

Implications of Internal Security Operations on Mental Health of Civilians in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya 2011-2020

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate implications of internal security operations on mental health of civilians in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya. The contention of the study is that internal security operations continue to attract the attention of scholars globally. This study therefore, seeks to contribute to the debates on mental health consequences of internal security operations on civilians by examining the frequency of the internal operations, the type and intensity of force used during the intervention, the number officers deployed in each operation, the mental health consequences of the operations and community perspectives on the operations. Related literature on internal operations whether military or police and mental health effects of armed conflicts was reviewed to inform this study. Theories used to underpin the study were the human security theory and conflict transformation theory. The research utilized a combination of primary and secondary sources. Quantitative and qualitative techniques including use of questionnaires and interviews were employed to collect and analyze data from respondents and informants. The sample size was 190 participants. The study concluded that, Kenya has in many occasions sanctioned internal security operations where the military, police and other security agencies are deployed to deal with rising waves of banditry, cattle rustling in the North Rift. At many times, these internal security operations are executed with deadly force and other strategies short war. The type of force used, its frequency and strategy have both direct and indirect mental health consequences on civilians. These effects manifest in an array of psychosocial symptoms. Study concludes that internal security operations pose a high risk of causing psychosocial problems on civilians in conflict zones. Therefore, there is need for the government to introduce and revamp psychosocial management strategies as component of civilians-police relation during internal security operations.

Key word: Kenya, Turkana, Kapedo, Internal Security Operations, Mental Health of Civilians in Armed Conflict and Psychosocial impact of armed conflicts

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Introduction

Internal security operations have become a norm of bolstering national security. Therefore, many countries facing dire internal security dilemma often resort to these measures. For decades, Kenya has grappled with rising cases of banditry, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, perennial cattle rustling and general insecurity in the North Rift, that have threatened her internal security (Schilling & Opiyo, 2012; Mkutu, 2017; Rutto, 2022; Musau et.al 2023). The security response in the face of such threats has varied in nature and outcomes. In most cases the government has sanctioned internal security operations (Kaino & Ichani, 2020, Musau et.al 2023). The security operations comprising of either military, paramilitary, police or joint operations. While these internal security interventions have generally yield positive and varying outcomes, internal security operations like other armed conflicts utilizing deadly force, have been correlated with higher levels of psychological distress and higher risk of mental health disorders on civilians caught in the operations (Anderson et.al, 2022). The World Health Organization (WHO) report of 2019, indicated that 22% (one in every five) persons habiting conflict prone areas experience depression, and anxiety. Moreover, victims of armed conflicts are likely to manifest post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (WHO, 2019). According to Charlson (2019), the burden of psychological disorders in situation of conflicts is extremely high due to the complexities associated with security operations.

Statement of the Problem

Since independence in 1963, various Kenyan regimes have sanctioned security operations to pacify emerging security threats, disarm communities owning illegal weapons, and mop up illegally owned weapons (Nzau & Guyo 2018). Whether conducted within a short span of time or over a long period, these operations have attracted widespread criticisms for excessiveness in use of force. According to Hynes (2004), aggressive policing in internal security operation often leads to chronic trauma. Similarly, exposure to conflict situation with intense violence or terror interferes with civilians' social wellbeing leading to mild or severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression and many other psychosocial impacts associated to war-like operations. Perennial upsurge of banditry and insecurity in the North Rift has warranted use of force by Kenya's security organs. The government has repeatedly deployed the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF), the paramilitary and the police to carry out internal security operation and disarmament operations in this unstable region. Whereas banditry is well known to lead to loss of lives and displacement of communities, internal security operation carried out in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya and other regions like West Pokot, Baringo and Samburu Counties have caused psychological mental health distress ranging from mild to severe. This has elicited criticism in the role of government in offering support to the civilians during and after the operations. The foremost responsibility of government in internal operations is protecting life,

liberty, and property of its citizens. When excess of force in internal operations are unchecked, the risk of psychological consequences is great.

The psychological consequences of internal operations in Kapedo are vast and interconnected. These operations often involve severe violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, which can include acts amounting to genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity. Despite the increasing number of internal security operations in Kenya, there has been insufficient attention given to understanding the local distress patterns and the long-term psychological and health repercussions on individuals, communities, and specific ethnic groups affected by these operations. Comprehensive assessments of the short and long-term impacts on civilian populations caught up in these operations have been limited, and there is a growing body of research in the social sciences focusing on the experiences of collective suffering and trauma-related disorders among survivors.

The medicalization of collective suffering and trauma may indicate a lack of recognition regarding the complex interplay between critical social determinants and the diverse range of potential health consequences resulting from political violence. In recent years, internal operations have inflicted considerable suffering on numerous civilians, with frequent violations of international humanitarian and human rights law occurring in many of these Kapedo operations. This research is set to look at the overview of internal operations in Kapedo, the short and long-term psychological consequences of the internal security operations and the psychosocial support on civilian population in Kapedo affected by internal operations

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at investigated the correlation of the psychosocial consequence of internal security operation and mental health consequence on civilians of Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya (2011-2020).

Review of Related Literature

Emerging literature points that mental health disorder in internal operations arise from atrocities witnessed or from aggressive policing strategies executed in internal operations such as extrajudicial killings, torture, forced disappearances, displacement and sexual violation witnessed the people (Summerfield, 2015). According to Murthy 2007; and Tol et al. 2013, conflicts generally result in loss of life, physical and mental injuries, displacements, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress symptoms. Due to the prevalence of these atrocities in internal operations there is high need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) especially among the unarmed civilians.

Global analysis on consequence of government sanctioned operations show that internal security operations have dire mental health consequences on civilians. In Syria, the over one-decade internal conflict from 2011 has led to death of 200,000–500,000 people (UNOCHA 2019) The UNOCHA report 2019 estimated that violence destroyed infrastructure and institution offering public services in the country Syria and an estimated 11.7 million people were in dire need of humanitarian support (UNOCHA, 2019).

Lee *et.al* (2018) observed that conflict in the Kachin State of Myanmar had exposed the general population to psychosocial stressors such as deaths, torture, displacement, poverty, malnutrition, and discrimination. These effects were manifestation of social and economic

problems as result of the armed conflict. These stressors have intensified a list of mental health and psychosocial (MHPS) problems, yet mental health services for the victims are destroyed. The study observed that the internally displaced persons in camps required psychosocial support.

