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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# ASSESSMENT OF CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC AND CRIME IN COSMOPOLITAN SLUMS AREAS, NAIROBI, KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

The outbreak of Coronavirus plunged the world into extraordinary times by crashing economies and restricting movements to a scale that has never been seen before. The outbreak was first reported in December 2019, in Wuhan City, China and in Kenya on March 13, 2020. The pandemic caused havoc on all sectors and especially healthcare system in Kenya and this is evident considering the incidences of criminal activities that we have researched. Some of the crimes in the study included domestic violence, burglary, and robbery with violence, children prostitution, rape, defilement, early pregnancy, illegal evictions and police brutality. The study objective was to establish the impact of corona virus on crime. The study conducted adopted survey as the design because of the flexibility it has in collecting data from a multiple populations. The questionnaires were distributed virtually using the survey monkey platform, which enabled the respondents to access and respond to the questions using their smart phones. The quantitative data collected was analyzed based on descriptive statistics, yielding frequencies and percentages of the perceptions of the respondents on every measured variable. A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed out of which 234 were returned. The findings indicates that looming economic uncertainty in Kenya effected many citizen; the loss of control, anger, frustration, and irritability that was expressed in the form of domestic violence against household members, particularly women and children.

## INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of Coronavirus has plunged the world into unprecedented times by crashing economies and restricting movements to a scale that has never been seen before. The Coronavirus, otherwise referred to as COVID-19 is caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2) (Nicola *et al.*, 2020). The virus outbreak was first reported in December 2019, in Wuhan City, China. Some of the earliest identified human cases of the virus had links to the wholesale food market in Wuhan City. Many of these were market employees, stall owners, or regular visitors to the market (Hafeez, Ahmad, Siddqui, Ahmad, & Mishra, 2020). The environmental samples that were collected from the market tested positive for COVID-19, which indicated that the market either the source of the outbreak or played a key role in fastening up the outbreak. The Chinese authorities subsequently closed down the market on January 1, 2020 (Nicola *et al.*, 2020). According to a report by the World Health Organization (2020), the genetic sequences of the virus that were drawn from the human cases and other virus non-human cases from China and across the world indicate that the ecological origin of COVID-19 is in the bat population.

Currently, available evidence suggests that Coronavirus has a natural animal origin and is by no mean a constructed or manipulated virus. Many researchers who have looked at the genomic features of the virus have established that it does not support the argument that SARS-CoV-2 is created in the laboratory, because its genomic sequence does not show a mixture of known elements. According to Hafeez, Ahmad, Siddqui, Ahmad, & Mishra (2020) noted that as researchers keep investigating the virus the knowledge about it keeps changing rapidly. However, what is currently known about it is that it spreads rapidly amongst people through respiratory droplets that are produced through breathing, sneezing, or coughing. The virus is considered most contagious when the infected persons are symptomatic even though transmission is still possible before the symptoms manifest in the patient. The duration between the exposure and the onset of the symptoms is generally between two to 14 days. The common symptoms of infections include coughing, sneezing, fever, and shortness of breath, with complications including throat pain, acute respiratory distress syndrome, and pneumonia. The diagnosis is conducted using the reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (Rrt-PCR) that is collected from a nasopharyngeal

swab or throat swab. The diagnosis can also be determined from a combination of risk factors and symptoms and a chest scan that shows features of pneumonia. There is no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19 now and the symptoms are rather managed through symptom abolition supportive therapy.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya was expected to wreak havoc on our healthcare system and result in unprecedented fatalities. However, with the announcement of the first case on March 13 (Kobia 2020), the severity of the pandemic seemed to pale into significance as compared to the effects of measures that were put in place to contain it. This is evident considering the incidences of criminal activities that have been reported in the metropolitan slum areas in Nairobi, which have been exacerbated by the various measures the government has put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19. In this discourse, therefore, we examine how the spread of the pandemic in Kenya has contributed to crime in the metropolitan slum areas in Nairobi. The term crime is derived from "crimen", a Latin word that means offense or wrongful behavior (Lynch, Stretesky, & Long, 2015). Crime is, therefore, a public wrong or an offensive act that violates state laws and is thus highly disapproved by society (Thotakura, 2011). Crime can also be considered as acts or omissions that are forbidden by law and are punishable by fine or imprisonment. Examples of crimes include robbery, murder, rape, burglary, child neglect, assault, drunken driving, and tax evasion (Lynch, Stretesky, & Long, 2015).

Thotakura (2011) notes that each society defines crime in their own perspective. Therefore, a particular crime may be illegal or legal. The illegal and punishable crime involves a breach of the state laws as provided in criminal law. The legal and non-punishable crimes involve all acts associated with self-defense. Some of the crimes covered in this discourse will include domestic violence, robbery with violence, children prostitution; rape, defilement and early pregnancy; illegal evictions; and police brutality.

