

Prevalent Crime Trends among Youths in Kibera Slum, Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The current modernity is largely defined by urbanization, which is characterized by rural to urban migration that has put pressure on urban spaces in terms of housing and amenities. One of the upshots of this development is the increase in crime rates, which disproportionately affect residents living in the informal settlements within the urban areas. This study looked at the prevalence of youth criminality in Kibera slum in Nairobi County. The study sought to understand the most prevalent types of crimes committed by youths in the slum and the socio-economic factors that contribute to those criminal activities. The study also examined how gangs and peer pressure influence youth involvement in criminal activity in Kibera and, the extent the existing programs in Kibera were effective in preventing youth crime. The social disorganization theory and the social learning theory informed the understanding of how the key variables in the study relate, subsequently guiding the suitability of the recommended intervention. The study adopted the mixed methods approach in collecting and analyzing data in which questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used. A quantitative sample of 100 respondents was determined using stratified sampling and simple random sampling and was engaged through the self-administered questionnaires. A qualitative sample of 30 participants was determined using purposive sampling and was engaged through the semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics whereas the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The study found that youth in the Kibera slum are pushed into crime by economic hardships since they are compelled to find alternative ways of earning a living. The key driver of youth criminality in Kibera included poverty, lack of education, unemployment, peer pressure, and gang influence. The most prevalent criminal activities amongst the youth include petty theft, fights, and drug-related activities, which they engage in for survival rather than intent. Gang involvement was rather less common amongst the youth, even though insecurity remained a major concern to them with many of them feeling unsafe in their neighborhood.

INTRODUCTION

The major effect of urbanization on societies has been the increased rural-to-urban migration with people, especially the youth, seeking better opportunities. Notably, the trends of the urban population are expected to grow exponentially across the globe in the coming decades (Kuddus et al., 2020). This rapid expansion is characterized by the proliferation of informal settlements, which are commonly referred to as slums (Agyabeng et al., 2022). Slums are often overcrowded and lack essential services such as clean water, sanitation, and proper housing (Agyabeng et al., 2022; Sekhani et al., 2022). Residents in slums grapple with a myriad socio-economic challenges including poverty, unemployment, and limited access to education and healthcare (Kuddus et al., 2020). Subsequently, these conditions create an environment where crime, particularly among young people, has become inevitable (Agyabeng et al., 2022).

The strong link between economic hardship and criminal behavior among youth is evident in extant literature (Agyabeng et al., 2022; Atrey & Singh, 2024; Kuddus et al., 2020). In particular, youth in slums lack access to quality education and formal employment, which predispose them to socioeconomic difficulties that make criminality attractive to them (Abhishek & Balamurugan, 2024). Many youth growing in these contexts are also

exposed to violence from an early age, whether through family struggles (Atrey & Singh, 2024), gang activity, or conflicts within their communities (Abhishek & Balamurugan, 2024; Ullman et al., 2024). According to Abhishek & Balamurugan, (2024) such exposure often normalizes violent behavior and increases the likelihood of criminal involvement. Past studies have consistently found that children who experience poverty and social disadvantage are at a higher risk of engaging in criminal activities later in life (Agyabeng et al., 2022; Atrey & Singh, 2024; Ullman et al., 2024).

The impact of these challenges is evident in many cities worldwide, including those in developing nations (Agyabeng et al., 2022; Sekhani et al., 2022; Ullman et al., 2024). In Kenya, for instance, crime is a significant issue in informal settlements, particularly in Nairobi's slums. The high crime rates can be attributed to a combination of economic hardship (Mbogo, 2022), lack of opportunities (Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024), and exposure to criminal activity from a young age (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024). Youths growing up in such environments may view crime as a means of survival, especially when legal employment opportunities are scarce. This study was conducted in Kibra slum in Nairobi County.

