

Integration of maritime security strategies in the management of land-based terror activities in Lamu County

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ABSTRACT

Lamu terror activities persists as a transnational menace that poses hazards to global interests, arising from and manifesting in both foreign and domestic contexts. Terrorist acts were executed by individuals or small cells that received varying degrees of support, including resources and training. While maintaining little to no link with the terrorist organizations to whom they profess loyalty. These has been enabled by presence of maritime domain which offers terrorist's advantages ranging from accessibility to the land, carrying out illegal activities in the sea to finance their land based terror activities. Despite existence of maritime security strategies in Kenya, maritime insecurities persists. This study opines that its existence influences land-based terror activities in Lamu County. The overall objective of the study was to assess the integration of maritime security strategies in the management of land-based terror activities. Routine Activities Theory and Securitization Theory underpinned the study. The study espoused convergent parallel research design. The study area was Lamu County. Target population of the study was 966 in which Slovin's formula was used to derive a sample size of 320 from Multiagency team; platoon commanders from General Service Unit (GSU) and Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU), Kenya Navy Fleet Commander, Kenya Coast Guard Service Lieutenant Commander, Lamu County Commissioner, Kenya Maritime Authority Manager, Director from ministry of Fisheries, Director from Blue Economy, Kiunga Youth Bunge leader, Sub-County Ministry of Education Directors, Kenya Maritime Police, Save Lamu civil society management committee, traders from both Lamu West Sub-County and Lamu East Sub-County, village elders, youth, women fishmongers, religious leaders, and radicalised youths. Primary data was collected using questionnaires, Interview Guide, Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews. Secondary data was obtained from police records, academic journals, books, policy papers, government publications and online sources. The obtained data was analysed with aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Findings were presented using frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs. The study findings indicated that there was low level of integration of maritime security strategies in management of land based terror activities in Lamu County. The study concluded that, maritime security strategies have direct influence on management of land-based terror activities. The study recommends; adoption of integrated maritime security strategy that can assist in response to maritime insecurities in areas that are not effectively manned.

Keywords; Land-Based Terror Activities, Maritime Security Strategies, counter-terrorism, Lamu County, Kenya.

I. INTRODUCTION

The intricacies and distinctiveness of contemporary terrorist activities differentiate them from classic terrorism, encompassing aspects such as financing methods and operating capabilities on land, hence undermining state authorities and their legitimacy (Hattendorf, 1994). O'Kelly(2025) research on the asymmetric threat posed by terrorism emphasized the critical necessity of securing ports. Highlighting the supply chain delivering products to these ports is a significant target for terrorists. O'Kelly(2025) observation aligns with Malcolm (2016), who identifies ports as appealing targets for terrorist organizations seeking to fund their operations. That their status is potential choke points for substantial economic activities (O'Kelly, 2025).

Till (2001) noted that the emergence of violent non-state actors has substantial capacity to contest the developing economic order. Yet, the lack of resources has hindered insurgencies from formulating a coherent strategy for targeting their preferred governments. This has led to the exertion of control over marine territories for financial gain. The case of the seizure of the yacht Le Ponant by small boat-borne pirates taking its crew prisoner for ransom in the Gulf of Aden (Joubert, 2013) showed their capability. Approximately fifty percent of global commercial operations occur via the Indian Ocean, which stretches from the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden to South Africa (Keter, 2022). The maritime boundaries in Africa are fraught with disputes and inconsistencies, posing a significant danger to the stability of maritime activities along the continent's shores (Ukeje & Mvomo, 2013). Recently, illicit activities like as drug trafficking are

increasing and likely to bolster transnational criminal networks while incapacitating the youth in coastal nations including Lamu coast.

Africa, in its pursuit of improved maritime security and the advancement of the blue economy, has initiated several key frameworks, including the Djibouti Code (2009) and the Yaoundé Codes of Conduct (2013), which serve as primary legal instruments for maritime security collaboration across the continent. Additionally, Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS), also known as AU 2050 AIMS, characterizes the blue economy as a pivotal aspect of the African Renaissance, as articulated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) (Ukeje & Mvomo, 2013). Nonetheless, maritime security challenges in Africa are mostly ascribed to ineffective governance, exemplified by Somalia, and a deficiency in collaboration and coordination in the execution and enforcement of maritime security measures. This has altered the marine landscape, rendering it less secure and providing terrorist organizations opportunity to utilize the seas for financing their terrestrial activities, the case of Lamu terror activities.

The alleged participation of numerous non-Somali East African nationals in the bombings across African nations indicates that violent extremist groups are effectively recruiting and establishing networks in East Africa via coastal regions, which may have significant policy implications for African security policymakers (Hansen, 2013). Despite the increasing interest of terrorist organizations in the marine sector, there is less study examining its impact on land-based terrorist actions. This study addresses the gap by examining the correlation between marine security methods and terrestrial terrorist activity in Lamu County. Kambere (2012) determined that the infiltration of small arms and light weapons along Kenya's coastline presents a substantial security danger. Coastal Kenya has emerged as a critical battleground in the struggle against Al Qaida and related factions in the Horn of Africa (Ross & Ben-David, 2009). This prompts a transition to a novel counter-terrorism strategy that necessitates more investigation.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Lamu being a major island within the Lamu Archipelago, Alshabaab have been using the sea to access to collaborate with transnational organized crime groups and gets involved in organized crime activities to fund its organization and terror campaigns (Kambere, 2012). Harress (2012) points out that the group smuggles legal commodities such as sugar, trade in illicit firearms, and engages in human trafficking, including recruitment drives in Kenyan Coastal regions.

Despite Kenya adoption of maritime security strategies like; multiagency approach, intelligence and counter intelligence, use of unmanned aerial vehicle, Kenya Navy and formation of Coast Guard to patrol the ocean, much is yet to be realized (Charo, 2021). There still exist maritime insecurity contributing to exploitation of maritime domain by terror groups for financial gain and funding realization of land based terror activities in Lamu County. Thus maritime insecurity continues to affect/ influence management of land based of terror activities.

1.2 Research Objective

To assess the integration of maritime security strategies in the management of land based terror activities in Lamu County

1.3 Research Question

To what extent are maritime security strategies integrated into management of land-based terror activities in Lamu County?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979)

According to this school of thought, a crime can only be committed if three things happen simultaneously. A determined lawbreaker, an ideal victim, and the lack of a competent defender make up the three parts. An ideal victim would be someone who is physical, vulnerable, easy to reach, and highly valued; an offender would be someone who is both inclined to break the law and capable of carrying it out. Along with the ransom that pirates want and the high value of tuna, the West Indian Ocean route is a major commercial activity route that marine criminals target (Potgieter, 2008).