**Domestic Violence:** In Kenya, domestic violence is considered a criminal act according to the Protection against Domestic Violence Act 2015. The statute provides for the protection of the victims of domestic violence and the provision of relief. The statute defines domestic violence as an act of violence, threats to violence, or imminent danger that is perpetrated against a person especially at the domestic level. Some of the identified relationships in which domestic violence occurs include marriages, people living together, the relationship between divorcees, and people in marriages that have been annulled (Republic of Kenya, 2015). The announcement of the first case of Coronavirus in Kenya and the subsequent spread of the virus forced the government to come up with measures for restricting movements in order to contain the virus. Home became a refuge for many, particularly in the first months since the first case was declared and in this context, domestic violence thrived. Odhiambo (2020) observes that while these measures enacted to curb the spread of the virus were necessary they have particularly affected women and girls by increasing the risks of gender-based violence. Ombuor (2020) provided an example whereby the number of cases of domestic violence in Kibera, which is the largest slum in Africa increased particularly occasioned by the announce restrictions

of movement. Most of these domestic conflicts were occurring at night at a time when the women and children cannot run out to safety. The Kenyan national helpline (1195) reported an increase in gender-based violence cases in March, with a 33.7 percent increase from February where 115 cases were recorded up from 86. The marginalization and economic dependence of women make them increasingly vulnerable during the pandemic (Kobia 2020). As Kobia (2020) notes, lockdowns increased the contact hours between the perpetrators and the victims, which makes it increasingly difficult for the victims to seek help because they are being monitored around the clock. Ombuor (2020) further notes that the pandemic has provided the perfect environment for abusers to be even more abusive and for those who have no abusive tendencies to become abusive due to the socioeconomic stress, where they are obliged to exert their dominance in a context where they seem to be losing power and control. The cases of gender-based violence in slums such as Kibera rose during the restriction of movement and women and girls were confined to their homes (Plan International, 2020). The same trends were also reported in other slums such as Mukuru Kwa Ruben (Ruben Center 2020).

The negative economic ramification that characterized the implementation of government measures to contain the virus resulted in many people losing their sources of livelihood, which resulted in tensions at the domestic level. Ombuor (2020) observes that the occurrence or rather perpetration of domestic violence is largely based on the power and control wheel. The COVID-19 pandemic brought about incidences of increased unemployment, with males who are major family providers in poor households losing their capacity to provide. The situation was exacerbated by the looming economic uncertainty, which put additional strain on household relations. The immediate effect of this was the loss of control, anger, frustration, and irritability that have been expressed in the form of domestic violence against household members, particularly women and children. Apart from denying the low-income earners living in slums means of livelihood and creating perfect environments for the perpetration of domestic violence, the government measures for stopping the spread of the virus complicated the opportunities for domestic violence victims to seek help (Parsitau & Jepkemei, 2020). According to Odhiambo (2020), women and children who are exposed to domestic violence have no reprieve particularly when it happens to them at night during the curfew hours. They cannot go out to report the matter to the police as they may be further victimized for violating the curfew.

**Robbery with Violence:** More than half of Nairobi's residents live in slums and informal settlements. There are about 2.5 million slum dwellers in nearly 200 settlements in Nairobi who represent about 60 percent of the capital city's population and occupy 6 percent of its land. For instance, Kibera is home to about 250 000 people, becoming the biggest slum in Africa and one of the largest in the world. Kibera is a hot spot for gang violence and organized crime. The Kibera-based gangs conduct their activities in areas such as Mombasa Road, Ngong Road, and the nearby Kiambu County (New Delhi Times, 2020). They use motorcycles to travel to their scenes of crime and they are mostly young. For instance, in April a gang of three from Kibera hired a bodaboda to Githurai Kimbo and Mwhihoko where they robbed locals. They were armed with a Ceska pistol and 10 bullets.

They then hijacked a motorist and kidnapped him to Mlolongo, with one of the gangsters driving the vehicle. At Mlolongo, they tried to attack another motorist, who incidentally is a licensed firearm holder, and warded them off by firing in the air. However, they later regrouped and hijacked a school van that they used to flee from Syokimau to Karen, from where they trekked to Kibera after vandalizing the vehicle. The police managed to trace them to Lindi in Kibera through a phone that one of the robbers had left charging in the car they had hijacked in Githurai (Wako, 2020). With the outbreak of COVID-19, these gang violence and vigilantism have been intensified in slums around Nairobi. The gangs are operated all over the city, from the central business district to slums in Mathare, Kayole, Kamukunji, Dandora, Githurai, and many other estates in the city. Some of the gangs have taken over illegal water points in the slums, charging the residents a fee to access this essential service, which is critically needed during the pandemic, as people have been encouraged to wash their hands regularly. In some parts of Mathare, gangs have taken control of public toilets and are demanding payment from residents. Other gangs have taken advantage of the inadequate provision of public services by the state and are, for instance, providing electricity to the slum residents through illegal connections that they are referring to as “stima sambaza” (New Delhi Times, 2020).

