

Strategic Options of Improving Strategies of Service Delivery by Private Security Firms in Crime Prevention in Nairobi County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

National security plays a vital role in realizing a nation's social, economic, and political goals. Given its importance, no country can fully address its security challenges alone; collaboration with key stakeholders such as local communities and private security firms (PSFs) is essential. PSFs, equipped with specialized expertise and training, serve as valuable allies to the police in crime detection and prevention, thereby enhancing public safety. This study explored strategic options of improving strategies of service delivery by PSFs in delivering security services aimed at preventing crime in Nairobi County, Kenya. Guided by the Resource-Based View theory, the research analyzed strategic measures available to PSFs for overcoming service delivery challenges. A descriptive survey design was utilized, incorporating a mixed-methods approach for data collection. The sample consisted of managers, supervisors, guards, and clients from selected PSFs in Nairobi County. A multistage sampling technique comprising clustering, proportionate random sampling, and purposive sampling was used to select 90 participants. Data collection involved questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics presented in tables and charts, while qualitative data were examined thematically and supported with direct quotations. The findings revealed that guarding services and collaborative initiatives were the main strategies employed by PSFs. Based on these results, the study recommended enhancing government policies to foster cooperation between public and private security sectors, establishing a regulatory body to ensure professional standards, and promoting the use of advanced technologies among PSFs to improve their role in crime prevention.

Keywords: Security, Private Security, Strategies, Strategic options, Service delivery

INTRODUCTION

Private Security Firms (PSFs) are commercial organizations that offer additional protection services to safeguard clients' lives and property against threats such as theft, burglary, vandalism, kidnapping, and murder. According to Thompson (2018), an effective strategy that aligns with both a firm's internal strengths and the external environment can lead to significant performance gains. As a result, more individuals, business owners, and organizations are turning to private security to enhance safety and reduce crime. However, to play this role effectively, PSFs must implement robust crime prevention strategies.

Ariel et al. (2017) define private security as a range of business entities, whether independently owned or run by self-employed individuals, that operate under commercial agreements to provide security services. Burnett et al. (2018) add that these firms perform multiple functions, including protecting people, property, and investments from various risks. They argue that private security contributes to reducing losses, deterring crime, and promoting general safety.

Globally, PSFs are increasingly important in supporting public security systems. Kinywa (2021) notes that rising crime rates have driven the expansion of the private security industry in many countries. Nonetheless, challenges like terrorism and attacks from groups such as Al-Shabaab continue, suggesting existing strategies may not be fully effective highlighting the need for further study into PSF crime prevention methods. In many countries, private security has overtaken public policing as the main provider of protection services due to increasing demand and market growth (Byne et al., 2019). This has led to a significant rise in the number of private security

personnel.

In developed countries like the U.S., U.K., and Canada, the 1960s saw a major shift toward private security as businesses sought better asset protection. A survey in New York City by Govender (2019) revealed that private security officers recognize their role in confronting security issues and follow structured procedures, guided by legal regulations a model relevant to Nairobi's context.

Bures & Carrapico (2017) explain that Israel began privatizing its security sector in the late 1980s to address new threats, adopting advanced technologies and professionalizing operations to attract government and private clients. These strategies enabled PSFs to secure both public and private facilities, offering potential lessons for Nairobi County.

In Africa, countries like South Africa, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Kenya have seen the emergence of PSFs. Diphorn (2016) notes that in South Africa's volatile security environment, PSFs can enhance public safety—particularly where government services fall short—if they operate with professionalism and accountability. This approach could help address urban crimes such as murder, cash-in-transit thefts, carjackings, and kidnappings.

In East Africa, reliance on private security is common due to under-resourced police forces (Mutonyi et al., 2020). PSFs often have more personnel and employ advanced technologies, although governments maintain exclusive control over the use of force. For example, by 2013, all mining firms in the Orientale province of the Democratic Republic of Congo had hired PSFs, even though firearm use was restricted. Some companies also partnered with public security forces, but the effectiveness of such arrangements remains unclear.

