
HOW THE AVAILABILITY OF PRIVATE SECURITY SERVICES ASSIST IN CRIME CONTROL IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT: *The study was motivated by the fact that despite the presence of private security companies and the availability of their services in Nairobi city, there was still an upsurge of insecurity. 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 500 respondents. Data were obtained using a combination of a questionnaire and interview schedule. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to 151 respondents, who were drawn from the private security companies in the area of study, and the members of staff working in the private institutions and also the area residents. The study was carried out in Karen location which is an upper market estate in Nairobi County. The study identified five categories of crime control services provided by private security companies, with providing alarm response and loss prevention being the major crime control service. The study further found that majority of the residents in the study area goes for the medium level security premium which offers alarm response and security guarding services. Findings revealed that a majority of respondents (52%) perceived the level of effectiveness by private security companies to be fairly moderate, 28% perceived them to be average and 20% of the respondents perceived them to be good. Overall, private security services, were perceived, to be relevant in crime control in Karen location.*

KEYWORDS: Security alarms, crime, crime control, surveillance, access control

INTRODUCTION

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 and playing a growing role in crime control. Robert and Gion (2003), observed that some of the sectors in which private security operate around the globe include patrolling public streets, transporting valuables, protecting critical infrastructures, providing security at the airports and other major transport hubs, responding to alarms activations, conducting surveillance, securing order and dealing with crowds at large public events and investigating crimes.

No government has the capacity to provide one hundred percent security for the people, hence the need for the private security providers to complement efforts of state actors in crime control. Mayah (2003) opines that this expansion in security needs gave rise to private security companies, 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 Fisher and Green (2004) assert, the ingenious use of private security human resources and technology may be the practical option left for crime prevention in communities.

The proliferation of private security companies reveals a gap in the safety and security demands in what the residents in Karen Location expect and the reality of what the National police service can feasibly offer. With rising crime and the inadequacy of the public police, this is the case in Kenya and has led the citizen's to engage the services of private security companies to provide security. The National police service cannot always prevent crime as an important part of proactive crime prevention because of inadequate manpower, advanced technological means. Therefore private security companies who do possess all these qualities are in a very strong position to assist the Kenya police service. Thus the vacuum created by inadequate state actors both in manpower and technology to provide security will be filled by the private security companies.

Statement of the Problem

The increase in the number of crime incidents reported in Karen, the serious negative effects to the residents is a reason enough for necessary and immediate action to be taken. Despite having one of their core functions as detection and prevention of crime, the government through the National police service has not been able to fully prevent crime. Therefore, private security companies have responded by providing private security services, with the aim of helping the affected residents to improve their own security. However, this has not been the case, crimes such as robberies, car thefts and burglaries, has continued to thrive even with their heavy presence there. Attacks on businesses 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 crime.

LITERATURE REVIEW

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.

The main market for private security services is commercial clients, ranging from industries, banks, government agencies and commercial firms to embassies, international organizations, NGOs (Abrahamsen 2005). Private security companies in general provide a variety of services, including guard services, alarm monitoring, armored transport, system integration and

management security, security consulting, information security and others. In Kenya 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.

Virtually all commercial premises and tens of thousands of domestic properties including foreign embassies, small and large business, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and humanitarian agencies now have twenty four hour guards and many have alarm system. Some such as the embassies and aid agencies are increasingly using private security companies, most commonly for risk analysis, staff training and professional advice on managing particular crises and to provide guards for site protection. G4S alone employ more than ten thousand people guarding public authorities, small and medium sized business, residential properties, international organizations, embassies and NGOs (Mkutu and Sabala, 2007). Currently in all major towns in Kenya, PSCs offer cash in transit security services to banks and delivery of registered mail to the general public. Alarm systems range from basic push button alarms that send a signal to off-site guards to highly sophisticated space protection systems linked to radio controlled backups, personal protection surveillance and system management maintenance. Private security companies that are not armed then pay the government for armed police to escort them.

