names were recorded), and respondents were debriefed post-study to reinforce privacy and appreciation.

## RESULTS

A total of 118 respondents were earmarked to participate in the study. 100 were selected to join by filling out the questionnaire, and the remaining 18 participated through the interview method. This means that 100 questionnaires were issued to the respondents; 84 were filled and returned for analysis, and 16 were not returned or were incomplete, making a response rate of 84%. The researcher also interviewed 10 respondents on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2023. This was adequate for the study to proceed. According to Holtom et al. (2022), it is good to conduct a study whose response rate is more than half of the approved sample size.

### Demographic Presentation of Respondents

The study involved diverse respondents to achieve its objectives. The demographics of these respondents were measured using age, gender, period of residency, and designation/role as shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2:** Demographic profiles of the respondents

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age of respondents	Below 18 years	8	7%
	18 years and above	104	93%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>
Gender of respondents	Male	93	83%
	Female	19	17%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>
Period of residency	Less than 1 year	9	8%
	1-5 years	12	11%
	6-10 years	17	15%
	11-15 years	29	26%
	16 years and above	45	40%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>
Designation of respondents	Police officers	27	24%
	Local government officials	23	21%
	Community representatives	62	55%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>

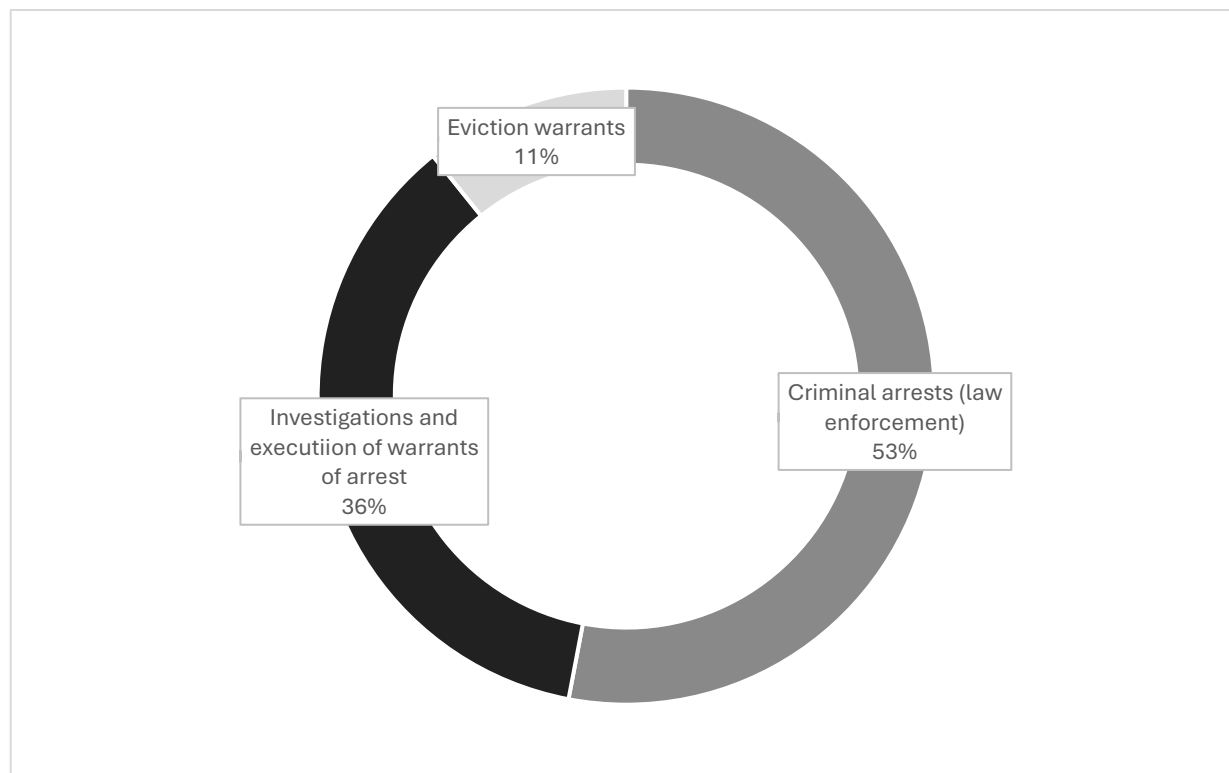
**Source:** Study (2025)