Kibra is the largest informal settlement in Nairobi and one of the biggest slums in Africa (Mbogo, 2022; Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024). The slum life at Kibra provide a key example of how socio-economic conditions influence youth crime. With a population exceeding 250,000 people living in a highly congested space, Kibra residents face extreme poverty and struggle to meet their daily needs (Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024). Since employment opportunities are limited in the Kenyan economy, many people rely on informal jobs such as street vending, casual labor, or small-scale businesses (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024). Besides, the lack of access to formal education and vocational training has compelled the young to seek alternatives for earning a living. The combination of economic hardship, overcrowding, and social instability makes them more vulnerable to engaging in criminal activities such as theft, drug trafficking, and gang violence. This study, therefore, acknowledged youth criminality as a reality in Kibra slum. The study, however, sought to understand the most prevalent forms of criminal activities that youth in Kibra slum engage in. The study was, therefore, guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the most prevalent types of crimes committed by youths in Kibera?
- ii. How do socio-economic factors, such as poverty and lack of education, contribute to youth crime in Kibera?
- iii. In what ways do gangs and peer pressure influence youth involvement in criminal activity in Kibera?
- iv. To what extent are existing programs in Kibera effective in preventing youth crime?

Statement of the Problem

Urban slums in Africa, particularly Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya, are marked by extreme poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to formal employment (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024; Wado et al., 2022). These conditions create an environment where crime, especially among the youth, thrives (Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024; Wado et al., 2022). Recent reports indicate a concerning rise in youth involvement in criminal activities, which present serious threats to social stability, community well-being, and law enforcement efforts (Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024; Wanyama, 2022). Notably, despite the gravity of this issue, there is a significant gap in research focusing specifically on youth crime trends within Kibera. Most existing studies examine urban crime broadly or fail to account for the unique socio-economic dynamics that drive youth criminality in slum settings (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Wa Teresia, 2022; Wado et al., 2022; Wanyama, 2022). As a result, policy responses have often been reactive rather than preventive, lacking the necessary empirical foundation to inform effective crime reduction strategies (Omboi, 2020). This study seeks to address this research gap by analyzing youth crime trends in Kibera, identifying socio-economic factors contributing to criminal behavior, and evaluating the effectiveness of current interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the social disorganization theory was used to understand the relationship between youth criminality in Kibera slum.

Social Disorganization Theory

The social disorganization theory seeks to explain how criminality emerges in communities characterized by factors including weak social structures, limited economic opportunities, and low levels of social cohesion (Brisman et al., 2018). The theory suggests that neighborhoods that have reported high poverty rates, residential instability, and ethnic diversity normally struggle to maintain social order (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2024); which eventually translate into increased criminal activities (Brisman et al., 2018). The theory further posits that crime is not necessarily a result of individual behavior; it is rather a function of environmental conditions that weaken traditional social controls (Errol et al., 2021; Kubrin & Weitzer, 2024).

The theory was developed in the early 20th century by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (Brisman et al., 2018; Errol et al., 2021); and emerged from their study of crime patterns in Chicago (Brisman et al., 2018). These scholars observed that certain urban areas consistently had high crime rates despite changes in the population (Brisman et al., 2018). The neighborhoods in these areas were characterized by economic deprivation, unstable family structures, and a lack of community involvement (Errol et al., 2021) which resulted in weakened informal social controls that typically regulate behavior (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2024).

The theory was applicable for understanding youth crime in Kibera slum, Nairobi. Notably, the slum faces significant socio-economic challenges, which include extreme poverty, unemployment, and inadequate social services. These are some of the salient factors the theory posits to weaken family structures, schools, and local institutions that typically guide and regulate youth behavior. The inadequate opportunities for education and employment, invariably predispose the youth in the slum to criminal influences, such as gangs and drug-related activities. Furthermore, the lack of effective law enforcement and community policing exacerbates insecurity, making crime a more accessible means of survival for some youths.

