Role of Community Leaders in Ensuring Secure Electoral Process in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study specifically analyzed assessed the role of community leaders in ensuring secure electoral process in Nairobi City County. Human Security and Securitization Theories explained how community leaders in Nairobi's informal settlements enhance electoral security by framing threats, mobilizing residents, coordinating with security actors, and guiding responses, ultimately reducing violence, increasing voter participation, and strengthening citizen-state relations. The study used a mixed-method design with 400 purposively sampled respondents from Nairobi's informal settlements. Data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups, and thematic analysis was applied to organize qualitative insights into themes, providing a comprehensive understanding of electoral security and social dynamics. This study observed that Community policing plays a vital role in ensuring safe elections, with elders, youth leaders, religious figures, and women's groups actively promoting peace, mediating conflicts, and mobilizing voters. Its effectiveness depends on community support, neutrality, and resources, while challenges include politicization, lack of training, and limited capacity. This study proposes a formal Community Electoral Security Council (CESC) of vetted community leaders to ensure impartial, well-resourced, and trusted community policing, strengthening electoral security and preventing politicization.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The electoral environment in informal settlements is closely tied to national security due to the socio-political and economic fragilities that define these areas. Overcrowding, poverty, joblessness, inadequate state presence, and weak security structures create fertile ground for political manipulation, ethnic or patronage-based politics, and criminal activity during elections. Such vulnerabilities allow gangs and militant groups to flourish, fueling instability that threatens both community safety and national cohesion (Haysom, 2013; Wilkinson, 2004).

This is not unique to Kenya; similar patterns emerge globally. In India, slums are shaped by clientelist politics (Sharma, 2013), while in Brazil, favelas remain under the influence of gangs and militias despite a formal electoral framework (Wacquant, 2008). Karachi's informal settlements in Pakistan have long been arenas of violent competition between political militias (Gazdar, 2007). In Mexico, cartels distort elections through intimidation and collusion (Camp, 2017), while in the Philippines, political dynasties and warlords maintain dominance through coercion (Mendoza, 2012). Across Africa and the Middle East including Ghana, Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt, Morocco, South Africa, and Uganda weak institutions, authoritarian tendencies, violence, and exclusion undermine the credibility of elections and erode security (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009; Lindberg, 2006; Mwagiru, 2012).

Kenya reflects these global dynamics, with informal settlements becoming flashpoints for electoral violence driven by ethnic mobilization, competition for political power, and the influence of organized criminal groups (Kanyinga & Long, 2009). Despite interventions by bodies like the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and civil society organizations promoting voter education, challenges such as mistrust in electoral institutions, rapid urban growth, and fragile governance structures perpetuate insecurity (Mutahi, 2018; Omolo, 2010). Taken together, the global and local picture demonstrates that in marginalized urban spaces, electoral politics and insecurity are deeply intertwined, making credible, inclusive, and peaceful elections indispensable for sustaining national stability.

Statement of the Problem

Despite repeated efforts by the state and civil society to address electoral insecurity in Kenya, informal settlements such as Mathare, Kibera, Korogocho, and Mukuru continue to experience high levels of violence, intimidation, and political manipulation during elections. Weak state presence, socio-economic deprivation, and the manipulation of electoral processes by political elites have made these areas hotspots of insecurity. Community leaders including elders, youth representatives, religious leaders, and grassroots organizers play a critical role in shaping the security environment during elections. Their influence enables them either to foster peace through mediation and advocacy or to escalate tensions through incitement and partisan mobilization. However, their lack of formal mandates, institutional support, and political neutrality often undermines their effectiveness in preventing violence and promoting secure elections. At the same time, state interventions remain reactive, poorly coordinated, and mistrusted by residents, further weakening confidence in electoral institutions. This situation underscores the urgent need to critically examine the role of community leadership in ensuring a secure electoral process, particularly within Nairobi's informal settlements where the risk of violence is persistently high.

Objective of the Study

Assessing the role of community leaders in ensuring secure electoral process in Nairobi City County

Justification

Elections in Nairobi's informal settlements are often insecure and violent, with community leaders playing a crucial yet under-documented role in maintaining peace. Studying their influence is vital for national stability and democratic consolidation, as it provides evidence to inform policy, academic debate, and grassroots peace-building.

