THE ROLE OF PRIVATE SECURITY IN COMMUNITY POLICING: Case of Kikuyu Sub County, Kiambu County, Kenya.

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The primary duty of every legitimate state is security and safety of her citizens and all persons within their jurisdiction. Rise of insecurity has led to more and more people turning to the private security to ensure their personal safety and that of their families and property. This demand arises due to the inability of the state to provide adequate security to its people. Simonsen (1998) noted, there should be partnerships between the public and private sector institutions that provide many of the same services. This study sought to identify the role played by the private security in community policing.

The study aimed at determining the level of engagement of private security in community policing, finding out the capacity of private security in supporting the implementation of community policing and to establish the relationship between the private security officers and the police. It was grounded on the differential association theory and the social control theory and adopted a descriptive research design. The primary target population constituted both male and female private security officers drawn from different private security companies in Kikuyu Sub-County. The unit of analysis of this study was the role played by the private security in community policing and the unit of observation was the private security officers. Purposive sampling and simple random sampling was utilized in selecting a sample size of 120 officers drawn from the management teams, field supervisors and the security guards. The study used primary data collected from the private security providers. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data. The data obtained from the questionnaires was edited, coded and entered in the computer for analysis with aid of statistical software (SPSS v20). The study used descriptive analytical methods which included percentages tables, graphs and charts to enhance clarity.

The study identified various services offered by private security sector in Kenya which included: cash carrying, guarding, alarm response and executive protection and security consulting. The study noted that there is no standardized form of training among the private security officers a factor which has an effect on their recognition as credible partners in community policing. The respondents rated the private security providers to be more advantaged than the police officers in access to information on crime due to their greater public confidence, their static deployment as well as their greater numbers in deployment compared to the police. They further noted that the level of cooperation and the level of information sharing between the private security providers and the police in fighting crime to be low. In community policing, the respondents perceived the level of engagement in it to be low due to low level of mutual mistrust and rivalry that exists between the two entities. The respondents identified several synergies between police and the private security providers in areas where joint operations are carried out. They were however of the opinion that the level of cooperation may be enhanced through joint training, regular joint security briefing meetings and crime mapping, physical and information resource sharing as well as reduced suspicion between the two entities. On the possible improvements on the policy and regulatory frameworks governing the practice of private security providers, the respondents recommended establishment of participatory regulatory bodies, enactment of Private Security Bill as well as training on how to deal with the emerging types of crime such as terrorism and cybercrimes. This will increase the participation of the private security providers in community policing.

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