Slum-dwellers were hard hit by the economic meltdown that came in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic because most of them rely on casual jobs for survival. They, therefore, do not have any savings that they can turn to at a time when most have been relieved of their jobs. This has led to the increase of insecurity in these informal settlements in Nairobi, where for instance, there have been reported in Kibera cases of men masquerading as police officers have been robbing small businesses at gunpoint. The increase in criminal activities was occasioned by the curfew and travel restrictions, which hampered the economic activities. The lockdown, in particular, exacerbated the level of crime in informal urban settlement areas such as Huruma in Nairobi where food vendors were forced to close down their businesses as early as 4.00 pm, which was three hours before the first curfew restrictions in a bid to avoid gangs that trolled the streets mugging and pickpocketing the residents (Atallah, 2020). Onyango (2020) also notes that since Kenya reported its first coronavirus case on March 13, the life of Nairobi’s slum dwellers became unbearable. Families have not just lost their loved ones to police brutality but also stampedes as slum residents scrambled for food provisions by well-wishers. Two families in Lindi and Laini Saba in Kibera lost their mothers who were trampled upon by a mob that was hustling for foodstuff that was donated by the former Premier Raila Odinga. Most of the residents in slums across the city including Kawangware, Mathare, Kibera, Kangemi, and Mathare lost their employment since most relied on daily casual jobs to eke a living. Most breadwinners in these families were cashless and could not afford the basic needs of their families. This has seen the increase in the rate of insecurity, which was complicated by the police operating in civilian clothes. Criminals have taken advantage of this by posing as police. They have raided premises and stole from the slum residents under the pretexts of being police officers. In late March, a gang of four, masquerading as police in Kibera was shot down in a botched robbery. The police claimed that they were part of a larger gang that was terrorizing and robbing local residents of their money and valuables.

**Children Prostitution:** According to Felix Kioli, a sociologist and a post-graduate studies director at the Southern Eastern Kenya University, the economic hardship that has come with the spread of the pandemic requires the government to protect children against vices such as prostitution and other criminal activities (Onyango, 2020). With schools closed down, most of the girls in the informal settlements in Nairobi were confronted with dire economic times, as their parents could not provide for them either as the lockdown measures tightened. In some quarters of Nairobi slums, girls have resorted to selling their bodies to help bring food on the table for their families; in other instances, the girls are pushed by their parents who are too under pressure to pay for their recurrent bills. In August, Nation Television [NTV] highlighted the case in Mukuru slum where children prostitution was reported to be on the rise, occasioned by the stringent economic times during this pandemic. According to the account of a teenage girl who was in a rescue shelter run by Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO), her mother was putting pressure on her to sleep to male visitors who were frequenting their house, with some promising her to educate her while others declaring interests to marry her. She claimed that her refusal put her at loggerhead with her mother who chased her out of the house (NTV Kenya, 2020).

In Pumwani slums, the tough economic times have pushed impoverished families to press their teenage girls to engage in sex for money as a source of family income. Girls as young as 15 have been forced to fend for their families by engaging in prostitution. In other cases, girls have volunteered to sleep with men so that they can afford sanitary towels. Notably, going to school provides girls living in slums with the opportunity for affording sanitary pads. This advantage was reversed by the closing of schools and the girls have since resorted to selling their bodies in exchange for sanitary pads (Plan International 2020). The provision of sanitary pads to girls in slums such as Pumwani Majengo has therefore become a very necessary way of ensuring that young girls are not lured into transactional sex (Kinyua 2020).

**Rape, Defilement, and Early Pregnancy:** In the wake of the virus spread in the county, the National Council on Administration of Justice claimed that there was a marked increase in the number of sexual offenses and some of the reported cases, the perpetrators were close relatives, or people living with the victims. According to Odhiambo (2020), the restrictions that have been imposed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic are highly likely to impede efforts by the survivors to report the abuses and seek services for psychosocial help. Sexual violence against women has numerous devastating consequences such as serious physical injuries of reproductive systems, mental health issues, contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, and unplanned pregnancies. Amongst the group of people that have endured, the most of the virus spreads and the accompanying measures to contain it include the commercial sex workers. With the implementation of curfew from May 7, their working hours have been reduced and when they have opted to work overnight, they have as well been forced to flaunt all manner of safety measures that come with their job. The lockdown forced the desperate sex workers to disregard their usual safety norms and expose themselves to the violence of all forms, including murders. The brothels and guesthouses have been closed down and clients have taken advantage of this to demand low rates and risqué services, and the sex workers face violence in case they refuse (Reuters,

