

# Factors Exposing Stalls in Nairobi Central Business District to the Crime of Terrorism

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## ABSTRACT

Terrorism attacks of late not only target key installations such as government buildings, embassies, and other critical infrastructure, but targets public institutions and individual enterprises characterized by little or no security, such as hotels and business stalls. This study was motivated by the fact that stalls in Nairobi Central Business District were attacked by terrorists in 2011, and no study has ever been conducted to address this attack. The objectives of this study were to examine the factors that expose stalls to the crime of terrorism and counterterrorism measures associated with the prevention of terrorism crimes against stalls. This study used the routine activities theory. This study adopted the descriptive research design that entailed both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of data collection and analysis. Purposive sampling was employed by selecting 120 stall operators, composed of 60 male and 60 female operators from the Nairobi Central Business District. The study used an interview schedule, composed of open and closed questions to answer the research questions. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences and presented using bar charts, pie charts, and tables. Regarding the factors exposing stalls to terrorism, the study found that 37% of stall operators thought stalls were easy to attack, while 36% of stall operators thought that the lack of CCTV's exposed stalls in Nairobi Central. On the preparation measures, the study found out that 47% of stall operators considered criminalization of terrorism as an appropriate measure, while 36% of stall operators noted that private security guards have played a significant role by including stalls in developing response plans to the crime of terrorism. Regarding the preparation measures taken by stalls, 77% of the stall operators carried out testing and improvements in physical security in place. The study concluded that stalls in the Nairobi Central Business District are easy targets for the crime of terrorism, and more research is required to explain the reasons underlying the factors exposing stalls and soft targets to the crime of terrorism and the preparation measures taken by stalls and other soft targets.

Submitted: June 25, 2025

Published: October 08, 2025

 10.24018/ejsocial.2025.5.5.610

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**Keywords:** Soft targets, stalls, terrorism, victimization.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mirgani (2017) in her book focusing on international terrorism and malls note that there has been an increase in the number of terrorist attacks in urban settings, centrally located businesses, commercial entities and open spaces within metropolitan areas as compared to hard targets (Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, 2018; The Organization for Security & Cooperation in Europe, 2019). According to the Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (2018) in their report on protecting critical infrastructure, hard targets are areas that are well protected and difficult to access such as government buildings and embassies while soft targets are places located within urban centers with limited security and easily accessible to the crime of terrorism such as hotels, cinemas, religious institutions and schools.



According to the [Global Counterterrorism Forum \(2017\)](#), attacks on soft targets are not a new phenomenon. However, in the past few years, they have become too frequent, random, and international ([Mirgani, 2017](#)). [Martin \(2016\)](#) also noted that, between 2007 and 2015, the total estimated number of terrorist attacks worldwide was 100,685, with approximately 72% of these attacks targeting soft targets and 27% targeting hard targets. Studies have observed that this increase in the number of attacks on soft targets can be attributed to the high likelihood of success in attacking soft targets compared with hard targets ([Hesterman, 2015](#); [Martin, 2016](#); [Schmid, 2021](#)). [Leukfeldt and Yar \(2016\)](#), conducted a secondary analysis on already existing data using concepts from Routine Activities theory and observed that the concept of a target is determined by its value or importance, visibility or exposure, inertia or the capacity to resist crime, and accessibility of a target location. According to the [Global Counterterrorism Forum \(2017\)](#), this has been attributed to terrorist groups directing, enabling, or inspiring their supporters through successful attacks, and the Internet to conduct small attacks against soft targets, as the aggregate of these attacks is equivalent to a major attack. These attacks are easy to plan, execute, leave very little room for detection and prevention, and require little controlled substances or weapons such as knives and vehicles.

