

## **Private security services and crime control in Karen location, Nairobi County, Kenya**

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to examine private security services and crime control in Karen location Nairobi county. The study was necessitated by the upsurge of insecurity in Karen location, which has led the majority of residents to engage the services of private security companies to provide security. This study was informed by Situational crime prevention and Crime prevention through environmental design theories. Descriptive survey research design was used, and the study utilized stratified random sampling technique to select respondents from the study population which was 450 respondents. The sample size was 152 respondents, who were drawn from the private security personnel in the seven private security companies in the area of study, and the members of staff working in the private institutions and also the home owners. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as the major data collection instruments, and were administered by the researcher to the respondents. Data collected was analyzed quantitatively and descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviation and frequency distribution were used to analyze the data. The study provided deeper knowledge to the security industry, the private security management and members of public and is also expected to yield tangible results that would assist a long way in curbing insecurity in Karen. The study found that majority of the residents in the study area go for the medium security premium which offers alarm response and security guarding services. The study recommended that there is need for the government to come up with a clear policy framework that sets the rules and guidelines for the private security industry.*

**Keywords:** *Private security, security personnel, crime control, insecurity, crime prevention.*

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### **I. Introduction**

The significance of security to mankind cannot be over-emphasized as the socio economic structure of any society or organization depends on the security system available in such society or organization. Hence human beings and societies since the beginning of time have developed measures to safeguard themselves and their properties against threat. Some of these measures predate the institutionalization of the public police and other uniformed organizations. As a result, while the state remains dominant in the security sector in the present age, it is not the only significant actor (Odinkalu, 2004). The idea that people have a right to protect themselves against any threat has existed since time immemorial. The exercise of this right was prior to the idea that government efforts for the purpose will materialize in form of public police.

No government has the capacity to provide one hundred percent security for her people, hence the need for the private security providers to complement efforts of state actors in crime prevention (Ekhomu, 2004).

Mayah (2003) opines that this expansion in security needs gave rise to private security companies (PSCs), first in the developed world and later in the developing countries. These needs might also include citizen's fear of crime, and awareness that the public police cannot effectively control crime by themselves. Therefore, this mandates greater cooperation with the private sector and its resources to jointly forge a partnership for crime prevention and reduction. In addition, as Fischer and Green (2004) assert, the ingenious use of private security human resources and technology may be the one practical option left for crime prevention in communities.

The size and role of the private security industry in crime prevention have grown dramatically across the globe in recent years. In spite of how accurate statistics and data are and what should be counted as private security industry, the substantial growth in most countries is not contested. Increased pressure upon the law enforcement officers have resulted in many countries around the world in the privatization of some police functions, with the private security industry filling the gaps left by the overstretched police.

### **II. Statement of the Problem**

The upsurge of insecurity in Karen has led the majority of residents to engage the services of private security firms to ensure their personal safety and that of their families and property. In Karen Location, being a high class pre-urban estate there is ever increasing needs for the security services provided by the government

through the Kenya Police service to the residents. The implication of this is likely that in most cases the Police get overstretched in fully providing these services in the right quality and in time. Therefore, private security companies have responded by providing private security services, with the aim of helping the affected residents to improve their own security. These services include, conducting patrols, responding to alarms activation, conducting surveillance, which are aimed at improving the security of the resident of Karen. However, this has not been the case as efforts made have not been sufficient in crime control, there have been increased reports of robberies, car thefts and burglaries among other crimes. Attacks on business and individuals have adversely affected business viability, economic stability and community stability. It is a fact that even after the local residents of Karen having engaged the services of private security companies to enhance their individual safety, continue to experience major challenges, it seems the availability of the private security services in the area of study has not managed to control crimes. And in spite of all these realizations, and the growing demand for private security services in crime control, much is still unknown about the services provided by the private security companies, as there is very little written in both academic and policy making arenas, thus the need of this study.