2020). On the first night of curfew implementation, a sex worker from Majengo slum invited a client for the night in her house was later found dead in a pool of blood. She had stomach and chest stabs and head injuries. Even though women in sex work have been vulnerable to violence, there has been an increase in number in terms of physical attacks and killings since the coronavirus restriction was enforced. The increase in violence against these sex workers, most of whom come from or operate in informal settlements in Nairobi has not only been perpetrated by their clients but also the police and other community members who accuse them of spreading Covid-19. The sex workers have become an easy target in the sense that their clients are taking advantage of them whereas law enforcers are using them to demonstrate that they are actually implementing the COVID-19 measures (Reuters, 2020). Cases of defilement have also been on the rise during this pandemic. The NTV report on Mukuru slums indicated that more than 200 cases of rape, defilement, and child prostitution have been reported in the slum ever since the outbreak of the pandemic. The report noted that the prolonged closure of schools had increased the opportunities for abusers to harm vulnerable girls and women (NTV Kenya, 2020). In Kibera, a 16 years old girl was rescued and taken to a safe house in Nairobi after a man held her captive and assaulted her sexually.

The attacker reportedly claimed that he decided to kidnap her, as he needed a female company to help him cope with the loneliness that came with the government-imposed lockdown to contain COVID-19 (Odhiambo 2020). Another 15-year old was defiled by a neighbor when lockdown started. Her single mother had just lost her job and she persuaded her daughter to solicit money from community members so that they could afford food. A neighbor lured her into his house and forced her to have sex with him after which he gave her Ksh. 500. The culprit eventually fled the area when police began pursuing him. Another 15-year-old in the same slum was defiled by a boyfriend who has bought her a packet of chips to quell her hunger. Unfortunately, both incidents resulted in a pregnancy (Ram, 2020). The apparent outcome of the increased sexual activity in the slum, whether criminal or not has been the reported increase in the number of teenage pregnancies. In Kibera, for example, the cases of teenage girls becoming pregnant during the pandemic have become common as most of them are idle are experimenting with sex while others are being taken advantage of by older men (Peralta, 2020). A report by the Kamukunji Community Empowerment Initiative indicated that a dozen teenage girls in Pumwani Majengo slums had become pregnant during lockdown; some of these cases arising from the lack of means to afford sanitary pads and they have to sleep with men so that they can buy them (Kinyua 2020).

**Illegal Evictions in Nairobi Slums:** The spread of COVID-19 shattered the economy and the most affected residents of Nairobi County were those living in the informal urban settles. The resulting economic crisis at the individual level was evident from the failure of some to raise their rent, which resulted in strife with their property owners. These cases have been captured in our local media, yet representing only a sample of similar incidences that have been occurring in the populous informal settlements in Nairobi (Nnoko-Mewanu & Abdi, 2020). In mid-May, a property owner in Kawangware removed the roof of his widowed tenant after she had defaulted Ksh. 2500 in rent payment.

The mother of four could no longer afford to raise the rent from her business in which she sells bedding after the economic shutdown that followed the announcement of the first cases in Kenya (Kejitan, 2020). As provided for in The Landlord and Tenant Act, Cap 301 and the Rent Restriction Act Cap 296, property owners are required to serve their tenants with a 30-day notice as they seek a remedy in the event a tenant defaults on payment. The property owner is only required to evict the tenant if they fail to pay up within the month-long notice. In most cases, property owners add padlocks on the defaulter's door, which is in itself a contravention of the law. However, as provided for by the Distress for Rent Act (Cap 293) the property owner is allowed to confiscate the tenant's property when they lack the capacity of paying their rent. In the event the defaulting tenant fails to pay up within 14 days to redeem their property, the property owner may auction the confiscated property to reimburse their loss (Nnoko-Mewanu & Abdi, 2020).

Apart from illegal evictions by individual property owners, the greatest eviction of persons in the informal settlement during the pandemic was presided over by the government itself. On May 4, more than 8000 people in Mathare North were rendered homeless after their houses were demolished Nairobi Water and Sewerage Company very early in the morning. This was the first round of the demolition, which was conducted despite the court order that had been issued the previous day, halting the eviction pending a court hearing. About 600 households were affected and deprived of homes and after losing personal belonging in the demolition melees, most families spent their nights outside for weeks. The demolitions did not just make these families more prone to contracting COVID-19 due to the absent social distancing in their predicament; they also risked arrest by police for flaunting curfews and other pandemic restrictions. The second round of evictions was conducted in Ruai, another informal settlement, on the night of May 15, and affected more than 1000 people. The residents were forced out into the rainy weather of the night (Nnoko-Mewanu & Abdi, 2020). The Nairobi Water Sewerage Company claimed that the residents had to be evicted because they had illegally acquired and occupied public land since 2008 (Bahlla, 2020). The claims could be valid but the eviction in the middle of a pandemic was untimely and inhumane (Voice of America, 2020). This was a time when the residents needed more social distancing and access to water to protect their public health, which they were then being deprived of. The eviction process itself was illegal considering that authorities only provided the resident with verbal notice two days before the demolitions. The Kenya's 2009 Evictions and Resettlement Guideline outline that government officials should gazette any evictions that it intends to conduct by giving a 90-days' notice. Such forced evictions are a violation of basic human rights such as the right to adequate housing and interfere with the attainment of other rights in regards to access to food, health, and water. According to the United Nations Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement, any eviction should be implemented in a way that upholds the rights of the affected persons especially children, women, the aged, and persons with disabilities. Evictions should not be conducted at night or when the weather is unfavorable such as during rainy seasons. More importantly, the evicted persons need to be given time to salvage their belongings. The Kenyan constitution provides that every person have the right to adequate and accessible