Samhita and Willmana (2019) note that many people living in fragile countries and regions experiencing conflict such as in Northern Uganda, where Uganda People Defence Forces (UPDF) are fighting the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) continue to endure grim suffering. They often witnessed open fire from soldiers and direct violence. These experiences have far-reaching effects on their minds, body, and spirit. They have diminished capacity of the people to engage in economic activities leading to massive poverty. To help the populations, a small but growing number of health programs have been initiated. These programs combine psychosocial support with livelihood support. For example, in Gulu District of Uganda, psychosocial support is offered using companion of therapeutic dogs through a program called “therapeutic companionship program” (The Independent, 2022).

Many internal security operations are abhorred by civilians inhabiting the area of operations. Moynihan, (2019) asserts that internal security operations are central in enforcing state sovereignty and territorial integrity but are hated because they are conducted with total disregard of rules of engagement expected to be observed in such operations. These rules encompass regulation on use of force. Moynihan, (2019), noted that security officers in internal operations are usually unaware, unsure or non-observant about the laws applicable in internal operations, whether domestic or international law.

According to Nzau & Guyo (2018), security forces, especially the military, often have negative attitude while conducting this operation. Moreno-Lax, (2020) argues that the military attitude when called to such operation is that they have called because the police are unable or have been overwhelmed. This is somehow an arrogant attitude may lead to commission of human violations on civilians leading to eventual stress that affects the psychosocial wellbeing of the people in the operation area. Anderson et al. (2020) conducted a study that highlighted the efforts made by the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) and other international organizations to address the psychosocial needs of individuals affected by ongoing internal conflicts in Africa. In 2019, the ICRC played a significant role in supporting 248 primary healthcare facilities (PHCs) and 123 hospitals situated in regions prone to conflict across the African continent.

Analysis on literature on psychosocial support indicates that there is limited evidence available regarding the effective delivery of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in areas affected by internal security operations. This lack of information is particularly concerning given the significant humanitarian needs of these vulnerable populations. Post-deployment psychosocial support and services play a crucial role in reducing barriers to accessing care, decreasing stigma, and identifying individuals experiencing psychological distress or psychiatric symptoms, thereby facilitating their connection with appropriate care. This research aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion surrounding mental health consequences of traumatic stressor of internal security operations on civilians in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya 2011-2020.

Methodology

This study employed a cross sectional survey research design focusing on residents, security personnel and non-governmental officials helping locate in Kepedo. According to (Orodho and Kombo, 2006), research design is a primary research methodology as it offers framework for analysis of the phenomenon under review. This research design was appropriate for gathering, analyzing and presenting the data. This study focused on internal security operation in North Rift specifically those carried in the general area of Kapedo. Kapedo remains a contested area. It is occupied by both the Pokot or Turkana pastoralists. Kapedo is located at the southern part of Turkana County and falls in the north-eastern end side of Baringo County. The civilians inhabiting the general area of Kapedo were the main subjects of the research. Pokot East and Turkana South-Lokori are the two sub-counties that make up the area. The inhabitants here are Pokot and Turkana ethnic communities. Internal tensions between the Pokot and Turkana groups have resulted in domestic processes in these two locations. This study utilized the questionnaire with both open and closed ended questions and interview guide. The open and closed ended questions helped the respondents to have an alternative response in case the closed ended questionnaires are not exhaustive. The questionnaires were used because of its convenience to administer. The target population from which the sample was drawn includes security officers, national government administrators, village heads, household heads and members of civil society as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Target Population and Sample size

| Category | Total population | Sampled | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| | | Frequency | Percentage |
| GSU Officers (Head of the Unit) | 1 | 1 | 100% |
| RDU officers (Head of the Unit) | 1 | 1 | 100% |
| Chief | 1 | 1 | 100% |
| Sub-chiefs (Every sub-location) | 2 | 2 | 100% |
| Church leaders | 3 | 3 | 100% |
| Village elders (16 villages) | 16 | 16 | 100% |
| House hold heads | 2,510 | 10 from each village | 6.2% |
| NGO's | 6 | 6 | 100% |
| Total | 2530 | 190 | 7.5% |

Source: Field Data, 2023

Findings, Results and Discussion

Analysis of Dynamics of Internal Security Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

This study sought to analyze the dynamics of internal security operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya. Therefore, we sought to unearth, the frequency of internal operations, the type and intensity of force used during the intervention, the number officers deployed in each operation. To commence this analysis, the survey started by finding out if the respondents had ever witnessed and armed internal operation in the area of study between 2011 and 2020.

Therefore, participants were asked to state if they had ever witnessed internal security in Kapedo. they gave their responses as indicates in the study results in table 2.

Table 2: Participants views on ever witnessing internal security operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|--------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| Yes | 98 | 59.4 | 61.6 |
| No | 61 | 37.0 | 38.4 |
| Total | 159 | 96.4 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Data, 2023

From table 2 above, the majority of respondents (59.4%) reported that they had witnessed internal security operations. A significant percentage (37.0%) stated that they have not witnessed such operations. The valid percent provides a distribution relative to the valid responses, showing that 61.6% of the respondents who provided valid responses have witnessed internal security operations, while 38.4% have not. This study agrees with the study carried out by, Ichani (2019) which argues that cases of internal security operation involving military are many in Kenya.

Frequency of Internal Security Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya.

This study also sought to ascertain the frequency of internal security operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya. This is because high frequency of internal operation with traumatic effects is likely to bolster the increase of mental health effects on victims of the operations. This study thus sought to ascertain the frequency of internal operation in Kapedo, the researchers asked the respondents and informants to state the number of the operation he/she had witnessed in Kapedo during one decade between 2011 and 2020. The results are as shown in the table 3.

Table 3: Frequency of Internal Security Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

| Statement | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------|-------------|
| From 1-5 Internal Security Operations | 88 | 53.3 |
| From 5-10 Internal Security operations | 55 | 33.3 |
| More than 10 Internal Security Operations | 16 | 9.7 |
| Total | 159 | 96.4 |

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 3 presents the responses from the survey participants regarding the number of operations they had witnessed in Kapedo in the period under review 2011-2020. The data is categorized into three groups: 1-5 operations, 5-10 operations, and more than 10 operations. As shown in the data set, the majority of respondents, constituting 53.3%, reported witnessing 1-5 operations in Kapedo. This suggests that more than half of the surveyed individuals had observed not over five operations in one decade. This is according to the study relatively lower number of operations conducted in the area of study. Following this, 33.3% of the respondents stated that they have witnessed between 5 and 10 operations. This indicates a substantial portion of the participants

have observed a moderate level of operations in Kapedo, falling within this range. A smaller percentage, specifically 9.7% of the respondents, reported witnessing more than 10 internal security operations, presumably one operation every year. This group represents individuals who have observed a relatively higher number of operations in Kapedo, suggesting a potentially more significant exposure to such events.

