The Pinch in the Transport Industry in the NEP of Kenya: The Struggles from Al-Shabaab Terrorist Activities

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Abstract

Mandera as one of the towns in the NEP of Kenya was a strategic position between the two regions, however, terror activities have reduced the level of socio-economic development that the region would have benefited from in a peaceful era. However, the emergence and persistent attacks by Al-Shabaab creates an empirical gap concerning the influence of terrorist activities on the socio-economic development of the NEP region, specifically in road transport industry. Thus, the study purpose was to analyze the influence of al-Shabab terrorist activities on the socio-economic development of NEP region of Kenya. The study was guided by a research question; In what ways have Al-Shabaab terrorist activities influenced the road transport industry in Mandera town of Mandera County? The study utilized the descriptive design with a target population of 159,638, being residents of Mandera Town. The study used stratified sampling to select 272 residents for questionnaire filling. The collected data was analyzed descriptively and presented using figures. The study found that road transport industry experienced substantial disruptions and challenges resulting from Al-Shabaab attacks. The road transport industry experienced increased transportation charges, decreased availability of buses, reduced passenger numbers, and heightened scrutiny of travel documents due to the threats and incidents caused by Al-Shabaab. The study concluded that Al-Shabaab terrorist activities have a significant negative impact on the socio-economic development of NEP region. The study recommends the strengthening of the security measures by the Ministry of Interior: Enhance security measures along key transport routes, at roadblocks, and at border crossings to minimize the risk of Al-Shabaab attacks and to ensure the safety of travelers, transport operators, and livestock traders.

Key words: Al-Shabaab, Socio-Economic Development Terrorism, Terrorist Activities, Transport Industry

Introduction

Terrorism is a complex topic that has multifaceted dimensions of definition and comprehension. There is widespread agreement on its main characteristics, which include targeted attacks on random targets, a desire to intimidate governments and entire populations, and a desire to gain publicity for a specific cause. Terrorism is also widely acknowledged to be much more than those qualities. Some types of terrorism aren't even driven by politics. Part of the difficulties in identifying or comprehending terrorism stems from the fact that terrorism is a dynamic activity. Terrorism takes on a variety of forms, and those forms are always changing, often in unexpected ways. For example, a decade ago, neither the phrase nor the behavior of cyberterrorism was considered. Finally, we can be confident that terrorism is a permanent element of our times and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.

According to Neagu (2017), the production of a terrorist attack in a nation that results in more fatalities and injuries lowers the demand for travel packages and airline tickets, which ultimately results in the postponement or cancellation of meetings and conferences that were scheduled to take place there. According to the Global Terrorism Index, the North African countries most hit by terrorist acts in 2016 were Egypt and Libya, which were rated 9th and 10th in a list of 164 countries, respectively, while Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco were ranked 35th, 42nd, and 95th. Tourists' safety is a serious concern. Most tourists will seek out areas that are safe and secure, avoiding those that have been afflicted by terrorism (Liu & Pratt, 2017).

The majority of attacks in Egypt have targeted security personnel, their locations, governmental structures, tourists, and hijacked aircraft. In October 2015, an airplane with 224 passengers on board was allegedly hijacked by the Islamic State's Sinai Province, which led to the plane's crash in Northern Sinai and the deaths of everyone on board. Following the incident, all flights to the Red Sea resort have been cancelled in Russia and the United Kingdom. Three months later, in January 2016 at a hotel in the Egyptian resort of Hurghada, two Islamic extremists attacked three foreign tourists (Neagu, 2017).

Al Shabaab, a Somali rebel and terrorist group that emerged in the middle of the 2000s amid a stateless country, is also known as Harakat Al Shabaab Al Mujahidin or Mujahidin Youth Movement. The group was founded by a section of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC-militant), which seized control of Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, in 2006. Ethiopia acted militarily to remove the UIC after assisting Somalia's budding transitional government. Al Shabaab recruited and gained support by taking advantage of historical anti-Ethiopian sentiment among Somalis, particularly among the Somali diaspora in the United States (CSR, 2020).

