

# Family Role In Alleviating Insecurity In Umoja 1 Ward, Embakasi West Sub County, Nairobi County, Kenya

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*Abstract: This study examines the role of family participation in alleviating insecurity in Umoja 1 Ward in Embakasi West Sub County of Nairobi County, Kenya. Specific objectives of the study were to identify the sources of insecurity, find out what roles the family unit could undertake to alleviate insecurity, reviewing conditions that hindered the family unit from playing an effective role in alleviating insecurity and proposing workable strategies that could be put in place to enable the family unit play an effective role in enhancing security in the study location. Umoja 1 Ward experiences insecurity incidences such as robbery with violence, house breaking, mugging and abductions in spite of adopting a strategic plan (2014-2018) that sought to address insecurity in the study area among other issues. The findings of the study revealed lack of security education and formation, exclusion of the family in security matters, laxity by security enforcement agents, unemployment and weakening of the family values constituted sources of insecurity. Secondly, individuals as well as the institutions within the society, including the family had a role to play in alleviating insecurity in Umoja 1 ward; especially through joining Nyumba Kumi, training the children on security matters, putting security measures in their locality, enhancing collaboration with the neighbours on security matters, reporting insecurity incidences to the concerned agents and sharing of vital information with security agents constituted important family unit contribution to security. Rampart security breaches which were reported and never resolved such as robbery with violence, house breaking, muggings and abduction constituted of conditions that hindered the family from playing an effective role in enhancing security. More specifically, ignorance on security matters, lack of employment, high levels of poverty, technological challenges and corruption was noted as critical hindrances to the family ability to contribute towards sustainable security. Further, the study also showed that, civic education, training on security matters, use of social media, use of creative arts, information sharing with the security agents and enhancement of legal frameworks constituted key strategies that could be used through the family unit to contribute towards sustainable security. The study recommend the need for inter- ministerial action plan whereby, the ministry of Education should develop a curriculum on security matters targeting the upper primary classes up to tertiary level, while the ministry of Interior and internal coordination should come up with integrated system of communication that allows for effective and efficient systems of communication and sharing on vital information to security agents. Finally, the government to take a facilitative role in helping the civil societies effectively participates in alleviating insecurity through civic education.*

*Keywords: Family, security, insecurity, stakeholders, sustainable security*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Insecurity in Kenya continues to hit headlines both in the print and electronic media in the recent times. Not a single day

passes in Kenya and the world over without a mention of nerve wrecking attacks mostly perpetuated by criminally inclined and motivated individuals (Ahmed, 2015). What is normally reported is what captures the media limelight as

opposed to what takes place in reality. Violations against sustainable security for sustainable social transformation continue to take place with abandon. On 21<sup>st</sup> September 2013 for instance, Kenya experienced a brutal attack on innocent civilians at West Gate Mall that led to the loss of 67 innocent lives as attested to by Atta-Asamoah (2015). On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2015, a more vicious and unprecedented attack was meted on innocent students at Garissa University in Eastern Kenya whereby, 148 mortal casualties and about 79 injuries were reported. These occurrences received a global uproar and condemnation. Nyambega (2015) opined that, Kenya security dockets spend a fortune in yearly budgetary allocation to address run away insecurity in the country. If this situation continues unabated, our society is headed towards disintegration due to many spheres of life that insecurity situation affects (Botha, 2013; 2014). This study sought to explore the roles that the family unit could undertake to alleviate insecurity.

Insecurity is greatly experienced in major cities such as Nairobi and the story is not different in some informal settlements in the city where a majority of the urban poor call home. Specifically, this paper focuses on family participation as a security agent in alleviating insecurity in Umoja 1 Ward, Embakasi West Sub County, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study seeks to propose the family unit as an important actor in curbing insecurity alongside conventional actors such as the police and other government agencies. Given a chance, the family unit would become a key collaborator with the police and other government agencies through education, reporting of insecurity incidences, besides sharing of vital information touching on security issues. If the family unit remains isolated from security related discourse and practice, it could become a breeding ground for insecurity than a feeder to security for sustainable social transformation. Challenges facing some families such as poverty are known to serve as reasons for some family members engaging in criminality. There is need to empower and support family units through education for them to understand and fit well in the security paradigm in their role as stakeholders for sustainable social transformation.