housing. This right is further strengthened by other legal structures such as the Prevention, Protection, and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (2012), the Land Act, and the Affected Communities Act (Nnoko-Mewanu & Abdi, 2020).

**Police Brutality:** The police have been accused of using excessive force, particularly when they were enforcing nighttime curfew, which left dozens dead and hundreds with life-threatening injuries. At least six people were reported dead within the first 10 days of the curfew, and in Nairobi, most of these victims of police brutality were from the informal settlements as attested by the findings of a research by Social Justice Center Working Group. According to Ombuor and Bearack (2020), the actual death toll of the people who have lost their lives due to police brutality cannot be ascertained, even as human rights groups and police oversight agencies grapple with the task of collecting and verifying reports of police brutality. In April, the number of persons who had lost their lives in the hands of police boots and buttons was higher as compared to the death from the pandemic itself. The Social Justice Center Working Group, which works in slums areas in Nairobi and across the country, claimed by April at least a person was dying per night from police brutality ever since the curfew began. Kenya's Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) reported in April that they had recorded a total of 35 cases of police brutality that were related to the enforcement of the curfew with 12 of these resulting in death. Ombuor (2020a) provides a case of a dumpsite worker in Dandora who was accosted by the police on the first day of the dusk-to-dawn curfew implementation. The incident occurred at about 7:30 pm and the victim managed to escape in between the beatings. He, however, sustained deep wounds on his head, was bleeding profusely, with one of his ear hanging. He succumbed to the injuries two days later.

The findings by independent groups demonstrated an increased case of police brutality on the first day of the implementation of the curfew on March 27 and sustained cases in the three succeeding weeks. To the Nairobi slum dwellers, the curfew had become the new pretext for the violence they are accustomed to when it comes to dealing with the police (Ombuor & Bearak, 2020). While government officials such as the government representative and the national police representative were reluctant to admit of these police excesses, the President made an apology in one of his addresses to the nation, admitted that the police had overstepped their mandate (Ombuor and Bearack, 2020). The public apology was ostensibly prompted by the shooting of a 16 years old boy name Yassin Moyo while he was on the balcony of their home. In Mathare slums in Nairobi County, where half a million people live within three square miles. On the same night that Yassin Juma was downed by a police bullet, another victim was clobbered to death and his body later found on the streets by the Mathare residents. According to an eyewitness account, the police had cornered the victim during the previous night's curfew. He was unarmed and had surrendered but was beaten up nonetheless (Kanyi, 2020). Police brutality has also manifest in the extortion of members of the public and looting where one was unable to come up with a bribe (Ombuor, 2020a; Kiruga, 2020; Sobecki, 2020). Evidently, the police have taken advantage of the increase in criminal activities to commit extra-judicial killings. For instance, in early May, the police shot down four suspected gangsters in Kibera in a botched robbery.

The police claimed that the four belonged to a gang that was terrorizing and robbing the locals of their valuables and cash (Ombuor & Bearak, 2020). According to Lancaster (2020) most of the police violence and exploitation during the pandemic occurring in the slums, which added a layer to the deep history of state violence in these particular communities. The Kenyan government has done very little to contain the police officers from enforcing the pandemic restriction in a non-violent way; the police force itself was apathetic to the public's concern and acting without any accountability. This fed into the broad response by the government, which came across as using scaremongering and heavy-handedness as strategies for containing the pandemic. The police were reportedly shooting at and beating people coming from work and at the marketplace long before the curfew hours began. The most depressing consequence of police violence, in this case, is how it increased the possibility of spreading coronavirus amongst the slum dwellers. For instance, there were reported cases where the police rounded up people coming from their businesses as they returned home, forced them to kneel beside each other as they kicked and whipped them. These very actions by the police contravened the social distancing guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health and exposed their victims to the risk of contracting the virus. Ironically, in doing this the police exposed themselves to the virus whose spread they were ostensibly trying to control.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** The descriptive research design was adopted for this study. According to Creswell (2014), the descriptive research design is effective for studies in which the researcher wants to describe the relationships between the elements, participants or the variables. The descriptive research design was considered appropriate in this case since the main aim of the study was to describe the relationship between the key variables of the study, which were the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the crime rate in the informal settlement in Nairobi County.