This study will benefit the Government, especially the Ministry of Interior, by offering policy insights to address divisive politics that threaten security. Citizens will also gain awareness of the dangers of being exploited by political factions during campaigns. Academically, the research contributes to knowledge by examining underexplored areas such as campaign strategies, the role of community leaders, government interventions, and displacement patterns in informal settlements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Elections are politically volatile moments where security is critical to prevent violence and uphold legitimacy. Community policing based on partnership, decentralized decision-making, and proactive intelligence gathering has gained global relevance as a democratic policing style that can enhance electoral security. By fostering trust between police and citizens, it can identify risks early, curb hate speech, and deter violent mobilization. However, its effectiveness is limited by political manipulation, weak institutions, and structural inequalities.

Innes (2016), studying the UK, shows how community intelligence built on trust helps detect risks, though partisan policing undermines its benefits. This highlights a research gap on how such intelligence exchanges reduce electoral risks without infringing on political rights. Similarly, Ferreira (1996), examining transitional democracies in Eastern Europe, demonstrates that community policing restored trust and electoral legitimacy during post-communist transitions. Yet, without institutional safeguards, these gains erode, and Ferreira does not address sustaining such models in fragile or resource-poor states, a gap especially relevant in Africa.

Charlotte Cross (2014) shows that in Tanzania, community policing, though introduced as a security reform, became politicized through patronage and loyalties, leading to partisan policing during elections and eroding community trust. She highlights that effectiveness in Africa depends on political context as much as operational design, but does not suggest how to counter such risks through oversight or institutional checks.

Ochieng and Ruhode (2013), studying electronic voting in South Africa, highlight that electoral technologies are only as credible as the institutions managing them. Where functional community policing exists, citizens are

more likely to accept results, as they feel empowered to monitor the process. This underscores community policing as a potential trust-building tool, though the study does not clearly link such effects directly to policing structures, leaving a gap between technological integrity and local security partnerships.

Blair (2021), in experimental studies from Uganda and Liberia, find that community policing alone does little to build trust or reduce crime unless paired with broader institutional reforms in accountability, training, and transparency. Applied to elections, this suggests that while community policing may enhance surveillance, it cannot by itself guarantee secure electoral environments. Unlike assumptions of inherent trust-building, their evidence shows its effectiveness depends on systemic change.

Pommerolle (2023) critiques Kenya's pre-2010 community policing reforms, arguing they often functioned as decentralized repression, with mechanisms used to gather intelligence on political rivals rather than ensure impartial electoral safety. This highlights the risk of community policing becoming a partisan tool without strong safeguards, and the extent to which constitutional reforms after 2010 addressed these weaknesses remains underexplored.

Skilling (2016) offers a more optimistic view, showing that accountability, transparency, and citizen involvement can foster trust in police during elections, making community policing a stabilizing force. Yet, she notes financial constraints, uneven implementation, and the absence of longitudinal studies tracking sustainability across election cycles as major limitations.

Mutisya Kioko (2017) examines local peace committees and the Nyumba Kumi initiative in Kenya, showing how these grassroots hybrid policing systems help resolve conflicts and monitor crime during elections, thereby preventing localized violence. However, he cautions that without strong legal frameworks, such structures risk inconsistency and political bias, raising unresolved questions about standardization and oversight.

Overall, the reviewed studies suggest that community policing can strengthen electoral security through intelligence gathering, trust-building between police and citizens, and local conflict management, though its effectiveness depends heavily on political context, institutional safeguards, and sustainable implementation.

Several research gaps emerge from the reviewed literature. First, there is a lack of longitudinal studies examining how community policing influences successive elections, making it difficult to assess sustainability over time. Second, comparative analyses across African contexts are scarce, limiting understanding of how different political environments shape the effectiveness of community policing during elections. Third, the relationship between community policing and new electoral technologies remains underexplored, despite evidence suggesting that trust in policing influences public acceptance of technological innovations (Ochieng & Ruhode, 2013). Finally, citizen perceptions of the legitimacy of community policing during elections are poorly studied, even though such perceptions are crucial to its success. Addressing these gaps would guide reforms to prevent politicization and enable community policing to achieve its full potential in securing elections.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the theories of Human Security Theory by the United Nations Development Programme (1994) and Securitization Theory by Barry Buzan (1998). Human Security theory emphasizes protecting individuals from multiple threats and empowering them to safeguard their welfare. In Nairobi's informal settlements, elections often cause violence, displacement, and livelihood disruptions, making elections agents of insecurity. Community leaders operationalize this theory by preventing conflicts, mediating disputes, fostering trust with security agencies, and addressing local vulnerabilities to ensure safer electoral processes.