The UN Panel of Experts on Somalia (2020) reports that the combined efforts of the Somali National Army, AMISOM's military operations, and heightened international air strikes have led to territorial losses for Al-Shabaab, including the significant stronghold of Janale in Lower Shabelle in March 2020. Despite these military advancements, the group still possesses the capability to produce and execute improvised explosive device attacks, although the number of large-scale complex attacks has decreased in 2020 compared to 2019. Al-Shabaab continues its campaign of intimidation, involving murders and executions, which target notable individuals and communities. The group also remains adept at exploiting security vulnerabilities as they arise.

A study conducted by James (2020) found out that Mandera County, in Kenya's North Eastern region, has a border with war-torn Somalia. As a result of its porous border, it faces considerable security threats in comparison to other counties in the country. Because terrorist elements exist in Somalia, these same elements might easily wreak havoc on Mandera County. Recently, the country has encountered security challenges including hijackings, increased radicalization, and violent extremism. On November 22, 2014, a bus heading to Mandera was hijacked by Al-Shabaab terrorists, resulting in the deaths of 28 passengers, while an armed attack on a quarry on December 2 killed 36 workers. Numerous similar incidents have occurred in Mandera since then, prompting concerns about the consequences of police policy changes on their capacity to prevent and address terrorist actions (James, 2020).

According to the County Government of Mandera (2021), livestock production plays a vital socioeconomic significance in the county. Eid (2014) emphasizes that livestock marketing is an important part of pastoral and agro-pastoral communities' livelihood systems in the Horn of Africa. Livestock trade to the Arabian Peninsula has long been a major outlet for livestock farmers in the region. Therefore, the county stands to lose a lot in terms of livelihood disruption from the constant attacks and activities of Al-Shabaab in the region.

Mandera was hosting several international organizations and local NGOs working in Somalia, particularly the neighboring Gedo region and Bay and Bakul regions. These were sub-offices connecting field offices in Mandera and the regional office in Nairobi. Nairobi, home to international diplomats and humanitarian organizations was serving the whole of Somalia including the self-autonomous Somaliland and Puntland among all the other parts of the country. Mandera was a strategic position between the two regions, however, terror activities have reduced the level of socio-economic development that the region would have benefited from in a peaceful era.

Mohamed (2017) conducted a study on the impact of terrorism on socioeconomic development, with a case study focusing on the North Eastern Region, while Chepkenen, Ochieng, and Odek (2018) examined the economic effects of improvised explosive device (IED) attacks on the livelihoods of the people of Mandera East Sub County, Mandera County, Kenya. However, there is an existing empirical gap concerning the influence of terrorist activities on the socio-economic development of Garissa County, specifically in road transport industry. Thus, the study purpose was to analyze the influence of al-Shabab terrorist activities on the socio-economic

development of Mandera Town, Mandera County. The study was guided by a research question; In what ways have Al-Shabaab terrorist activities influenced the road transport industry in Mandera town of Mandera County?

Literature Review

According to JCAT (2019), terrorists have historically targeted buses, mainly overseas, because of the possibility of many victims, perceived lack of protection, and predictability of bus timetables and routes, The attacks frequently did not necessitate extensive training, and were carried out with little forethought or weaponry. Terrorists attack buses using a range of tactics, techniques, and procedures, including small arms and edged weapons both inside and outside the bus, as well as IEDs hidden within or attached to the vehicle and along its route. In addition, hijacking a bus and its passengers has been employed in other countries to enable the bus to be used in a vehicle-ramming attack. When a 16-passenger tourist bus drove by a hidden roadside IED in Giza, Egypt, in December 2018, it exploded, killing four passengers.

Maruf and Joseph (2018) claim that the first Al-Shabaab attacks on Kenya occurred when grenades were thrown into a pub and a bus stop in Nairobi, killing at least six people. An Al-Shabaab member who was a suspect in the attacks was detained by Kenyan authorities. Following that, Kenya experienced an increase in grenade and shooting assaults, with the primary targets being bus terminals. A leaked report prepared by Kenya's National Intelligence Service (NIS) for top Kenyan officials said that Sheikh Hassaan Mahat, a pro-Shabaab imam in Eastleigh, was using criminals to throw bombs at public transport vehicles.