**Research Population:** The population of the study included the residents of the informal settlements in Nairobi County. Notably, Nairobi County is considered to have the highest annual growth rates in comparison to other cities across Africa. About 75% of the population in the County live in the informal settlements or slums and this number is projected to double in the next 15 years. Despite of the population surge in the informal settlements, the residents only cover a meager 5% of the total residential land in the city. There are about 2 million people living in the informal settlement, accounting for over half of the Nairobi County's population (Ren, Guo, Zhang, Kisovi, & Das, 2020). These residents live in some of the renowned sprawling informal settlements in Nairobi, which include Kibera, Mathare, Kawangware, Deep Sea, and Mukuru slums.

**Sampling Design:** The simple random sampling design was used in selecting the participants in this study. The sampling design was used to ensure that the members of the research population had an equal opportunity for participating in the study. Cluster sampling was also used, as Mugenda & Mugenda (2007) note, the sampling design is appropriate for studies in which the researcher cannot obtain a sampling frame since to the dispersal of the population across a large

geographical area. The cluster sampling was also effective in ensuring as equal representation of the clusters within the research population. The clusters in this case included slums that are spread across Nairobi County such as Kibera, Mathare, Kawangware, Deep Sea, and Mukuru slums.

**Sample Size:** The research population in this study was the 2 million residents of the informal settlements in Nairobi County. Mugenda & Mugenda (2007) suggested a sample size of 384 participants in studies whose population is more than 10 000. The sample size is derived based on the formula outlined below:

$$NF = \frac{n}{1 + (n/N)}$$

In this case, NF is the desired sample size for a study with a population that less than 10 000; n is the desired sample size for a study with a population of over 10 0000; and N is the estimate of the population size. This yields a sample size of 384, which is the desired population for studies with populations of more than 10 000, when the confidence level is 95% and the margin of error is 5%. The sample size is considered sufficient to enable the research to draw assumptions from the research population of any size (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2007).

**Data Collection and Analysis:** The questionnaire was used to collect data in the study. The questionnaire was structured to cover elements such as the demographic information of the respondents and their views regarding criminal activities such as domestic violence; robbery with violence; child prostitution; rape, defilement and early pregnancies; illegal evictions and police brutality. The questionnaire was considered appropriate for collecting data since the researcher aimed at reaching a large sample size at a time when the pandemic had restricted movement of persons. The questionnaires were distributed virtually using the survey monkey platform, which enabled the respondents to access and respond to the questions using their smartphones. The quantitative data collected was analyzed based on descriptive statistics, yielding frequencies and percentages of the perceptions of the respondents on every measured variable.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

**Response Rate:** A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed out of which 234 were returned. This accounted for a response rate of 61%, which according to Barbie (2008), a response rate of over 60% is good for analysis and reporting in social research.

**Table 1.0. Response rate of the study**

Rate of response	Percentage
Responses	61%
Non Responses	29%

### Demographic Information

**Gender of the Respondents:** The findings indicated that 53 % of the respondents were men while 47% of the respondents were women. The findings therefore, represented an also proportionate perspective of the residents of the informal settlement in Nairobi County.

**Table 1.1. Gender of Respondents**

Gender	Percentage
Men	53%
Women	47%

**Age of the Respondents:** The findings also showed that 22% of the respondents were aged between 18 – 25 years; 32 % were aged between 26 – 35 years; 27% were aged between 36 – 45 years; 10% were aged between 46 – 55 years; and 9% were aged from 56 years and above. The findings were therefore generated from all age groups in the adult population in the informal settlement even though majority of the respondents were aged between 26 – 35 years.

**Table 1.2. Age of the Respondents**

Age	Percentage
18 – 25 years	22%
26 – 35 years	32%
36 – 45 years	27%
46 – 56 years	10%
Above 56 years	9%

**The Current Employment Status of the Respondents:** The current status of the respondents during the pandemic indicated that 73% of the respondents were not employed; 11% were employed part-time while 16 % were still in employment at the time the study was conducted. This demonstrates the unemployment levels were significantly higher during the pandemic amongst the informal settlement residents.

**Table 1.3. Employment Status of the Respondents**

Employment Status	Percentage
Employed	16%
Not Employed	73%
Employed Part-Time	11%

**Domestic Violence:** The findings of the study indicated that most of the most respondents (47.9%) agreed that they had heard or cases of domestic violence in your neighbourhood during the pandemic. Most respondents (45.8%) strongly agreed that the cases of domestic violence had increased in the neighborhood during the pandemic. Most respondents (47.8%) strongly agreed that the economic strains on parents in households was contributing to the increase in domestic violence during the pandemic. Besides, most respondents (38.6%) agreed that the lockdown and restriction of movement was contributing to the increase in cases of domestic violence during the pandemic. Most respondents (37.5%) also agreed that the increase in contact hours due to school closure and joblessness was contributing to increase in cases of domestic violence during the pandemic.