Individuals that engage in piracy do so because they consider it to be a normal part of their lives, as stated in the Routine Activities Theory. The desire to assault a profitable target, even whether the danger is little or not worth it, is what drives pirates, who are criminals. Theorists have also speculated that the Somali terrorist group Al Shabaab may have connections to the pirates. Piracy, armed robbery, and other marine criminal operations were more severe, frequent, and better organized due to Somalia's status as a failed state, which further hindered law enforcement efforts (Pratt *et al.*, 2010).

2.1.2 The securitization theory

Securitization theory posits that threats are formulated by a sequence of assertions that rely on a specific generic framework. This grammar presents an issue, such as piracy, as an existential threat to a certain referent object, such as the nation-state or international trade (Barry & Waever, 1998). Such assertions are only effective when articulated by entities possessing the authority to address security matters and when a pertinent target audience acknowledges these threats. Threat construction typically accompanies a proposal for measures to safeguard the reference object from the threat. Buzan and Waever assert that a defining trait of security is that counter-measures are exceptional and frequently extreme. They may entail military measures commensurate with armed conflict or a substantial reduction of civil liberty.

The study seeks to elucidate securitization theory and its connection to maritime security by identifying various threats within the maritime domain, as outlined in the 2008 UN Secretary General's Report on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, including piracy and armed robbery, illicit trafficking in arms and weapons of mass destruction, narcotics trafficking, human smuggling and trafficking by sea, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. The securitization of these operations necessitates the formulation of strategies to resist them, ultimately contributing to the deterrence of terrorists exploiting the marine domain (Rao, 2010).

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Maritime security Policy and strategy framework : Global and regional

Africa's integrated maritime Strategy (2050) in attaining secured blue economy: The extensive African Maritime domain harbours substantial resources that, when completely utilized, will provide African societies with considerable more assets to bolster their ongoing development initiatives, including food and energy security (African Union, 2016). The development is a crucial basis for the stability and sustainability of peace on the continent. The development process is nearly unattainable without security on both land and offshore, necessitating a strategy to integrate the two. Bueger (2015) elucidates that maritime security encompasses threats within the maritime domain, including inter-state disputes, maritime terrorism, piracy, trafficking of narcotics, human trafficking, illicit arms, illegal and unregulated fishing, and environmental crimes, all of which are addressed in the strategy pertaining to the African Maritime Domain.

The African Union's recent continental initiative, the 2050 AIMS, seeks to restore Africa's marine sector for sustainable development. The plan aims to enhance the quality of life for Africans by implementing sustainable maritime governance in accordance with the blue economy policy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). The 2050 AIMS emphasizes the necessity of addressing sustainable fishing, pollution, and maritime environmental issues within the African Maritime Domain, particularly in the East African Community. The 2050 AIMS regard ocean governance and marine security as crucial components for a sustainable blue economy. Article 8 of the strategy emphasizes the marine aspect of the green economy, pushing Africans, particularly the East African community, to reconsider the management of inland waterways, oceans, and seas through effective maritime governance.

Among the principal aspects of the plan pertinent to the East African Community is the concept of connecting landlocked nations and inland waterways to the blue economy framework (2050 AIMS). The EAC comprises four of Africa's sixteen landlocked nations, as reported by the African Marine Atlas (AMA, 2018). The 2050 plan emphasizes the significance of defined maritime boundaries and urges governments to amicably resolve disputes, enhance the substantiation of claims, and fulfil their duties under UNCLOS and other frameworks (Walker, 2015). The African Maritime Domain 2050 serves as the foundation for any discourse on African maritime security. It serves as a publicly accessible indicator of African maritime objectives, notably in the lack of national and regional strategies (Bhattacharjee, 2014). The 2050 goals delineate the ultimate objective and outline the methods and strategies that, if effectively executed and followed, are anticipated to facilitate substantial wealth generation within a safe, secure, and sustainable African marine economy.

The plan is a significant, yet ambitious, document that outlines the structure, vision, and principles essential for advancing an African marine economy and establishing maritime security. Nonetheless, a significant element conspicuously lacking in 2050 is the influence of the term on endeavours to expand state authority and sovereignty over maritime domains, and its implications for African international relations (Bueger, 2015). The definition is thorough, it encompasses all domains and resources associated with, situated on, beneath, adjacent to, or bordering an African sea, ocean, or lakes, as well as intra-coastal and interior navigable waterways, including all maritime operations, infrastructure, cargo, vessels, and other modes of transportation related to Africa. It also encompasses the atmosphere above the African seas, oceans, lakes, intra-coastal and inland navigable waterways, as well as the electromagnetic spectrum of the oceans. This comprehensive definition aims to encompass all pertinent jurisdictional domains and human activities related to the sea, whether occurring at, in, or beneath its surface. However, the 2050 aImS ambitiously extend to encompass internal or inland waters, including lakes and rivers. This sharply contradicts with standard marine practices and legal frameworks globally, including UNCLOS.

The plan emphasizes the significance of defined maritime boundaries within its vision, although confines itself to a resolute appeal for governments to amicably resolve disputes, enhance scrutiny of claims, and fulfil their

commitments under UNCLOS and other frameworks (Walker, 2015). This delegates the determination of boundary disputes to states, lacking instruction or assurance of compliance with relevant international legal standards. The ultimate objective of the Africa's integrated maritime Strategy 2050 is anticipated to facilitate substantial wealth generation within a safe, secure, and sustainable African marine economy (Bueger, 2015). This maritime strategy overshadows land-based terror activities perspective, the gap that this study seals by examining the nexus between the existing maritime security strategies and management of land-based terror activities.

Legal and judicial effectiveness : The legal issue regarding piracy is uncomplicated when an attack occurs in the territorial waters of a specific nation, executed by its inhabitants against a vessel registered and flagged by that same nation. The sole limitation in these instances is the real capacity of the nation's law enforcement forces, judicial system, and national legislation (Davis & Engerman, 2006). Nevertheless, in the majority of instances pertinent to the international community, the issue is considerably more intricate. This prompts an inquiry into the legal definition of piracy. In addition to the form of the activities, motive is a crucial factor in determining whether an action qualifies as piracy or as maritime terrorism. The UN treaty on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which succeeded the 1958 treaty and has been in effect since 1994, exhibits three limitations common to both accords. Their applicability is restricted to the high seas, despite the prevalence of pirate attacks in territorial waters; they assume the participation of two vessels, thereby excluding incidents involving pirates masquerading as stowaways or mutinous crew members; and they categorically exclude attacks motivated by altruistic purposes (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982). The 1998 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA) partially addresses these issues by encompassing the same acts irrespective of motivation and eliminating the 'two-ship criterion,' thereby applying to specific instances of maritime terrorism.