Kiama (2018) studied the role of private security in reducing crime in Nairobi, finding that despite their presence, insecurity persisted. That study focused largely on the deterrent value of security personnel numbers and did not explore other crime prevention strategies. The current research seeks to fill this gap by assessing how different PSF service delivery methods contribute to crime reduction. Githimi et al. (2018) emphasize patrolling by foot or vehicle as a common tactic used by PSFs to deter criminal activity. However, ongoing incidents of unjustified killings, robberies, and property damage in these areas raise concerns about how effective such methods truly are. This underscores the need for a deeper evaluation of how PSF strategies can be improved to better address crime in Nairobi County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The different strategic methods used by private security firms to enhance their crime prevention services are referred to as strategic options. Odhongo & Omolo (2017) emphasized that effective training significantly improves task performance by enabling employees to apply standardized procedures and acquire essential knowledge and skills. As private security firms (PSFs) take on greater roles in maintaining public safety, the importance of proper training has grown, becoming a critical component of successful crime prevention efforts. Gittings et al. (2018) identified training-related factors such as on-the-job and off-the-job training as key motivators that boost employee performance. On-the-job training techniques include mentorship, coaching, job rotation, and role-playing, while off-the-job methods include sensitivity training and transactional analysis. Despite their benefits, many PSFs, particularly smaller ones, seldom utilize these approaches, which weakens their ability to prevent crime effectively.

Jonyo (2018), in a study focused on Kenya's private security sector, found that continuous training not only enhances employee capabilities but also gives firms a competitive advantage. On-the-job training, for example, equips guards with practical skills relevant to their roles, such as information and communication technology (ICT) use and proficiency in English, Kiswahili, or other foreign languages skills that can significantly improve crime prevention outcomes.

Odhongo (2018) recommended that PSFs implement a standardized training curriculum and set secondary education as a minimum qualification for recruits. He proposed a blended training model combining classroom instruction, hands-on field exercises, online modules, and specialized programs tailored to modern crime challenges. However, many PSFs still lack uniform training standards and often hire underqualified personnel. To tackle this issue, PSFs should develop role-specific training requirements and enforce mandatory training

protocols, enabling guards to obtain specialized licenses, especially for high-risk roles. For instance, guards deployed in situations involving terrorism should receive targeted training in counter-terrorism tactics and weapon handling (Numonjonov, 2020).

Globally, partnerships between private security and community policing are seen as critical in strengthening public safety by fostering trust between communities and law enforcement. Berg & Howell (2020) noted that private security expanded rapidly in Africa following economic reforms and reduced government spending, conditions often imposed by international lenders in the 1990s. These reforms weakened public services, including policing, contributing to rising unemployment and crime rates. PSFs stepped in to fill the gap, generating employment opportunities. However, many of these jobs come with poor pay, limited protections, and precarious terms of employment, which has diminished the quality and reliability of crime prevention services (Cooper-Knock, 2016).

In South Africa, the government has taken steps to improve labor conditions in the private security sector. The Security Officers Board is responsible for ensuring compliance with employment standards (Punch, 2016). Guards often perform multiple duties, including patrolling, managing front desk operations, driving, and transporting valuables without proper protective gear.

Globalization has significantly reshaped the security landscape. The rise of global markets, technological advances, and increased movement of financial assets have changed crime patterns (Diphooorn, 2016). Ralph (2018) highlighted that these developments have prompted private security firms to revise their strategies to remain competitive, grow their client base, and retain existing customers. In this evolving environment, PSF leadership must adopt a new mindset. Nduku (2018) argued that both public and private security providers now operate in complex and unpredictable markets influenced by internal and external pressures. This situation demands adaptive leadership and well-informed strategic planning to navigate modern security challenges effectively.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was based on the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, originally proposed by Penrose (1959) and later developed by Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1986). RBV advocates argue that to maintain long-term competitiveness, organizations should focus on evaluating and leveraging their internal resources rather than solely reacting to external market pressures to build strategic advantages. Barney (2018) highlights that an organization's value is rooted in its resources, which must be rare, diverse, and difficult for competitors to imitate. Such resources can help firms effectively counter external threats. For example, a security company equipped with advanced patrol vehicles and high-tech alarm systems can better address crimes like theft, trespassing, and burglary resources that are not commonly available among most security providers in Nairobi County.