Securitization Theory, developed by Barry Buzan, views security as socially constructed through speech acts that frame issues as existential threats. In Nairobi's informal settlements, electoral struggles are often securitized, justifying increased state presence or coercive actions. Applying this theory shows how community leaders influence electoral security by framing threats, mobilizing residents, coordinating with security actors, and guiding responses, ultimately reducing violence, enhancing voter participation, and strengthening citizen-state relations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a mixed-method design combining a descriptive survey and historical research to examine electoral security in Nairobi's informal settlements, focusing on Kibera, Kawangware, and Mathare. The research involved about 2 million residents and key political and security actors, capturing patterns of election-related insecurity and tracing historical trends in violence and local peace mechanisms.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants with in-depth knowledge of electoral politics and security challenges, including local leaders, security officers, election monitors, and residents with first-hand experiences of electoral violence. A total of 370 respondents participated, 100 from four settlements (Kibera, Mathare, Korogocho, and Eastleigh) and 300 political actors and community representatives with 274 completed questionnaires, ensuring contextually rich data on the complex relationship between electoral processes and security in marginalized urban areas.

Table 1.1: Sample Size

Category	Population	Proportion	Sample Size= (Proportion*Total Sample size(400))
Citizens	2,000,000	**Purposively selected**	**200**
Political players	69	**17.5%**	**34**
IEBC	11	**2.5%**	**6**
Election observers	30	**7.5%**	**15**
Religious leaders	50	**12.5%**	**25**
NPS	200	**50%**	**100**
Representative of Residents	40	**10%**	**20**
Total		**100%**	**400**

Source: Researcher (2025)

Methods of Data collection and Analysis

The study sampled 400 respondents to capture diverse perspectives across Nairobi's heterogeneous informal settlements, allowing comparisons between population subsets and enhancing statistical power to examine links between electoral processes and national security. Data collection combined interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, and focus group discussions (FGDs), providing in-depth insights from key informants, standardized quantitative data, and community perspectives on electoral security. Thematic analysis was used to code and group qualitative data into themes, capturing participants' experiences and views, with findings presented in tables, diagrams, and narrative form to provide a rich interpretation of complex social dynamics.

Role of Community Leadership in Ensuring a Secure Electoral Process

Introduction

Community leadership is vital to securing elections in Nairobi's informal settlements, where congestion and insecurity make electoral periods highly volatile. By fostering trust and partnerships with residents, grassroots actors, and the police, community leaders enhance information exchange and collective ownership of security. Initiatives such as community policing in Mlango Kubwa and Kibera illustrate how involving residents in surveillance and crime reporting improves safety and empowers democratic participation. Nonetheless, elections

in these areas remain tense and conflict-prone. Community leaders play a dual role either as peace advocates who promote dialogue and stability or as tools of political manipulation that fuel insecurity.

Demographic Information

Response Rate

The study targeted 400 participants from Nairobi's informal settlements, with 370 completing the questionnaires, yielding a 92.5% response rate. This exceeds the 70% threshold considered reliable in social science research, supporting the validity and generalizability of the findings. The 30 non-responses, likely due to attrition, lack of cooperation, or inaccessibility, pose minimal risk of bias given the high response rate, thereby ensuring the accuracy of the results.

Table 1.2: Sample Size

Target Respondents	Actual Responses	Response Rate (%)
400	370	92.5

Source: Researcher (2025)

Age Distribution

Table 1.3: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
18-24	120	32.4%
25-34	120	32.4%
35-44	55	14.9%
45-54	40	10.8%
55+	35	9.5%
Total	370	100%

Source: Researcher (2025)

Most respondents (65%) were aged 18–34, the dominant voting and mobilizing group in informal settlements and the most exposed to election-related insecurity. As a result, the study mainly reflects youth perspectives on security, politics, and elections. Older age groups were underrepresented 14.9% aged 35–44 and only 9.5% aged 55+ which limits generalizability, as their distinct experiences and views on long-term security and electoral violence could have added valuable insights.

Gender Distribution

The gender composition of the respondents was 58% male and 42% female. This reflects a fairly balanced representation considering the gender demographics of Nairobi's informal settlements.