Kirunda (2007) maintains that an examination of all the circumstances relating to the growth of the private security industry in Uganda reveals that private security in that country has only benefited wealthy people and businesses that can afford to pay the hefty bills of the companies providing security. The people in the rural areas, so he argues have been left exposed to the same dangers and risks that prevailed prior to the advent of privatization of security in that country (Kirunda 2007). The Ugandan situation also aptly applies to Kenya. In Kenya, the homes of wealthy citizens in urban areas throughout the country have become fortresses under the protection of PSCs and strongly built walls lined with electric wires. It is clear that the commercialization of security neglects the need for the provision of security for rural and poor communities while concentrating on the more affluent urban areas.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study was carried out in Karen administrative location, within Nairobi County. The area was purposively selected for this study because it has the highest concentration of private security companies and the overreliance of them by the local residents. The study population consisted of different categories of members of the public who are users of services provided by the private security companies.

Sample size and sampling procedure

Seven private security companies were randomly selected from a list of private security companies operating within the study area. One supermarket was selected, and five petrol stations, four commercial banks and three hotels. For each of these private institutions, the

manager in charge of security was interviewed. Stratified random sampling procedure was used to choose the members of public from the two administrative sub locations, this involved getting the strata by dividing the total population of members of public participants who had engaged the services of private security companies in the said areas, a total of 330, into three major levels of premiums.

Data collection instruments

The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. The quantitative instrument was the questionnaire; these were used to obtain data from the three categories of respondents who included the private security personnel, members of staff from private institutions and members of public. The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and close ended questions. The qualitative instruments used in the study were the interview schedule. The interview schedule was structured to elicit information about the role of private security in crime prevention. The interview schedules were used to collect detailed qualitative data from the security managers.

RESULTS

This section analyses, interprets and presents the study findings in form of tables, figures and percentages.

Crime Control Services Provided by the Private Security Companies

Research findings in this section was in response to the objective of the study which was to establish 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. The responses were clustered into five categories, and the respondents selected a multiple of services provided by the private security companies as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Crime Control Services

Services	Frequency	Percentage
Providing mobile patrols	77	63.6
Providing residential security	86	71
Providing security surveillance in marked security vehicles at strategic points	84	69.4
Regulating public access control to buildings	21	17.3
Providing alarm response and loss prevention services	98	80.9

These results imply that a majority of respondents (80.9%) indicated that the major crime control services provided was providing alarm response and loss prevention services. The provision of alarm response included the quick response by the private security provider after an alarm has been activated from the home of the resident or business premises; this is done in the minimum time possible. This was followed by providing residential security as indicated by (71%). This included the provisions of guard services by the private security companies mostly at the gate and in the compounds of the area residents and business premises.

The other was providing security surveillance in marked security vehicles at strategic points as indicated by (69.4%). This include the provision of offering security surveillance in marked vehicles by private security companies mainly stationed at strategic points which include malls, and petrol stations. Providing mobile patrols accounted for (63.6%) of the respondents. These include private security company vehicles patrolling the area both during the night and day time; their presence is a means of crime control. The last is regulating public access control to buildings as indicated by (17.3%). These include the use of access control mechanism, used in order to gain entry to premises and buildings which may be by use of cards or biometrics procedures.

Company Involved

The respondents then indicated the company they have engaged to provide security services.