Karimi and Fombu (2014) reported that in 2014, Islamist terrorists attacked a bus in Kenya, killing at least 28 people who could not recite Quran verses, as per authorities. The bus, carrying 60 passengers, was en route from Mandera, close to the Somali border, to Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. Al-Shabaab took responsibility for the attack. In another attack in Mandera reported by Reuters (2017), a bus was sprayed bullets by Al-Shabaab killing two people but their efforts to identify non-locals did not bear fruit as locals refused to identify non-locals but gave them hijabs to cover themselves (Reuters, 2015b).

In December 2019, Al-Shabaab militants attacked a Medina Bus en route to Mandera and separated locals from non-locals. They killed up to 8 non-locals before letting the others proceed with their journey. They also looted belongings, food, and money. In another incident ICC (2020) reported that a bus traveling from Mandera in northeast Kenya to Nairobi, Kenya's capital, was assaulted by gunmen thought to be members of the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab. As the passenger bus was traveling crossing a bridge, the shooters assaulted it. They attempted to stop the bus by waving it down, but the driver refused to do so. The militants opened fire on the bus when they realized it was not going to stop. Seven passengers on the bus were seriously hurt because of the intermittent firing. The bus was also said to have broken down because of the gunfire. The militants boarded the broken-down bus, according to local police accounts, and attempted to divide all the passengers by faith. They discovered, however, that everyone aboard the bus was a Somali Muslim from the area. They grew enraged at the bus driver for failing to halt. Ramos (2015) reports that a journey to Mandera on road is highly risky that most buses travel with an escort from police vehicles.

According to Reuters (2015a), a bomb exploded aboard a bus carrying United Nations workers on Monday, killing at least nine people. The bus was passing through Garowe, Puntland's city in northern Somalia. Following a bus bombing in Eastleigh in November that killed at least seven people, enraged mobs of young Kenyans stormed and plundered Somali-owned homes and businesses. Eastleigh people were then subjected to rape, beatings, torture, theft, and extortion because of the police's actions. Thousands of residents had fled the area by the time the campaign ended in early 2013 (Maruf & Joseph, 2018).

This information provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the influence of Al-Shabaab terrorist activities on the road transport industry in Mandera Town, Mandera County. The literature highlights a range of tactics and methods used by Al-Shabaab in their attacks on buses, including small arms and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The literature also highlights the risks associated with traveling by bus in Mandera and other areas affected by Al-Shabaab, including the possibility of being attacked, hijacked, or separated based on religion. The literature also provides evidence of the impact of Al-Shabaab attacks on the road transport industry in Mandera, including the killing of passengers, theft of belongings, and breakdown of buses. Additionally, the literature highlights the risks associated with traveling by bus in Mandera, including the need for police escorts and the possibility of being targeted by Al-Shabaab militants.

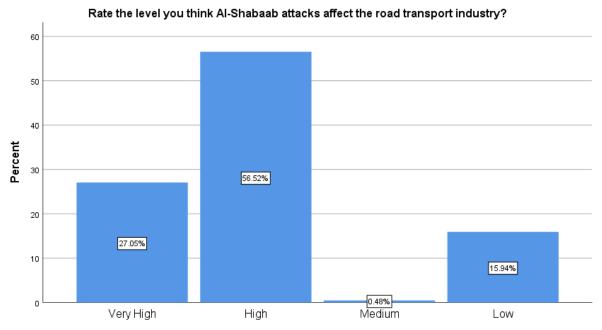
In conclusion, the literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the influence of Al-Shabaab terrorist activities on the road transport industry in Mandera Town, Mandera County. The literature highlights the range of tactics and methods used by Al-Shabaab in their attacks on buses and the impact of these attacks on the road transport industry, including the risks associated with traveling by bus in Mandera. The literature also provides evidence of the need for further research to better understand the impact of Al-Shabaab activities on the road transport industry in Mandera and to identify potential solutions to mitigate these risks.