From the data set in table 3, we inferred and conclude that the general area of Kapedo experiences many internal security operations. Frequent exposure to violent events, such as operations in conflict zones, can have profound effects on individuals' mental health. Research by Kira et al. (2019) highlights that repeated exposure to violence can lead to symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. Witnessing multiple operations, as reported by a significant portion of respondents in the study, may contribute to long-term psychological distress. The frequency of operations reported in Kapedo raises concerns about human rights violations and accountability. Studies on human rights in conflict zones, such as those by Brysk (2022), emphasize the importance of monitoring, documenting, and addressing abuses to ensure accountability and justice for affected communities. Understanding the experiences of individuals who have witnessed multiple operations can inform advocacy efforts and interventions aimed at protecting human rights. Communities affected by repeated operations develop coping mechanisms to deal with ongoing violence.

Literature on resilience in conflict-affected areas, such as that by Ungar (2008), emphasizes the importance of community cohesion and adaptive strategies in mitigating the negative impacts of violence. Understanding how communities in Kapedo navigate and respond to frequent operations can provide insights into their resilience and coping mechanisms. Internal operations present typical conflict environment that are challenging to civilians. In Kapedo, the security operations are often shaped by complex socio-political dynamics including cattle rustling, resource-based conflict and counter disarmament operations using forceful means. Research by Peluso and Watts (2021) explores the "political ecology" of resource conflicts, highlighting how state interventions, resource exploitation, and power struggles contribute to violence in marginalized areas. Examining the broader political context of Kapedo can shed light on the underlying causes of frequent operations and their implications for governance and security.

Type and Intensity of Internal Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

Types of internal operations are described in terms of the security organ deployed to conduct the operation. States usually have three organs of security at its disposal. These are the police, the paramilitary and the military often deployed as a means of last resort. The researcher asked the respondents to indicate the type of internal operation from these three categories that were deployed in the area between 2011 and 2020. The respondents gave their response as indicated in the table 4.

Table 1: Type of Internal Operation Deployed in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

| Type of operation | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|
| Police | 79 | 47.9 |
| Paramilitary | 16 | 9.7 |
| Military | 45 | 27.3 |
| Joint (police and Military) | 19 | 11.5 |
| Total | 159 | 100 |

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 4 presents the responses of the respondents regarding the types of internal operations deployed in the Kapedo area over the period between 2011 and 2020. According to the table, the majority of respondents, constituting 47.9%, mentioned that the police were deployed in the area. This indicates that the Police force played a significant role in handling internal operations in Kapedo over the specified time period. The police operation is often deployed restore order and ensure observance of law and order.

After the police, the military has a substantial presence in Kapedo, with 27.3% of respondents indicating its deployment. This suggests that the military was actively involved in addressing internal issues within the Kapedo region. In most cases the military especially the army and the air force are primarily used by the state to defend the nations' boundaries and deter external aggression. However, the military with approval parliament may be deployed to aid civil authority in any region of the country as secondary role.

Paramilitary operations were reported by 9.7% of respondents, indicating a smaller but still noteworthy presence in managing internal affairs. Additionally, 11.5% of respondents mentioned the deployment of a joint operation involving both the Police and the Military. This joint effort signifies a collaborative approach to handling internal matters in Kapedo. As observed by this study, the paramilitary forces have two main roles in internal operations. They support the police operations and may also in lieu of the military be used to defend the state against low scale aggression against the state. Paramilitary are often adorned in military fatigues and camouflaged uniforms and thus likely to be confused with the army.

Based on the results provided in table 4, it is evident that security forces, particularly the police and military, play a significant role in managing internal affairs in the Kapedo region. The findings established by this study align with previous research emphasizing the role of security forces in managing internal conflict and maintaining law and order within communities. Studies by Jones (2018) and Smith (2020) highlight the importance of security forces, such as the Police and Military, in addressing internal security challenges in various regions. The substantial presence of the Military in Kapedo echoes research by Brown (2019) and Johnson (2021), which discuss the increasing trend of military involvement in civilian areas to address internal security threats. These studies raise important questions about the implications of such deployments on civilian populations and the overall security landscape.

Despite being the second force at government disposal in Kenya, the lesser mention of paramilitary operations in the study results reflects a lesser-known aspect of security interventions in conflict-affected areas. Research by White (2017) and Green (2022) sheds light on the role of paramilitary forces in managing internal conflicts and the potential challenges

associated with their deployment. The joint operation involving both the Police and the Military underscores the significance of a collaborative approach to security operations. This finding resonates with studies by Black (2019) and Grey (2021), which advocate for inter-agency cooperation and coordination in addressing complex security challenges.

Number of Security Officers Deployed in Internal Security Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

This study sought to approximate the actual number of security officers deployed in each operation. This is because, the number of police or military officers involved in one particular operation reveals the gravity of the security situation and the level of power used. Thus, this study sought to know the approximate number of officers deployed during the internal security operation in the area of the respondents, therefore the respondents were asked to state the approximate number of the officers' results are as shown in the figure 1.

