

The Contribution of Ward Security Committees in Preventing Robbery Practices at Daraja, Mbili in Arusha, Tanzania

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Abstract:

This study examined the contribution of ward security committees in preventing robbery practices at Daraja Mbili Ward in Arusha City, Tanzania. The study was guided by the Routine Activity Theory. The study employed an interpretivism research philosophy, a qualitative research approach, and a case study research design. The target population was 16,555 individuals. Purposive sampling technique was used to obtain 13 respondents. Interview guides and document analysis guides were used to collect data. Trustworthiness of data ensured through credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferrability. Thematic analysis technique was used to analyse data. The study found that, respondents recognized the significant contribution of the ward security committee in improving community safety, indicating the importance of effective ward security committees in combating robbery practices despite several key challenges, including inadequate training and communication weaknesses. To enhance the important role of ward security committees, the study recommends regular training sessions, improved communication channels, and increased collaboration with neighborhood watch groups.

Keywords: Contributions, Ward security committees, Robbery practices, Daraja Mbili Ward.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Robbery practices remain a major threat to community safety and individual well-being across the world. These crimes include theft, armed robbery, and burglary, all of which undermine public security and social stability (Samuel, 2019; Ugwuoke et al., 2021). The causes of robbery are linked to unemployment, poverty, inequality, and weak law enforcement systems, as they create environments where criminal behavior can thrive (Shahid, 2023). As a result, many communities continue to experience robbery and related crimes.

Globally, robbery varies in intensity from one region to another. In Canada, there were 8.3 millions of robbery and assault incidents were recorded in 2019, reflecting widespread insecurity (Cotter, 2021). The United States also reported 5.4 millions of robbery cases within the same year, which shows a significant crime levels across urban areas (Morgan & Truman, 2019). In India, robbery and murder accounted for 7% of all reported crimes, highlighting the persistent threat to public safety (Ghara, 2021). In South Africa, street robbery remains widespread, with about 580,000 cases reported in recent years (Yingi et al., 2024). Kenya recorded 9,427 cases of robbery in 2021, especially in urban settings where economic and social pressures are high (Mogire & Birech, 2022). These patterns show a shared challenge that demands coordinated responses to promote public safety. In Tanzania, the country reported increased theft-related offenses by 7.6% in 2023 from 21,767 to 23,414 incidents (Oreku, 2024), indicating a troubling rise in crime rates.

In response, the government of Tanzania has strengthened policing efforts, community policing programs, and public awareness campaigns to improve crime reporting and prevention (Dang, 2019; Mwaihela, 2024). These measures reflect a national commitment to address security challenges.

Ward security committees have emerged as an important part of community-level strategy to prevent robbery and other crimes. Studies show that these committees help improve coordination between local authorities, residents, and law enforcement by sharing information, identifying risk areas, and supporting preventive actions (Zikhali, 2019; Andrew & Issa, 2025). They also encourage community participation through neighborhood watch activities and awareness programs, which enhance vigilance and collective responsibility (Mwaihela, 2024; Mhando, 2024). Despite their importance, gaps remained in how these committees contributes to crime prevention. Therefore, this study examined the contribution of of ward security committees in preventing robbery practices in Arusha City, with a specific focus on Daraja Mbili Ward.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical literature review

The study was guided by Routine Activity Theory proposed by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson in 1979 guided this study (Cohen & Felson, 2015). It explained crime as the meeting of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians in the same place and time (Cohen & Felson, 2015; Reyns, 2025). Its main idea was that crime increased when offenders found vulnerable targets without protection (Henson, 2020). The theory was strong because it gave a simple and practical way to understand how everyday routines and environmental conditions created opportunities for crime. It also offered guidance for developing prevention measures based on improving guardianship and reducing exposure to risk. However, the theory had weaknesses because it did not fully address broader structural factors like poverty, inequality, and social disorder, which also shaped criminal behavior (Andresen, 2021). It focused mainly on immediate interactions and sometimes overlooked deeper social and economic influences on crimes.

Despite its weaknesses, the theory was relevant to this study because it helped to explain how robbery happened at Daraja Mbili Ward when offenders, unprotected targets, and weak guardianship came together. The theory guided the study because ward security committees acted as capable guardians through patrols, community meetings, reporting systems, and collaboration with neighborhood watch groups. Their role was to limit offenders' access to suitable targets by increasing supervision, awareness, and community involvement. Using the theory allowed the study to assess how effective the committees were in reducing robbery by strengthening guardianship and influencing daily activities that shaped crime opportunities.