Methodology

The study utilized the descriptive design thereby collecting both qualitative and quantitative data using questionnaires and observation. The target population was 159,638, being residents of Mandera Town as well as local leaders. The study used stratified random sampling to obtain a sample of respondents from the total population. The questionnaire was the primary data collection instrument containing structures that were administered to the residents of Mandera Town. For purposes of data analysis, the researcher used descriptive, using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation to draw conclusions on the influence of Al-Shabaab activities in the socio-economic development of NEP region of Kenya.

Results

The study analyzed the influence of Al-Shabaab terrorist activities on the road transport industry in Mandera Town, Mandera County. The research questionnaire had a 5-point Likert scale question that the respondents were asked to rate. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in Figure 1.



Rate the level you think Al-Shabaab attacks affect the road transport industry?

Figure 1 Level that Al-Shabaab attacks affect the road industry

Figure 1 shows that when respondents were asked to rate the level they think Al-Shabaab attacks affect the road transport industry, 27.05% selected very high, 56.52% selected high, 0.48% selected medium while 15.94% selected low. The majority (56.52%) of

the respondents (over half) chose 'high' as the level of impact. This indicates that they also consider Al-Shabaab attacks to be a serious concern for the road transport industry, but perhaps not as severe as the 'very high' category. More than a quarter (27.05%) of the respondents believe that Al-Shabaab attacks have a very high impact on the road transport industry. This suggests that these respondents see these attacks as a significant and potentially disruptive threat to the industry. A negligible percentage (0.48%) of respondents rated the impact as medium. This small group may not perceive the attacks to be as significant of a threat as others, but they still acknowledge some level of influence on the road transport industry. Nearly 16% of respondents chose 'low' as the level of impact.

This group might believe that Al-Shabaab attacks have a limited or indirect influence on the road transport industry, or that the industry can cope with the challenges posed by such attacks. The results indicate that most respondents (83.57%) perceive Al-Shabaab attacks to have a substantial negative impact on the road transport industry.

In a different inquiry, the respondents were asked to indicate whether there had been increase in transport charge due to Al-Shabaab attacks. The data was analyzed and presented in Figure 2.

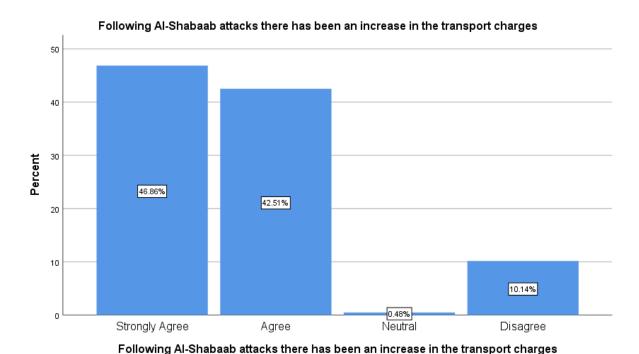
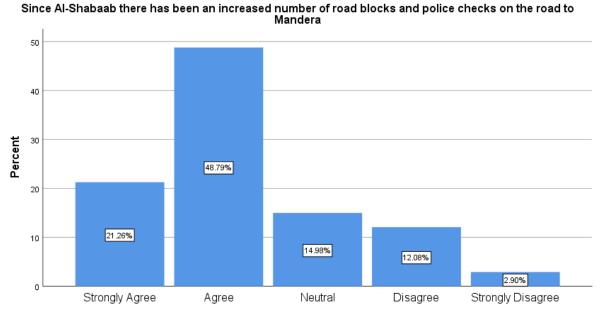


Figure 2 Al Shabab Attacks and Increase in Transport Charges

Figure 2 shows that when asked following Al-Shabaab attacks there has been an increase in the transport charges like 46.86% selected strongly agree, 42.51% selected agree, 0.48% selected neutral while 10.14 selected disagree. Nearly half of the respondents that is 46.86% strongly agree that Al-Shabaab attacks have led to an increase in transport charges. This suggests that these respondents perceive a direct and significant correlation between the attacks and higher transportation costs.