### **III. Literature review**

The growing need for private security services has witnessed the push for by policy makers, planners as well as development agents to stress on their services in crime control. As a result, various scholars have responded by writing a considerable amount of literature dealing with private security services issues. A study was carried out on private security companies in Kenya in 2007 and according to Mkutu et al (2007), it was found that a significant share of the market of private security is controlled by few big sized multinational companies that offer comparatively higher standards of service than the smaller firms. Wakefield (2005), note that the private security industry remains largely unregulated by government. This is critical omission on the part of the government as it allows industry players to lower standards of security services provided to citizens. Further Wairagu et al (2004), notes that although there are over 2000 security companies operating in Kenya, only 21 companies were members of the Kenya Security Industry Association (KSIA), an association of private security firms in Nairobi. This means that majority, fall outside the ambit of the industry self-regulation mechanisms. Besides, a sizeable number of locally owned security companies operate illegally, since they are not registered by government authorities. There is no specific government body to regulate the industry, neither is there a policy framework that sets the rules and guidelines for the industry. As a consequence, many companies pay little attention to labour laws, work ethics and service standards. Employees of the private security companies are often young, incompetent, inadequately trained and ill equipped, and lack the motivation to deliver quality services.

In his arguments, Abrahamsen (2005) contends that, the private security market in Kenya is highly differential and highly competitive. He further argues that while the leading PSCs offer a package of advanced, integrated security services, the vast majority of companies provide only low- skilled manned guarding services. The differentiation is recognized within the sector, with some representatives describing a three- tier structure, at the top, a few big companies offering integrated security solutions at a high cost; a larger medium tier, providing predominantly guarding, but also some use of technology; and then finally, a bottom tier of small, often unregistered companies, offering only manned guarding at very low prices. Nevertheless, guarding remains to a significant extent the bread and butter for most companies, resulting in intense competition as companies from all three tiers may bid for the same contracts.

As stated by Abrahamsen (2005) the main market for private security services is commercial clients, ranging from industries, banks, government agencies and commercial firms to embassies, international organizations, NGOs. The leading companies offer a full range of services, including electronic intruder alarm system, radio alarm response, perimeter protection and access control, guard dogs, satellite tracking, as well as in some cases fire and rescue services, whereas the majority of companies provide only manned guarding for access control and perimeter patrol. Cash- in- transit and cash management is a growing and expanding part of the business, as more and more clients realize their vulnerability in an increasingly armed environment.

There is also general agreement that the upper- end of the security market in Kenya is moving increasingly toward technological solutions, and that the future may well be increasingly dominated by alarmed response services rather than the traditional manned guarding. Private security vehicles are highly visible around Nairobi's more wealthy areas and suburbs, parked at strategically central point's ready to respond to calls from clients. The alarmed response service is unarmed, and when responding to an emergency call, PSCs will generally send one vehicle to the client and one to the nearest police station. Currently, the alarmed response market is limited by the relatively low number of residents who can afford the service, leading in turn to high costs for the companies. However, with the introduction of cheaper alarm systems, it is possible that larger PSCs with a mobile response capability could provide unmanned security to a much wider client base and at a much lower cost. This would entail a considerable structural change to the industry, allowing the larger, more

technologically advanced companies to make inroads into broader sections of the market from which they are currently excluded by price competition.

#### **IV. Methodology**

The study involved private security personnel from seven private security companies and members of public who receive services from the said companies within Karen Location. The study employed non probability stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques to arrive at a sample size of 152 respondents. However only 126 respondents were interviewed as the remainders did not return the questionnaires during the entire data collection period. Primary data was collected through questionnaires and interview schedules administered to the respondents in Karen location Nairobi, which was purposively sampled for its large concentration of private security companies. The data was analysed qualitatively in descriptive form.

#### **V. Results**

This chapter analyses, interprets and presents the study findings as per the aim of this study, which was to to examine private security services and crime control in Karen Location Nairobi County. The study also sought to establish the types of crime control services provided by the Private Security companies, and to assess the factors which lead the residents to seek for private security services and finally to examine the challenges faced by private security personnel in providing crime control services in the area of study. The figures, percentages and frequencies used in this chapter and the next one refer to the entire sample unless stated otherwise.

##### **4.1 Factors that lead the residents of Karen to engage Private Security Services**

The first specific objective of this study was to assess the factors which lead the residents of Karen location to engage private security companies. Research findings in this section provided detailed analysis on the factors which lead the residents of Karen location to seek for private security services. These factors vary from one person to another and from one area to another.