Despite the enactment of the anti-terrorism statute in Kenya in 2002, along with later modifications, obstacles persist in achieving effective legal deterrence, resulting in extrajudicial tactics and unmitigated money laundering (Kombo, 2018). The courts of Kenya possess the authority to adjudicate piracy offenses perpetrated both within and beyond its jurisdiction, regardless of the nationality of the offenders. The creation of the International Crimes Division at the High Court in 2012 has not improved the adjudication of such cases (Hamad, 2016). Judicial personnel lack sufficient training in international maritime law and other pertinent laws and treaties. Judicial attempts in Kenya aimed at combating piracy need a comprehensive anti-piracy policy and an effective money laundering law to enable the confiscation of funds derived from piracy (Kombo, 2018).

Al Shabaab has successfully enlisted non-Somali ethnic communities in Kenya, rendering its operations more covert and challenging to identify (Chitembwe, 2021). An effective regional or national maritime security strategy and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) advocacy program are absent (IMO, 2010). Despite the enactment of the anti-terrorism law in Kenya in 2002, along with later modifications, there are no effective judicial deterrent convictions, resulting in impunity for offenders and the use of extrajudicial techniques by both security officials. This complicates response to maritime insecurities; which to the study believe contributes to land-based terror activities (Hamad, 2016).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Convergent parallel design with the mixed research approach was used. The design entails the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data, independent analysis of each, and subsequent integration of the findings to achieve a more holistic understanding of the study issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach contextualizes statistical security data with community experiences in Lamu County, yielding robust, actionable insights for policy.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Lamu County. The expansive Boni Forest constitutes roughly 21.4% of the county's land area. Lamu's closeness to Somalia and the Boni Forest renders it an optimal place for Al-Shabaab infiltration. The forest functions both a tactical site for hit-and-run operations and a sanctuary for training. The closeness to Somalia enables the trafficking of illicit weapons perpetrate crimes via the Indian Ocean. Pandanguo Basuba, Boni Forest, Pangani, Gamba, Milihoi, Bargoni, Mpeketoni, Amu, Witu, Kiunga, Faza, Pate, and Siu are regions in Lamu characterized by violent extremism and terrorism. Figure 1. indicates the study area.