[Hesterman \(2015\)](#) in her book on soft targets indicates that physical security of soft targets involves the presence of metal detectors, alarms to warn others of an ensuing terrorist attack, security guards, presence of armed officers, visitor badges and log in books indicating the name, time, and phone number of visitors, use of facial recognition technology, ensuring dust bins are closed to prevent the planting of explosive devices, use of locks, and closed-circuit television. [Petho-Kiss \(2020\)](#), who quantitatively assessed the number of terrorist attacks on churches, is attacked because of inadequate security measures and the ideological and political objectives of terrorists. [Botha \(2021\)](#) writes that location of soft targets in major cities, the number of soft targets, traffic flows in and out of the location and the time of day the target is busy and crowded, contribute to victimization. However, these factors vary depending on the target.

Terrorism is real and learning from countries that have experienced attacks or lessons from past attacks goes a long way towards ensuring preparedness against terrorism. Preparedness implies training the public or private sector by various stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations, civil societies, fire services, the police, emergency services and 'red teams' which basically conduct simulations of terror attacks. In addition to training, counter terrorism measures should involve regular reviews, unannounced testing of the measures in place by independent experts, regular updates of the various technological systems, regular repetition and regular practice of the procedures until they are deeply ingrained to assist potential victims into making informed decisions in the event of an attack ([Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2017](#); [Jones, 2004](#)). Kenya experienced a terrorist attack on stalls in 2011 when a grenade was thrown into a stall killing one person and injuring others ([Mukuna, 2019](#)). Despite this attack, no study on terrorism has focused on the factors that might expose stalls within Nairobi Central Business District to terrorism and the counter measures that stalls in Nairobi Central Business District have taken to prevent future victimization.

## 2. ROUTINE ACTIVITIES THEORY

[Felson and Cohen's \(1979\)](#) routine activities begin with the assumption that criminal inclinations are given rather than focusing on why crime occurs. Routine activities theory posits that crime results from structural conditions characterized by the technology and organization of a given society which provides an opportunity for the convergence of three components: a person with criminal inclinations or the ability to carry out those tendencies; a suitable target that is a person or place determined by its value, the ability to resist victimization, accessibility, and exposure of the target; and, the absence of a capable guardian, either the victim or formal security. Borrowing the concepts of symbiotic and commensal relationships from Human Ecological Theory, it is noted that, as criminals improve their efficiency, potential victims and guardians tasked with preventing crime also improve their protective measures through weapons, tools, skills and control through changes in routine activities.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive design. [Neuman \(2014\)](#) states that the design starts with an issue or question about the types of people or social activities with the aim of adequately defining and answering the issue or questions of interest. This study focused on stall operators in Nairobi Central Business District; however, since the number of stalls in Nairobi Central Business District is unknown, this study adopted purposive sampling to select respondents from stalls based on gender and street. According to [Neuman \(2014\)](#) purposive sampling is appropriate for selecting informative research topics and in an area of study where there is no definite number of respondents.

TABLE I: LIST OF RESPONDENTS DISTRIBUTED ACCORDING TO LOCATION AND GENDER

Respondents	Street	Male	Female
Stall	Koinange street	10	10
Operators	Muindi Mbingu & Mama Ngina	10	10
	Tom Mboya	10	10
	Moi Avenue	10	10
	Haile Selassie	10	10
	Kenyatta Avenue	10	10
Total		60	60

Since the sampling size can range from 100 to 5000, this study subjectively chose 120 respondents comprising of 60 male and 60 female stall operators within the Nairobi Central Business District (C.B.D), comprising 10 female and 10 male stall operators from stalls located along Haile Selassie Avenue, Koinange Street, Muindi Mbingu/Mama Ngina Street, Moi Avenue Street (Assanand stall), Kenyatta Avenue and Tom Mboya Street (Neuman, 2014). This is illustrated in Table I. Due to the lack of a sampling frame of stalls, financial resources and time, the sample size was not representative of all stalls but was appropriate to answer the research questions thereby providing a preliminary understanding and knowledge for further research on the factors that expose stalls and other soft targets in Kenya to terrorism and the preparation measures taken against the terrorism crime to prevent future victimization.