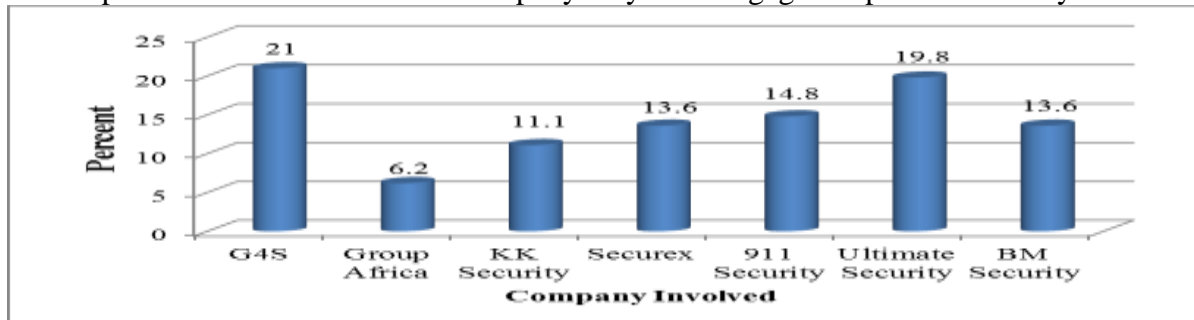


Figure 1: Company Involved

According to the findings as shown in figure 1 above, 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 engaged Securex, 11.1% of the respondents indicated that they had engaged KK security and 6.2% of the respondents indicated that they had engaged Group Africa. This depicts that most of the residents in Karen engaged G4S Security Company, followed by ultimate security company. The main reason was that the two companies have offices within the study area and they are in a position to provide all the security premiums required by the respondents.

Security Measures Undertaken by Private Security Companies

The respondents were requested to state whether various security measures promote crime control. The responses were clustered in six categories and the respondents gave multiple answers, the findings obtained are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Security Measures

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Visible presence of private security guards in public places.	104	85.9
Closed-circuit television in shops/ business places.	65	53.7
Security sign boards indicating that the premises are electronically monitored by a private security	75	61.9
Distributing information about crime and criminal	62	51.2
Stationary surveillance by private security officers in marked vehicles at strategic points.	104	85.9
Creating a culture of crime awareness among citizens	76	62.8

The results in Table 2 above renders an assessment of the most important security measures the respondents would like to see in daily crime control activities undertaken by private security. Majority (85.9%) of the respondents indicated that visible presence of private security guards in public places was one of the major security measures undertaken by the private security companies in promoting crime control. This kind of security control includes the stationing of private security guards in shopping malls and other business premises to provide security services. Stationary surveillance by private security officers in marked vehicles was also termed as another security measure as indicated by (85.9%) of the respondents. This include the provision of availing stationary marked vehicles manned by private security personnel and performing surveillance duties at strategic points, and in case of any anomaly they contact the operational centre for action

Another (62.8%) of the respondents indicated that creating a culture of crime awareness among citizens, was also a security measure which promoted crime control. This includes the provision of community policing within the neighbourhood whereby residents are updated of crime trends. The use of security signboards indicating that the premises are electronically monitored by private security was also termed as a security measure as indicated by (61.9%) of the respondents. This is the placing of signboards bearing the names of the security company providing security at a given premises which alert could be offender.

About (53.7%) of the respondents indicated that the use of closed circuit television (CCTV) in shops and business premises was also a security measure undertaken by private security companies. This is the use of CCTV in monitoring activities in business premises which they record for future use in case of any occurrence. This type of security surveillance, not only contribute to the elimination of actual opportunities to commit crime, but also serve as a reassurance of safety and security. This clearly shows that the respondents are in collective agreement that these security measures do play a role in crime control.

Security Premiums

The residents also indicated the security premium they have subscribed to from the private security provider.