#### A. THE CONCEPT OF FAMILY

The etymology of the word family is drawn from a Latin word *familia* which means household (Chirozva & Mukamuri, 2018; Ngundo, 2015). A family consists of parents and their children whether dwelling together or not. Further, Magezi (2018) and Ngundo (2015) state that there are different types of families which include: monogamous, extended, nuclear, polygamous, single parent, step family and grand parent family. The American census bureau defined the family as a group of two or more persons related by birth, marriage or adoption and residing together in a household (Strong & Cohen, 2005). According to the Synod Report (2015), the family is defined as the constitutive elements of relations, which included parents, grandparents, children and close relatives. Based on these views, it can be noted that there are many types of families and a family is a group of people living together or a part but linked by birth, adoption or marriage. In other words, family members live and or keep together through various means including staying together and or

keeping constant communication if separated by distance to ensure their wellbeing.

Gaudium et spes, no. 52 and Pope Benedict XVI (2011), describes the family as a school of humanity. The Synod Report (2015) state that, the family is the bearer of the constitutive elements that forms and shapes the character, identity and destiny of its members and the society by extension. Therefore, the researcher opines that the role of this school of life is to form individuals who constitute the society in an integral manner. Socialization and character formation of new members is one of the critical roles that can be played by the family unit.

The African Union (2004) recognized family as the most basic and fundamental unit of the society. In Africa its centrality may be seen from expressions given concerning it in some popular sayings such as, “self-made man does not exist or, one is a person through others”. The family has multiple roles and functions whose uniqueness and indispensability in the society is unquestionable (Chirozva & Mukamuri, 2018). In an African family setup, Ngundo (2015) shows kingship systems as cords that bond individuals to the community life on a day to day basis. The extended family and the council of elders were recognized institutions that intervened on community matters among many communities in Kenya and other parts of Africa (Chirozva & Mukamuri, 2018; Nyanhoga & Amutabi, 2014). The extended family among the Pokot for example, includes the nuclear family, in-laws and other relatives (Masinde, Mohammed & Ruto, 2004). In conclusion all these scholars clearly emphasize the primacy and importance of the family role in bonding family members to the extended family and to the community.

Although the extended family setup is an old African practice, a study by Soko (2015) decried a tendency towards a decreased cohesion of the family life in upbringing of children. He identified the changing lifestyles and individualism as the main chain breaker between the nuclear and extended family particularly with regards to the parenting roles. In addition, Chirozva and Mukamuri (2018) noted that, the modern day African family is shifting from the cultural setup to an increasingly modern setup, which essentially affects the dynamics of relationships between persons in the family and the society in general. This turn of events has an impact on the nature and character of the family members and the society in general. It can be construed that, if the extended family has lost its vital role in upbringing the young people today, formation gap will be a reality that will be reflected in the character formation which effectively impacts on the type of people we have in the society. All the necessary effort should be done to ensure that, the family institution continue with its formative role which includes but not limited to security matters.

The etymology of the word security is drawn from a Latin word ‘*securus*’ which means peace or free from harm from any external threats (Baldwin, 1997, Ngumbi & Appiah, 2015). Baldwin adds that individuals, communities or nations are considered secure by the absence of any harm be it internal or external. Buzan, Waeber and Wilde (1998) describe security as a reality of survival from existential threats by reverent objects which may be state, nation, community or individuals. Collins (2016) asserts that any threat to survival

by any of these reverent objects attracts remedial measures geared towards resolving the outstanding threats. Security in other words is being free from danger or threats from within or without. Insecurity in whichever form upsets such social expectancies.

The concept of human security first came into focus following 1994 Human Development Report (HDR) resolutions that provided a framework for the meaning and understanding of human security (Tadjbakhsh, 2014). Since then, the security discourse was expanded to embrace other dimensions such as economic, political, environmental and social aspects; a reality that would ensure an integral approach to a secure world; where men and women would embrace security in a holistic way since it affects every sphere of their lives (Baldwin, 1997). Security therefore is human centered and is effectively linked to the integral wellbeing of the people and the society.

Urbanization is viewed by many studies as a major challenge to security in major cities globally (Asamoah, 2015; Magezi, 2018; Masinjila, 2015; Pokhariyal & Muthuri, 2003). Degrading conditions for huge populations found in cities often at times force some people to get involved in crime and violence; as may be witnessed through joining criminal gangs and terrorist activities due to a combination of factors such as unemployment, poverty, segregation or marginalisation, frustration and inequality (Ahmed, 2015; Patel & Burkle, 2012). Similarly, Nairobi city is cosmopolitan in nature and draws a huge population from the rural Kenya (rural –urban migrants looking for employment), besides population from the neighboring countries, especially Somali, South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda and Congo which have suffered many political and security challenges for decades. Consequently, crimes such as carjacking, kidnappings, robberies, homicide, mugging and other forms of insecurities are experienced on a daily basis. This study argues that, every person involved in these crimes could be traced from a family. Therefore, the involvement of close relatives such as family members in mitigating further escalation, keeping watch and cautioning their relatives on the dangers of getting into crime constitutes one way of alleviating insecurity challenges in urban centers to a certain degree. This framework of thinking and acting places the family unit at the centre of desired engagement as a security agent which will in turn render credence to claims that, the society has a security paradigm shift that has encompassed all social actors in matters concerning security as opposed to just a few.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Nairobi County, Kenya. Specifically, data was collected in Umoja 1 Ward, Embakasi West Sub County. Nairobi County houses the capital city of Kenya, Nairobi. According to the 2009 census (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2009), the administrative area of Nairobi is 696 km<sup>2</sup> (269 sq. ml). Currently, Nairobi is home to over 6.5 million people and the number keeps growing due to factors such as unemployment among others. Such challenges are precursor to other social ills which include but not limited to high crime rates. Umoja 1 Ward continues to report high