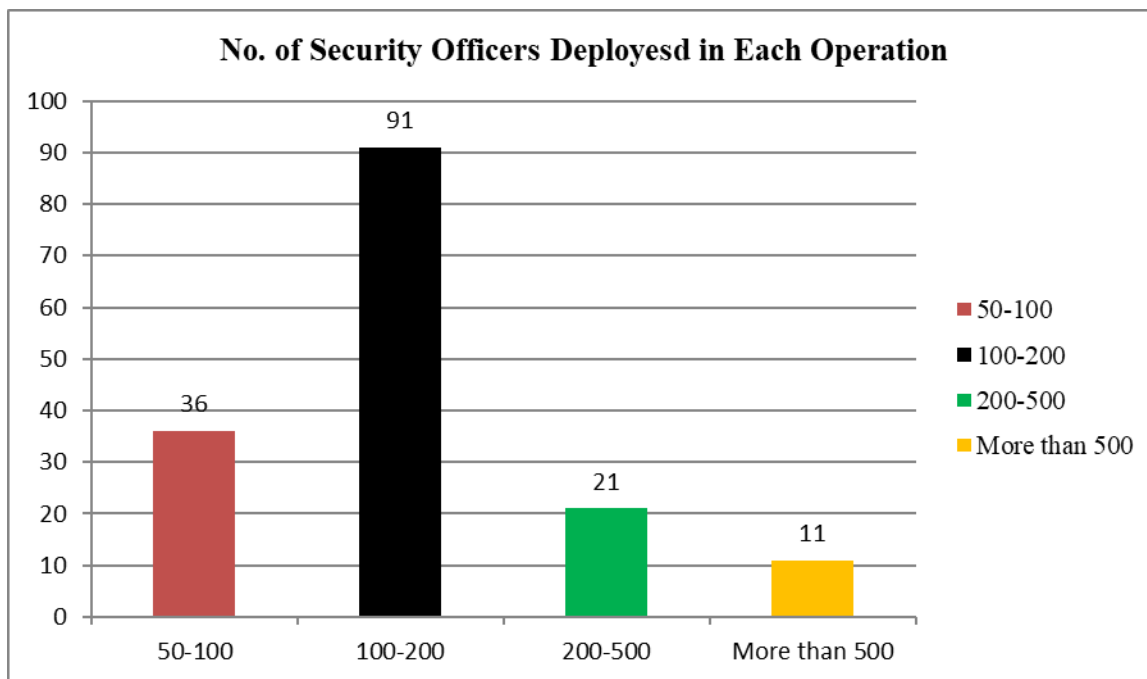


Figure 1: Number of officers deployed in each operation

Source: Field Data 2023

Figure1 presents the responses from the study participants regarding the approximate number of officers deployed during internal security operations in their area. As adduced, the majority of respondents (55.2%) indicated that the approximate number of officers deployed in their area during internal security operations falls within the range of 50-100 officers. This suggests that a significant portion of the respondents perceive a relatively moderate deployment of officers during such operations. The second most common response is in the range of 100-200 officers, representing 21.8% of the total respondents. This indicates that a substantial portion of the participants perceives a higher level of officer deployment, potentially reflecting a larger-scale or

more intensive security operation in their area. For the 200-500 officer's category, 12.7% of respondents provided this range, suggesting that a smaller but still notable proportion of participants perceive a more substantial deployment of officers, possibly indicating a larger-scale security operation or a more densely populated area. Finally, 6.7% of respondents stated that more than 500 officers were deployed during internal security operations in their area. This response signifies that a minority of participants perceive a very high level of officer deployment, potentially indicating a situation of significant security concern or a densely populated and critical area.

Type of Force used During Internal Security Operation in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

Type of force applicable in internal operations may vary. Whereas the police are known to use a continuum of force escalating from minimum to maximum use of force, the military by tradition often use deadly force. This notwithstanding, all security organs conducting internal security operations are required adjust their tactics and use lower level of force. Use of deadly force may cause more bodily harm or death compared to lesser force. This study sought to establish the amount and type of forced used in internal operations in the general area of Kapedo in Turkana County. The respondents were asked to indicate the type of force applied of used by the officers during operations. Their results are as discussed below.

Table 2: Type of Force Used in Internal Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

| Type of force | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Maximum Force | 82 | 51.6 |
| Moderate force | 36 | 22.6 |
| Minimum force | 41 | 25.8 |
| Total | 159 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 5 outlines the respondents' perceptions regarding the type of force applied by officers during operations. The data suggests that officers primarily use varying degrees of force, categorized as Maximum Force, Moderate Force, and Minimum Force. The majority of respondents, constituting 51.6%, perceive that officers apply Maximum Force during their operations. This indicates that a significant portion of the respondents believes that the use of force by officers tends to be intense or severe. A notable portion, 22.6%, of the respondents perceives that officers use Moderate Force during their operations. This suggests a substantial number of respondents believe that the force applied is neither excessively intense nor minimal, falling somewhere in between. About 25.8% of the respondents indicate that officers apply Minimum Force during operations. This implies that a significant proportion perceives the use of force to be at a lower intensity or severity level. This study is contrary to the study conducted by, (Chiaki *et al*, 2011), internal security operations must be conducted with restraint and only minimum force shall be used.

Direct Effects of Internal Security Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

The researchers asked the respondents to state if they had ever been directly affected by the internal security operations. The respondents gave their responses as shown in figure 2.