Table 1.4 Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	215	58
Female	155	42

Source: Researcher (2025)

Both male and female perspectives were critical in understanding how different gender roles affect perceptions of election campaign strategies, local leadership mediation, and security concerns.

Education Level of Respondents

Table 1.5 Education levels of Respondents

Education level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Primary	157	42.4%
Secondary	120	32.4%
Tertiary	83	22.4%
None	10	7.7%
Total	370	100%

Source: Researcher (2025)

The majority of respondents had primary (42.4%) or secondary (32.4%) education, indicating a generally basic level of schooling that shapes both their political understanding and vulnerability to manipulation. A smaller group (22.4%) had tertiary education, reflecting greater critical thinking and civic awareness, while 7.7% lacked formal education, making them highly vulnerable in electoral participation. These findings underscore the need for voter education programs focused on primary and secondary levels, the mobilization of tertiary-educated residents for leadership, and targeted support for the uneducated minority through inclusive communication strategies.

Occupation of Respondents

Table 1.6: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Informal sector	195	52.7
Formal employment	65	17.6
Unemployed	75	20.3
Students	35	9.4

Source: Researcher (2025)

Most respondents (52.7%) worked in the informal sector, highlighting their economic vulnerability to political instability and unrest. Unemployed respondents (20.3%) faced deprivation that increased susceptibility to political manipulation, while the formally employed (17.6%) sought stability and security for their assets. Students (9.4%) formed a small but politically important group, driven by future opportunities yet prone to manipulation. Overall, the varied occupational backgrounds reflect the complex social fabric of informal settlements and shape diverse responses to elections and national security.

This study investigated four key aspects of the role of community leadership in securing the electoral process: This included; community leadership concerns during the electioneering period, community leaders' policing

strategies during elections, community perceptions of the effectiveness of security management and the relationship between community leadership and national security.

Community leadership Concerns during Electioneering Period

Security is a major concern in Nairobi's informal settlements, where election periods often see increased violence. Local leaders are central to managing these security concerns, whether through direct action or coordination with law enforcement and other stakeholders.
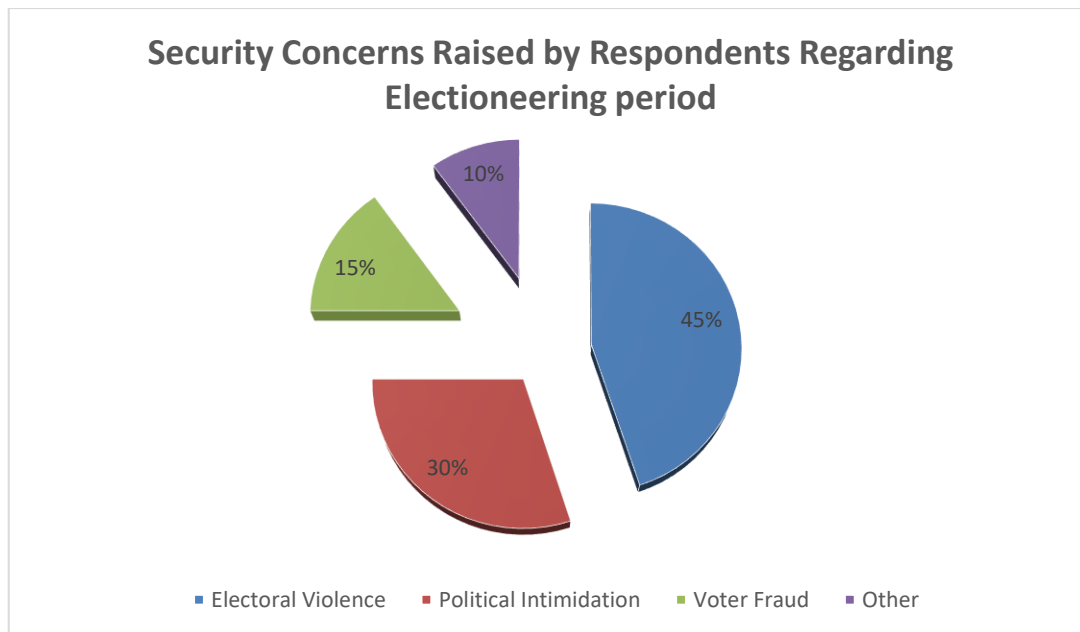

Figure 1.1 Security Concerns during Election Periods

Source field data 2025

The pie chart shows that the greatest perceived threats to secure elections are electoral violence (45%) and political intimidation (30%), together making up 75% of concerns. Violence manifesting as physical clashes and disruptions directly threatens voter turnout and the credibility of results, while intimidation undermines free expression and voter choice. Voter fraud accounts for 15%, reflecting worries about manipulation of the electoral process, and 10% fall under "other" issues. Overall, the findings suggest that safeguarding elections requires prioritizing the reduction of violence and intimidation, alongside strengthening electoral integrity.

