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Strategic Policing Initiatives and Conflict Resolution in Baringo County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: The main objective of the study was to establish the influence of strategic policing initiatives on conflict resolution in Baringo County, Kenya. The study was anchored on Conflict Transformation Theory. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The target population of the study comprised all 419 individuals comprising County Government Executive officers, Sub-County Administrators, County Security Committee member, County Peace Forum members, County Interfaith Forum members, Assistant County Commissioners, Chiefs and Chairpersons of Nyumba Kumi Elders. Using statistical formula, a sample of 136 elements was obtained and which was allocated proportionately. Thereafter, simple random sampling technique was used. This study used questionnaires in collecting data from the respondents. The researcher undertook a pilot test on 14 respondents in Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya. The collected data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Before inferential analysis, the data was tested to ascertain if it met the various assumptions of regression. The study established that strategic policing initiatives [r=.363[**], p=.000], had a weak and positive correlation with conflict resolution. The study concluded that strategic policing initiatives had statistically significant influence on conflict resolution. The study recommended the need for realignment and expansion of these initiatives with the active involvement of community members. It also recommends the need for security agencies to embrace proactive approaches and digital technologies in surveillance and prevention of conflicts.

Key Words: Strategic Policing, Conflict Resolution

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, conflicts have caused significant negative impacts on economies, hindering development and causing disruptions leading to direct economic losses through destruction of property, displacement of populations, and disruption of economic activities (Otieno & Baillie, 2023). The prevalence of conflicts globally has led to more investigation on possible conflict resolution strategies that can help mitigate against the impact of these conflicts. Establishing resilient mechanisms is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of sustainable conflict resolution and development. Conflict resolution is the long-term process of finding a peaceful solution to a disagreement between two or more parties (Ogot, Nyanchoga & Muchoki, 2023). It involves understanding different perspectives, finding common ground, and working towards a mutually agreeable outcome. Effective conflict resolution is crucial for maintaining healthy relationships and productive environments (Mwangi & Mung'ale, 2024). While the global impact of conflicts has been well-documented, the complexity, nature and the accompanying environments calls for a localized approach to enhance sustainability of conflict resolution. According to Shatila, Nigam and Benetti (2024), governance strategies can serve as a solution to minimize conflicts derived from private and public values or cross-sector collaborations.

Furthermore, governance strategies envision the processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that constructively engage people across boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres (Tando, Sudarmo, & Haryanti, 2021). As noted by Yao, Li and Zeng (2021), integrating local governance through community involvement can be a key to sustainable development and can be effective in managing conflicts. Strategies deployed locally in recent years have included disarmament efforts, community-oriented

strategies, integrated institutional approaches, enhanced community policing, progressive governance strategies, empowerment initiatives, livestock related initiatives among others (Muteti, 2023). However, the efficacy of these initiatives remains under-evaluated and lacks a cohesive framework. In Indonesia, Tando *et al.,* (2021) argued that conflict can be reviewed through internal or external roots and that the proper resolution of dealing with these conflicts is through collaborative governance. In Nigeria, Nwankwo, Okpalibekwe and Madubueze (2023) argued that local governance systems play a critical role in delivering essential services and reduction of conflicts. Locally, Abudho (2024) argued that to effectively tackle the governance and development challenges, it is crucial to actively involve community clan leaders in the affected regions.

Governance strategies can play a role in managing conflicts and facilitating cooperation by embracing a variety of social relations, community participation and public issues (Yao *et al.,* 2021). On such governance strategy is strategic policing. Strategic policing is a method of police administration and management that is outcome and performance-focused, rather than output-and accounting-focused (McIntyre, Hodgkinson & Caputo, 2023). It can also be seen as an ongoing process that seeks opportunities to enhance operational efficiencies by identifying internal issues and external influences that hinder organizational sustainability. It focuses on management's responsibility for implementation to create a customer-focused, high-performance learning organization. Strategic policing emphasizes proactive crime prevention and community engagement to resolve conflicts (Cheung & Yu, 2021). It involves analyzing crime patterns, identifying at-risk areas, and implementing targeted interventions. A key component is conflict resolution, which focuses on de-escalation techniques, mediation, and fostering positive relationships between law enforcement and the community. Strategic policing has evolved into a highly complex structure that requires dynamic leadership paradigms and an organization that is adaptable to a fast-paced world. It seeks to analyze operational functions, identify inefficiencies, review systems integration, and detect gaps in communications (Hendrix, 2021).