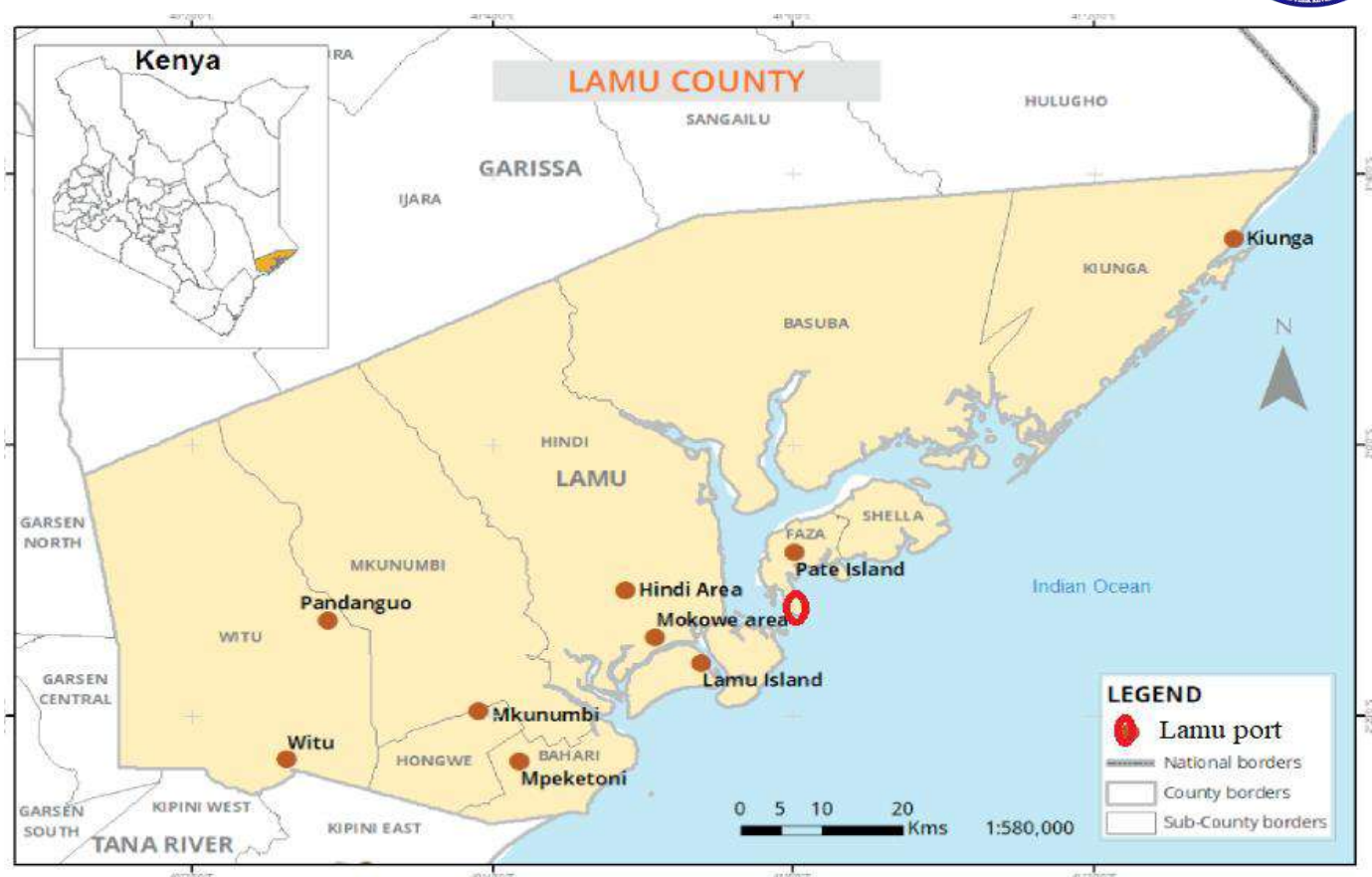


Figure 1
Study Area, Lamu County
Source: GIS Expert, 2026

3.3 Target Population

The entities selected for this study represent a segment of the maritime sector within the Indian Ocean region of Kenya. Some segment of the target population relies directly and heavily on these water bodies for their sources of livelihoods hence any insecurity activities in these marine ecosystems directly affects the economic status. Therefore, the target population of the study was; 966 comprising of; state actors under national government; two Multiagency team (platoon commanders from General Service Unit (GSU) and Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU), Kenya Navy Fleet Commander, Kenya Coast Guard Service Lieutenant Commander, Lamu County Commissioner, Kenya Maritime Authority Manager. Together with County Government officials; Director from ministry of Fisheries, Director from Blue Economy, Kiunga Youth Bunge leader, and two Sub-County Ministry of Education Directors were the Key Informants. The focus group discussions consisted of two groups; one group that is one section of Kenya Maritime Police comprising of 10 officers and second group from Non Governmental Organization, Save Lamu civil society management committee comprising of 12 members and 933 locals comprising of 117 traders from Lamu West Sub-County and 17 from Lamu East Sub-County, 83 fishermen, 177 village elders, 303 youth, 130 women fishmongers, 73 religious leaders from muslim and 33 from Christian, and 7 radicalised youths.

3.4 Sampling and Sample size

The study employed simple random sampling on the unit of analysis that is locals, census on selection of Key Informant participants while purposive sampling method on Focus Group participants to identify and select the respondents who participated in the research reflecting the interpretive paradigm's emphasis on gathering respondents' perspectives and validating them to explore insights and essential matters that are relevant to the study's aims. In alignment with this, the study determined the sample size of respondents utilizing Slovin's formula. The formular provides exact probabilities and avoids assumptions of other tests Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999) articulated as follows;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where: n= is the sample size

N= 966 (Target population)

e= 0.0457 (Desired marginal error)

$$n = \frac{966}{1 + 966 \cdot (0.0457)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{966}{1 + 966 \cdot 0.00208849}$$

$$n = \frac{966}{3.01748} = 320$$

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Primary data was collected using interview guides, focus group discussion, observation protocols, archival documents, questionnaires which were self-administered, as well as secondary data sourced from books, journals, newspapers, magazines, and other pertinent materials. The instruments covered both restricted and open questions to elicit precise responses that extend beyond mere opinions, observations, and insights. To guarantee that all pertinent information regarding the evolving nature of the terrorism threat in Lamu County was comprehensively captured, key informant interviews and focus group discussions was employed. In order to determine the content validity a pilot study was conducted in Mombasa County where the research question and objective formulated earlier against the expected responses with the item elicited from the field.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data was processed and analyzed in alignment with the study's specific objective. Qualitative data was classified and categorized into a series of codes, establishing coding associations based on identifiable qualities of the data to group analogous thoughts, ideas, and opinions. The subsequent phase of analysis involved a meticulous line-by-line scrutiny of all data sources. This entailed methodical analysis of raw data to establish categories of comprehension. Categories were consolidated to form linkages for systematic data interpretation. Consequently, qualitative data was first processed, summarized, and categorized into relevant themes. Content analysis was employed to ascertain the most prevalent topics, their settings, and their interrelations (Patton et al., 2017).

Sentimental analysis was used to record the opinions expressed by respondents concerning events or phenomena through Focus Group Discussion. Data obtained through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions was triangulated to evaluate their efficacy and to arrive at the objective of the study. Conversely, quantitative data, being numeric, underwent descriptive analysis, which involved the statistical description, aggregation, and presentation of the components of interest. Inferential statistics derived from the results was analyzed to draw inferences regarding associations between variables. In this context, data was transformed into numerical representations and analyzed in relation to the study's objectives. The study entailed the analysis of frequencies and percentages. Data analysis and reporting of quantitative data was conducted with aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Researcher complied with stringent ethical standards governing study. Individuals and organizations participating in the study guaranteed confidentiality and privacy, with the assurance that information obtained during the research not to be disclosed to third parties under any circumstances.

The study commenced only after securing authorization and approval from relevant parties and competent authorities. An authorization letter was procured from the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. The researcher acquired a research permission and authorization from the National Commission of Science and Technology (NACOSTI) after Institutional Review Board. With the letter, informants and respondents were solicited with respect and decorum to engage in the research. Letters of request were dispatched to prospective respondents and interviewees to participate in interviews at the designated times and locations. Participants were ensured that their involvement in the study was voluntary. The principles of secrecy and anonymity were upheld. The researcher complied with the regulations regulating access to designated entities and respondents to ensure that the sample size is achieved through official means.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 County and National Government in ensuring safety of Lamu County locals

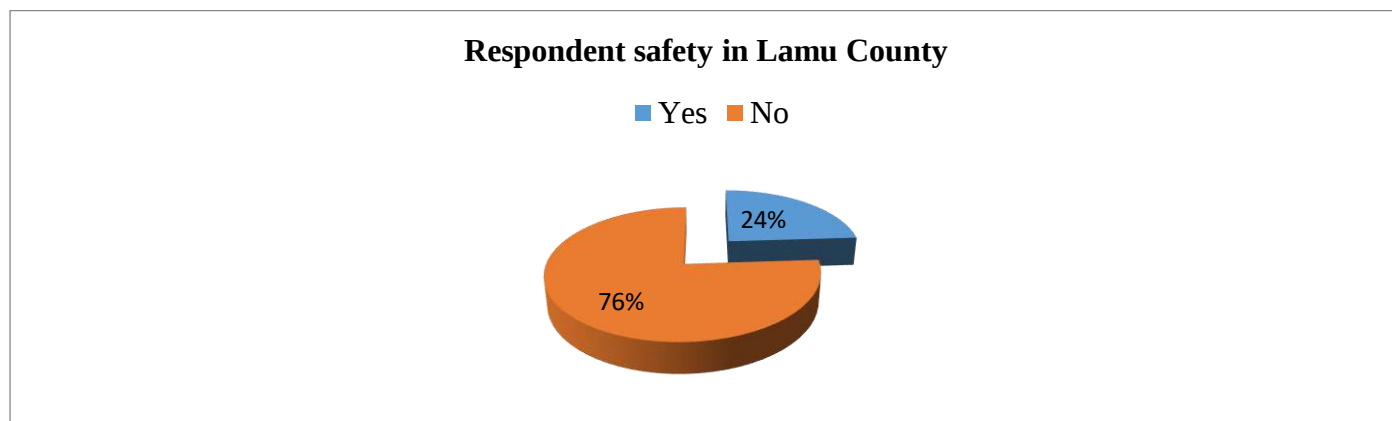


Figure 2

Safety of locals in Lamu County

In regard to respondents safety in Lamu County, figure 2. indicated that majority of the respondents at 74% (237) indicated that they were unsafe while 26% (83) indicated that they were safe. The findings indicated that the both the County and National Government failed to protect the locals from terror activities in Lamu County, implying that they are not safe because terror activities have not been contained in Lamu County due to influence maritime insecurities.