### 3.1. Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data were collected using an interview to answer the study questions. The total number of respondent was 120, comprising 60 male and 60 female stall operators, but a total of 119 respondents (60 male and 59 female stall operators) adequately responded to the interview schedule. Qualitative data were transferred to Microsoft Excel where they were sorted and organized according to gender and themes identified in the literature review. The data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences by clicking on the variable view where in the first column titled name. In the first row the variable was respondents followed by gender and there after the research questions. This corresponds to a column of labels. The columns of width were eight, decimals were zero, aligned was right and the role of the data was input. The variables were numeric and assigned values of 0 and 1 for gender and 0-5 for the interview responses, which were marked by the letters a, b, c, d, e and f respectively. The variables in this study were categorical therefore the measurement levels were nominal. After entering the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, the data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The results of the analysis were in the form of frequency and percentages. They were presented using tables, graphs and pie charts based on the themes identified and the gender of stall operators.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Factors that Contribute to the Crime of Terrorism Victimized Stalls

Table II illustrates the overall findings of the factors that might contribute to terrorism in stalls in the Nairobi Central Business District (C.B.D). These factors are related to the general factors that might expose vulnerable targets to terrorism. The study found that 36% of stall operators thought stalls were easy to attack while 20% thought that it was accessible to the crime of terrorism by many people. There was a slight difference between the male and female respondent's responses to the factors contributing to terrorism with 37% of male respondents and 36% of female respondents considering stalls easy to attack by terrorist.

### 4.2. Factors that Directly Contribute to the Crime of Terrorism Victimized Stalls

Table III provides an illustration of the overall findings on the factors directly exposing stalls to terrorism. The study found that 38.8% of the respondents thought that lack of CCTVs was a factor that exposed stalls to the crime of terrorism victimization of stalls, while 37.1% of the respondents thought that a lack of guards was a factor that exposed stalls to terrorism victimization. There were differences in the findings of male and female stall operators, with 42% of male operators considering the lack of CCTVs as a factor directly exposing them to terrorism, while 42% of female stall operators considered the lack of guards as a factor exposing stalls in Nairobi Central Business District (CBD) to terrorism.

TABLE II: FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO TERRORISM VICTIMIZATION IN STALLS

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
What might contribute to the crime of terrorism in stalls within Nairobi C.B.D?	Accessible to everyone	11 19.0%	13 22.4%	24 20.7%
	Easy to attack	22 37.9%	21 36.2%	43 37.1%
	Occupied with many people	6 10.3%	7 12.1%	13 11.2%
	Suitable opportunity	11 19.0%	10 17.2%	21 18.1%
	High likelihood of success	6 10.3%	7 12.1%	13 11.2%
	Other	2 3.4%	0 0.0%	2 1.7%
	Total	58	58	116

TABLE III: FACTORS THAT DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTE TO EXPOSING STALLS TO THE CRIME OF TERRORISM

	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Lack of metal detectors	11 18.6%	9 15.8%	20 17.2%
Lack of warning signs	0 0.0%	1 1.8%	1 0.9%
Lack of guards	19 32.2%	24 42.1%	43 37.1%
Absence of CCTVS	25 42.4%	20 35.1%	45 38.8%
Others	4 6.8%	3 5.3%	7 6.0%
Total	59	57	116

#### 4.3. What Preparation Measures have Stalls Taken to Prevent Terrorism

The respondents were asked to choose from multiple answers the preparation measure undertaken by stalls to prevent stalls in Nairobi Central Business (C.B.D) from terrorism.