##### **4.1.1 Factors on Seeking Private Security Services**

The respondents were requested to indicate the factors that led to engagement to private security services. The responses from the respondents were clustered in five categories. The findings obtained are shown in Table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.1: Factors on Seeking Private Security Services**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Lack of enough security from the local public police	46	56.8
Having been a victim of crime	36	44.5
The feeling of insecurity in the society	56	69.1
Due to the availability of the private security services	15	18.5
Because the neighbors are engaging them	4	4.9

**Source: Field Data, 2015**

Table 4.1 gives the study findings on factors that led the public to seek private security services. From the findings, 69.1% of the respondents indicated that they sought private security due to the feeling of insecurity in the society, 56.8% of the respondents indicated that they engage private security due to lack of enough security from the local public police, 44.5% of the respondents indicated that they have been a victim of crime, 18.5% of the respondents indicated that they engage private security due to the availability of the private security services and finally, 4.9% of the respondents indicated that they sought private security services because their neighbours were engaging them. The above finding shows that the rate of insecurity in the country and the un-reliable security services from the government agency have been the major reasons as to why individuals are going for private security services.

##### **4.2 Crime Control Services provided by the Private Security Companies**

The second specific objective of this study was to examine services provided by private security companies within Karen location. Research findings in this section provided detailed analysis on the type of crime control services provided by private security companies within Karen Location. The services provided vary from one private security company to another, but most of the services are similar.

#### 4.2.1 Crime Control Services

The respondents were asked to indicate the crime control services provided by the private security companies in Karen location. The services were divided into five different categories as indicated in table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2: Crime Control Services**

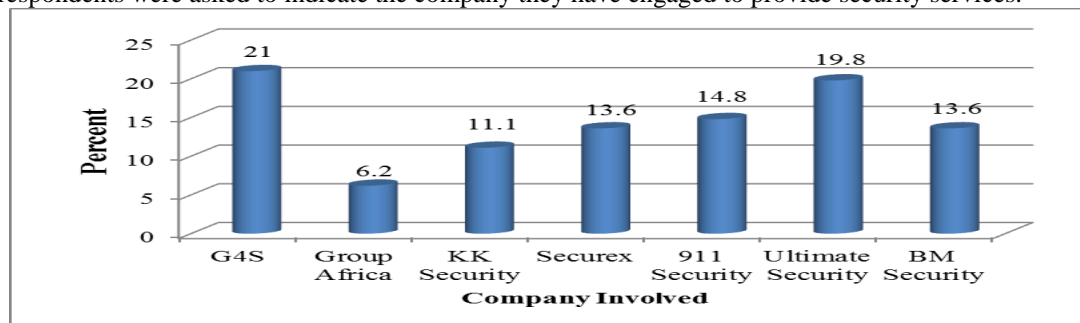
Services	Frequency	Percentage
Providing mobile patrols	45	55.6
Providing residential security	57	70.4
Providing security surveillance in marked security vehicles at strategic points	61	75.3
Regulating public access control to buildings	21	25.9
Providing alarm response and loss prevention services	65	80.2

Source: Field Data 2015

From the results as shown in table 4.2, 80.2% of the respondents indicated that they provided alarm response and loss prevention services, 75.3% of the respondents indicated that the private security firms provided security surveillance in marked security vehicles at strategic points, 70.4% of the respondents also indicated that they provide residential security, 55.6% of the respondents indicated that the private companies they engaged provided mobile patrols and finally 25.9% of the respondents stated that they hired the private company to regulate public access control to buildings.

#### 4.2.2 Company Involved

The respondents were asked to indicate the company they have engaged to provide security services.



**Figure 4.1: Company Involved**

Source: Field Data 2015

According to the findings as shown in figure 4.3, 21% of the respondents indicated that they engaged G4S, 19.8% of the respondents indicated that they engaged ultimate security, 14.8% of the respondents indicated they engaged 911 Security, 13.6% indicated they engaged BM security and the same percent (13.6%) indicated that they engage Securex, 11.1% of the respondents indicated that they engage KK security and 6.2% of the respondents indicated that they engage Group Africa. This depicts that most of the residents in Karen engaged G4S Security Company, followed by ultimate security company.

#### 4.2.3 Security Measures

The respondents were requested to state whether various security measures promote crime control. The responses were clustered in six categories. The findings obtained are shown in Table 4.6 below.