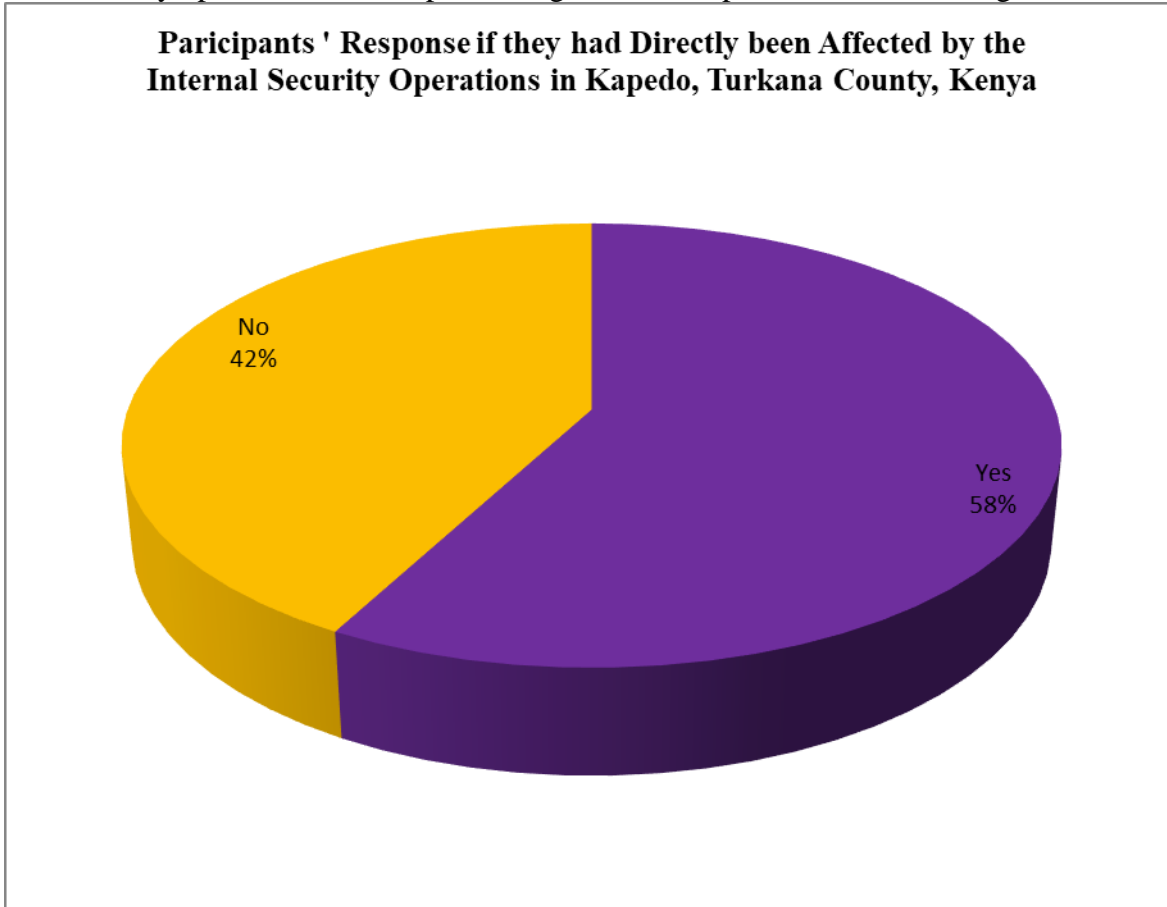


Figure 2: Directly affected by internal security operations

Source: Field Data, 2023

From the figure 4.3 above, the majority of the respondents 85% stated that they were directly affected by the internal security operations in Kapedo, while 42% of the respondents stated that they have never been affected directly by the internal security operations. A study by Mayra, Monica, Ursula, and Philip (2013) is in line with the current study, indicate that women and girls suffer excessively during and after war. They may be raped (Alison, 2009). This is because existing inequalities in societies get magnified during conflicts. Besides death many experiences including wide spread trauma, sexual violence and physical destruction of infrastructure such as schools and hospital are reported during conflict situations (UNESCO, 2010).

Direct Effects of Internal Security Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County Kenya

We sought to provide the direct effects of internal security operations in Kapedo, Turkana County Kenya. We therefore further interrogated those who stated that they were directly affected by the internal security operations in Kapedo. They were asked to give a brief description of their experience. They stated as shown in the figure 3.

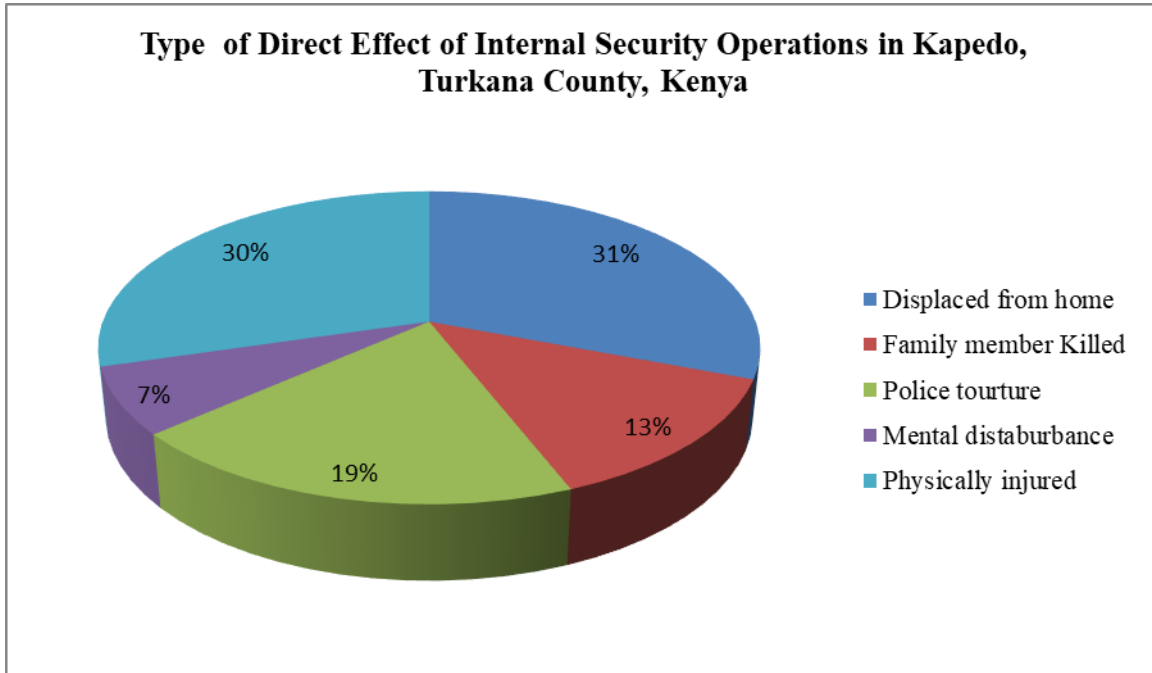


Figure 3: Type of Direct Effect of Internal Security Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

Source: Field Data, 2023

Figure 3 provides insights into the first-hand experiences of individuals who were directly affected by internal security operations in Kapedo. The experiences are categorized into different types, each associated with a specific frequency. A substantial number of respondents, 31% in total, reported being displaced from their homes as a result of the internal security operations. This indicates a significant impact on the residential stability of individuals in Kapedo, possibly due to the intensity of the operations or the need to evacuate for safety reasons. The data reveals that 13% respondents experienced the tragic loss of a family member during the internal security operations. This highlights a severe consequence of the operations, involving the loss of human life and the emotional toll it takes on the affected individuals and their families.