number of insecurity cases including: robbery with violence, mugging, house breaking and abductions among others. In the efforts to deal with the challenges of insecurity, the Embakasi West Sub County (Constituency) drew a five-year strategic plan (2014-2018) which aimed at addressing social issues such as insecurity, education, environment, unemployment and information, communication and technology (ICT) among others (Administration Office, Umoja 1 Ward, July 2, 2018). Additionally, the report shown that the financial allocations availed every financial year was geared towards addressing priority areas that affect the community. Despite efforts by the Sub County, the area crime reports by the police department are still high.

Insecurity in Embakasi Sub County was earmarked as a priority area, a fact that paints it as a reality typified by presence of general criminality which poses a major challenge to the study location. In view of this, the researcher saw the need to come up with variety of strategies that could deal comprehensively with the challenges of insecurity. While prioritizing insecurity as a threat and earmarked it for attention, the researcher felt that the implementation function was still stuck on the usual implementing agency namely; the police which according to them made the whole process lack in the much needed ventilation. The researcher argues that the continued presence of insecurity in the study area demonstrate the need to diversify approaches to address it through other agencies which include but not limited to the family unit. Change of tact is always encouraged when dealing with persistent challenges in society and the employment of multi - agency approach would bring more success through the envisaged unity of purpose.

According to 2009 census there were 50,739 people in Umoja 1 Ward. Stratified and simple random sampling methods (Cresswell, 2014; Strong & Cohen, 2005) were employed to arrive at the total number of study participants. From three hundred and seventy-three (373) family units in Umoja 1 ward of Embakasi West Sub County, 180 individuals aged 18 years and above were recruited to take part in the study. To arrive at the 180 participants, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling size table for determining sample size for a known population was used. Two major data collection tools were used in this study including questionnaires and focus group discussion interviews (Cohen, 2000; Mvumbi & Ngumbi, 2015). One hundred and fifty (150) participants were supplied with questionnaires with a return rate of 92% (139) while the other 30 respondents were put into three focus group discussions, of which 25 of them representing 70% of the respondents turned up for the focus group discussion sessions.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON ROLES OF THE FAMILY IN ALLEVIATING INSECURITY

In order to understand the study participants' views on whether or not the family unit plays any important role in alleviating insecurity in Umoja 1 Ward, the researcher administered a questionnaire (Likert scale questions) with several statements. The respondents were required to rate

given security statements on a range of 1 to 5 in order of; 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree. This was with a view of collating the respondents' views on who should be responsible for Security in Umoja 1 Ward. The findings showed that, 80% of the respondents strongly agreed that security is an individual's responsibility, 72% viewed it as a family unit's responsibility, 80% viewed it as a government agencies' responsibility, and 60% viewed it as a church and other social institutions' responsibility to offer security solutions. An overwhelming majority - 95% of the respondents strongly disagreed that vigilante groups had any responsibility in security matters.

Participants were requested to give their preferred choice of the Social institutions that could offer security solutions in Umoja 1 Ward. The findings showed that while the individual, the family unit, government agencies, church and other social institutions were strongly preferred as agencies that could protract security solutions, vigilante groups were not preferred at all. From these results, it was clear that the respondents preferred options should synergize efforts to ensure stronger security interventions in Umoja 1 Ward on the one hand. On the other, vigilante groups singled out including *Gaza* and *Pilipili Hoho* in Umoja 1 Ward were viewed as negative, destructive and wanton and therefore should be eradicated. When asked to explain why the vigilante groups were not their preferred choice of delivering security services, the response was that they are exploitative, illegal and that they escalate insecurity in the study area rather than enhancing it.