The majority (93%, n=104) were aged 18 years and above, with only 7% (n=8) below 18, indicating a predominantly adult sample as shown in Table 2. Gender distribution showed a strong male dominance, with

83% (n=93) male and 17% (n=19) female respondents, reflecting potential gender disparities in participation or roles related to land conflicts. Regarding residency duration, 40% (n=45) had lived in Kilifi County for 16 years or more, followed by 26% (n=29) for 11–15 years, 15% (n=17) for 6–10 years, 11% (n=12) for 1–5 years, and 8% (n=9) for less than 1 year, suggesting a mix of long-term residents and newer arrivals. By designation, community representatives comprised the largest group at 55% (n=62), followed by police officers at 24% (n=27) and local government officials at 21% (n=23), aligning with the study’s focus on diverse stakeholder perspectives.

### Police enforcement strategies for land-related conflicts

Police enforcement strategies in Kilifi County primarily involve criminal arrests, execution of warrants, investigations, and direct on-site actions during land-related disputes as highlighted in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2:** Police enforcement strategies applied to manage land-related conflicts

**Source:** Author (2024)

Based on the collected data, criminal arrests were the most reported enforcement strategy, accounting for 53% followed by investigations and direct-on-site activities (36%) as shown in Figure 4.8. Eviction warrants (11%) were the least used interventions against land-related conflicts in Kilifi County. The preference for criminal arrests stems from their immediate impact on de-escalating conflicts. Arresting perpetrators, particularly ringleaders, often disrupt organised land invasions and serve as a deterrent. These findings align with Kalabamu (2019), who observed that arrests are pivotal in managing African land disputes but are often constrained by systemic and resource limitations.

The relatively high use of eviction warrants (29%) reflects the importance of judicial backing in legitimising police actions. The warrants ensure adherence to legal frameworks, minimising accusations of bias or excessive force. Baughman (2020) emphasised the role of timely execution of warrants in maintaining law and order, particularly in contentious land disputes. The lower reliance on investigations and eviction warrants may indicate a limited capacity for long-term resolution. Investigations require extensive resources, training, and coordination with judicial authorities, which is often lacking in Kilifi. Respondents noted that resource constraints, including understaffing and lack of forensic capabilities, hinder thorough investigations, corroborating findings by Gilbert (2017), who observed similar limitations in addressing land conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa.



## Effectiveness of enforcement strategies

The respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statements on the success rate of the police enforcement strategies used in resolving land invasion-related cases in Kilifi County. Establishing a success rate in police intervention strategies is vital in assessing their capacity to address land-related conflicts. The findings of the study are illustrated in Table 3. The effectiveness of police enforcement strategies was evaluated through metrics such as the success rate of arrests, case clearances, and eviction executions.

**Table 3:** Effectiveness of police enforcement strategies

<b>Key:</b> D=Disagree; N=Neutral; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree; SD=Standard Deviation							
<b>Effectiveness of police intervention</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Law enforcement leads to arrests and conviction.	25.0	15.5	8.3	28.6	22.6	3.08	1.11
Investigations and direct-on-site activities resolved land invasion cases.	0.0	3.6	10.7	34.5	51.2	4.33	1.01
Land invasion eviction warrants are usually executed successfully by the police	6.0	13.1	4.8	35.7	40.5	3.92	1.09
<b>Total</b>						<b>3.69</b>	<b>1.11</b>

**Source:** Author (2024)

The analysis showed that slightly above 19.1% agreed that eviction warrants were executed successfully, which helped in slowing down crime. while only 28.6% agreed that law enforcement led to arrests and convictions. The high agreement regarding the resolution of land invasion cases (25.0%) suggests that arrests and convictions are perceived as impactful when applied effectively. However, the lower agreement on investigations and direct-on-site activities (0.0%) highlights gaps in the justice pipeline. While 40.5% strongly agreed on warrant success, this reflects enforcement in areas with court support. The 25% disagreement may be tied to politically sensitive land parcels where implementation is resisted.