The data highlights a major vulnerability in Kenya's electoral process, where violence and intimidation often driven by youth recruitment pose direct threats to both democracy and national security. Politicians exploit unemployed and economically marginalized youth by offering short-term incentives to act as agents of violence, particularly in informal settlements like Mathare and Kibera (Mueller, 2014). This cycle undermines voter integrity, disrupts communities, and fuels instability.

To counter these risks, proactive measures must focus on addressing youth vulnerability, promoting inclusive political participation, and empowering community and religious leaders to discourage violence and hold politicians accountable. Grassroots initiatives such as peace meetings, sports programs, and civic education provide alternative narratives and strengthen resilience against manipulation (Wairuri, 2019). Such interventions enhance trust in elections, reduce intimidation, and ultimately safeguard national security.

Community leaders' policing strategies during the electioneering process

Community policing employs the help of elders, youth leaders, religious leaders, and women's groups; these implications have a strict influence on security during elections, with the direct means of voter mobilization. The findings of the interview and survey conducted in the informal settlements in Nairobi were analyzed, which

brought forth a few important themes on how local leaders mediate during election campaigns and security concerns. Table 1.7 indicates the reservations of the main respondents.

Table 1.7 Community Leadership Policing Strategies

Statement	N	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Deviation
Most leaders from the informal settlements have been encouraging dialogue among different ethnic communities during election campaigns to prevent violence	274	7%	13%	3%	50%	27%	3.85	0.22
Local leaders act as crucial intermediaries between political parties and the community. They are deeply involved in voter mobilization, disseminating political information, organizing rallies, and encouraging voter registration	274	10%	7%	2%	42%	39%	4.08	0.13
community leaders help in mediating conflicts and peace-building to de-escalate tensions during elections period	274	8%	9%	1%	47%	35%	4.13	0.11
There is enhanced youth engagement and empowerment through shifting the focus from political competition to shared community safety and socio-economic concerns	274	6%	8%	2%	43%	41%	4.23	0.10
The local leaders have a significant role to play in promoting security in the informal settlement during election campaigns	274	12%	16%	5%	35%	32%	3.35	1.00
Average Scores	**274**						**3.94**	**0.99**

Source: Research Data (2025)

The findings in Table 1.7 reveal that community leaders in Nairobi's informal settlements play a central role in promoting dialogue, mediating conflicts, and enhancing security during elections. A majority of respondents agreed that leaders encourage inter-ethnic dialogue to prevent violence (Mean=3.85, SD=0.22) and act as significant intermediaries between political parties and communities (Mean=4.08, SD=0.13), facilitating mobilization, information sharing, and voter registration. Many also confirmed that leaders mediate conflicts (47% agreed, 35% strongly agreed) and engage youth in peace-building, with strong support for empowerment initiatives (Mean=4.23, SD=0.10). Leaders were further viewed as crucial in enhancing local security, although responses varied (Mean=3.35, SD=1).

The study highlights that community leaders influence both peace and insecurity: they can foster harmony through dialogue, peace forums, and joint patrols with police, or worsen tensions through inflammatory rhetoric and mobilization of gangs (Birch, 2020; Turnbull, 2021). Community leaders, elders, youth and women representatives are heavily relied on for political communication, mobilization, and distribution of resources, reflecting their dual role as both mediators and political actors (Onyango, 2019).

Practical interventions include community-police partnerships, early warning systems, peace meetings, youth dialogues, and civic education, which build trust, reduce violence, and strengthen democratic resilience (Mugaju, 2020; Kamau & Nzioki, 2019; Mwangi, 2021). Importantly, youth engagement is highlighted as both a risk and an opportunity: while vulnerable to political manipulation, young people can be transformed into peace agents when included in dialogue and community initiatives (Mkutu, 2021).