Fundamentally, RBV suggests that a firm's competitive edge arises from its unique, non-transferable resources both tangible and intangible that set it apart from competitors (Ainuddin et al., 2017). Rather than creating new capabilities for every opportunity, the theory promotes adapting and optimizing existing resources to seize market opportunities efficiently. The core idea is that firms gain an advantage by utilizing what they already have in a distinctive way.

Under RBV, organizations are seen as collections of resources, including physical assets, intangible qualities, and organizational know-how. Long-term success depends on how well these resources are integrated, provided they meet four essential criteria: they must be valuable, rare, hard to imitate, and irreplaceable. Assessing these aspects requires careful analysis of both internal capacities and the external competitive landscape (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

This theory is particularly relevant to the study because it offers a systematic framework for maximizing the impact of limited security resources. RBV enables private security firms to critically evaluate the value and effectiveness of their crime prevention strategies. It also helps them identify which of their service delivery methods offer a competitive edge by being unique or difficult for rivals to replicate.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive survey research design, which enabled the researcher to observe and document variables such as values, attitudes, traits, perceptions, and behaviors in their natural state. The research was conducted in Nairobi County, with particular attention to the Industrial Area, Central Business District (CBD), and surrounding suburbs within the county. Nairobi was chosen due to its high concentration of private security companies, many of which either operate extensively in the region or have their headquarters there. Moreover, Nairobi serves as a hub for private enterprises, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and foreign embassies all of which rely on the services of private security firms making it an ideal setting for this study. The target population included security guards from a range of private security companies large, medium, and small as well as their clients, as outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Target population

Security Company	Population	Population %
Small	75	65
Medium	25	22
Large	16	13
Total	116	100

Source: Questionnaire data 2020

This study first utilized purposive sampling to classify private security firms into large, medium, and small categories. Following this, simple random sampling was applied to select security managers, guards, and clients based on their firm's classification. Out of 116 total respondents, 90 individuals were randomly selected as potential participants for the research. The appropriate sample size was determined using Yamane's formula, based on a 95% confidence level.

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + Ne^2)}$$

Where, n = Sample size

N = Study Population, 116 in this case

e = Alpha level of 0.05

substituting these values in the above equation, the sample size was:

$$n = \frac{116}{(1 + 116(0.05^2))}$$

n = 90

With the use of Yamane's formula, the sample size of the study was determined to be 90 respondents from a population of 116 with a confidence level of 95%. Sample size distribution was presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Sampling of Respondents Firm's Clientele by size

Security Company	Frequency	Sample size
Small	75	69
Medium	25	15

Large	16	6
Total	116	90

Source: Questionnaire data 2020

The main instruments used for data collection in this study were questionnaires and interviews, both tailored to align with the study's objectives. Questionnaires were distributed to senior management personnel from various Private Security Firms (PSFs) and their clients to gather responses related to the research questions. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A captured demographic details of the respondents, while Section B addressed the core objectives of the study, focusing on the effectiveness, challenges, and services offered by PSFs. Questionnaires were chosen for their practicality, ability to cover a broad range of topics, and reduced susceptibility to external manipulation. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were included to enable a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Secondary data were also utilized, sourced from academic journals, online resources, government publications, World Values Surveys, NGO reports, and media outlets.

In addition to questionnaires, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, such as PSF managers and their clients. These interviews were expected to provide more accurate and insightful data, given the participants' direct involvement in security service delivery. One-on-one interviews enabled deeper exploration of relevant topics and more meaningful findings. Structured interviews were carried out using predetermined questions and professional recording methods, serving as a follow-up to the questionnaire responses. This format allowed participants to articulate their perspectives in their own words. With support from research assistants, the researcher personally delivered questionnaires to randomly selected security personnel across various firms. Interviews with PSF officials, managers, and clients were scheduled through phone calls and in-person visits to their offices.

Qualitative data were used to enrich the interpretation of quantitative results. Quantitative responses were organized in chronological order based on the questionnaire structure, ensuring proper coding and verification of each entry's accuracy.