A substantial proportion of the respondents (just over 42%) agree that transport charges have increased following the attacks, but perhaps not as forcefully as those who strongly agree. This group still acknowledges the link between the attacks and rising transportation costs, but they might see it as a less pronounced effect. A negligible percentage of respondents selected neutral, indicating that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement. This small group may not have enough information or a strong opinion on the matter. About 10% of respondents disagree with the statement, suggesting that they do not believe Al-Shabaab attacks have led to an increase in transport charges. The results indicate that most respondents (89.37%) believe that Al-Shabaab attacks have contributed to an increase in transport charges.

The research participants were asked about the level of Al Shabaab attacks, number of roadblocks and police check on the road to Mandera. The findings were presented using Figure 3.



Since Al-Shabaab there has been an increased number of road blocks and police checks on the road to Mandera

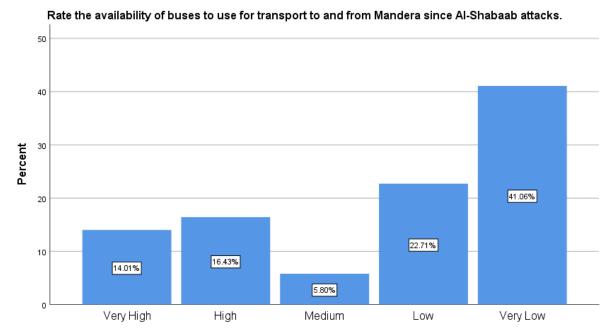
Figure 3 Level of Al Shabaab attacks, number of roadblocks and police check on the road

Figure 3 shows that when asked whether they agree with the statement since Al-Shabaab attacks there has been an increased number of roadblocks and police checks on the road to Mandera, 21.26% selected strongly agree, 48.79% selected agree, 14.98% selected neutral, 12.08% selected disagree while 2.90% selected strongly disagree. Just over 21% of the respondents strongly agree that Al-Shabaab attacks have led to an increased number of roadblocks and police checks on the road to Mandera. This group perceives a significant and direct correlation between the attacks and heightened security measures in the area. Nearly 49% of the respondents agree with the statement but not as forcefully as those who strongly agree. This group still acknowledges the link between the attacks and increased security measures but may view it as a less pronounced effect. Almost 15% of respondents chose the neutral option, indicating that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may lack enough information or have an undecided opinion on the matter. About 12% of respondents disagree with the statement, suggesting that they do not believe Al-Shabaab attacks have led to an increased number of roadblocks and police checks on the road to Mandera. This group may think that other factors are responsible for any observed increase in security measures or may not have noticed any change in security.

A small proportion of respondents (2.90%) strongly disagree with the statement, indicating that they firmly reject the notion that Al-Shabaab attacks have led to increased security measures on the road to Mandera.

The results reveal that most respondents (70.05%) believe that Al-Shabaab attacks have contributed to an increased number of roadblocks and police checks on the road to Mandera.

The study examined the rate of the availability of buses for transport to and from Mandera since Al-Shabaab attacks. The data was analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and presented using Figure 4.



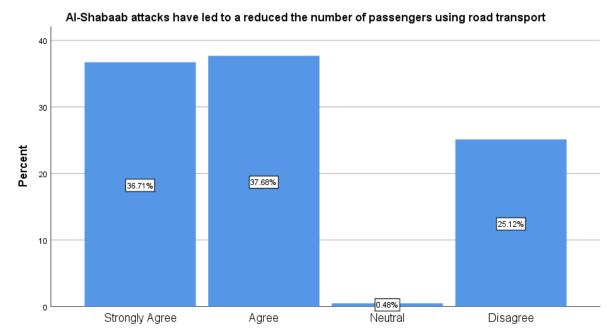
Rate the availability of buses to use for transport to and from Mandera since Al-Shabaab attacks.

Figure 4 Rate of the availability of buses for transport to and from Mandera since Al-Shabaab attacks

Figure 4 shows that the rate the availability of buses to use for transport to and from Mandera since the attacks was very high for 14.01% of the respondents, 16.43% indicating high, 5.80% selected medium, 22.71% selected low while 41.06% selected very low. About 14% of the respondents perceive the availability of buses to and from Mandera to be very high since the attacks. This group believe that transportation services have been largely unaffected or have even increased in response to the situation. Just over 16% of the respondents chose 'high' as the level of bus availability. This group also considers the availability of buses to be relatively good, but perhaps not as abundant as those who selected 'very high.' A small proportion of respondents (5.80%) rated the availability of buses as medium. This group think that bus availability has experienced some impact due to the attacks, but that the overall situation remains manageable. Nearly 23% of the respondents selected 'low' for the availability of buses.