**Robbery with Violence:** The findings of the study indicated that most of the respondents (52.3%) agreed that gang violence had increased in the neighborhood during the pandemic. Most of the respondents (53.1%) agreed that the cases of daylight robbery had increased due to curfew and restrictions of movements. Most respondents (41.9%) agreed that gangs had taken over essential services such as water supply and public toilets charging the residents a fee to access them. Besides, most respondents (58.3%) strongly agreed that violent crime had become the option for many youths who had lost their jobs due to the ongoing pandemic. Most respondents (47.9%) agreed that neighborhood vigilantism had been intensified as a way of curbing violent crime during the pandemic.

**Table 1.4. Domestic Violence Incidents during the COVID-19 Outbreak**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
) I have heard or experienced cases of domestic violence in your neighbourhood during the pandemic.	47.9%	32.7%	17.2%	0.4%	-
) The cases of domestic violence have increased in the neighborhood during the pandemic.	45.8%	39.2%	8.9%	4.8%	1.3%
) The economic strains on parents in households is contributing to increase in domestic violence during the pandemic.	47.8%	36.2%	10.6%	4.9%	0.5%
) The lockdown and restriction of movement is contributing to the increase in cases of domestic violence during the pandemic.	32.7%	36.8%	27.6%	2.1%	0.8%
) The increase in contact hours due to school closure and joblessness is contributing to increase in cases of domestic violence during the pandemic.	34.6%	37.5%	19.7%	5.1%	3.1%

**Table 1.5. Robbery with Violence Incidents during the COVID-19 Outbreak**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
) Gang violence has increased in the neighborhood during the pandemic.	28.7%	52.3%	13.2%	4.6%	1.2%
) Cases of daylight robbery have increased due to curfew and restrictions of movements.	27.6%	53.2%	12.7%	6.1%	0.1%
) Gangs have taken over essential services such as water supply and public toilets charging the residents a fee to access them.	25.8%	41.9%	13.9%	10.6%	7.8%
) Violent crime has become the option for many youths who have lost their jobs due to the ongoing pandemic.	58.3%	32.4%	8.9%	0.4%	-
) Neighborhood vigilantism has become intense as a way of curbing violent crime during the pandemic.	26.7%	47.9%	14.2%	8.3%	2.9%

**Table 1.6. Child Prostitution Incidents during the COVID-19 Outbreak**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
) Cases of child prostitution have been on the increase in the neighborhood since the outbreak of the pandemic.	27.3%	51.0%	12.6%	6.8%	2.3%
) The loss of incomes for households is pushing teenage girls to prostitution to buy food.	58.3%	29.7%	8.7%	3.2%	0.1%
) Some parents are pushing their teenage girl into prostitution to make them bread winners for their households.	29.6%	45.8%	13.2%	8.6%	2.8%
) Lack of access to necessities such as sanitary towels that are provided for girls at school has pushed some teenage girls into prostitution.	32.6%	49.7%	8.7%	6.9%	2.1%
) Indefinite closure of schools has resulted in economic uncertainties that have pushed teenage girls into prostitution.	52.1%	36.7%	7.2%	2.6%	0.6%

**Table 1.7. Rape, Defilement and Early Pregnancies Incidents during the COVID-19 Outbreak**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
) The incidents of rape and defilement have been on the rise in the neighborhood since the pandemic struck.	27.6%	54.3%	10.2%	6.7%	1.2%
) The cessation of movement and curfews have contributed to the increase in the cases of rape and defilement.	31.8%	53.1%	8.7%	6.2%	1.2%
) The cases of rape and defilement that are going on are more than what is being reported.	22.3%	26.9%	35.4%	13.2%	2.2%
) Idleness due to increased joblessness has contributed to the increase in cases of rape and defilement.	28.6%	41.7%	14.3%	7.8%	7.6%
) The indefinite closure of school has resulted into idleness and hopelessness leading teenagers to engage in pre-marital sex.	24.7%	58.3%	8.9%	4.8%	3.3%

**Table 1.8. Illegal Evictions Incidents during the COVID-19 Outbreak**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
▪ I have heard or experienced cases of forceful evictions by government authorities during the pandemic.	39.6%	45.8%	11.7%	2.0%	0.9%
▪ Many residents face the risk of forceful eviction by the property owners due to rent arrears caused by loss of income in the ongoing pandemic.	27.9%	39.6%	16.2%	7.3%	9%
▪ Some residents have moved upcountry to avoid forceful eviction by property owners due to loss of income caused by the pandemic.	29.6%	52.1%	6.3%	5.7%	6.3%
▪ There are incident of property owners locking doors or removing parts of roofs as a way of forcefully evicting tenants.	39.6%	27.3%	11.9%	12.7%	8.5%