For the qualitative data gathered from both key informant interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses a data checklist was developed. This checklist was categorized according to the main research themes, aiding in data consolidation and interpretation. The first section included demographic variables such as age, gender, and occupation, while the second section corresponded with the study's three main objectives. This tool facilitated the organization and analysis of the data under each theme, guiding the interpretation and discussion of findings.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The survey aimed to assess the effectiveness of the PSFs' service delivery strategies in relation to crime rates in Nairobi County. Respondents provided their feedback using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented "Very High" and 5 indicated "Very Low." The findings are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Strategic options of improving strategies of service delivery in Crime Prevention by Private Security.

Type of Strategies of Service Delivery	Number and percentage of Participants					
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Institutional Paradigm shift	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	10 (33%)	16 (53%)	30
Additional Training	3 (10%)	5 (17%)	6 (20%)	9 (30%)	7 (23%)	30
Good working conditions	3 (10%)	5 (17%)	8 (27%)	10 (33%)	4 (13%)	30
TOTAL						90

Source: Questionnaire data 2020

Institutional Paradigm shift Strategic Option

As shown in Table 7 above, a majority of respondents (53%) indicated that Private Security Firms (PSFs) have not significantly embraced an institutional paradigm shift. The study revealed that most PSFs lack adequate resources to implement critical institutional and managerial reforms needed to enhance their service delivery effectiveness. This shortfall is attributed to a constantly evolving environment that necessitates regular adaptations—particularly the shift from traditional practices to digital solutions. For example, the adoption of new technologies often involves substantial financial investments, which many PSFs, especially smaller ones, are unable to afford. This financial strain has negatively affected their capacity to deliver services efficiently. One participant noted that:

“Some firms lacked basic modern facilities such as mobile response vehicles, security phones, alarm systems, and adequately trained personnel to facilitate these changes.”

Participants' responses suggested that PSFs operate in a dynamic environment influenced by rapid population growth, workforce diversity, evolving work cultures, technological advancements, and increased pollution. These changes demand financial investment in training and equipment to keep pace. Ferreira et al. (2015) similarly observed that a major challenge facing private security operations in Central Europe was insufficient funding. The research found that PSFs engaged in crime prevention lacked the resources to foster meaningful cultural change, often clinging to outdated practices that are ill-suited for the current environment. These conclusions are in line with the findings of Mamus and Boduroglu (2018), who identified key policing challenges as including limited personnel, inadequate funding, poor logistical support, insufficient actionable intelligence, and a lack of modern technology.

Additionally, it emerged that government regulations—or the lack thereof—played a significant role in hindering PSFs from achieving an institutional shift. Specifically, the absence of clear policies or legal mandates on training standards, coordination between PSFs and police, guard vetting processes, and information sharing limited the development of more effective service delivery strategies. In many instances, guards received minimal training, and unarmed personnel with limited knowledge of basic security protocols were deployed, increasing their vulnerability in high-risk situations. Due to legal restrictions, they were not permitted to carry firearms or wear protective gear like bulletproof vests, thereby weakening their crime prevention capabilities. One participant highlighted this issue, stating:

“Many private security guards faced life-threatening situations at work, as they could not defend themselves against armed robbers with just a baton and a whistle, and government restrictions prevented them from using firearms for self-defense.”

The study also found that the collaboration between PSFs and law enforcement agencies was informal and poorly structured, lacking regulatory clarity. Interactions between police and private security were largely based on individual discretion rather than coordinated policies. In some cases, police officers offered support to PSFs by responding to alarms or providing security for cash-in-transit operations. This observation corroborates Abrahamsen and Leander's (2016) claim that the absence of a robust regulatory framework fosters mutual distrust and suspicions of collusion in illicit activities. Furthermore, the legal roles of private security officers and their understanding of their own rights were found to be underdeveloped.

The complexity and fluidity of the business environment further posed challenges for PSFs attempting to undergo institutional transformation. In today's fast-paced world, adaptability is crucial, but many PSFs fail to adjust their operations accordingly. This lack of agility limits innovation and undermines service quality. PSFs, like many other businesses, contend with widespread issues such as corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, heavy taxation, debt, inadequate infrastructure, and subpar services, all of which strain organizational culture and reduce competitiveness—particularly when compared with international firms operating in similar markets. One participant commented:

“Most PSFs navigated tumultuous and rapidly changing environments, resulting in complex, interwoven initiatives that affected work processes, organizational structures, and resource allocations, ultimately impacting

performance. Even with a well-crafted strategy, poor performance among PSFs was linked to delays in resource availability, political interference, and economic fluctuations.”