This group believes that the Al-Shabaab attacks have had a negative effect on the transportation services to and from Mandera, leading to decreased availability. The largest proportion of respondents (41.06%) perceive the availability of buses to be very low since the attacks. This group views the attacks as having a significant and detrimental impact on the transportation options to and from Mandera. The results indicate that most respondents (63.77%) believe that the Al-Shabaab attacks have led to decreased availability of buses for transport to and from Mandera.

The study entailed the level to which the Al-Shabaab attacks have led to a reduced number of passengers using road transport. The findings were presented using Figure 5.



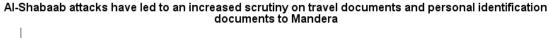
Al-Shabaab attacks have led to a reduced the number of passengers using road transport

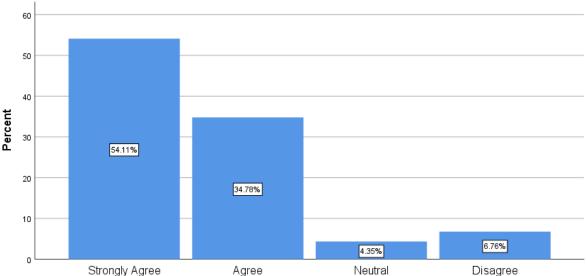
Figure 5 Al-Shabaab attacks have led to a reduced number of passengers using road transport

Figure 5 shows that when asked to rate the level they agree with the statement that Al-Shabaab attacks have led to a reduced number of passengers using road transport industry, 36.71% selected strongly agree, 37.68% selected agree, 0.48% selected neutral while 25.12% selected disagree. Over a third (36.71%) of the respondents strongly agree that Al-Shabaab attacks have led to a reduced number of passengers using the road transport industry. This group perceives a significant and direct correlation between the attacks and the decline in passenger numbers. Nearly 38% of the respondents agree with the statement, but not as forcefully as those who strongly agree. This group still acknowledges the link between the attacks and the decrease in passengers but may view it as a less pronounced effect. A negligible percentage of 0.48% of respondents selected neutral, indicating that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

This small group may not have enough information or a strong opinion on the matter. About a quarter of respondents disagree with the statement, suggesting that they do not believe Al-Shabaab attacks have led to a reduced number of passengers using the road transport industry. This group may think that other factors are responsible for any observed decline in passengers or may not have noticed any change in passenger numbers. The results show that the majority of respondents (74.39%) believe that Al-Shabaab attacks have contributed to a reduced number of passengers using the road transport industry.

The study investigated the level to which Al-Shabaab attacks have led to an increased scrutiny on travel documents and personal identification documents to Mandera. The findings were presented in Figure 6.





Al-Shabaab attacks have led to an increased scrutiny on travel documents and personal identification documents to Mandera

Figure 6 Al-Shabaab attacks have led to an increased scrutiny on travel documents and personal identification documents

According to Figure 6, al-Shabaab attacks have led to an increased scrutiny on travel documents and personal identification documents to Mandera. About 54.11% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 34.78% selected agree, 4.35% selected neutral while 6.76% selected disagree. Over half of the respondents strongly agree that Al-Shabaab attacks have led to increased scrutiny on travel documents and personal identification documents for travel to Mandera. This group perceives a significant and direct correlation between the attacks and heightened security measures related to travel documentation. Just under 35% of the respondents agree with the statement, but not as forcefully as those who strongly agree.

This group still acknowledges the link between the attacks and increased scrutiny of travel documents but may view it as a less pronounced effect. A small percentage, making about 4.35% of respondents selected neutral, indicating that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may not have enough information or a strong opinion on the matter. About 7% of respondents disagree with the statement, suggesting that they do not believe Al-Shabaab attacks have led to increased scrutiny on travel documents and personal identification documents for travel to Mandera. This group may think that other factors are responsible for any observed increase in document scrutiny or may not have noticed any change in security measures related to travel documentation. The results reveal that the majority of respondents (88.89%) believe that Al-Shabaab attacks have contributed to increased scrutiny on travel documents and personal identification documents for travel to Mandera.