The disparity between enforcement actions and legal outcomes underscores the need for enhanced collaboration between police and judicial institutions. The relatively high success in executing eviction warrants (40.5%) is attributed to the procedural safeguards and authority granted by court orders. However, respondents noted that warrants are not always enforceable due to organised resistance or lack of resources, echoing observations by Guerena (2016), who highlighted similar challenges in land conflict zones.

## Hindrances to the effectiveness of intervention strategies

The study also sought to explore common challenges hindering the efficacy of the intervention strategies. For instance, the study examined hindrances to arrest attempts by the police when apprehending perpetrators or executing court warrants of land-related conflicts. Finding the challenges faced warrants the government developing measures that ensure officers are equipped to fight land-related conflict criminals effectively. Results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Challenges in Arresting Suspects Involved in Land-related Violence

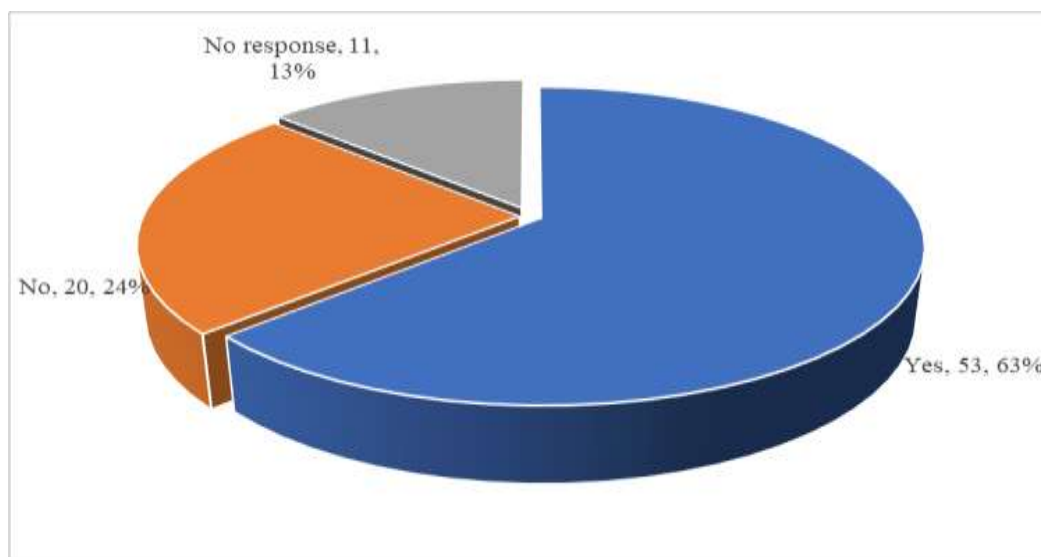
<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Petitions/court injunctions	22	25.6
Evictions	19	22.1
Organized crime/ Cartels	30	36.2

Limited legal authority	13	15.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Author (2024)

The results reveal that the majority (36.2%) of respondents identified organised crime or cartels as the leading challenge faced by the police when apprehending perpetrators or executing court warrants in land-related conflicts. 25.6% of them identified petitions in the form of court injunctions as another key challenge that hinders police in apprehending perpetrators or executing court warrants of land-related conflicts. In comparison, 22.1% identified evictions, and 15.8% identified limited legal authority. It can be concluded that police in Kilifi experienced challenges when arresting suspects involved in land-related conflicts. The 36.2% citing '*organised crime/cartels*' likely refers to coordinated land invaders who manipulate title fraud and resist evictions collectively, challenging police capabilities.

The researcher also probed further on instances of failure of the intervention strategies. The author sought to determine whether there were instances when police could not arrest perpetrators of land-related conflicts in Kilifi County. Examining cases of failure of specific intervention strategies provides a leeway for the police to return to the drawing board for improved ways of executing warrants for land invasion perpetrators. Results are presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Instances where NPS Officers were Unable to Execute Eviction Warrants

**Source:** Author (2024)

Most (63%) of the respondents indicated that there were instances when police were unable to execute eviction warrants by not being able to arrest perpetrators of land-related conflicts. This finding portrays the events of land invasion, in which a large group of invaders epitomise an organised group that attacks as a unit. These findings agree with a study by Guerena (2016), who observes that arresting perpetrators of land invasion cases requires a thorough understanding of property law, which describes circumstances under which evidence that supports criminal arrests is managed; therefore, Kilifi County police need more training on how warrants of arrest are executed to avoid confrontations.