Furthermore, the study emphasized that PSFs face external environments marked by extreme volatility and complexity, making the implementation of institutional and managerial changes particularly challenging. This aligns with the observations of Hajela (2016), who emphasized the importance of continuous environmental scanning for businesses to identify emerging threats and opportunities. In such unstable conditions, PSFs must remain proactive in monitoring developments and adapting their strategies.

Moreover, rising crime complexity—exacerbated by social issues such as the erosion of family values, high unemployment, and endemic corruption—has undermined PSFs' crime prevention efforts due to limited resources. The increase in diverse and severe criminal activities, including armed robbery, sexual violence, homicide, car theft, and fraud, has shifted PSFs' attention away from institutional reforms toward immediate responses to crime. One participant observed:

“Society was living in fear, making everyday life perilous as criminals could strike at any moment. Violent crimes such as murder and theft were on the rise, creating confusion and alarm within the political system. Consequently, it became increasingly dangerous to walk alone in isolated areas, particularly in poorly lit places.”

The surge in criminal activity is not confined to developing nations but reflects a broader global trend (McMichael, 2018). Both violent and property crimes are prevalent worldwide, complicating efforts to reform institutional structures. This study's findings support Baraga's (2016) observations about Nairobi, where frequent incidents of mugging, banditry, illegal firearm possession, and break-ins—alongside common petty crimes like pickpocketing—are typical in crowded urban areas. These criminal pressures have diverted PSFs' focus from organizational transformation to reactive measures, thereby limiting their long-term effectiveness.

Additional Training Strategy

The strategy of providing additional training has been poorly implemented by private security firms (PSFs), with 30% of participants indicating its inadequate adoption, which has contributed to weak performance in crime prevention. The lack of professionalism and dedication among many private security guards was largely attributed to the absence of this enhanced training approach. This shortfall was linked to the lack of a uniform training curriculum across PSFs. Although training is essential to improve the standards of private security services, many guards receive only minimal instruction or none at all. The study found that enhanced training plays a vital role in shaping the professionalism and competence of private security personnel, directly influencing their ability to effectively prevent crime as part of their duties. One participant, a client of PSFs, noted:

“Despite the industry's size, there is no standardization in training and recruitment practices for security personnel. Consequently, training and service standards vary significantly between firms. While most PSFs provide basic training to their guards, some deploy individuals with little to no training, whereas others, especially multinational firms, offer more comprehensive training programs. Concerns about the professionalism and integrity of private security personnel are frequently raised due to these inconsistencies, with accusations that some guards may collude with criminals.”

According to the findings, proper training fosters new skills, knowledge, and attitudes among security guards, reshaping their perspectives and improving their capabilities. It also helps correct misconceptions. The study concluded that adopting a more robust training strategy would better equip guards to handle specific responsibilities, thereby improving the effectiveness of crime prevention efforts. This supports the view of Niazi et al. (2017), who emphasized that training helps organizations and their staff respond to current and future challenges, while also enhancing customer service and crime prevention strategies.

In addition, regulatory limitations posed by government policies negatively impacted the adoption of advanced training programs, thus affecting the effectiveness of service delivery. The study revealed significant concerns within the private security sector regarding the government's prohibition on firearm training for guards, especially given the increasing rates of crime and violence. Many guards are equipped with low-level weapons

that require minimal instruction, placing them at a disadvantage when faced with well-armed criminals. A supermarket security guard expressed:

“It was difficult confronting armed criminals with basic tools, expressing a desire for government approval to carry firearms to match the threats they face.”

This sentiment highlighted the fear and vulnerability that security guards experience in the line of duty. While the government aims to regulate specialized training and weapon access, this also reflects broader public perceptions of the private security industry. Although specialized training in areas like firearms comes with risks—such as potential injury, death, or property damage—the findings support Meehan’s (2016) assertion that legal frameworks aim to raise professional standards and exclude unqualified individuals from the field.