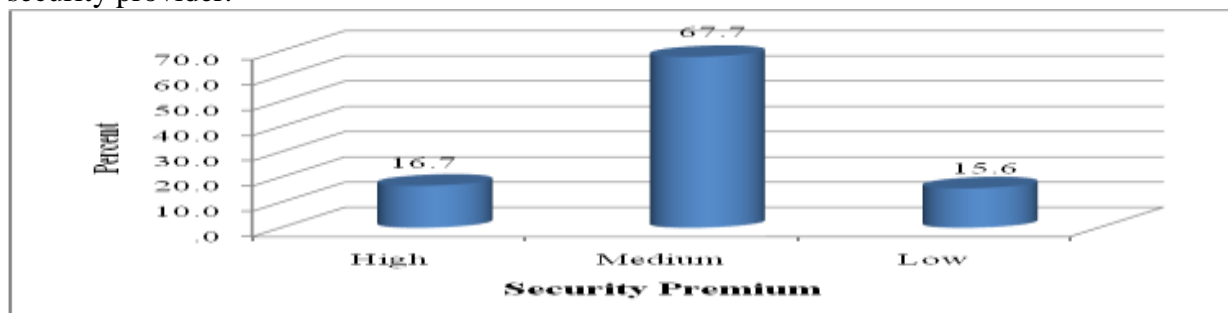


Figure 2: Security Premiums

According to results shown in figure 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. The respondents were in a position to show the security control services offered by the various security premiums they had subscribed to.

Security Control Services offered by the Security Premiums

Further, the respondents were requested to indicate the security control services offered by the security premiums. The responses from the respondents were clustered in four categories. The findings obtained shows that the private security companies provided a multiple of security control services as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: 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 3, 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.

Functions by Private Security Personnel in Crime Control

The respondents then indicate the functions of private security personnel in crime controls. The responses were clustered in four categories as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Functions by Private Security Personnel in Crime Control

Functions	Frequency	Percent
Patrolling streets and neighbourhood	21	52.5
Regulating public access control to building	22	55
Protection of life and property	22	55
Rapid response to electronic alarms	25	62.5

According to the findings in Table 4, Rapid response to electronic alarms was the major private security function as indicated by (62.5%) of the respondents. These include responding to electronic alarms raised by their clients to the private security control room, including electronic intruder alarm system. Regulating public access control to buildings was also another important function by private security personnel as indicated by (55%) of the respondents. The function involves the use of security gadgets when regulating access to buildings.

Another (55%) of the respondents indicated that protection of life and property was also a function of private security in crime control. The function includes protecting critical infrastructure and providing security in residential areas and securing order and dealing with crowd at large public events. Patrolling streets and neighbourhood was also another private security function as indicated by (52.5%) of the respondents. The patrols are normally conducted by private security personnel either in security vehicles or on foot, which is mainly conducted in the residential areas, and this is a deterrence to criminal activities.

Security Functions on Promotion to Crime control

The private security personnel respondents were requested to indicate whether various security functions in their opinion promote crime control. The responses were clustered in eight categories and respondents gave multiple answers as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Security Functions on Promotion to Crime Control

Functions on crime control	Frequency	Percentages
Patrolling streets and neighbourhood	33	82.5
Educating society with regard to crime.	30	75
Regulating access control to buildings.	34	85
Service delivery to the community	25	62.5
Observation duties in marked security vehicles.	35	87.5
Transporting money.	22	55
Protection of life and property	36	90
Rapid response to electronic alarms at businesses.	37	92.5

According to the results obtained on Table 5, majority of the respondents as indicated by (92.5%) were of the view that rapid response to electronic alarms was a major function which promote crime control. This is done through Alarm monitoring which is strategically placed at alarm receiving centre, which provide critical real time information for the monitoring of a variety of systems. They dispatch the nearest vehicle to the alarm activation; this is done through a state of the art computerized facility manned by highly skilled and trained personnel for rapid response. This operation centre works round the clock throughout the year. Protection of life and property in parking areas was also another function which promotes crime control as indicated by (90%) of the respondents.

In addition, (87.5%) of the respondents indicated that observation duties in marked security vehicles at key points promote crime control. Visibility is a powerful crime deterrent, patrol officers can enhance safety and reduce the risk of vandalism or theft of property by just their presence alone. Private security personnel provide solution with around the clock patrols operations and personnel who are trained to support in a variety of ways. About (85%) of the respondents indicated that regulating access control to buildings and business premises promote crime control. Access control systems are about more than monitoring and controlling entry, they are integral part of any security system and give a convenient platform to manage a facility. Access control provides control over facilities that traditional keys cannot, with the ability to lock and unlock doors from virtually anywhere, or allow access only during specified times.