II.   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Conflict resolution aims at resolving conflicts and preventing future violence by addressing root causes, fostering reconciliation, and building sustainable peace. However, Baringo County has experienced recurring conflicts, primarily driven by competition over natural resources, historical grievances, and marginalization. According to the KNBS (2024) the number of livestock thefts rose from 2,679 in 2022 and to 2,860 in 2023. Furthermore, 56 persons were killed in 2020 and 151 people killed in 2021 (indicating an increase of 371.9% of people killed). Further, a total of 62,476 livestock were stolen in 2021 compared to 29,265 in 2020. Conflicts especially related to cattle rustling and the distribution of illicit arms have inflicted significant harm on human development in the region (Marube *et al.,* 2024). Violent raids lead to loss of life, destruction of property, worsened health outcomes, and hindered development initiatives. Studies have suggested strategies including climate-smart livestock development programs, intensified security operations and surveillance, regulations on the livestock sector, and initiatives aimed at redressing the underdevelopment and marginalization (Muteti, 2023). However, the efficacy of these initiatives remains under-evaluated and lacks the cohesive framework needed to foster sustainable security solutions. While various stakeholders including the government, faith-based organizations (FBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community elders have attempted to mitigate the impact of these security challenges through various initiatives, their impact seems wanting. Some of the notable initiatives adopted in the recent past include the continuous disarmament, integrated institutional approaches, community policing, progressive governance approaches, community empowerment initiatives, livestock identification and traceability among others (Marube *et al.,* 2023; Muteti, 2023; Kimokoti, 2022). However, there are few if any studies that have focused on strategic policing initiatives and conflict resolution. This study sought to address these knowledge gaps.

III.   LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1   Theoretical Review

The current study was anchored on Conflict Transformation Theory (CTT) which was proposed by Johan Galtung in the 1950s. CTT postulates conflict transformation as a process that addresses the root causes, structural and cultural, of a conflict to create a sustainable, peaceful, and just society (Borah, 2024). Initially focused on conflict resolution, CTT evolved to emphasize transformation, recognizing that conflicts often stem from deep-seated issues, such as power imbalances, cultural differences, and social injustices (Borah, 2024). CTT now encompasses various levels (personal, local, national, global) and dimensions (cultural, structural, direct) of conflict transformation, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing complex conflicts. According to CTT, conflict transformation aims to fundamentally change the conflict's underlying dynamics, addressing the structural, cultural, and relational factors driving the conflict (Fisher, 2021). Conflict transformation seeks sustainable and just solutions by empowering parties to redefine their relationships, interests, and identities (Hausing, 2021). CTT acknowledges that conflicts are complex systems requiring

long-term engagement. The theory can thus be used to explain strategic policing initiatives since these initiatives aim at long term resolution of conflicts. Furthermore, CTT emphasis on addressing root causes, contextual relevance, inclusive approach prioritizing local communities, and dynamic adaptability makes it appropriate in this study.

3.2   Empirical Review

Previous empirical studies have attempted to address various policing initiatives with mixed findings. Bishar (2022) examined the importance of community policing on youth radicalization in the North Eastern region of Kenya, Wajir County. This study adopted a parallel convergent mixed methods approach to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from 20 security agencies, 10 local administrators, 20 clan elders,15 senior employees working in the Security ministry and 15 senior police officers using self-administered questionnaire and semi-structured interview guides. The Study indicated that there is the rise in radicalization of the youth in the North Eastern region and subsequent terrorist attacks in the region in the past one decade. The integrated findings showed that community policing is necessary in addressing the radicalization problems and conflict. They noted that despite the challenges facing community policing, they were opportunities for community policing to help in de-radicalization and conflict level in the region.

Saibung'wa & Munene (2024) sought to establish determinants influencing effective implementation of community policing program in Nakuru North sub county, Kenya. The study used a mixed-methods survey design and targeted 20 police officers, 10 local police committees, district commissioners and police commanders and police officers. Data were collected through questionnaires and interview schedules. The study showed that the community was actively involved in local policing. The study concluded that initiatives should be launched to make municipal police more effective, such as ensuring the confidentiality of information, organizing regular meetings to discuss security issues and making the community aware of the importance of local police. The study recommended the need for the community to work with security chiefs to help improve and strengthen local policing and for committee members to make the community aware of the importance of policing initiatives.