Scholars like Anderson and McKnight (2015) support the study findings indicated that since Kenyan troops entered Somalia in October 2011 to launch a military offensive against Al-Shabaab under Operation Linda Nchi to Protect the Country and up to 2019, it is estimated that Kenya has experienced as many as 600 terrorist attacks. Both the human and economic cost of these attacks has been high an estimated 1,314 fatalities and \$1.2731 million as of 2019. The situation has resulted in Kenya being ranked the 20th most at-risk country to terrorism globally in 2021 (Demirjian, 2022). Most of the terror attacks in Kenya are concentrated in the north-eastern (NE) and coastal counties.

Further, the report from Centre for Human Rights and Policy studies on the trends of violent extremist attacks and arrests in Kenya, January- December 2022 support the findings. The report indicates 36% increase compared to 51 attacks recorded in 2021, Lamu and Mandera recording highest number of fatalities. Mandera recording 37 terror related attacks and 18 fatalities in different incidents. The second highest number of attacks, 21 reported in Lamu which also recorded the highest number of death at 72. As indicated on figure 3.

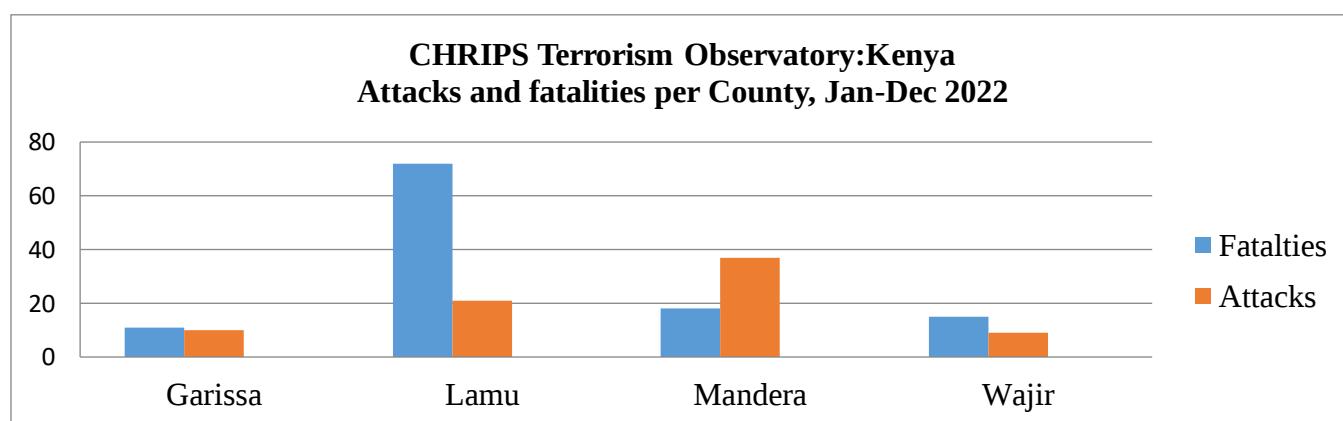


Figure 2

Attacks and fatalities per County, Jan-Dec, 2022

Yusuf (2022) justifies the trend, indicating that threats are faced by the coastal counties of Kenya, partly because of their proximity to Somalia. The Boni Forest, an expansive area that extends from Lamu, Garissa and Tana River counties to Somalia, acts as one of the strategic hideouts and a haven for insurgents. Where, terror incidents led by AS have been particularly concentrated in Lamu County, for instance, in June 2014, AS attacked hotels and a police station in Mpeketoni, killing at least 48 people, attack on Camp Simba, a US military airbase in Lamu's Manda Bay, killing one US serviceman and two contractors, and destroying military equipment (Langat & Handa, 2023). Attracting considerable attention across the globe as it was the first against a major military base in Kenya that led to the deaths of

US nationals and their access in the camp's airstrip with relative ease, despite the presence of US and Kenyan soldiers raised concerns (Leriari, 2019).

According to Demirjian (2022), the threat from violent extremist organisations in Lamu continues to be high, with a series of small-scale attacks being reported, including use of IEDs, small-arms attacks, the torching of houses, and abductions. Ramadhan and Aiyera (2023) highlights the killing of four Al Shabaab militants by Kenya Defence forces (KDF) while getting access into Boni Forest and recovering a rifle, 100 bullets and other paraphernalia in Lamu County. Supported by Imano (2023) findings, the use of IEDs was common in the Al shabaab attacks in the county citing the Camp Simba attack of January 2020 at Manda airstrip done through explosives; Rocket Propelled grenades (RPGs) which created a chance for an ensuing fight between the terrorists and KDF, the scenarios that has made Lamu unsafe.

According to Centre for Human Rights and Policy studies on the trends of violent extremist attacks and arrests in Kenya, January- December 2022 report, explosive devices were employed in 33 terror-related incidents. These devices included rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), bombs, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), primarily used in attacks directed at security officials and critical infrastructure. Firearms were employed in 23 attacks, majorly involving security officials and civilians. There were 6 incidents involving arson reported in 2022.

In two separate attacks targeting civilians in January in Lamu County, suspected Al Shabaab militants attacked villages in Hindi and Mpeketoni, torching several houses in both villages and killing a total of 3 civilians (Langat & Handa, 2023). Still, in Lamu, a machete was used in one incident alongside other weapons when suspected Al Shabaab militants attacked civilians in a village in Witu area. At least one person was reportedly shot, another hacked to death with a machete, while others were burnt alive, and several houses were torched (Agence France Presse, 2022). The type of weapons used in 26 incidents was not specified. Figure 4 shows the Weapons used according to the Centre for Human Rights and Policy studies.