Empirical Review

Youth crime in Kenya's urban slums has become a significant concern, particularly in settlements such as Kibera in Nairobi and Mathare (Elfversson & Höglund, 2019; Mwanza, 2023; Wado et al., 2022). These densely populated informal settlements are characterized by extreme poverty (Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Mwanza, 2023; Winter et al., 2022), inadequate infrastructure (Kiplagat, 2021; Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Wa Teresia, 2022), and limited access to essential services (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Mwanza, 2023; Wado et al., 2022). According to Kubende & Ocharo, (2024) the challenging socio-economic conditions within these environments often push young people toward criminal activities as a means of social mobility or survival.

Extant literature reveals several key socio-economic factors contribute to the rising crime rates among the youth in these slum areas. One of the most prominent factors is poverty and economic hardship (Kiplagat, 2021; Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Wa Teresia, 2022; Wado et al., 2022). Many families in slums live below the poverty line, and thus struggle to afford basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024; Winter et al., 2022). Wa Teresia, (2022) note that with few employment opportunities available, many young people in the slums have resorted to crime as a means of financial survival. Due to this, petty theft, burglary, drug dealing, and violent crime have emerged as alternatives to legitimate employment (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Mwanza, 2023; Wado et al., 2022), especially as formal job opportunities continue to remain scarce or inaccessible to these youths due to lack of education and skills (Elfversson & Höglund, 2019; Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024). The youth are also pressured to provide for themselves and their families, and are thus compelled to engage in criminal activities, which further reinforce a cycle of poverty and crime (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Wa Teresia, 2022; Winter et al., 2022).

Closely linked to poverty is unemployment and lack of economic opportunities (Elfvérsson & Höglund, 2019; Kiplagat, 2021; Wa Teresia, 2022). According to Winter et al., (2022), many young people in slums face significant barriers to securing meaningful employment, and this is primarily due to limited education and vocational training. Besides, even those youths who attain basic education often find it difficult to compete in Kenya's competitive job market, where formal employment opportunities are scarce (Mwanza, 2023; Wa Teresia, 2022; Winter et al., 2022). As a result, frustration and desperation drive them towards illegal activities, such as robbery, gang involvement, and illicit trade (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Wado et al., 2022). Therefore, without viable economic alternatives, crime has become an appealing, though dangerous, option for economic survival for the youth engaging in criminality (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Wado et al., 2022).

Another critical factor associated with youth criminality is inadequate education and school dropout rates (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Mwanza, 2023; Wa Teresia, 2022; Wado et al., 2022). According to Kibichii & Mwaeke, (2024) many children in slums face obstacles in accessing quality education due to high school fees. They also lack learning materials, and are compelled to contribute to family income at an early age. Due to this, school dropout rates remain high (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Kiplagat, 2021; Winter et al., 2022), which leaves most of these youth without the necessary skills or qualifications to secure legal employment (Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024; Wado et al., 2022). The limited access to education, predisposes these youths to recruitment into criminal groups, drug trafficking rings, and gangs that promise quick financial rewards (Wa Teresia, 2022; Wado et al., 2022).

Family instability and weak parental guidance also play a crucial role in pushing young people toward criminal activities (Elfvérsson & Höglund, 2019; Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Wa Teresia, 2022; Winter et al., 2022). Kibichii & Mwaeke, (2024) found that most slum households experience challenges such as single-parenthood, domestic violence, substance abuse, and absentee parents. The lack of robust family support and positive role models denies the young people social and emotional support that they need to resist turning to their peers and criminal gangs for a sense of belonging and identity (Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Mwanza, 2023; Wa Teresia, 2022). Notably, these groups often provide financial support, protection, and social status, which makes crime an attractive alternative to the hardships of slum life (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Wa Teresia, 2022).

Another factor that fuels crime among the youth in informal settlements is drugs and substance abuse (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Kiplagat, 2021; Wado et al., 2022). The widespread availability of cheap and illicit drugs in slums exacerbates criminal behavior since many young people become involved in drug dealing (Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Wa Teresia, 2022) or commit crimes to sustain their addiction (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Mwanza, 2023). Ouma & wa Teresia, (2024) note that substance abuse impairs judgment, increases aggression, and fosters an environment of lawlessness, which in turn results in increased incidents of robbery, assault, and even homicide.