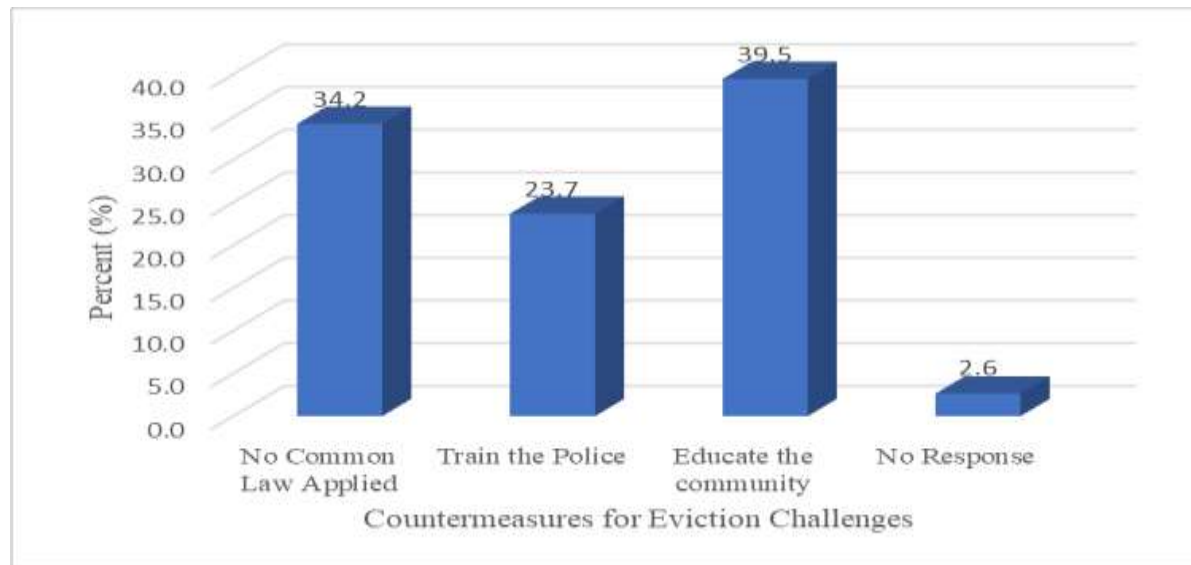
The findings also agree with a study by Leipold (2021), who noted that the police should not apply common law when arresting suspects of land-related conflicts in the county. Again, the police need to be retrained to handle land-related disputes effectively.

These findings are in tandem with a study by Angote (2018), who pointed out that the challenging enforcement environment for land invasions involves implementing lawfully issued eviction orders and notices. The findings

also agree with the conclusions from Quizon (2013), who noted that the challenges of arresting suspects of land-related violence are based on causes such as disaffection from Indigenous farmers due to failed land reforms to address injustice. The author cited a 2020 land clash incident in Vietnam between police and Indigenous farmers near Hanoi city that left three police officers dead. Indeed, scrutinising these incidents would possibly identify other offences, which was not the case.

### Countermeasures for eviction challenges during execution of warrants

The researcher sought the opinion of the respondents regarding the measures for eviction challenges experienced during the execution of warrants. Recommending measures is essential as this helps the government develop effective measures to assist police in fighting land-related conflicts in Kilifi County as shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4:** Countermeasures for eviction challenges during execution of warrants

**Source:** Researcher (2024)

Most respondents (39.5%) recommended education of the community as one of the measures addressing the challenges the police face when implementing eviction warrants. Slightly over thirty-four percent recommended not applying common law during the process while 25.7% recommended training the police on executing eviction warrants effectively, and 2.6% abstained. These findings agree with Baughman (2020), who found that for new metrics for full ‘criminal accountability’, it is essential to determine the execution rate of court eviction orders as a proportion of eviction orders and notices served that the police implemented fully. The results also concur with Mutuma and Jambawo (2017), who note that crime trends, especially targeting white land settlers in South Africa, as per police reports, have been escalating since the early 1980s, with the most dramatic increase occurring in 1990. The burgeoning crime rates, especially on land in the country, cause feelings of insecurity and undermine popular confidence in the democratisation process. This may result in political pressure, which undermines the government’s human rights agenda and is more likely to cause people to withdraw from the public sphere. This calls for the government to train the police to execute arrest warrants to avoid confrontations effectively.