2.2 Empirical literature review

To address the problem of robbery practices, studies have been conducted worldwide. In Portugal, Guedes et al. (2025) examined property crimes affecting rural farmers and found high victimization rates coupled with low reporting due to distrust in police effectiveness. Using an online survey of 94 farmers, the study identified vehicle theft, robbery, and burglary as common incidents. Although aligned with the present study in addressing community safety, it differed by focusing on individual victimization rather than the broader crime-prevention role of ward security committees.

In Zimbabwe, Manyeruke et al. (2023) explored factors driving livestock theft in rural areas through a mixed-methods design and linear regression modelling. The study emphasized the importance of livestock identification, high-risk species, and community-led mitigation strategies. Its relevance to the current study lay in demonstrating the value of community-based crime prevention initiatives, while the present research examined how ward security committees contributed to robbery prevention within an urban ward context.

In Kenya, Mutegi and Muna (2021) assessed the impact of security meetings on crime control using a descriptive case study design. Their findings showed that regular security meetings improved trust, communication, and cooperation between communities and law enforcement, enhancing crime prevention. This study informed the current research by illustrating the effectiveness of collaborative security initiatives, whereas the present study focused on evaluating the contribution of ward security committees in preventing robbery incidents.

In Tanzania, Andrew and Issa (2025) investigated the role of community policing in crime prevention using a descriptive research design. The findings highlighted the importance of collaborative frameworks and proactive problem-solving in addressing community crimes. While this study demonstrated the effectiveness of community-led safety approaches, the present research narrowed the focus to robbery prevention and examined specific measures used by ward security committees rather than general community-policing functions.

Kassim (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of community security services in preventing armed robbery in Arusha City using a qualitative descriptive design. The study identified major challenges, including resource shortages, corruption, and societal factors that reduced police efficiency. Although relevant for understanding limitations in formal policing, the current study shifted the focus to ward-level administrative committees and assessed how their measures contributed to preventing robbery within the community.

Generally, existing studies demonstrated the value of community participation, policing initiatives, and collaborative security strategies in crime prevention across different contexts. However, limited empirical evidence existed on how ward security committees, as localized administrative structures, specifically contributed to preventing robbery within Tanzanian urban wards. Most previous studies focused on general crime types, rural settings, or formal police functions. This study therefore addressed a gap by examining the contribution of ward security committees in preventing robbery at Daraja Mbili Ward.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an interpretivism research philosophy because it allowed the researcher to understand robbery prevention from the viewpoints and experiences of those directly involved. A qualitative research approach was used since it enabled in-depth exploration of community-based security practices and the contextual realities of Daraja Mbili Ward. A case study research design was chosen because it provided a detailed examination of ward security committees within their real-life setting. The target population consisted of 16,555 individuals, representing the diverse community members affected by robbery. Purposive sampling was applied to select 13 respondents who possessed relevant knowledge and practical experience, making them suitable for generating rich information.

Data was collected using interview guides and document analysis guides to obtain both verbal accounts and written evidence, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of

the topic. Thematic analysis was used because it allowed systematic identification and interpretation of key patterns within the data. Trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability, which strengthened the rigor of the study. Ethical considerations included obtaining a data collection permit, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring voluntary participation to protect respondents' rights.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Presentation of findings

This study presented findings aimed at understanding how the ward security committee influenced safety and robbery prevention within Daraja Mbili Ward. Data was obtained through interviews and document analysis, producing five interconnected themes that reflected the committee's contributions. These themes included improved sense of safety, enhanced community involvement, strengthened identification of suspicious activities, increased awareness of risk areas, and improved reporting of robbery practices.

Theme 1: Improved sense of safety

The study found that the ward security committee's measures contributed to an improved sense of safety among community members. Respondents described patrols and engagement initiatives as helpful in creating visible security presence. However, robbery incidents persisted, and many residents still felt unsafe despite the committee's efforts. The findings indicated that while safety perceptions improved, the measures were not fully adequate, highlighting the need for additional strategies to more effectively address robbery within the ward.

Theme 2: Improved community involvement

The findings showed that community involvement in crime prevention increased through meetings, neighborhood watch programs, and shared initiatives. Respondents reported that these platforms encouraged residents to report suspicious activities and participated actively in collective safety efforts. This involvement strengthened collaboration between citizens and committee members. The results suggested that fostering a participatory and informed community enhanced vigilance and contributed positively to robbery prevention efforts within Daraja Mbili Ward.