Table 1.9. Police Brutality Incidents during the COVID-19 Outbreak

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
▪The use of excessive force by the police to enforce curfew hours has resulted in injuries of residents.	42.5%	47.9%	2.3%	3.1%	-
▪The use of excessive force by the police to enforce curfew hours has resulted in deaths of residents	43.1%	54.2%	1.3%	1.4%	-
▪Police have taken advantage of the curfew to extort members of the public and loot businesses.	45.8%	39.3%	12.7%	2.2%	-
▪Police have taken advantage of the increase in criminal activities to commit extra-judicial killings.	43.8%	38.7%	8.2%	6.9%	2.4%

**Child Prostitution:** Based on the findings of the study, most of the respondents (51.0%) agreed that cases of child prostitution were on the increase in the neighborhood since the outbreak of the pandemic. The study also found that most respondents (58.3%) strongly agreed that the loss of incomes for households was pushing teenage girls to prostitution to buy food. Most respondents (45.8%) agreed that some parents are pushing their teenage girl into prostitution to make them bread winners for their households. Most respondents (47.9%) agreed that the lack of access to necessities such as sanitary towels that were provided for girls at school had pushed some teenage girls into prostitution. Furthermore, most respondents (52.1%) strongly agreed that the indefinite closure of schools had resulted in economic uncertainties that have pushed teenage girls into prostitution.

**Rape, Defilement and Early Pregnancies:** The findings of the study indicated that most respondents (54.2%) agreed that the incidents of rape and defilement were on the rise in their neighborhood since the pandemic struck. The study established that most respondents (52.1%) agreed that the cessation of movement and curfews had contributed to the increase in the cases of rape and defilement. Most respondents (35.4%) were however, neutral that the cases of rape and defilement that were going on were more than what was being reported. Besides, most respondents (41.7%) agreed that idleness due to increased joblessness had contributed to the increase in cases of rape and defilement. Most respondents (58.3%) also agreed that indefinite closure of school had resulted into idleness and hopelessness leading teenagers to engage in pre-marital sex.

**Illegal Evictions:** The findings of the study indicated that most of the respondents (45.8%) agreed that they have heard or experienced cases of forceful evictions by government authorities during the pandemic. Most of the respondents (39.6%) agreed that many residents faced the risk of forceful eviction by the property owners due to rent arrears caused by loss of income in the ongoing pandemic. Most respondents (52.1%) agreed that some residents had moved upcountry to avoid forceful eviction by property owners due to loss of income caused by the pandemic. Besides, most respondents (39.6%) strongly agreed that there were incident of property owners locking or removing doors or removing parts of roofs as a way of forcefully evicting tenants.

**Police Brutality:** The findings of the study indicated that most respondents (47.9%) agreed that the use of excessive force by the police to enforce curfew hours had resulted in injuries of residents. Most respondents (54.2%) also agreed that the use of excessive force by the police to enforce curfew hours had resulted in deaths of residents.

Most respondents (45.8%) also strongly agreed that the police had taken advantage of the curfew to extort members of the public and loot businesses. Besides, most respondents (43.8%) strongly agreed that the police had taken advantage of the increase in criminal activities to commit extra-judicial killings.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

### Conclusion

The outbreak and spread of COVID-19 in Kenya have made life in the informal settlements in Nairobi more challenging for the residents. On one hand, the stringent measures put in place by the government to contain the virus have had social and economic ramifications that have manifested in terms of increased criminal activities. These criminal activities are characterized by robbery with violence, domestic and gender violence, rape, defilement, child prostitution, illegal evictions, and early pregnancies. On the other hand, criminal activities have been perpetrated by the very authorities that are supposed to protect the informal settlement residents, manifesting as police brutality, which has claimed the lives of some residents. Therefore, whereas the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the country and was nationally acknowledged as a health crisis, a social-economic pandemic rocked the informal settlement in Nairobi, providing a perfect atmosphere for the perpetration of various criminal activities.

### Recommendation

- )] Additional Public awareness campaigns to sensitize the public on the risks of domestic and sexual violence in the advent of the COVID-19 outbreak and more especially how the affected persons can access the health and psychosocial help that they need.
- )] The government and other relevant stakeholders need to consider more services for persons sexually abused during this pandemic or because of this pandemic as essential service; they should, therefore, avail the required resources for medical and psychosocial support for the victims and provide them with alternative shelters.
- )] There is a need for promoting economic opportunities for women, which will ensure that they are cushioned against socio-economic difficulties that come in the wake of such pandemics.
- )] The recommended preventive measures include vaccination, wearing masks, washing hands using soaps or hand sanitizers, covering the mouth when coughing, and keeping a one-meter distance from others. Self-isolation for fourteen days is recommended for persons who have tested positive for COVID-19.

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