**Table 4.3: Security Measures**

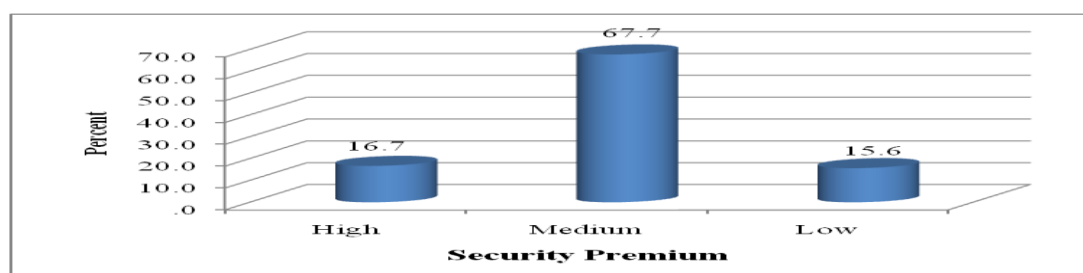
	Frequency	Percentage
Visible presence of private security guards in public places	67	82.72
Closed-circuit television in shops/ business places	43	53.09
Security sign boards indicating that the premises are electronically monitored by private security	50	61.73
Distributing information about crime and criminal	62	76.54
Stationary surveillance by private security officers in marked vehicles at strategic officers in marked vehicles strategic points	74	91.39
Creating a culture of crime awareness among citizens	56	69.13

Source: Field Data, 2015

The findings as indicated in table 4.3 shows that, 91.39 of the respondents indicated that stationary surveillance by private security officers in marked vehicles at strategic points promote crime control, 82.72% of the respondents indicated that visible presence of private security guards in public places promote crime control, 76.54% of the respondents indicated that distributing information about crime and criminal activity to the community promote crime control, 61.73% of the respondents indicated that security sign boards indicating that the premises are electronically monitored by a private security company promote crime control, 69.13% of the respondents indicated that creating a culture of crime awareness among citizens promote crime control and 53.09% of the respondents indicated that Closed-circuit television in shops or business places promotes crime control.

#### 4.2.4 Security Premium

The residents were requested to indicate the security premium they have prescribed to from the private security provider.



**Figure 4.2: Security Premium**

**Source:** Field Data, 2015

According to results shown in figure 4.2, 67.7% of the respondents indicated that their security premium was medium, 16.7% of the respondents indicated high. Finally, 15.6% of the respondents indicated that their security premium was low. This clearly indicates that majority of the respondents had a medium security premium.

#### 4.2.5 Security Control Services

Further, the respondents were requested to indicate the security control services offered by the security premium. The responses from the respondents were clustered in four categories. The findings obtained are shown in Table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.4: Security Control Services**

Control Services	Frequency	Percentage
Residential Security	69	85.16
Security surveillance	31	38.27
Alarm response services	70	86.42
Mobile patrols by marked vehicles	38	46.91

According to the findings as illustrated in table 4.4, 86.46% of the respondents indicated that their security premium offers alarm response services, 85.16% of the respondents indicated that their security premium offers residential Security, 46.91% of the respondents indicated that their security premium offers mobile patrols by marked vehicles and 38.27% of the respondents indicated that their security premium provides security surveillance. This is an indication that the major security services provided are alarm response services and residential security.

In addition, the respondents indicated that in Karen, it's very rare to find attacks in areas that are patrolled. In addition, the respondents indicated that most of security guards provide ground services so as to promote peace within the area. The further indicated that the above security functions make it impossible for the people who want to break into somebody's house to change their mind when they see a patrolling security vehicle.

### 4.3 Challenges faced by Private Security Personnel

The third specific objective of this study was to examine the challenges faced by private security personnel in crime prevention in Karen location. Research findings in this section provided detailed analysis on the challenges faced by private security personnel in providing crime control services within Karen Location.

#### 4.3.1 Challenges Faced by Private Security Personnel

The respondents were requested to indicate challenges faced by private security personnel in crime control within Karen location. The challenges were divided into five different categories as shown in table 4.5 below.

**Table 4.5: Challenges faced by private security personnel**

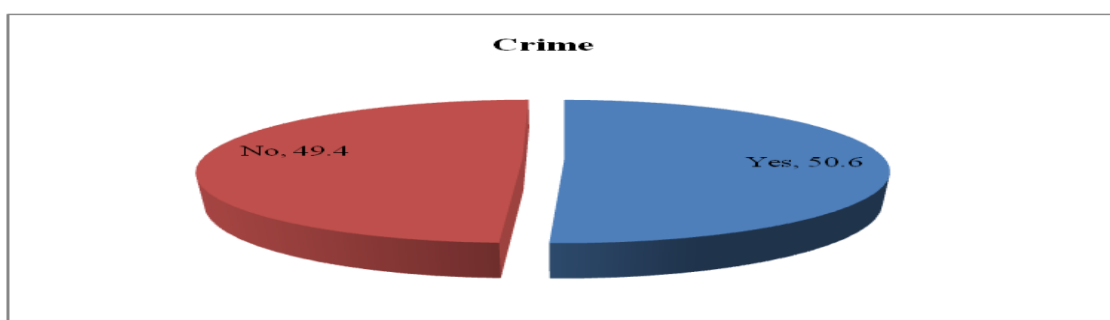
Challenges Faced	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of cooperation from the public police	12	14.8
Encountering armed criminals when they are not armed	59	72.8
Private security officers are not properly and adequately trained	45	55.5
Private security officers are incompetent when executing their tasks	12	14.8
Poor working conditions	42	51.8