Discussions

The findings from this study offer a detailed look at the profound negative impact that Al-Shabaab's terrorist activities have on the road transport industry in Mandera Town, Mandera County. Several themes emerge from the data, many of which echo the existing literature and provide empirical support for previous academic and practical observations.

One significant consequence of Al-Shabaab's actions, as reported by a vast majority of respondents (89.37%), is the surge in transport costs. This finding mirrors the observations of Ramos (2015), who discussed how the heightened security risks and measures associated with traveling to and from Mandera would lead to increased operating costs for transport providers. In the present study, this escalation in transport charges is seen as an economic impact that could drive up prices for goods and services, a hypothesis that resonates with Ahmed's (2017) work on the economic repercussions of terrorism.

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Similarly, the prevalence of roadblocks and police checks, noted by 70.05% of respondents, lends credence to Ramos' (2015) reporting on the comprehensive security measures aimed at mitigating terrorist activities. Although these actions are intended to protect travelers, they often result in extended travel times, a point that is reflected in the inconvenience reported by many respondents in this study.

The decline in bus availability, as acknowledged by 63.77% of respondents, is a finding that aligns well with Karimi & Fombu's (2014) reports. These reports suggested that transport operators might be deterred from providing services in high-risk areas, ultimately restricting transportation options for residents. This constraint is reinforced in this study, reflecting the far-reaching impact of Al-Shabaab's activities on the local transportation industry.

A noteworthy outcome from this study is the drop in passenger numbers reported by 74.39% of respondents, a result that echoes Maruf & Joseph's (2018) insights into the fear and safety concerns around traveling in affected regions. This declining trend, along with heightened transport costs, could detrimentally impact the local economy due to reduced revenue for the transport sector and impaired local mobility (Ahmed, 2017).

This study also illuminates a critical aspect of counter-terrorism strategy, as evidenced by the reported 88.89% increase in scrutiny of travel and identification documents for travelers to Mandera. This aligns with Cannon & Ruto Pkalya's (2019) analysis that law enforcement agencies have intensified their efforts to identify and track potential terrorists. This intensified scrutiny implies a stricter verification process for travelers, presenting additional challenges to the road transport industry.

In summary, the evidence gathered in this study reaffirms and adds depth to the existing understanding of the substantial negative influence that Al-Shabaab terrorist activities exert on the road transport industry in Mandera Town, Mandera County. The array of issues facing the industry, such as elevated transport charges, heightened security measures, a decrease in bus availability, a reduction in passenger numbers, and increased scrutiny of travel documents, points to the need for comprehensive, effective counterterrorism strategies. Insights into the interconnectedness of sectors affected by terrorism (Santos & Haimes, 2004) and an understanding of the root causes of terrorism (Cannon & Ruto Pkalya, 2019) could facilitate the development of strategies that mitigate the effects of Al-Shabaab's actions. By doing so, the road transport industry and the wider Mandera community could experience enhanced safety and security, fostering socio-economic development in the region.

Conclusion

The study concluded that Al-Shabaab terrorist activities have a significant negative impact on the socio-economic development of NEP region in general. The study showed that road transport industry experienced substantial disruptions and challenges resulting from Al-Shabaab attacks. The road transport industry experiences increased transportation charges, decreased availability of buses, reduced passenger numbers, and heightened scrutiny of travel documents due to the threats and incidents caused by Al-Shabaab.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

- i. Strengthening of the security measures by the Ministry of Interior: Enhance security measures along key transport routes, at roadblocks, and at border crossings to minimize the risk of Al-Shabaab attacks and to ensure the safety of travelers, transport operators, and livestock traders.
- ii. The Ministry of Roads and Infrastructure works on improving the road network and increase security surveillance: Invest in improving and maintaining transport infrastructure in Mandera County to facilitate smooth transportation of goods and people, minimize disruptions caused by Al-Shabaab attacks, and promote economic development.

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