Overall, the evidence underscores that community-based mediation, youth empowerment, and grassroots peace forums are essential to reducing electoral violence in informal settlements. These approaches not only secure the electoral process but also enhance long-term national security by fostering trust, social cohesion, and peaceful coexistence. Neighborhood leaders always liaise with law enforcement agents to offer voters safety. They assist in recognizing vulnerable populations and areas and coordinate with the police to install safety facilities at venerable locations.

Figure 1.2. Effectiveness of Local Leaders' Strategies in maintaining security

Community Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Managing Security

Community perceptions are an important issue in relation to community policing and how the locals perceive the entry of community policing in matters of campaigning, electoral, and ensuring security. This section deals with the community's attitudes towards community policing and how this affects the process of elections. The primary respondents participated in a questionnaire administered to them, and their replies are shown in Table 1.8.

The bar graph shows that community dialogues are the most common strategy used by local leaders in Nairobi's informal settlements (55%), highlighting their effectiveness in conflict resolution and preventing electoral violence. Collaboration with police follows at 30%, indicating reliance on formal security mechanisms, though to a lesser extent than grassroots approaches. Public peace and security campaigns account for 15%, reflecting external awareness-raising efforts. Overall, these findings demonstrate a multi-pronged strategy by local leaders combining dialogue, police cooperation, and public campaigns that strengthens electoral security and contributes to broader national stability

Table 1.8: Community perceptions on Effectiveness of Managing Security

Statement	N	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Deviation
The community places greater trust in local leaders compared to external police or political figures.	274	7%	14%	3%	40%	36%	3.84	0.56
The community's leaders are considered the "first line of defense" in peacekeeping, filling gaps where formal security institutions fall short.	274	9%	9%	2%	41%	39%	4.02	0.43
The community views local leaders as "one of us," implying a greater sense of accountability and commitment to the community's well-being	274	5%	13%	2%	47%	33%	4.01	0.49
Despite the high expectations and trust placed in them, local leaders face significant resource limitations.	274	9%	8%	1%	48%	34%	4.10	0.25
Average Scores	**274**						**3.99**	**0.43**

Source: Research Data (2025)

The results in Table 1.8 show that communities in Nairobi's informal settlements place greater trust in local leaders than in police or external political actors (Mean=3.84, SD=0.56). A large majority (40% agreed, 36% strongly agreed) indicated that leaders are perceived as the first line of peacekeeping, supported by further findings (Mean=4.01, SD=0.49) showing that communities view them as "one of their own." Respondents also highlighted strong consensus that, despite this trust, local leaders face severe resource limitations (Mean=4.10, SD=0.25), constraining their ability to meet community expectations.

Key informant interviews and FGDs affirmed that local leaders' elders, youth leaders, and religious figures are central in mediating disputes, mobilizing voters, and collaborating with police to avert violence. Their embeddedness in local contexts enhances their legitimacy and ability to predict tensions, making them vital actors in securing peaceful elections and, by extension, national security (Resnick, 2019; Lynch, 2014). However, research cautions that without institutional safeguards, community policing may be manipulated by elites for partisan ends (Blair, 2021; Pommerolle, 2023).

Overall, the data underscores both the indispensable role and the vulnerabilities of local leaders. They are trusted intermediaries who prevent election violence and foster peace, yet they struggle with inadequate resources. This gap between community expectations and leaders' limited capacity risks disillusionment, highlighting the need for institutional support and resource strengthening to sustain their contributions to electoral and national security.

Relationship between the role of Community leadership and national security

The second study objective aimed at establishing the nexus between the role of community leadership and national security in Nairobi's informal settlements. This subsection presents the model summary, ANOVA and regression output where other factors are kept constant.

Table 1.9: Model Summary (Role of Community Leaders)

Model	R	R2	Adjusted R2	S.E Estimate				
					F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.711[a]	.505	.502	.34831	244.140	1	273	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Role of Community Leadership								

Source: Research Findings (2024)

The correlation results in Table 1.9 show a strong positive relationship between community leadership and national security (R=0.711). The coefficient of determination (R^2=0.491; adjusted R^2=0.489) indicates that approximately 48.9% of the variations in national security can be explained by the role of community leadership in Nairobi's informal settlements. The p-value (p=0.000) confirms that this relationship is statistically significant. These findings underscore the critical role of community leadership in promoting peace and electoral security, aligning with Soderberg and Bjarnesen's (2018) conclusion that local leadership is central to sustaining stability through constructive political rhetoric and peaceful engagement.