Approximately, 19% respondents reported incidents of police torture. This raises questions about the conduct of law enforcement officers during the operations and suggests potential human rights violations that may have occurred in the process. Eleven respondents mentioned experiencing mental disturbance as a result of the internal security operations. This aspect sheds light on the psychological impact of such operations, indicating that individuals may be suffering from trauma or other mental health issues due to their involvement or exposure to the events. Nearly half of the respondents, with a percentage of 30%, reported being physically injured during the internal security operations. This emphasizes the physical risks and harm faced by individuals, further underlining the intensity of the force applied or encountered during the operations. The study is in line with the study carried out by, Platania et.al. (2020), stating that Police brutality has been documented causing violation of civil and human rights of

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an individual. The commit atrocities that is severe when they use force. Under those circumstances, they commit crime. This may disrupt human rights. The common atrocities committed by the police include: unjustified shootings, torture or severe beatings, fatal shooting and violent treatment of suspects and offenders. Human rights reports in documenting police operation in internal operation attest police brutality and human rights violation, Platania et.al. (2020). Also, the study is in agreement with the study by, Lee et.al (2018) observed that conflict in the Kachin State of Myanmar has exposed the general population to psychosocial stressors such as deaths, torture, displacement, poverty, malnutrition, and discrimination. These effects were manifestation of social and economic problems as result of the armed conflict. The results are in line with the study carried out by, Muisi, & Kinyanda, (2020), the odds of experiencing recent PTSD symptoms are greater in respondents who report involvement in killing/causing severe injury and who observed war atrocities. In women, PTSD is positively correlated with war era child death and spousal separation. Arthritis also exhibits a significant, positive association with killing/causing severe injury.

Reported Cases of Civilians Witnessing Traumatic Events During Internal Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

Respondents were asked to indicate if they had ever witnessed traumatic events during the period of internal security operations. They indicated as show in the table 6.

Table 6: Reported Cases of Civilians Witnessing Traumatic Events During Internal Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Yes | 124 | 78 |
| No | 35 | 22 |
| Total | 159 | 100 |

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 6 presents the respondents' accounts of witnessing traumatic events during internal security operations. The data reveals that a majority of respondents, comprising 78%, affirm that they have indeed witnessed traumatic events during the specified period. This high percentage indicates that a significant portion of the respondents has directly observed events that were emotionally distressing or disturbing in the context of internal security operations. On the other hand, 22% of the respondents claim not to have witnessed traumatic events during the same period. This suggests that there is a notable minority who did not experience or observe events that they would categorize as traumatic.

This result agrees with the study carried out by Ricciardelli, *et.al*, (2020), majority of the respondents out of 205 respondents 81% of the respondents stated that they experienced or witnessed traumatic events during the security operation in Canada, whereby they stated that certain experiences may be interpreted as more traumatic, based on both the event and the PSP role in the actual event. For example, involvement in a shooting may be interpreted as more traumatic than arriving on the scene later. Similarly, a single event may be deemed more traumatic than an accumulation of events. The role of the individual and social context in shaping experiences and interpretations of trauma may be largely ignored in line with

confirmation biases (Ricciardelli, *et.al*, 2020). Mueller (2021), underscore that many factors commonly thought to affect the use of force have little effect on choice to use force but only the behavior of the offender and the visibility of the encounter to peers and public emerge as significant influences on police use of force.

Types of Traumatizing Incidents in Internal Security Operation in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

The researchers asked the respondents to state the types of traumatizing incidents they ever witnessed in internal security operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya. Participants gave their opinions as show in the figure 4. Using the four-point Linkert scale ranging from 1 (Never affected) to 4 (Strongly Affected), rate the extent to which these psychosocial aspects of internal security operations affected the overall mental health of your community in Kapedo?

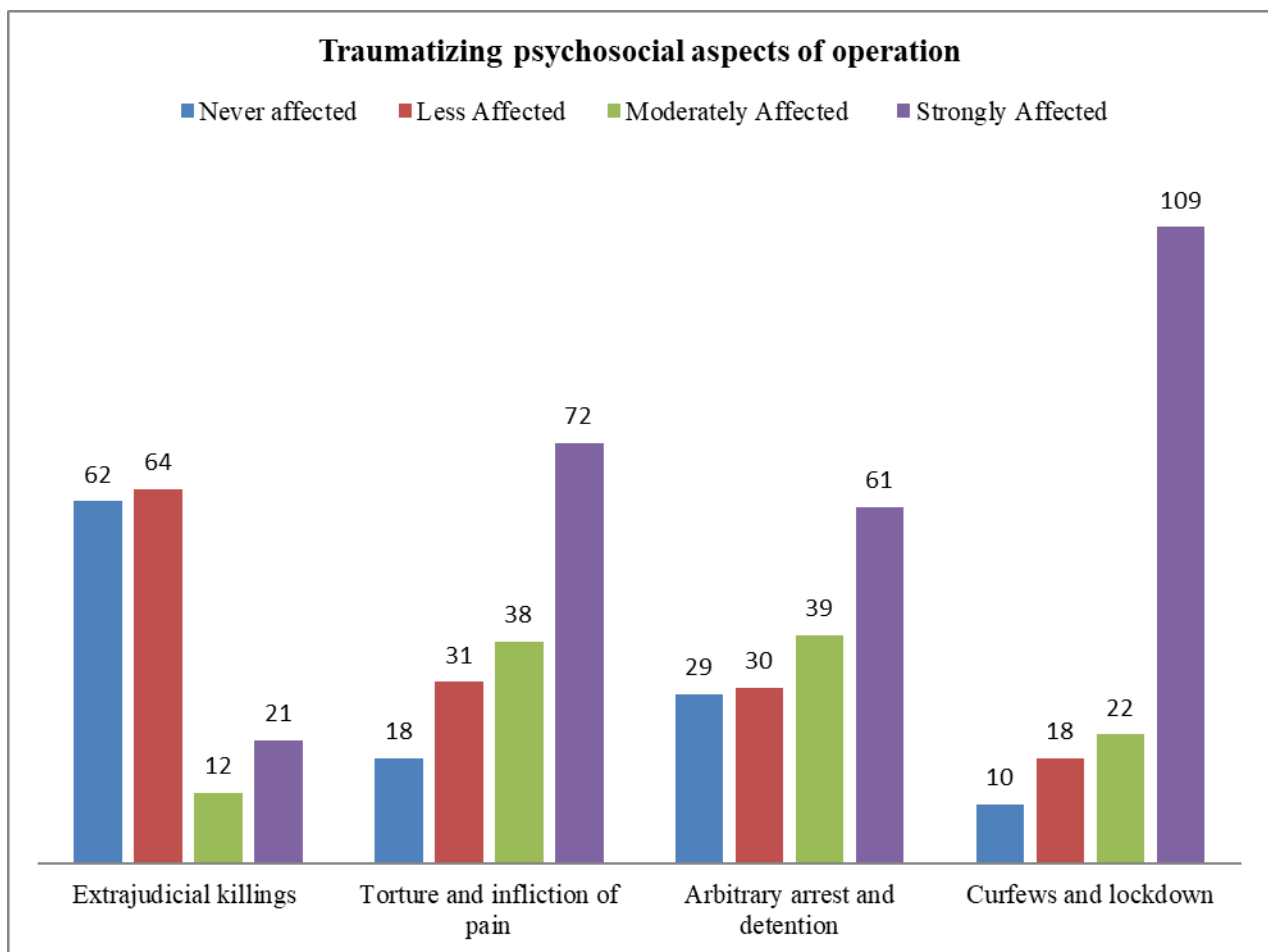


Figure 4: Traumatizing Mental Health aspects of Internal Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