Mutahi, Hoglund and Elfversson (2024) investigated how community policing shapes local trust-building and collaboration in Kenya. The study assessed these dynamics in Karagita and Kaptembwo that have experienced violent crime and repeated electoral violence using desktop reviews. They argued that a relational perspective, which centers local residents' interactions with police and community policing structures, provides novel insights into the challenges of policing reforms. They demonstrated how contingent and incremental trust can be built in very challenging circumstances. Despite considerable challenges of crime, police misconduct, and political interference, their findings point to how positive everyday interaction and community policing structures can contribute to incremental improvements in police-community relationships. In contrast to existing work on African policing that primarily highlights the challenges of police reform, this study offers insights into when reform has the potential to be effective.

IV.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey research design since it seeks to establish how one variable affects changes in another variable. The target population was all 419 individuals and comprised County Government Executive, Sub-County Administrators, County Security Committee member, County Peace Forum members, County Interfaith Forum members, Assistant County Commissioners, Chiefs and Chairpersons of Nyumba Kumi Elders. Sample size was determined using statistical formula as 136 respondents. The study then employed probabilistic approaches using simple random sampling. This study used closed ended questionnaires in collecting data from the target group. Pilot testing was done on 14 respondents (10% of target sample) who faced similar conflicts in Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya. Before commencing data collection, the researcher sought and obtained a research permit from the National Council of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) as legally required to all researchers conducting studies in Kenya. Upon receipt of the research permit, the researcher sought permission from the various government agencies, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and community elders after outlining the objectives of the current study. The researcher then administered the questionnaires to the individual population members to ensure that the correct information is received from the respondents. The collected data was analyzed quantitatively by first coding and then analyzing them using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Before analysis, the data was tested to ascertain that it met the various assumptions of regression. Specifically, tests for linearity, normality, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity were carried out. The collected data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study sought to establish gender, age, educational and work experience distributions. From the findings, 81.8% of the respondents were male and while only 18.2% of the respondents were female. This implies that amongst the targeted population most were of the male gender and did not meet the 30% constitutional gender requirement. It was therefore evident that among senior government officers, senior security officers, chiefs and village elders; the staffing is dominated by the male gender. Majority of the respondents were over 35 years of age (72.8%) while only 27.2% were below 35 years. It can therefore be suggested that the composition of the target population in the present study were mostly elderly respondents who took part in decision making in their respective jurisdictions. Similarly, senior officers targeted tend to be of advanced age and rise through their respective ranks after some considerable time has lapsed. Furthermore, the inclusion of village elders who do not have a retirement age explains the presence of respondents aged over 60 years. From the findings, 34.5% of the respondents had degree level qualification, 21.8% of the respondents had a diploma level qualification, 18.2% had a secondary level qualification, 12.7% had a certificate level qualification, 7.3% had a primary level qualification while only 5.5% had a master degree qualification. The presence of primary and secondary level qualification was largely attributed to illiteracy levels amongst pastoral communities. However, across the other senior officers, there was relatively well-educated respondents. Majority of the respondents (69.1%) had over 10 years working experience. Cumulatively, over 87% of the respondents had more than 5 years of working experience which implied that they were knowledgeable in addressing the study objectives.

5.1 Strategic Policing Initiatives and Conflict Resolution

The descriptive findings in terms of percentages, means and standard deviations were based on a 5-point Likert scale where SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree and SA=Strongly Agree are presented in this section. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Policing Initiatives

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std Dev
Our security services use proactive approaches when enforcing law and order in our region	5.5	7.3	16.4	38.2	32.7	3.85	1.124
Our security services have embraced digital technologies when tackling insecurity	7.3	9.1	12.7	41.8	29.1	3.76	1.180
In my area community policing has been embraced by all communities as a way of reducing conflicts	4.5	12.7	25.5	30.9	26.4	3.62	1.141
The adoption and use of community policing has led to reduction of conflicts in my region	1.8	3.6	23.6	45.5	25.5	3.89	.892
Our community has also embraced the Nyumba Kumi initiative to bolster peace in the area	7.3	10	9.1	48.2	25.5	3.75	1.161
Our adoption of the Nyumba Kumi initiative has resulted in a more peaceful coexistence	0	14.5	29.1	35.5	20.9	3.63	.975
Our security services undertake continuous disarmament in our region	6.4	10.9	12.7	49.1	20.9	3.67	1.118
The use of continuous disarmament has contributed to the reduction in conflicts and thefts	12.7	5.5	12.7	41.8	27.3	3.65	1.288
Grand Mean						3.73	1.110