According to Kibichii & Mwaeke, (2024) the lack of effective law enforcement and weak governance in slums has invariably worsened the crime situation. In most instances, many slum residents perceive law enforcement agencies as corrupt, inefficient, or even complicit in criminal activities (Kiplagat, 2021; Mwanza, 2023; Wado et al., 2022; Winter et al., 2022). Policing-related challenges such as inadequate policing, slow judicial processes, and a lack of community trust in law enforcement have created an environment where crime flourishes unchecked (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Wa Teresia, 2022). In some cases, criminal gangs take over law enforcement roles, and subsequently impose their own rules and punishments, which further erodes government authority in these areas (Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Winter et al., 2022).

Additionally, peer pressure and gang culture have further contributed to youth involvement in crime (Elfvérsson & Höglund, 2019; Mwanza, 2023; Thieme, 2021). According to Wado et al., (2022) many young people in slums grow up in environments where criminal activities are normalized. The influence of peers engaged in theft, drug trade, and violent crimes becomes overwhelming, and especially for those seeking acceptance and recognition. Kubende & Ocharo, (2024) note that gang culture has gained a strong presence in slum areas, where criminal groups offer security, financial incentives, and a sense of brotherhood. Once youth are recruited, leaving a gang

becomes difficult due to threats of violence or retaliation, which further trap many youths in a life of crime (Kiplagat, 2021; Mwanza, 2023; Wa Teresia, 2022; Wado et al., 2022).

Addressing youth crime in slums requires a multi-faceted approach that tackles these socio-economic challenges. These include providing the youth with economic opportunities (Nzau, 2015), improving access to education (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Mwanza, 2023; Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024; Winter et al., 2022), strengthening family support systems (Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Wa Teresia, 2022; Wado et al., 2022), and enhancing community policing efforts are critical steps toward reducing crime (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Kubende & Ocharo, 2024; Mwanza, 2023; Wado et al., 2022; Winter et al., 2022). Notably, addressing the root causes is imperative in mitigating youth criminality in slums as it will stop the perpetuation of a cycle of poverty, insecurity, and social instability.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted the mixed-methods research design, which integrates quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques (Clark et al., 2021; Creswell & Clark, 2021). Subsequently, surveys were used to collect statistical data on crime prevalence and socio-economic factors influencing youth involvement in crime whereas in-depth interviews were conducted with youths, community leaders, and law enforcement officials to provide insights into personal experiences and perspectives. The combination of these methods allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of youth crime in Kibera.

Study Area

The research was conducted in Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya. Kibera is the largest urban slum in Africa (Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024), and is characterized by high population density, poverty, and inadequate access to basic services (Kibichii & Mwaeke, 2024; Mbogo, 2022; Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024), all of which contribute to crime among young people (Ouma & wa Teresia, 2024). Given the limited research on youth crime in Kibera, this study aimed to fill that gap by exploring the prevalent criminal activities perpetrated by the youth in the slum.

Target Population

The study focused on youths aged 15-24 living in Kibera. This age group was selected because it represents a critical period of vulnerability to crime and delinquency. Kibera is divided into several wards, with varying population sizes, including Laini Saba, Lindi, Makina, Woodley/Kenyatta Golf Course, and Sarang'ombe.

Table 1.0: Kibera Population Distribution based on Wards

No	Wards	Population
1	Laini Saba	15,100
2	Lindi	13,788
3	Makina	21,635
4	Woodley/Kenyatta Golf Course	23,858
5	Sarang'ombe	26,971

Inclusion Criteria

Participants had to:

- Be aged 15-24 and have lived in Kibera for at least one year.

- ii. Give informed consent (or obtain parental consent if under 18).
- iii. Be able to respond to survey or interview questions in English or Kiswahili.