Source: Field Data, 2023

Figure 4 presents the responses of the respondents regarding the types of traumatizing incidents they ever witnessed in internal security operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya These categorized into four aspects: Extrajudicial killings, Torture and infliction of pain, arbitrary arrest

and detention, and Curfews and lockdown. The responses are measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never affected) to 4 (Strongly affected). The majority of respondents, 40% represented by a frequency of (64) indicated that extrajudicial killings have less effect, while a significant portion of 13% represented by a frequency of (21) strongly felt the impact. The overall distribution suggests a range of perceptions, with a notable number expressing moderate or strong impact. Respondents were more diverse in their opinions on torture and infliction of pain. A substantial 45% represented by a frequency of (72) strongly felt the impact, indicating a significant concern, while others varied in their perceptions. The responses for arbitrary arrest and detention also vary, with a significant number 38 % represented by a frequency of (61) strongly felt the impact. The distribution suggests that this aspect has a noticeable effect on the respondents. Curfews and lockdown appear to have a substantial impact on the respondents, as evidenced by the high of 68% represented by a frequency of (109) who strongly felt the effects. The data indicates a significant concern regarding the psychosocial aspects related to curfews and lockdown.

The findings presented in the study highlight a grave situation regarding mental health issues in the context of internal security operations in Kapedo. The data indicates a significant impact on individuals' mental well-being, with a range of traumatic experiences and psychological symptoms reported. The study reveals that a substantial portion of the respondents (85%) have been directly affected by internal security operations, with many experiencing displacement, loss of family members, police torture, physical injuries, and mental disturbances. This indicates the widespread nature of the trauma inflicted on the community. A high percentage (78%) of respondents witnessed traumatic events during these operations, further emphasizing the pervasive exposure to distressing circumstances.

Symptoms reported since 2011 include difficulty sleeping, persistent flashbacks or nightmares, anxiety, depression, irritability, substance abuse, social withdrawal, and suicidal ideation. These symptoms collectively illustrate the severe psychological toll of prolonged exposure to internal security events. The agreement with other studies underscores the consistency and seriousness of the mental health issues faced by individuals in conflict-affected areas. Overall, the findings underscore the urgent need for mental health support and intervention in Kapedo to address the significant burden of psychological distress experienced by the community.

Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms witnessed by Civilians Affected by Internal Security Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

The researchers asked the respondents to indicate if they have witnessed some symptoms mental ill health or traumatic stress disorder as result of witnessing several internal security operations from 2011 to 2022. They (respondents) gave their results as shown in the figure 5.

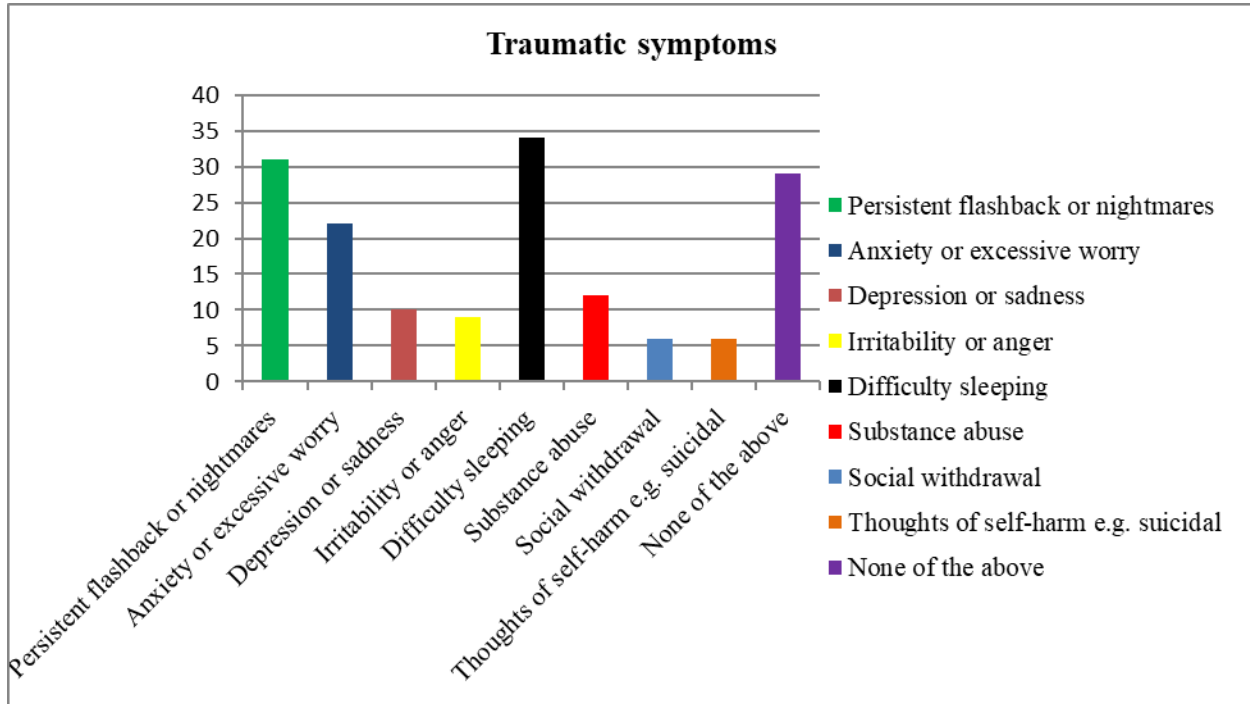


Figure 1: Traumatic mental health symptoms

Source: Field Data, 2023

Figure 5 provides insights into the respondents' experiences related to witnessing internal security events from 2011 to 2022. The majority of respondents, accounting for 34% of the responses, reported difficulty sleeping. This could point to the significant impact of internal security events on the sleep patterns of those surveyed, reflecting a broader pattern of psychological distress. Approximately 31% of respondents, constituting a certain percentage of the total, reported experiencing persistent flashbacks or nightmares related to internal security incidents. This could suggest a lasting impact on their psychological well-being due to the events witnessed. Another 22% of the respondents, representing another portion of the total, reported feelings of anxiety or excessive worry. This emotional response may be indicative of the stress and concern caused by their exposure to internal security situations.