From Table 1, 70.9% agreed that security services used proactive approaches when enforcing law and order in the region [Mean = 3.85, SD=1.124]. They further agreed (70.9%) that security services had embraced digital technologies when tackling insecurity [Mean = 3.76, SD=1.180]. The findings on use of proactive approaches in policing implied that there is enhanced and timely policing thereby reducing conflicts. 57.3% agreed that community policing had been embraced by all communities as a way of reducing conflicts [Mean = 3.62, SD=1.141]. 71% also agreed that adoption and use of community policing had led to reduction of conflicts [Mean = 3.89, SD=0.892]. The findings on community policing implied that it was an effective approach to conflict reduction and resolution. 73.7% agreed that their community had also embraced the Nyumba Kumi initiative to bolster peace [Mean=3.75, SD=1.161]. 56.4% agreed that adoption of the Nyumba Kumi initiative had resulted in a more peaceful coexistence [Mean=3.63, SD=0.975]. The findings on Nyumba Kumi initiative indicates that the initiative if well-implemented can lead to enhanced conflict resolution. 71% agreed that security services undertook continuous disarmament [Mean=3.67, SD=1.118]. 69.1% agreed that the use of continuous disarmament had contributed to the reduction in conflicts and thefts [Mean=3.65, SD=1.288]. The findings on continuous

disarmament indicates that the initiative can be effective in reduction of conflicts. Similarly, with a grand mean [Mean=3.73, SD=.1.110], the study deduced that strategic policing initiatives affected conflict resolution. The findings mirror those of Bishar (2022) who argued that community policing is necessary in addressing conflict. The findings also mirror those of Mutahi *et al.,* (2024) who established that positive everyday interaction and community policing structures can contribute to incremental improvements in police-community relationships.

5.2 Measurement of Conflict Resolution

The respondents were asked to state the level of agreement to various propositions on conflict resolution and the findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Conflict Resolution

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	StdDev
With the conflict resolution programs currently ongoing, there has been reduced human conflicts	0	0	7.3	47.3	45.5	4.38	.620
The conflict resolution programs have also led to reduction of losses of life in my area	0	0	10	40.9	49.1	4.38	.665
The conflict resolution programs have also led to increased peaceful coexistence	0	0	10.9	44.5	44.5	4.34	.667
We are now able to collaborate on peace efforts with other neighboring communities	0	5.5	5.5	47.3	41.8	4.25	.795
The conflict resolution programs in my area have also led to reduced losses of property and livestock	1.8	7.3	7.3	40	43.6	4.16	.972
We have in the recent past experienced reduced number of cattle raids	1.8	5.5	7.3	40	45.5	4.22	.932
We are now able to peacefully graze our animals and till our lands with minimal interference	3.6	1.8	29.1	30.9	34.5	3.91	1.019
We are now experiencing relative calm and reduced tension as a result of the conflict resolution programs	0	5.5	10.9	38.2	45.5	4.24	.856
Grand Mean						4.23	.816

From Table 2, the respondents (92.8%) agreed that with the ongoing conflict resolution programs, there had been reduced human conflicts [Mean=4.38, SD=.620]. The respondents (90%) also agreed that the conflict resolution programs had led to reduction of losses of life [Mean=4.39, SD=.665]. The findings implied that there have been some conflict resolution programs that have reduced conflicts and loss of lives. Furthermore, the respondents (89%) agreed that the conflict resolution programs had also led to increased peaceful coexistence [Mean=4.34, SD=.667]. The respondents (89.1%) also agreed that they were now able to collaborate on peace efforts with other neighboring communities [Mean=4.25, SD=.795]. The findings implied that the existing conflict resolution strategies had enhanced peaceful coexistence and collaboration amongst the warring communities. Similarly, the respondents (83.6%) agreed that the conflict resolution programs had led to reduced losses of property and livestock [Mean=4.16, SD=.972]. The respondents (85.5%) also agreed that they had in the recent past experienced reduced number of cattle raids [Mean=4.22, SD=.932]. The findings implied that ongoing conflict resolution programs have led to reduced losses in property and livestock as well as reduced cattle raids. Furthermore, the respondents (65.4%) agreed that they were now able to peacefully graze their animals and till their lands with minimal interference [Mean=3.91, SD=1.019]. The respondents (83.7%) also agreed that they were now experiencing relative calm and reduced tension as a result of the conflict resolution programs [Mean=4.24, SD=.856]. The findings implied that the ongoing conflict resolution programs had led to relative calm. Furthermore, with a grand mean [Mean=4.23, SD=.816], it was deduced that the resolution techniques were relatively effective.