The study also identified low educational attainment among security guards as a major barrier to the adoption of enhanced training strategies. Since guarding roles often demand minimal skills, the sector attracts personnel with limited academic qualifications. According to Section 23 of the Private Security Industry Regulation Act, virtually anyone can become a security guard without meeting minimum educational criteria. The findings indicated that workers with higher education levels are more likely to embrace and effectively apply training programs. Ongoing training initiatives could promote awareness of technological innovations, support integration of training into everyday operations, and deepen understanding of modern crime prevention techniques. As one respondent observed:

“The basic requirements for guards are minimal, including a high school certificate (though not mandatory), an identification card to prove age, and a certificate of good conduct indicating no criminal record.”

Overall, the research indicated that many PSFs have failed to adopt enhanced training strategies needed to improve their crime prevention capabilities. Due to the low educational qualifications of their staff, most PSFs struggle with professional growth, gaining industry recognition, engaging in meaningful work, and achieving both job satisfaction and high-quality service delivery—factors critical for attracting and retaining clients. These findings echo Mbuvi’s (2015) observation that many PSF employees are underqualified young adults, often school dropouts aged between 18 and 30, who lack proper training and motivation, ultimately resulting in ineffective crime prevention strategies.

Good Working Conditions Strategy

The initiative to enhance working conditions received low support, with only 33% of participants approving it. Most respondents noted that Private Security Firms (PSFs) implemented this strategy poorly. A key reason for this was the absence of professionalism and the lack of a structured employment framework for security guards, both of which hindered efforts to improve service delivery. The findings revealed that demotivation among guards was largely due to low pay and frequent salary delays. Many smaller PSFs, operating in an unregulated environment, opted to pay fines for non-compliance rather than adhere to minimum wage laws or offer fair compensation to their workers. As one respondent observed:

"Due to high inflation, many security guards struggled to afford basic necessities, such as food and transportation, often leading to long walks to work."

Despite their responsibility for protecting people and valuable property, many guards were paid wages insufficient to support themselves or their families. This lack of adequate compensation left them vulnerable to unethical practices, including facilitating theft for bribes, which ultimately compromised crime prevention strategies. The study noted a recurring pattern of guards being involved in burglaries, driven by poor pay and the failure to effectively implement better working conditions. These findings echoed a report by the Kenya National Private Security Workers Union (KNPSWU), which condemned widespread exploitative practices in rapidly growing PSFs. Some of these firms, despite holding profitable contracts, still paid below the legally mandated minimum wage.

Low morale was another factor contributing to the failure of this strategy. Most PSFs did not offer flexible work arrangements or incentive systems to reward guards' contributions. As a result, many guards worked excessively

long hours often more than twelve hours daily without breaks or additional benefits. One guard based in the central business district noted:

“Many colleagues often went hungry during their shifts due to the lack of scheduled breaks for meals.”

According to Kenya’s Employment Act (Cap 226), security personnel should work no more than 52 hours per week, with overtime pay required for extra hours. However, this regulation was not enforced in practice, as most guards were treated as casual laborers, often denied breaks, holidays, and proper compensation. The study also highlighted that working conditions including access to tools, adequate training, and welfare support such as insurance played a critical role in the success of the strategy. For example, while guards were only provided batons, police officers involved in cash transit operations carried firearms and wore protective gear. Many mobile response teams within PSFs lacked basic equipment, such as communication tools and vehicles, which limited their operational effectiveness. A respondent pointed out:

“Legal restrictions on arming private security personnel placed them at great risk, especially during incidents like the Westgate mall attack, where they were expected to respond without proper training or equipment.”

This concern was consistent with KNPSWU’s assertion that many firms provided minimal professional training, putting both guards and clients at risk. Additionally, the lack of regulatory oversight regarding employment standards and professional growth opportunities for guards further exacerbated these issues. The increasing number of guards being injured or killed on duty due to poor training, inadequate insurance coverage, and insufficient resources has led to growing insecurity in Kenya underscoring lessons still being learned from past tragedies.