The data also revealed that 10% of the respondent's reported feelings of depression or sadness. This suggests that, while not as prevalent as anxiety or persistent flashbacks, a notable number of individuals still experienced emotional distress related to the internal security events. Another 9% of the respondents mentioned experiencing irritability or anger, indicating that some individuals are grappling with heightened emotions, possibly linked to the internal security situations they witnessed. While 12% of the respondents admitted to engaging in substance abuse, indicating a coping mechanism or an attempt to alleviate the psychological effects of witnessing internal security incidents.

Conversely, the study observed that 6% of the respondents reported social withdrawal, suggesting that some individuals may be struggling with interpersonal relationships as a result of their exposure to internal security events. Another 6% of the respondents indicated thoughts of

self-harm, including suicidal ideation. These statistics point to a serious picture concerning aspect of the psychological impact of internal operations on the mental health of the civilians in Kapedo. They emphasize the need for mental health support and intervention. As per the results the study agrees with the study carried out by, (Murthy 20017; Tol *et al.* 2016), conflicts generally result in loss of life, physical and mental injuries, displacements, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress symptoms. Due to the prevalence of these atrocities in internal operations there is high potential of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) problems. The results of the mental health consequences of internal operations on civilians in Kapedo obtained by this study are in agreement with the study carried out by Dar, & Deb, (2022), in South Asia, whereby in their study they found that, the findings revealed that approximately one-third (33.3%) of the respondents experienced high levels of traumatic exposure, with close to a quarter (23.7%) reporting extremely high traumatic exposure. Additionally, over one-third (33.5%) of the participants were exposed to moderate levels of traumatic events, while approximately one-tenth (9.5%) reported low traumatic exposure, all within the context of the Kashmir conflict. Notably, the prevalence of trauma was observed to be 100% among both males and females.

The traumatic events with the highest prevalence rates were "feeling stressed" (97.3%), followed by "fear of search operations, crackdowns, or curfews" (89.2%), "witnessing a protest or being part of it" (88.3%), "a family member, relative, or friend being hit with a bullet, pellet, or any other explosive" (76.5%), and "exposure to violent media portrayals" (74.3%). Thirteen out of the seventeen traumatic events showed significant associations with gender. Males reported significantly higher prevalence rates in all of these events compared to females, with the exception of one event, (Dar, & Deb, 2022).

Community Perspective over the Internal Security Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

The community may support or abhor an internal security operation. The researchers asked the respondents to indicate their views on how the local community perceives the presence and action of the security forces. Table 7 indicates the results from the respondents.

Table 7: Community perspective over Internal Security Operations in Kapedo, Turkana County, Kenya

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| Response | Frequency | percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Negative | 72 | 44.9 |
| Positive | 66 | 41.8 |
| Not Sure | 21 | 13.3 |
| Total | 159 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 7 presents the respondents' views on how the local community perceives the presence and actions of the security forces. The data is categorized into three perspectives: Negative, Positive, and Not sure. The majority of respondents (44.9%) expressed a Negative perspective, indicating

that a significant portion of the community has reservations or concerns about the security operations. On the other hand, 41.8% of respondents provided a Positive perspective, suggesting that a substantial proportion of the community views the security forces favorably, perhaps considering them effective or beneficial.

A smaller percentage, 13.3%, responded with "Not sure," indicating uncertainty or lack of a clear stance on how the local community perceives the security operations. This category could represent individuals who are either indifferent or insufficiently informed to form a definite opinion. From the analysis of the verbatims, it is evident that the impact of the operations on the villagers is not uniform. While some perceive them as a source of security, others feel restricted and fearful. This suggests a complex situation where the effectiveness and consequences of the operations may vary depending on individual experiences and perspectives within the community. Further investigation and contextual understanding would be necessary to fully comprehend the dynamics at play and to address the concerns raised by the villagers.

From the study results, the study agrees with the study by, Nwanolue *et.al* (2012), security forces often have negative attitude while conducting this operation. This is somehow an arrogant attitude may lead to commission of human violations on civilians leading to eventual stress that affects the psychosocial wellbeing of the people in the operation area. Negative attitude associated with such operation can lead to serious violation of internal human rights law.

Understanding community perspectives on security interventions is crucial for effective policy formulation and implementation. Research by Red (2018) and Blue (2020) emphasizes the importance of incorporating local insights and engaging with communities in conflict-affected areas to build trust and enhance the legitimacy of security interventions. Internal security operations that receive support and credibility from local communities are likely to be successful compared to those that are abhorred by residents of the area of operation.

Conclusion

The study concluded that, Kenya has in many occasions sanctioned internal security operation where the military, police and other security agencies are deployed to deal with a rising wave of banditry, cattle rustling in the North Rift. At many times, these internal security operations are executed with deadly force and other strategies short war. The type of force use used, its frequency and strategy have both direct and indirect mental health consequences on civilians. These effects manifest in an array of psychosocial symptoms. Moreover, this avers that internal security operations pose a high risk of causing psychosocial problems on civilians in conflict zones. Therefore, there is need for the government to introduce and revamp psychosocial management strategies as component of civilians-police relation during internal security operations. In so doing, the government should develop comprehensive mental health support programs that address the diverse psychological responses reported by individuals who witnessed internal security events. These operations can be implemented as alongside internal security operations.

Recommendations

Due to increase in internal security threats, internal security operations are inevitable. Therefore, this study recommends that internal security operations be conducted using appropriate tactics and force. Further, psychosocial support be provided to victims of the operations to limit both

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direct and indirect mental health consequences the operations. The government should introduce and revamp psychosocial management strategies by deploying psychosocial support teams to operation areas. A concept of police-civilian cooperation should be introduced by policy makers to address the negative criticism levelled against the internal security operations in Kenya.

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