Exclusion Criteria

- i. Youths with cognitive impairments that hinder participation.
- ii. Youths unwilling to give informed consent.

Sample Size and Sampling Design

The sample size for this study was determined using the following formula for calculating sample size for finite populations:

$$n = Z^2 \times p \times q / e^2$$

where:

n = sample size

Z = confidence level coefficient (1.96 for a 95% confidence level)

p = estimated prevalence of the target population characteristic (proportion of youth involved in crime)

q = 1 - p

e = margin of error

Assumptions

In the absence of prior research on youth crime prevalence in Kibera, a conservative estimate of p (proportion of youth involved in crime) is set at 60%.

A 95% confidence level is desired (Z = 1.96).

A margin of error of 5% (e = 0.05) is considered acceptable.

Calculation:

$$n = (1.96^2) \times 0.6 \times 0.4 / (0.05^2)$$

$$n = 3.8416 \times 0.3 / 0.0025$$

$$n \approx 96.04$$

Since fractional sample sizes are not feasible, the sample size was rounded to 100. To ensure equal representation of the sample in terms of gender, a stratified sampling method was used, which included 50 male youth and 50 female youth. Simple random sampling was thereafter used to determine the participants that were included in each stratum.

Data Collection

A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on youth demographics, socio-economic background, experiences with crime, and exposure to gangs. The self-administered questionnaire was translated into Kiswahili to ensure accessibility for participants who were less conversant with the English language. Semi-

structured interviews were used to collect data from 30 participants who were purposively sampled. The interviews explored their lived experiences, perceptions, and motivations related to youth crime in Kibera.

The questionnaire and interview guides (used to conduct the semi-structured interviews) were pretested with a group of 15 youth from Kibera who were subsequently not included in the main study. The findings of the pre-testing helped refine the tool to ensure clarity, cultural relevance and effectiveness.

Validity measures adopted included content validity whereby the research tools were constructed based on the existing literature and input from criminology experts. Face validity was also used in which the community stakeholders and potential participants reviewed the tools to ascertain their relevance and clarity. Besides, the reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained using the Cronbach's Alpha to test the internal consistency of the tool. The inter-rater reliability was ensured by having two researchers independently analyze interview responses to confirm their agreement in terms of the emergent themes.

The study was conducted over three months. The participants were provided with informed consent forms, which they were required to fill/sign before participating. The under-age participants (minors) required parental or guardian consent to participate in the study. The questionnaires were self-administered in private, though the researcher was available for clarification. The interviews were conducted in confidential settings, and participants were requested to give consent to audio-record their responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile of Participants

The study sought to understand the demographic profile of the participants. The results revealed that a majority of the participants (38%) were aged between 18 and 20 years; 32% were aged between 15 and 17 years; and 30% were aged between 21 and 24 years (See Table 1.2). This implied that the participants were majorly young with the majority falling between 15 and 24 years old. The age distribution also indicated a fair balance of the various age groups in the research population. This was essential in identifying high-risk age groups and structuring targeted interventions, such as education, job creation, and mentorship programs, to prevent crime.

The results also revealed that 52% of the respondents were male whereas 48% were female (See Table 1.2). There was, therefore, a balanced gender distribution in the study, which suggested that the findings were based on a gender-inclusive perspective on youth crime in Kibera. The slight differences in gender distribution also indicated that crime involvement was not necessarily gender-skewed.

A majority of the respondents (65%) had lived at the slum for more than 10 years; 18% had lived at the slum for a period of between 6 to 10 years; 12% had lived there for less than 5 years whereas, 5% had lived there for less than 1 year (See Table 1.2). This suggested that having lived in Kibera for more than 10 years most respondents had deep-rooted experiences with the social and economic challenges of the slum, including crime. Besides, those who had stayed 6-10 years (18%) and 5 years or less (12%) may also have had significant exposure, while the 5% who have lived there for less than a year may have had limited experience with local crime trends. These results suggested that long-term residents had better insight into the criminal patterns and that crime prevention efforts should consider both long-term and newly settled populations.