Another (82.5%) of the respondents indicated that they were of the view that patrolling of streets and neighbourhoods promote crime control. Residential patrols are done by security officers who patrol the neighbourhood, look for signs of crime, help the residents if necessary and share information with the police. They work similar to neighbourhood watches but unlike the latter, they are carried out by private security firms and have been shown to be better crime deterrence than small group of volunteers

Type of Crime Encountered

The respondents then indicated the type of crime they have encountered, even after engaging the services of the private security companies. The results were as shown in the table 6 below.

Table 6: Type of Crime Encountered

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

From Table 6 above, House breaking as indicated by (49.3%) of the respondents was the most encountered crime followed by (39.5%) of the respondents indicated that they had encountered robbery, while (30.8%) of the respondents indicated that they had encountered burglary. However, (19.7%) of the respondents indicated that they had encountered theft of a motor vehicle, which also included theft of motor vehicle parts. This shows that crimes which include housebreaking, burglary and robbery are the major crimes which the residents encountered even after engaging services from the private security companies.

Level of Effectiveness by Private Security

The respondents then indicated the level of effectiveness of private security companies in dealing with security challenges in their organization.

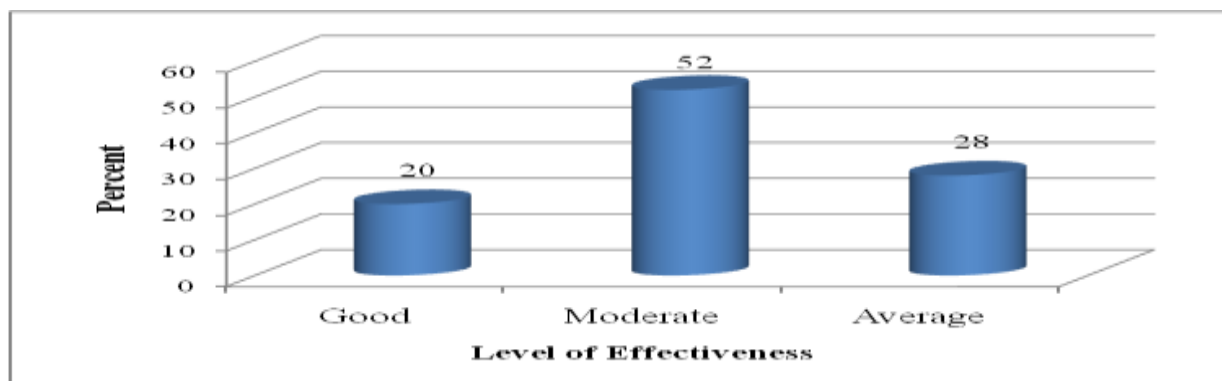


Figure 3: Level of Effectiveness

According to the findings in figure 3, 52% of the respondents indicated that level of effectiveness was moderate, 28% of the respondents indicated that the level of effectiveness to be average and 20% of them indicated the level of effectiveness as good. None of the respondent indicated the level of effectiveness to be bad. This shows that most of private companies were in a position to address issues on security.

CONCLUSION

The study found that it is no longer realistic to consider the provision of security as the sole preserve of the police. The private security companies have invaded the security space, not necessarily for purposes of usurping the mandate of the police, but as a result of a constant demand for safety and security on the part of those who can afford to pay for such services. The study concluded that private security companies have been providing their clients with quality, cost effective mobile patrols, majority of the companies offer professional mobile patrol services. The presence of a fully equipped highly visible patrol car, which monitors an extended area, prevents incidents before they happen and allow for a fast and professional response when necessary. Providing alarm response and loss prevention was the major crime control service provided by the private security companies. The other crime control service provided by private security companies was providing security surveillance in marked vehicles at strategic points.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need for the establishment and strengthening of crime control procedures between the private security companies and the National police services, there should be a greater cooperation between the National police service and the private security industry as far as safety and security in Kenya is concerned and finally security organizations need to be proactive in crime prevention education, awareness and surveillance. They should regularly hold workshops for sensitization and sharing of information and intelligence on how to improve on crime prevention and detection procedures

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