

**DETERMINANTS OF JUVENILE INVOLVEMENT IN CRIMINAL
BEHAVIOUR IN MAJENGO SLUMS – NYERI COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Crime is a major concern to every nation in the world, especially the involvement of minors in criminal activities. In Kenya there is a high rate of minors involvement in criminal activities indicated by the high number of them being arrested or sentenced with criminal charges. Of my specific concern is Majengo Slums of Nyeri County where minors have joined criminal activities such as terrorism activities, robbery offences, Murder, breaking and stealing among other crimes frequently committed in this region. In addition, the minors have been recruited to join and operate in some organized extremist groups such the Mungiki group.

Considering the effects of juvenile involvement in criminal activities, there is a need to identify factors that contribute to minors' involvement in criminal activities and seek ways to mitigate them. This study therefore sought to establish the factors that promote juveniles involvement in criminal activities in Majengo Slums of Nyeri County, to fill in the gap of knowledge and assist in developing strategies to curb the menace.

Specifically the study sought to: determine the factors that promote juveniles involvement in criminal behavior in Majengo Slums of Nyeri County, find out the levels of juvenile involvement in criminal behaviors in Majengo Slums of Nyeri County, and investigate the impact of juveniles' involvement in criminal behaviors in Majengo Slums of Nyeri County. A cross-sectional descriptive research design was used in this study to assess the determinants of juvenile involvement in criminal activities in Majengo Slums of Nyeri County. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select the sample. The study targeted a sample size of 50 respondents including police officers, local administration members such as chiefs and members of local organizations supporting the rights of children. Twenty respondents were intervened including nine selected juveniles in the correctional centers. Data collection instruments included questionnaires and interview guides. Both quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed and results presented in tables and graphs with emphasis on graph analysis. The results revealed that the main causes of juveniles involvement in criminal behaviors include; exposure to criminal peers, low literacy levels, un employment, the quality of parenting; lack of adequate supervision; rejection by the mother/father, lack of parents involvement with the child, maltreatment of children including neglect and abuse and youth homelessness; rebellion against parental authority, income inequality and poverty. The findings of this study showed that there was increase in theft and robbery offences among the juveniles. Crime among the juveniles was reported as a social problem that affects the lives of people, lowers their dignity, and affects people psychologically, physically, emotionally, economically and socially, thus affecting community development. The proposed strategies to curb juveniles involvement in criminal behaviors included; constant presence of police in the neighborhoods and the establishment of more police stations in juveniles-offence prone areas; preventing the free usage of small arms/weapons by members of the community and creation of training/job opportunities for idle youngsters to prevent them from engaging in crime and violence. Improve the image of the police and establishment of community policing forums. The parents must also take responsibility over their children up to the time when they would be in the position to stand on their own. Finally, Kenyan government deserves every support from local and international organizations as well as individuals to sustain the constitutional free basic education, and ensure its quality and a fair distribution of its resources in order to increase literacy levels and reduce crime rates.