5.3 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is used to describe how two distributions of scores are related to each other. Specifically, Pearson correlation which was employed in this study indicated the strength and a direction of the linear relationship between each of the independent variables and the dependent variable, loan default. Before undertaking correlation analysis, the scores of each variable were cumulated and the cumulated score was then use to compute the correlation coefficient. The study undertook to establish the correlation between all the independent variables and conflict resolution and the findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Results

		Strategic Policing Initiative
Conflict Resolution	Pearson Correlation	.363**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	110

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation results in Table 3 indicated that strategic policing initiatives [r=.363**, p=.000] had a moderate and positive correlation with conflict resolution. This finding implies that an increase in the level of strategic policing initiatives would lead to an increase in conflict resolution. The findings agree with those of Mutahi *et al.,* (2024) who established that positive everyday interaction and community policing structures can contribute to incremental improvements in police-community relationships thereby reduction of conflicts.

5.4   Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is a statistical process of estimating the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. The study undertook regression analysis between the strategic policing initiatives and conflict resolution and the model summary findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.363a	.131	.123	.56480

From the findings in Table 4, the R-square value of 0.131 indicates that strategic policing initiatives explained 13.1% of variation in conflict resolution in Baringo County, Kenya. Furthermore, in order to establish whether the fitted model was significant, the study analyzed the ANOVA output arising from the regression analysis. Table 5 shows the analysis of variance (ANOVA) findings

Table 5: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5.215	1	5.215	16.348	.000b
Residual	34.452	108	.319		
Total	39.667	109			

The findings in Table 5 indicated a statistically significant model (F= 16.348, p=.000). The finding therefore implied that the model can be used for infer relationships through hypothesis testing and can be used to test the significance of the parameter estimates of the model. The findings on the regression coefficients are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.091	.288		10.726	.000
Strategic Policing Initiatives	.307	.076	.363	4.043	.000

From Table 6, holding all other factors constant, strategic policing initiatives causes an increase in conflict resolution by a factor of 0.307. Further, the following specific model was developed as:

Conflict Resolution = 3.0917 + 0.307Strategic Policing Initiatives

The study concluded that strategic policing initiatives strategic policing initiatives had a significant influence on conflict resolution. The findings tally with those of Mutahi *et al.,* (2024) who concluded that community policing among other strategies contributes to conflict reduction.

VI.   CONCLUSION

The study concluded that security services used proactive approaches when enforcing law and order and that security services had embraced digital technologies when tackling insecurity. It was also concluded that community policing had been embraced by all communities as a way of reducing conflicts and that adoption and use of community policing had led to reduction of conflicts. The study also concluded that communities had embraced the Nyumba Kumi initiative to bolster peace and that adoption of the Nyumba Kumi initiative had resulted in a more peaceful coexistence. Similarly, it was concluded that security services undertook continuous disarmament and that the use of continuous disarmament had contributed to the reduction in conflicts and thefts. It was also concluded that strategic policing initiatives had a

significant influence on conflict resolution. The study recommends the need for security services to expand their use proactive approaches and digital technologies when tackling insecurity by adopting use of drone technologies, resource mapping tools, digital tracking and enhanced technology-based surveillance. The study also recommends the need relevant agencies to rejuvenate the Nyumba Kumi initiative and enhance trust-building taking into consideration community characteristics and availability of security organs. Finally, the study recommends the need for security agencies to expand continuous disarmament programs within specified timelines including offering sustainable alternatives to the communities in cognizant of their emerging vulnerabilities, community re-integration and whenever possible, integration into the security systems as model citizens upon rigorous retraining and re-evaluation.

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