**Source: Field Data, 2015**

According to the results in table 4.5, some of the challenges encountered by the private security personnel when providing crime control services were that 72.8% of the respondents indicated that private security personnel encountered armed criminals while they are not armed exposing them to greater risk, 55.5% of the respondents indicated that private security officers are not properly and adequately trained, 51.8% of the respondents indicated that private security personnel are engaged in poor working conditions, 14.8% of the respondents indicated that private security personnel lack cooperation from the public police and the same percentage 14.8% of the respondents indicated that private security personnel are incompetent when executing their tasks. The above findings show that by not arming the private security personnel's poses a greater challenge especially in those events where they have to engage criminals with lethal weapons. Poor working conditions and inadequate trainings are some of the other major challenges affecting this workforce.

#### 4.3.2 Crime Encounter

The residents were requested to indicate whether since they engaged private security services they had encountered any crime.



**Figure 4.3: Crime Encounter**

**Source: Field Data 2015**

According to the findings in the figure 4.3, 50.6% of the respondents indicated that they encountered crime even after engaging the private security services while 49.4% of the respondents indicated otherwise. This clearly shows that despite the fact that majority of the residents having hired private security; crime was still being reported in the residential area.

#### 4.3.3 Types of Crime Encountered

The respondents were requested to indicate the type of crime they had encountered, even after engaging the services of the private security companies. The results were as shown in the table 4.9 below.

**Table 4.6: Type of Crime Encountered**

Crimes Encountered	Frequency	Percentage
Robbery	32	39.5
Burglary	25	30.8
House breaking	40	49.3
Theft of a motor vehicle	16	19.7

Source: Field Data, 2015

Table 4.6 illustrating the types of crimes encountered shows that 39.5% of the respondents had encountered robbery, 30.8% of the respondents indicated that they had encountered burglary, 49.8% of the respondents indicated that they had encountered house breaking and 19.7% of the respondents indicated that they had encountered theft of a motor vehicle. This shows that crimes which include housebreaking, burglary and robbery are the major crimes which the residents reported even after seeking services from the private security companies.

## VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, it is evident that Karen location being a high class pre-urban estate, there is ever increasing needs for the security services provided by the government through the Kenya police service to the residents. The implication of this is likely that in most cases the police get overstretched in fully providing these services in the right quality and in time. Therefore private security companies have responded by providing private security services with the aim of helping the affected residents to improve their own security. In light of this, the study sought to assess the factors which lead the resident of Karen location to engage the services of private security companies, with a view to establish the types of crime control services provided by the private security companies, and to examine the challenges faced by private security personnel in providing crime control services in Karen location and various findings were obtained. The major security companies providing private security in this area included G4S and 911 Security, KK Security, Securex, and Security Group Africa.

This study therefore concludes that the social standing of the police is diminishing in the eyes of law-abiding citizens, simply because they are realizing that the police cannot deliver what they promise in their mission statements proudly displayed at police stations throughout the country. This apparent inability on the part of the police to honour their commitments has seen the mushrooming of private security enterprises and improved self protection measures taken by the public to ensure their own safety and security. It further concludes that majority of the residential areas go for the lowest bidder and not on the competence and ability to provide services otherwise the threshold need to be scaled upwards to mitigate the gap that currently exists. The study recommends that there is need for the government to come up with a clear policy framework that sets the rules and guidelines for the industry, and also recommends for the establishment of a proper training guidelines to be followed by all the private security companies to ensure that the private security personnel are adequately trained and equipped in order for them to deliver quality services. To mitigate the challenges that the residents and private institution face, this study recommends that the security providers should lobby for legislative enactments legalizing the arming of the private security guards so that they will not always depend on a third party.

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