Table 1.2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15-17 years old	32	32
18-20 years old	38	38
21-24 years old	30	30

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	52	52
Female	48	48
Length of Residence in Kibera	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	5	5
1-5 years	12	12
6-10 years	18	18
More than 10 years	65	65
Level of Education	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage (%)
None	15	15
Primary School	35	35
Secondary School	42	42
Vocational Training	13	13
University	5	5
Financial Situation	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage (%)
Very Difficult	12	12
Difficult	36	36
Getting By	31	31
Comfortable	18	18
Very Comfortable	3	3

The results also showed that 42% of the respondents had acquired secondary education as their highest education level. Besides, 42% had primary school education; 15 percent did not have any education; 13% had vocational training, whereas 5% had university education (See Table 1.2). These results imply that low education levels may be associated with crime involvement; thereby, emphasizing the need for educational and vocational training programs to address youth crime.

Additionally, the results showed that 36% of the respondents described their family financial background as difficult; 31% claimed they were getting by; 18% indicated they were comfortable; 12% claimed their position was very difficult and 2% said they were comfortable (See Table 1.2). These results indicated that poverty is a major issue among youths in Kibera, potentially driving some into crime for survival. These results highlighted economic struggles as a key factor influencing youth crime, suggesting the need for poverty alleviation programs, job creation, and financial support initiatives.

Prevalence of Youth Crime in Kibera Slum

The study sought to find out the prevalence of youth involvement in criminal activities in the slum. The findings showed that 38% of the youth have been involved in some form of criminality, which includes offenses such as petty theft (22%) and fighting (18%) (see Table 1.3). According to PTS 14:

"Petty theft and fighting are common, especially when people are desperate."

Besides, PTS 8 claimed that:

"Petty theft and fighting happen all the time. Sometimes, it's just out of frustration or survival, not because people want to be criminals."

Other crimes include drug selling and drug (12%), whereas gang activity was the least frequent, with only 5% admitting involvement (see Table 1.3). The interviewed participants also presented similar views regarding the prevalence of youth crime in Kibera slum. For instance, with regards to drugs PTS 16 said that:

"Drugs are everywhere, and some youths sell them to make quick money. It's a dangerous cycle."

PTS 21 commented on gangs, claiming that:

"Not everyone joins gangs, but those who do can be very dangerous. Most young people are just trying to get by."

However, most of the youth (82%) reported witnessing a crime in their neighborhood. Only 27% of the respondents indicated that they felt safe in their neighborhood, which highlighted a significant concern for personal security among young people in Kibera (see Table 1.3). According to PTS 3:

"It's hard to feel safe here, especially when the police don't always protect us."

Besides, PTS 8 also noted that:

"I personally don't feel safe, especially at night. You always have to watch your back."

Table 1.3: Prevalence of Youth Crime in Kibera Slum

Youth Involvement in Criminal Activity (n=100)		
Type of Crime	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	38	38
No	62	62
Types of Criminal Activity (n=100)		
Crime Type	Frequency	Percentage
Stealing	22	58%
Fighting	18	47%
Vandalism	8	21%
Drug Use/Selling	12	32%
Gang Activity	5	13%
Feelings of Safety in Neighborhood (n=100)		
Feeling of Safety	Frequency	Percentage
Very Safe	8	8

Somewhat Safe	19	19
Neither Safe nor Unsafe	25	25
Somewhat Unsafe	32	32
Very Unsafe	16	16

Socio-Economic Factors Contributing to Youth Crime in Kibera

The study sought to establish the causes of criminality amongst the youth in Kibera slum. The findings showed that some of the causes of criminal involvement by the youth included (85%); lack of education (72%); unemployment (68%); peer pressure (52%); gang influence (45%) and others (10%). The interviewed participants also had similar views. For instance, PTS 11 noted that:

"Poverty is everywhere around here. Many young people turn to crime because they have no opportunities."