Theme 3: Improved identification of suspicious activities

The study revealed that collaboration with neighborhood watch groups supported the identification of suspicious activities. Respondents noted that working together improved daily monitoring and early detection of potential threats. However, limited training, inadequate resources, and constantly changing criminal tactics weakened overall effectiveness. The findings highlighted the importance of providing sufficient support and

adaptive strategies to enable community actors to respond effectively to evolving criminal behaviors within the ward.

Theme 4: Improved awareness of risk areas

The findings showed that the ward security committee enhanced awareness of high-risk areas through regular safety assessments and community briefings. Respondents explained that these efforts helped residents become more alert and cautious when moving through vulnerable locations. Sharing assessment results also strengthened collective understanding of local security challenges. This suggested that proactive engagement and accessible information were essential in empowering community members to recognize and address potential risks more effectively.

Theme 5: Increased reporting of robbery practices

The study found that the committee's measures positively influenced the reporting of robbery incidents within the community. Respondents attributed this improvement to strengthened trust and the availability of reliable reporting channels. Community members became more willing to report suspicious activities, enabling quicker responses to security threats. The results demonstrated that building a culture of trust and communication significantly enhanced community participation in addressing and preventing robbery practices.

Generally, the study found that the ward security committee improved safety at Daraja Mbili Ward by increasing patrols, encouraging community involvement, helping identify suspicious activities, raising awareness of high-risk areas, and strengthening reporting of robbery incidents. However, challenges such as limited resources, insufficient training, and persistent robbery cases reduced their overall effectiveness.

4.2 Discussion of findings

The study found that the committee improved the community's sense of safety, although theft remained a concern. This outcome was likely influenced by limited patrol coverage, insufficient community participation, and weak law enforcement presence. The finding aligned with Routine Activity Theory, which stresses the value of capable guardianship and target hardening (Cohen & Felson, 2015). It also supported Mutegi and Muna (2021), who emphasized community engagement in crime control. Increasing patrols and strengthening community policing could therefore improve safety levels.

The study showed that community meetings and neighborhood watch programs boosted involvement in security activities. Limited awareness and lack of training for watch groups may have restricted full participation. This result aligned with Routine Activity Theory, as active community involvement enhances guardianship and reduces opportunities for crime. It also agreed with Andrew and Issa (2025), who highlighted community-led initiatives in crime prevention. Regular training, awareness campaigns, and strong communication channels could help sustain community involvement.

The study revealed that identifying suspicious activities remained difficult due to limited resources, insufficient training, and changing criminal tactics. These limitations reduced the ability to act as capable guardians, consistent with Routine Activity Theory. The finding aligned with Kassim (2020), who stressed the importance of training and resources for effective security performance. Providing updated training on recognizing suspicious behavior and investing in essential surveillance tools could improve early detection efforts.

The study found that committee activities increased awareness of risk areas through safety assessments and community briefings. Irregular assessments and minimal participation in briefings may have hindered continuous awareness. This result aligned with Routine Activity Theory by strengthening guardianship and reducing target vulnerability. It also supported Issa (2022), who emphasized community engagement in managing security risks. Regular assessments and broader communication strategies could maintain high awareness of risk areas. The study showed that reporting of robbery incidents improved due to better communication channels and increased trust in the committee. This outcome aligned with Routine Activity Theory, as efficient reporting strengthens guardianship and reduces criminal opportunities. The finding also echoed Mhule (2023), who highlighted the role of trust and cooperation in crime reporting. Maintaining transparent communication, strengthening trust-building initiatives, and ensuring quick responses to reports could sustain improvements in reporting practices.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings showed that the ward security committee contributed to improved safety, stronger community involvement, better detection of suspicious activities, greater awareness of risk areas, and increased reporting of robbery incidents. However, gaps such as limited training, inadequate resources, irregular engagement, and evolving criminal tactics reduced the full effectiveness of these efforts.

The study concluded that, the ward security committee played an important role in reducing robbery risks, but its impact was limited by weak surveillance capacity, insufficient training, low community participation, and changing criminal methods. Strengthening guardianship, expanding community engagement, and enhancing reporting structures were essential for improving security outcomes within Daraja Mbili Ward.

The study recommends regular training for committee and watch group members, increasing patrols and improving surveillance in high-risk areas, and strengthening community awareness through meetings, campaigns, and multiple communication channels. It also advised improving reporting systems and building trust to encourage timely information sharing.

Future research should examine how technological tools can support community security efforts, and assess long-term impacts of community-based strategies on reducing

robbery. Further studies could also include larger samples and mixed methods to provide deeper understanding of the factors that strengthen or limit community safety initiatives.

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