Table 1.10: ANOVA (Role of Community Leaders)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.987	1	8.987	56.243	.000[b]
	Residual	12.304	273	.160		
	Total	21.291	274			
a. Dependent Variable: National Security						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Role of Community leadership						

Source: Research Findings (2025)

The ANOVA results in Table 1.10 show that the model is statistically significant (F-statistic, p<.05), confirming that election campaign strategies of local leaders have a measurable effect on national security. This significance indicates meaningful differences between the impacts of various leadership roles, including cultivating dialogue, facilitating conflict resolution, adopting ideology-based campaigning, mobilizing youths, and fostering national security initiatives. In line with Williams (2024), the findings demonstrate that different aspects of community leadership contribute unequally to national security, highlighting the importance of evaluating these roles distinctly when assessing their influence.

Table 1.11: Regression Output (Role of Community Leaders)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	2.125	.193		11.012	.000	1.741	2.510
	Role of Community leaders	.458	.062	.649	7.500	.000	.335	.578
a. Dependent Variable: National Security							

Source: Research Findings (2024)

From the findings in Table 1.11, the model thus becomes;

Y=2.125 - 0.457X$_2$ + e

The results in Table 1.11 show a significant positive relationship between local leadership and national security when other variables are held constant (r=0.416, p<.05). This indicates that community leaders contribute constructively to strengthening national security during electoral processes through peace-oriented messaging, dialogue, and reconciliation in times of conflict. These findings align with Birch, Daxecker, and Höglund (2020), who argue that political leaders can enhance peace and stability by promoting nonviolent campaigns. Similarly, Soderberg and Bjarnesen (2018) caution that while poor political rhetoric can incite violence and undermine security, community leaders also hold the potential to serve as central actors in fostering peace.

CONCLUSION

This study noted that community policing is a vital mechanism for ensuring a safe electoral process, particularly in areas with a history of election-related violence. Key actors including elders, youth leaders, religious figures, and women's groups play critical roles in mediating conflicts, promoting voter participation, and fostering peace. Their effectiveness, however, depends on neutrality, community trust, and adequate resources. Politicization or bias can undermine their credibility and the success of community policing initiatives. The effectiveness of community policing in elections relies on the trust and engagement of the community, as well as the impartiality of its leaders. Supporting these actors through training and resources, while maintaining their neutrality, is essential to achieving a secure and peaceful electoral process.

RECOMMENDATION

Institutionalizing Community Policing with Neutrality and Resource Capacity

The study recognizes community policing as an essential resource; however, due to the scarcity of funds and the general belief of being politically biased to a particular group, its efficiency can be undermined. To overcome this, what is suggested is to institutionalize community policing into a formal, non-partisan structure. Within this framework, a new institution, the Community Electoral Security Council (CESC), would be linked to national security agencies and legitimized in the eyes of community actors to represent their interests in, and engagement with, national security agencies.

The CESC itself should be made up of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, pre-vetted group of elders, and out of ten more broadly, young people and religious leaders, as well as representatives of women's groups, whose integrity and neutrality are beyond question. The members would be chosen during a wide-open, communal procedure. They should be prepared to sign a written neutrality contract, any political association being an offence that will exclude them. The institutionalization would also entail training these councils on formal handling of issues on electoral security, early warning systems and dealing with conflicts in a formal manner.

More importantly, the government must provide the CESC with a source of funds that would enable it to acquire basic communication equipment and a small operational budget. This would enable them to be independent and play their beneficial role without being in need of political leaders' support. The national security agencies would be required to adopt the CESC as a legitimate partner to whom they must work exclusively, as that is the only way that they would be treated equally, as the rest in the electoral security architecture. This would not only empower community policing to be able to conduct their activities, but would also prevent the community policing activities from being co-opted by political power, which in turn would restore trust that is paramount in maintaining a secure electoral process.

Areas of Further Research

i. Further analysis is needed to design and implement a framework of Conflict-Sensitive Campaigning, with workable suggestions for political parties and candidates to address the security implications of door-to-door campaigning and rallies.

ii. To assess how formal training and institutional assistance help community policing actors to remain neutral and effective in times of electoral processes.

iii. To examine the efficacy of certain institutional changes and community-based structures of accountability in countering the politicization of security agencies during electoral cycles in the informal settlements.

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