Three focus group discussions of 10 members each named FGD # 1, FGD # 2, and FGD # 3 were contacted between October 2nd and 5th, 2018. The three were subjected to a set of interview questions as far as security matters were concerned in Umoja 1 Ward. Participants from FGD #2, (October 2, 2018) strongly felt that government agents like the police were better placed to enhance security since they had constitutional mandate. According to FGD #2 members, the police have well established communication networks between the residents and other social actors such as the Church and non-governmental organizations working for social welfare in Umoja 1 Ward. Therefore, the respondents felt that the police had a great chance, the right tools and framework of improving the security situation in the locality but in collaboration with the family unit which is the bedrock of many insecurity actors.

Studies show that involving the family unit in matters security has its own share of challenges especially if reporting an errant family member to authorities which could make them convicts. For example, FGD #2, (October 2, 2018) pointed out that parents and relatives at times made the family unit lame in helping eradicate insecurity when they adopt protective stance towards their relations who engage in acts contrary to the law. As a stark reality that may affect the fruitfulness of the family as a reliable collaborator, education and support to the family unit was proposed as key. This study suggests that, security factors such as, policy makers, security agents like the police and non-governmental agencies, lobby and peer groups within the society should engage in a forthright public education in support to the family so as to undertake its appropriate contribution in this regard. The public education should cover areas formative topics, lobby,

support and empower the family unit to be focused on security within their locality and learn to work in solidarity with other groups towards attaining sustainable security. In addition, the family unit in Umoja 1 Ward should be given specific roles to play in order to alleviate insecurity.

Apart from being influenced by their family members, Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2012) and Tahiri and Grossman (2013) states that young people have a high possibility of being lured into radical groups and violent extremism by criminal gangs who offer them incentives to commit criminal acts. According to Sikkens, San, Siekelink and winter (2017), a majority of these youths are either in school, college and at home under their parents' or guardian's care because they are not yet economically independent. Such a scenario locates the family unit as the timely and convenient intervener in countering those who would vulnerably fall prey to orchestrators and escalators of insecurity.

## B. PROPOSED ROLES BY FAMILY UNITS IN ALLEVIATING INSECURITY

The respondents strongly set the proposal that, all family units in their Ward should adopt the following proactive practices: Joining the *Nyumba Kumi* groups, train their children on security matters, put security measures in their families, enhance collaboration with neighbors on security, report insecurity incidences, and share vital information with the security agents. In the FGD #2 (October 2, 2018), they suggested that families should share vital information concerning security with the police and other stakeholders. However, they felt that voluntary sharing of this vital information had many impediments chiefly because, there was no appropriate information sharing mechanisms that would direct proper flow of information from the source to those accountable of processing and acting on such information. A participant from FGD #2 (October 2, 2018), lamented about an experience in which an insecurity incident he reported involving being robbed by criminals ridding on a motor bike to the police. After reporting, the police asked him to provide a list of people he suspected robbed him. According to him, he felt a sense of double loss and victimization.

Although the family unit was fronted as a great help towards arresting insecurity in the study area, corruption within the security sector was pointed out as a vitiating factor to voluntary efforts especially when it comes to secrets keeping. The group feedback decried collusion that takes place between offenders and some security officials. For example, a youth (FGD #3), wondered loudly "How comes that we know where the criminal gangs operate from and the police do not? They must be birds of the same feathers." (October 5, 2018). This assertion clearly showed the possibility of lack of trust between the residents and the security agents who carry out security duties in their area.

Atta-Asamoah (2015) agrees with this study's findings that security providers could fail to arrest insecurity when he observes that, gangs are employed by political and economic elites to intimidate particular sections of the population for political or economic ends. Further, he asserts that gangs operate in various parts of the city or country and they are vulnerable to the main insurgent groups. However, their

activities ultimately serve the same final purpose, mainly; disruption of essential wellbeing of the society.

In order to address lack of trust between the security providers and the residents in Umoja 1 Ward, this study suggest the involvement of more stakeholder especially families to make the services more inclusive and collaborative. When more people or groups are involved, there will be no one to blame when things go wrong because everyone is charged with the task of providing security. The research suggests that, there should be a synergy within the whole security ecosystem that allows each system to make it worthwhile contribution. Family units in this regard are fronted to form part of the envisaged security ecosystem. More than often, parents and relatives are occasionally in complete denial when their relatives are associated with crime. It is clear that parental influence has an impact on the youth positively or negatively (Magezi, 2018; Miguda, 2016; Sikkens, San, Siekelinck & Winter, 2017). Therefore, influence imparted by parents or other relations in the family to children and young adults as explained through Social Learning Theory (SLT) advocated by Albert Bandura (Papalia, Feldman & Martorell, 2012; Nabavi, 2012) should not be taken lightly. Other scholars have shown that relatives are charged with personality development and behavior modelling of their kinsmen (Newman & Newman, 2007). Consequently, family members (parents and relatives) should be held accountable whenever their kinsmen get involved in crime or are members of a criminal gangs because either they condone the vice or fail to impart proper guidance and mentorship which is an important aspect of social living.