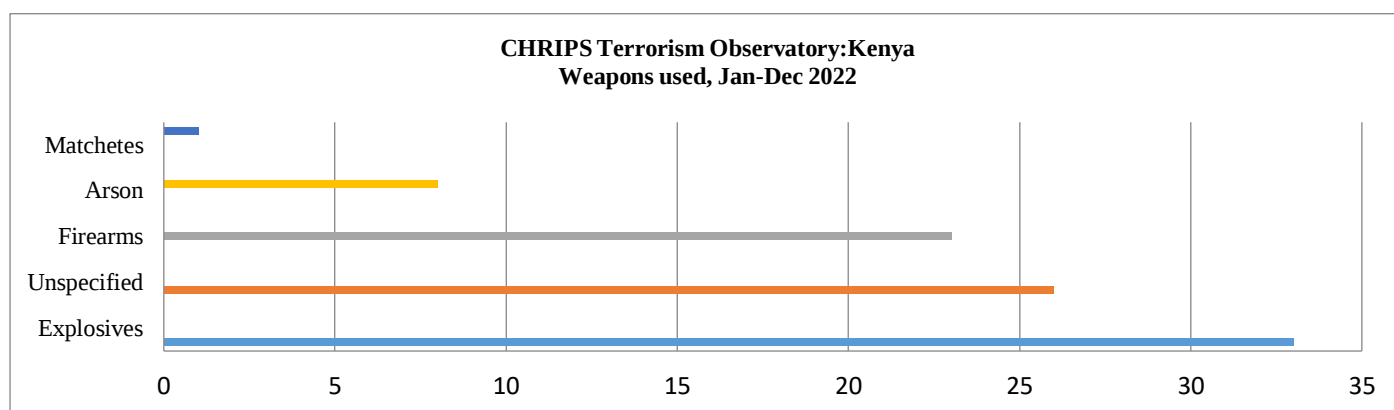


Figure 4
Weapons used, Jan-Dec, 2022



Plate 1
Military Vehicle hit by Rocket Propelled Grenade during patrol in Lamu

Interview with General Service Unit platoon Commander further indicated that;

“We normally experience shootings by the Alshabaab either directed to us or locals indiscriminately. Sometimes we are forced to go for rescue during arsons which are carried out by Alshabaab group.”
(Interview with KI from GSU-Mokowe Camp in Lamu County, 13th August, 2025).

Langat and Handa (2023) further acknowledged that terrorist actions that have occurred in Lamu County in the past have increased personal insecurity in the county, since terrorist assaults have murdered, injured, and displaced many people from their homes. Noting that the previous terrorist activity has caused substantial suffering to the residents of Lamu county, who have had to deal with numerous security operations and curfews as the government works to resist Al-Shabaab attacks leading to implementation of counter-terrorism efforts including deployment of security forces, particularly in Boni Forest, in attempt to track down Al-Shabaab operatives. Despite these counter-terrorism measures, terrorist incidents continue to occur in Lamu County.

However, Leriari (2019) study on countering international terrorism by the military in Africa, by use KDF operation Linda Boni Forest with the main objective to conduct Internal Security operation to flash out armed militants in Boni forest and its environs in support of National Police Service in order to deter and defeat terrorist attacks as well as revive sanity along main supply routes for Kiunga and Lamu, differs with the study findings. According to Leriari (2019), the operation has been a success indicating that KDF has been able to dismantle Al-Shabaab Camps and neutralized of the Al-Shabaab troops in the Boni forest. Ensuring that Kenyans residing in Lamu County are free from Al-Shabaab threats coming from the intense Boni Forest. According to Leriari findings, the intelligence and thorough reconnaissance employed by the KDF made the operation successful in infiltrating the Al-Shabaab modus operandi. Incorporation of local community intelligence in maritime security plans Figure 5 shows incorporation of local community intelligence in maritime security plans

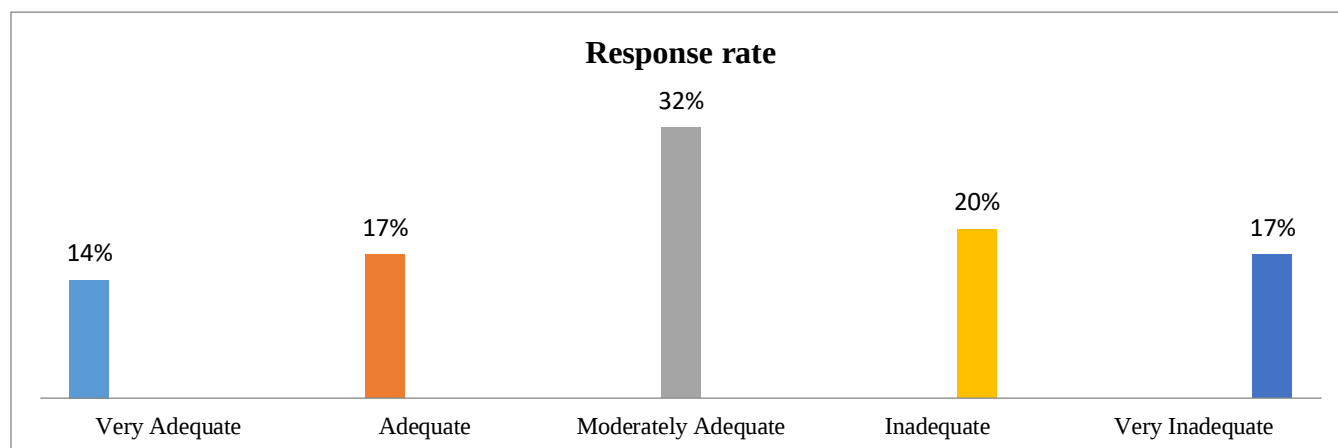


Figure 5: Incorporation of local community intelligence in maritime security plans

Source: Field Data, 2025

In reference to figure 4, majority of respondents 32% (101) indicated that the level of incorporation of local community intelligence in maritime security plans was moderately adequate, meaning not adequately incorporated in maritime security plans. The findings possibly associated to poor coordination among security agencies and community, preventing meaningful engagement. This hinders information sharing, and limits the participation of the community, thereby undermining the community's collective ability to develop and act on intelligence.