Interview findings reveal that various countermeasures are utilised to resolve land-related disputes and evictions. For instance, one participant noted;

*Evicting people who have illegally occupied private land is not easy. However, the use of non-violent means, such as mediation, has seen a reduction in land-related conflicts in Kilifi County. (K6 Interviewee, 2024)*

Another participant pointed out that land administration processes are an effective tool for addressing the rampant issue of land invasion.

*Nothing supersedes having land ownership documentation where land disputes have arisen. Certificate of title deeds issued by the Registrar upon registration/purchase of land and a transfer is taken by all Courts as prima facie evidence that the person named as proprietor of the land is the absolute owner, subject to the encumbrances, easements, restrictions, and conditions contained or endorsed in the Certificate. (K8 Interviewee, 2024).*

This is also reflected by another participant, who is a senior police officer who noted that;

*We still have land-related cases where competing claims to the same piece of land exist. We have managed to address some of the land dispute issues in the county with the help of the Environment and Lands Court. For instance, the protracted conflict, which I understand goes into the late 1990s about the rolling piece of land across here, was resolved through the Environment and Lands Court. The Environment and Lands Court in Malindi ruled on July 19, 2021, that the swathe of land, 7,100 acres (2.861ha) covering the parcel of land known as Kilifi/Madzimbani/Mitangoni/B/1 was owned by Mumba Ngala Chome (deceased) and his descendants. The land on which public institutions have been constructed was ruled to be acquired by the NLC under the provisions of the law relating to compulsory acquisition. Within the said land were three villages of Mwabeja, Mwamundu, and Mwakai of Mitangoni, which were to be evicted, as well as the spared public institutions, namely, five public primary schools, two public secondary schools, and a public health Centre (K7 Interviewee, 2024).*

Respondents noted that exclusion of local elders from mediation eroded legitimacy. Including such institutions could bridge the trust gap between formal police structures and informal land ownership claims.

## CONCLUSION

This study sought to assess police enforcement strategies in managing land-related conflicts. The findings indicate that criminal arrests (41%), execution of eviction warrants (29%), and investigations (23%) are the most common enforcement actions. While these strategies are essential in restoring law and order, their effectiveness depends on legal backing and successful case resolution. The MBO Theory supports these findings, as it emphasises setting clear enforcement objectives and performance indicators to measure effectiveness. However, enforcement alone does not address the root causes of land conflicts, reinforcing Galtung's perspective that sustainable peace requires tackling both immediate conflicts and their deeper structural causes. Enhancing enforcement mechanisms for criminal instances associated with land-related disputes is also needed. One way could be advocating for expedited court procedures for land-related cases to reduce delays in obtaining eviction warrants and resolving disputes. The police should also be equipped with adequate resources to improve response times and enforcement effectiveness, including transportation, personnel, and legal support.

This study assessed the NPS's effectiveness in responding to land invasion-related crimes in Kilifi County, Kenya. Specifically, the study established the causes of land-related crimes, established trends in land-related offences reported to the NPS, and examined arrest trends for land-related conflicts reported to police. It determined the success rate in investigative case clearance and execution of eviction warrants related to land invasions. It is important to note that other factors/objectives were left out by this study, which can be investigated to determine their outcome. Other countries can also be under the same investigation to determine their outcome. Other aspects include the root cause of land invasion in Kilifi, considering the awareness of the members of the public of what the law says about land ownership. The study underscores the need for hybrid training programs equipping police officers with conflict resolution, legal, and cultural competencies. Insights can inform NPS curriculum reforms and guide resource allocation, like prioritising capacity-building in hotspot zones and integrating community-led structures. These findings may also inform legal reforms around land tenure and law enforcement collaboration.

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