#### C. REASONS FOR FAMILY UNITS AND OTHER SECURITY STAKEHOLDERS WORKING TOGETHER

When this study advocates for synergy and engaging in efforts that help in alleviating insecurity in Umoja 1 Ward, it should not be viewed as a farfetched idea since collaborative efforts often a times lead to tenable solutions. Family as a stakeholder deserves to be involved in security decision making forums because they have the potential of providing ideas that can help create potential solutions. Frequently, stakeholders drawn from varying backgrounds have the ability to look at issues comprehensively from which security field can immensely benefit.

Today, security issues are more complicated than several years back and should not be left at the hands of the security agencies only for better results. In support of involving other stakeholders in security matters; Hussein, Gnisci and Wanjiru (2004) hold that issues of security are no longer the preserve of defense and humanitarian actors. Their views are a departure from the traditional approach to security whereby, military activities, the control of military hardware, action against armed groups and their networks were seen as the only methods of dealing with insecurity. The use of coercive force in today's society cannot guarantee security especially in the face of ideologically instigated criminality such as terrorism. In support of this view, Brzoka (2003) proposes a shift from traditional understanding of security interventions that primarily concerned themselves with the state use of coercive

instruments to promote and achieve regime stability. In their stead he proposed creation of sustaining structures which anchor and sustain security; of which family unit is indispensable according the argument of the researcher who strongly advocates for the family unit involvement in securitization efforts. Assigning the family an active role as new players in security matters is a sure way of enhancing security.

Effective security services in a locality or country should involve the whole social ecosystem rather than a small group of people. Bhuli, Fink and Zeiger (2014) and Hussein, Gnisci, and Wanjiru (2004) observes that, there is a shift from the traditional view on security whereby, the phenomena is being viewed as a system which concern the whole social ecosystem. This means that, what affects the society affects the family and vice versa. In this view, the researcher is of the opinion that, the proposition of forsaking security matters in the hands of the just armed agents is no longer desirable due to the ever changing motivations by which, insecurity situations occur. Since the family is part of the social ecosystem, it should be used effectively to alleviate insecurity in our society. Failing to involve the family in today's security matters is failing to tap on the immense potential that the family unit predisposes for use by those involved in security welfare of the society.

Tahiri and Grossman (2013) opine that radicalizing groups easily target directionless youth who are obvious insecurity escalators and perpetrators. Their inability to make mature and sound decisions is instigated by multiple social and economical factors such as peer pressure and unemployment. Such youth are also vulnerable to political machinations and false promises particularly during political campaign seasons. In an event that there is no recourse, the aggrieved youths, easily adopt to anyone who promises them whatever hope. In such situations, family support is important in enlightening the youth who are vulnerable to blind persuasions and association.

Botha (2014), Miguda (2016) and Masinjila (2015) conclude that if steps are not taken to protect the Kenyan youth, the country will have to contend with decadence and rampart insecurity. This realization challenged the author to seek and advocate for security interventions that considered the family unit as an important actor in security concerns within the society. Interventions by the family unit and the government agencies combined have the ability to close the gaps that perpetrators exploit to escalate insecurity in the country.

Magezi (2018), Pokhariyal and Muthuri (2003) are in agreement with this study finding when they say, increase in crime and related insecurity in cities like Nairobi could be linked to urbanization, laxity on the part of security providers, poverty, influx of refugees, existence of small arms, street children and street families. In agreement with these views, the Nairobi Police Crime Survey Report (2001) noted that lack of street lighting, laziness among other factors aggravate the situation. Collins (2016) point out that, the greatest impediment in dealing with insecurity arises when people adopt a complacent approach to security as opposed to dynamic interventions informed by ever mutating character of insecurity manifestation. However, involvement of the family

unit in matters security should be applied with caution through careful training since involvement of the family as a critical contributor to alleviation of insecurity for sustainable social transformation cannot be over emphasized.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper is an exploration of how families could be involved in alleviating insecurity in Umoja 1 Ward of Embakasi Sub-county, Nairobi County, Kenya. After the introduction, the paper has focused on unpacking the key concepts - family and security before looking at the study methodology. The next sections examined the study results and discussion involving: participants' views on role of family in alleviating insecurity, proposed roles by family units in security matters, reasons for family units and security stakeholders working together before drawing some conclusive remarks.

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