Rao (2010) maritime security concern diverge from not only concentrating on issues emanating at sea alone but need to perceive the maritime sector as a domain that only manifests the symptoms of problems that are interlinked to complex networks of states and non-state actor's activities in the hinterland. Rao believes effective management of the coasts can only be achieved by adding civilian dimension to maritime security responsibilities through engaging the coastal communities by formulating an inclusive strategy that co-opts several stakeholders widely recognized by the onshore and offshore maritime agencies. This he believed can further be enhanced by networking coastal communities and stakeholders into an integrated security regime to ensure a steady and secure maritime domain.

Findings concur with Otieno (2020) study on challenges faced by the National Police Service in Counterterrorism in Lamu County, indicating poor police-public relationship was the major challenge in counterterrorism in Lamu County. Interview from his respondents indicated that poor relationship has hindered counterterrorism as the locals don't trust the police, thereby not cooperating nor sharing information on security matters or general intelligence. The locals blame the police for torturing them; arrest them arbitrarily for disrespecting their religion, taking their land and extra judicial killings.

Suggesting need for developing a framework for cooperation with the locals (Saferworld, 2016), a coordinated approach in enhancing good relationship to enable them share information; decision making on potential risk situations, and also better enable them integrate the necessary mechanisms for counterterrorism. Otieno further noted that by

engaging the locals, the police have the opportunity to have a greater reach in Lamu, and avoid being seen as outsiders that disregards faith that so many locals hold, but that has been politicised and used as a pawn for terrorists to garner support for their cause (Saferworld, 2016).

Chitembwe (2021) in support of the findings further indicated that the police do not engages the communities in issues relating to radicalization and countering radicalization. This has affected exchange of information between citizens and the police. That the structural approach to bridge social divides and creates a cooperative relationship between the state and the community makes community policing an element of transformative justice. Noting that police killings of young Muslim men in Lamu areas suspected of terror activities spread fear among parents who then shun any contacts with the police (Chitembwe, 2021). Any community member who could be perceived to be close with the police was regarded a sell-out, and this widened the distance between security agencies and civilians.

Simiyu (2023) indicated that community based policing in the context of Lamu County in Kenya, play a crucial role in enhancing security, since these initiatives are viewed as grassroots approaches that empower local communities, by tailoring policies to the specific needs of the community. According to Cherney (2015), the local community initiatives are instrumental in complementing multiagency security approaches in Lamu County, Kenya, by fostering community engagement and empowering residents to actively contribute to security efforts (Canton, 2015).

Simiyu (2023) highlights the Nyumba Kumi initiative, which was implemented to involve the community or society in preventing terrorist attacks within the nation, which was as a result of community policing, implemented to involve the community or society in preventing terrorist attacks within the nation. The effort has been successful in rural areas, but it is still dormant in urban areas, not even successful in Lamu County.

Badurdeen (2024) study on Cross-border dynamics in terrorist mobility and infiltration along the East African Coastlines to some extent indicated why security agencies don't involve locals' community intelligence in maritime security plans. This highlights the relationship between some of the locals and the criminal networks. That Criminal networks have recruited local fishermen for their knowledge and expertise of the seas and maritime landscapes, such as their knowledge of the location of mangrove shelters or the local surveillance patrols as they provide safe spaces giving ample time for changing boats, stayovers, hiding goods or people, and also for boat refuelling Badurdeen (2024). This involved navigation of the local police's surveillance tactics due to experience of local surveillance using deceptive strategies. For this case, some social networks such as families and friends of those involved in crime or terrorist networks assisted passively or actively in their local tactical operations therefore sharing intelligence with them could affect maritime security operation.

Findings diverge with Leriari (2019) study findings on countering international terrorism by the military in Africa: a case study of the Kenya defence forces. The study observed that majority of the respondents (98.8%) asserted that they collaborated with local community in Counter Terrorism, implying that Kenya Defence Forces collaborated with local community, civil societies and NGOs in fight against terrorism. According to the findings, communities were observed to help in providing information to the government officers and this was found to be essential in curbing terror. That local community leaders in many instances enhanced cooperation with the agencies in counter terrorism through campaigns that reduces extremism and radicalization amongst the people (Hoffman, 2019).

On contrary opinion, Wahome (2024) study on efficacy of populace-centred approach towards curbing terrorism in Kenya and Somalia supports Leriari (2019) argument further indicating that the diversity of participation, including voluntary involvement in community-based policing initiatives and provision of information through anonymous tip lines, demonstrates a multifaceted approach that involves various community members in supporting security agencies. Their active engagement in various collaborative initiatives, including intelligence sharing, joint security drills, community policing forums, awareness campaigns, and financial support, underscores a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to counter-terrorism efforts, reflecting recognition of the need for holistic strategies beyond immediate security concerns, denoting local community intelligence incorporation in maritime security plans.

4.3 Nexus between Lamu County security plans and maritime security strategies

Figure 6 shows the research findings on nexus between Lamu County security plans and maritime security strategies.

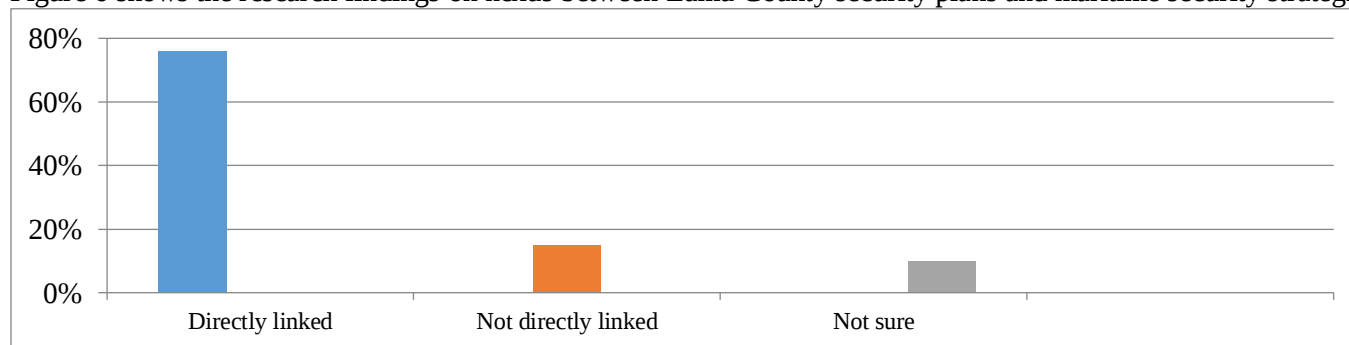


Figure 6: nexus between Lamu County security plans and maritime security strategies

Source: Field Data, 2025

On the alignment between national maritime security strategies, local and Lamu County security plans, majority of the respondents 76% (243) indicated direct link between national maritime security strategies and Lamu County security plans. According to the findings, there was direct link between maritime security strategies and Lamu County security plans, which is believed to be structured and directed on attainment of national security.