The research ultimately concluded that weak strategic leadership within most PSFs was a major obstacle to improving working conditions, leading to poor performance in crime prevention efforts. Ineffective management especially in overseeing field operations reflected a broader indifference among security firm leaders toward employee welfare. According to Mbaya (2017), strong leadership involves inspiring and motivating staff to contribute toward an organization’s success. However, many managers appeared more focused on maximizing profit than supporting their workforce. One guard remarked:

“Management didn’t understand how personal issues impacted work. Even being sick led to pay deductions. We knew we were earning far less than the amount the client paid for our services, which felt deeply unfair.”

The interviews emphasized the need for a motivational framework that aligns individual efforts with organizational goals. However, the lack of visionary leadership at the top was identified as a major hindrance to successfully implementing better working conditions and achieving effective crime prevention outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The research aimed to investigate strategic options for enhancing service delivery by private security firms (PSFs) in crime prevention. The results indicated that a significant portion of participants (53%) reported a very low level of adoption of these strategies by PSFs. It was found that many PSFs lacked sufficient resources to implement the necessary institutional and management changes to boost the effectiveness of their service delivery strategies. Additionally, government policies and regulations hindered PSFs from making the needed institutional adjustments, while the fast-changing business environment and the increasing complexity of crime obstructed the cultural transformation within these organizations, resulting in poor strategy adoption.

Moreover, the strategy aimed at providing additional training saw a reported poor adoption rate (33%) among PSFs, which contributed to ineffective service delivery. The findings revealed that the lack of professionalism and commitment among most private security guards stemmed from the insufficient adoption of additional training programs. This was largely due to the absence of a standardized training curriculum, government regulations affecting certain training requirements, and the low educational levels of many security guards, all of which impeded the PSFs’ ability to implement additional training and ultimately impacted service delivery effectiveness.

The strategy for improving working conditions also received a poor adoption rating (33%), with most participants indicating limited implementation by PSFs. The findings showed that the lack of professionalism and a clear service scheme for security guards contributed to the inadequate adoption of strategies intended to enhance service delivery. This was linked to the demotivation of private security guards caused by low wages, delays in payment, absence of incentives, insufficient working equipment, and a lack of strategic leadership within many PSFs, all of which adversely affected the adoption of improved working conditions.

CONCLUSION

The study found that many Private Security Firms' (PSFs) services were applicable to their areas of operation, as various types of criminal activities are present in different parts of Nairobi County. The most successful service delivery strategies employed by the PSFs included both personnel and technological aspects, such as security guards, alarm systems, access control, CCTV surveillance, and canine units. However, without a legal security policy framework and legislation to effectively address certain criminal activities, PSFs will continue to manage the consequences of crime rather than prevent it. It is clear that the absence of policies and legislation governing collaboration between the police and PSFs hinders the effectiveness of the PSFs' crime prevention strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the research, it was recommended that:

Expanding and diversifying the training curriculum for private security providers will enhance their ability to engage in crime policing through effective crime prevention service delivery strategies. Implementing standardized training for security guards will build public and police trust in the private security sector, facilitating cooperation between private security firms and national security agencies in crime policing efforts.

To strengthen the relationship and collaboration between private security entities and law enforcement, there is a need for government policies and legislation that promote cooperation between security agencies and private security firms (PSFs) for effective crime prevention strategies. This is crucial as, while police are the primary law enforcement agency, PSFs are often more widespread and may face challenges in addressing violent crime on their own.

To enhance professionalism and commitment to ethical conduct within the industry, it is necessary to establish an oversight agency that will ensure accountability, transparency, and professional standards, particularly given the commercialization of crime prevention by the private security sector. This agency would oversee the internal governance of PSFs, including staff recruitment, training, the roles of governing boards, financial matters, accountability, and standardized service delivery in crime prevention.

The integration of modern and innovative technologies is recommended to help PSFs achieve their crime prevention, detection, and client satisfaction goals. For example, new terrorism detection equipment that evades traditional screening methods, and advanced integrated information systems that consolidate existing systems—such as access control, video surveillance, and intrusion detection into a centralized computerized data storage solution would significantly enhance their operational effectiveness in the context of globalization.

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