PTS 4 also said that:

"Lack of education and unemployment are big reasons for youth crime here. If you don't go to school and can't get a job, what else can you do? You either struggle or join bad groups."

PTS 9 also claimed that:

"I have seen friends get pushed into crime just because they wanted to fit in. Once you join, it's hard to leave."

Peer and Gang Influence on Youth Crime in Kibera

The study sought to establish the connection between peer and gang influence on the involvement of the youth in Kibera with criminality. A majority of the respondents (72%) reported that there were active gangs in their neighborhood. However, 18% claimed that the gangs did not exist whereas 10% were not sure. Participants such as PTS 10 said that:

"Gangs influence a lot of young people. Some join willingly, but others are pressured because they feel like they have no choice."

PTS 6 added that:

"Some people might say gangs don't exist, but maybe they just don't recognize them. For us who live here, we know they are active."

According to PTS 17:

"Even if you're not in a gang, their presence affects you. They control certain areas, and if you live there, you have to be careful."

Additionally, PTS 11 said that:

"I've seen friends get involved with gangs, and once you're in, it's hard to leave. That's why many youths end up in crime."

Table 1.4: Peer and Gang Influence on Youth Crime in Kibera

Gang Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	72	72

No	18	18
Unsure	10	10

Existing Programs for Preventing Youth Crime in Kibera

The study sought to establish the solutions that could be adopted to address youth criminality in Kibera slum. The findings showed that various approaches could be adopted including increased economic opportunities (38%), improved educational access (32%), and community-based programs that provide mentorship and recreational activities (25%). The interviewed participants also agreed that increased economic opportunities for the youth were a key deterrent to their involvement in criminality. This included the provision of job creation initiatives, vocational training programs, and access to microloans to enable them to pursue self-employment ventures. For instance, PTS1 claimed that:

"If there were more jobs available, especially for young people with limited education, there would be less temptation to turn to crime."

The interviewees also indicated the need for improving access to quality education at all levels of learning. They noted that this could be achieved by increasing investment in schools within Kibera, providing learners with scholarship opportunities so that they can access high-end education, and availing vocational programs that provide school dropouts with craft skills that can make them create employment for themselves or get employment in the informal sector. According to PTS7:

"Education is the key to a better future. If more young people could finish school and get good jobs, crime would go down."

Besides, PTS 3 also noted that:

"We need more relevant skills training programs that can help us find decent jobs after school."

Additionally, the participants noted that there was a need for establishing community-based programs that are geared towards addressing the predictors of youth criminality in the slum. They cited programs including mentorship programs, recreational activities, and safe spaces where the youth could develop positive social connections and life skills. For instance, PTS 13 claimed that:

"Having positive role models and mentors who can guide us can make a big difference. Many young people here feel lost and alone."

Besides, PTS 5 also noted that:

"There's not much to do for young people in Kibera after school. Investing in sports facilities, youth centers, and recreational activities would keep us engaged in positive ways."

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that the most prevalent criminal activities amongst the youth include petty theft, fights, and drug-related activities, which they engage in for survival rather than intent. Gang involvement was rather less common amongst the youth, even though insecurity remained a major concern to them with many of them feeling unsafe in their neighborhood. The key driver of youth criminality in Kibera included poverty, lack of education, unemployment, peer pressure, and gang influence. More specifically, youth in the slum are pushed into crime by economic hardships since they are compelled to find alternative ways of earning a living.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended the establishment of initiatives that focus on education access, vocational training, and job creation. These may include community mentorship, crime awareness programs, and rehabilitation support, which could go a long way in strengthening the social support systems that the youth require to be diverted from the allures of quick fixes that criminal activities promise. Such programs will not only deter them from criminality but also provide them with a positive alternative of earning a living.

There is also a need for establishing initiatives such as community policing and stronger law enforcement to enhance security and trust in the slums, and therefore, deter youth criminality. More importantly, drug awareness and rehabilitation programs should be implemented to prevent substance abuse.

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