According to Langat and Handa (2023), national government has integrating a range of counterterrorism tactics, blending both military and non-military strategies. The formulation of maritime security strategies and county security plans bases on improvement of blue economy and deterrence of external shocks posing threats to the economic security of the county since Lamu County plays a vital role in Kenya's economic landscape. This has led to both local and national authorities, in collaboration with community stakeholders to undertake concerted efforts to develop and implement strategies that bolster economic security (Simiyu, 2023). This strategy reflects a forward-looking approach to economic security management, which is achieved through securing the Indian Ocean from exploitation by pirates.

However, maritime strategies tend to exclude the function of land forces, thus the strategies are all about being able to have control maritime methodologies. There is significant function in the maritime strategies for land forces, predominantly for the interior operations arch in the isles in within the close Kenyan vicinity (Goodwich, 2019). For the case of Kenya Defence Forces, there is existence of land forces that are deployed adjacent to maritime channels in defence of the coastal region; however, there is need for nation's amphibious capability that is limited though adequate to consent on land lodgement of militaries to land in an un-opposed manner (Hoffman, 2019).

4.2 Coordination between County Security Agencies and National Maritime Security agencies

The study sought to measure the level of coordination between county security agencies and national maritime security entities. Findings are captured in figure 7

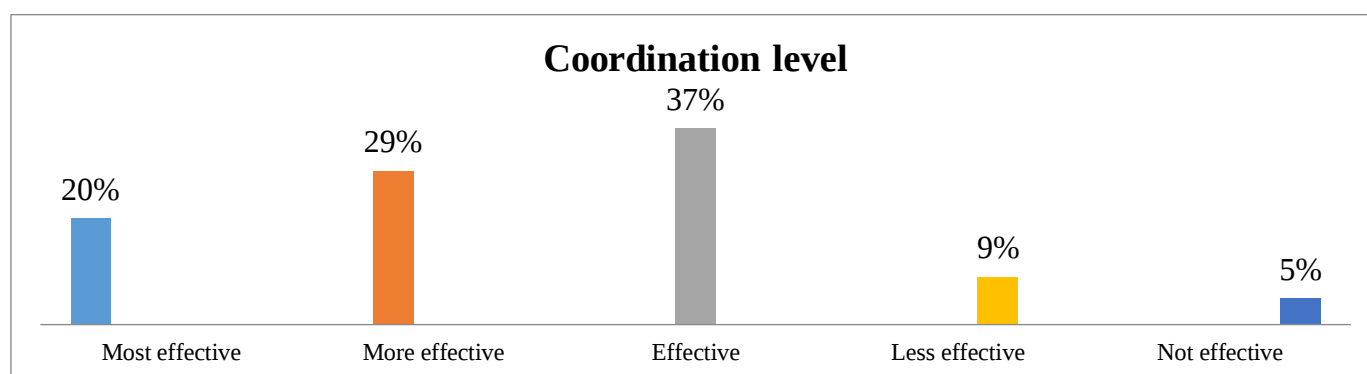


Figure 7: Coordination between county security agencies and national maritime security entities

Source: Field Data, 2025

Out of 320 respondents, majority of the respondents 37% (117) indicated that coordination between county security agencies and national maritime security entities was effective.

Kimonye (2022), on assessing security situation in Lamu County indicated various terror attacks against Kenya by the al-Shabaab clearly exhibited that terrorist activities are among the major threats to peace and security in Kenya, regionally and the rest of the world, which has resulted to the institutionalization of a counter terrorism agency to help in the coordination and planning of ways to eliminate the threats and actions of terror.

To boost coordination between security agencies, former president of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, asked the country's security forces to drop the silo mentality where security forces operated single-handedly independent of other units if the security of the country has to be assured. Since the silo mentality approach had failed mainly when faced by threats brought about by extremism and terrorism around the world, called for adoption of a multi-agency approach to security. This has seen changes in the management of the war on insecurities in Lamu since the incorporation of the multiagency approach to security including county security agencies and national maritime security entities (Tiony, 2013).

However, Njue (2020) contest that the mitigation measures that national and county government have put in place have been deemed to be ineffective and inadequate in addressing the maritime insecurities. The Coastal region has continued to experience unabated and runaway cases of illegal and unsustainable illegal and unregulated fishing and mining of the country's maritime resources. The effects of this have been poor performance of the blue economy of Kenyas Coastal County attributed to weak fisheries laws and regulations and poor implementation of the same.

On the same note, (Hamad, 2016) approved that addressing the problem of IUU and therefore improving the country's blue economy requires strong partnerships and effective collaboration between the national and county government and other essential stakeholders, policy coordination within the national boundaries, and financial resource

commitments. Further solid political will from the national and county governments and other arms of government like the legislation and the judiciary in shielding the blue economy from unsustainable exploitation and enhancing its potential in augmenting the country's overall economy.

Otieno (2020) on the opposite side indicated that there was suspicion between the County government and the national government organs, which undermined operations in counter terrorism. That the county assembly and the county executive were working at cross purpose. Worse still that the Lamu County Constitutional County policing Authority has not been established and structures that would foster cooperation between different levels of government in counter terrorism security are not in place (Otieno, 2020). Alsawalqa and Venter (2022) noted that mismanagement of terrorism and other civil disturbances contributed to lack of trust within the community. Signifying that effective collaborative strategy to handle the issue of extremism caused by Alshabaab has yet to be established among Kenya security agencies. In contrast, national maritime security agencies and county security agencies have devised and executed distinct strategies, involving use of indiscriminate violence against the locals residing in close proximity to Indian Ocean as a mean to address the issue causing distrust between the locals and security agencies.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The County and National Government failed to protect the locals from terror activities at 74% from respondents, which depicted low level of integration. The author opines that this could have been as a result of mistrust between the local administrators and the multiagency security intelligence organs; who received directly the intelligence reports from locals but never shared it. The study therefore concludes that there was low level of integration of maritime security strategies in management of land based terror activities in Lamu County, therefore not being able to protect locals from terror activities.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends; adoption of integrated maritime security strategies like joint naval patrols and information sharing platforms in response to maritime insecurities in areas that are not effectively manned by security agencies.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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