Fig. 1. provides illustrates the male and female findings on the preparation measures taken by stalls to prevent stalls from the crime of terrorism. The study found similarities in the responses regarding testing and improvements of physical security, with approximately 49% in male respondents and 27% in female respondents. The overall finding of the study was that 77% of the respondents carried out regular testing and improvements in their physical security, whereas 33% engaged in terrorism awareness programs.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

In this study, the factors that exposed soft targets were conceptualized as accessibility based on the structure of the building and location, suitable opportunity for the offender that corresponded to the exposure of the target, and high chances of success that corresponded with the value of stall targets to offenders; this is seen as an easy victory by terrorists, easy to attack due to the absence of capable guardians to offer resistance such as guards and CCTVs, and occupied with many people, which correspond to the value or significance of the target (Felson & Cohen, 1979). The Study found that stalls easily fall victim to terrorism by both male and female stall operators. Studies show that soft targets are attacked because there is little to no security to resist the crime of terrorism as compared to hard targets (Martin, 2016; Schmid, 2021).

Stalls can also be exposed to terrorism as a result of the direct physical factors of a specific stall and indirect factors related to terrorism. According to direct factors, the study found that male responses tended towards a lack of CCTV cameras, while female responses tended towards a lack of guards. The overall finding was that the lack of CCTV cameras was considered by both male and female stall operators to expose stalls to the crime of terrorism. According to RAND Corporation (2024), the presence of CCTV cameras together with uniformed security personnel in crowded places

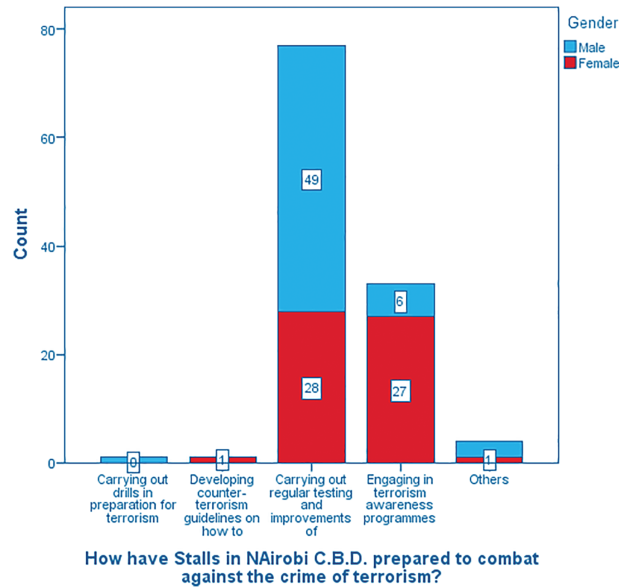


Fig. 1. Preparation measures taken by stalls in Nairobi Central Business District.

was associated with positive feelings and perception of safety. This is in contrast to studies which have shown that various attacks, including the Westgate and Garissa University attacks in Kenya occurred when security guards and CCTV cameras were present ([Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2017](#); [Hesterman, 2015](#); [Petho-Kiss, 2020](#)). This study is in accordance with reviewed literature which show that the presence of guards and CCTVs are factors that play a role in preventing targets like stalls in Nairobi Central Business District from victimization by terrorism. However, the findings are not in accordance with the Routine Activities Theory which states that, the presence of capable guardians prevents targets from victimization ([Felson & Cohen, 1979](#)).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Stall operators generally consider stalls in Nairobi Central Business District (CBD) as easy targets for the crime of terrorism due to a lack of CCTVs with male respondents attributing this to a lack of CCTVs, while female respondents attributed this to a lack of guards. Stall operators generally consider testing and improvement of physical security as adequate preparation to counter the crime of terrorism, yet terrorism has targeted areas where these security measures are present. This does not correspond with Routine Activities Theory, which states that in the absence of capable guardians, crime will occur.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends further research on the crime of terrorism victimization on stalls and other vulnerable targets in order to compare the results based on gender and the factors of lack of guards and CCTVs attributed to exposing stalls in Nairobi Central Business District to the crime of terrorism targets. These studies should be conducted to determine the reasons underlying the effectiveness of physical security as an adequate preparation measure against terrorism. In addition, these studies should explain the observed similarities and disparities between the male and female stall operators' attitudes to the crime of terrorism. This will further contribute towards understanding the crime of terrorism, while also providing an opportunity for a comprehensive evaluation of terrorism crime on soft targets and the capacity of Kenya's counterterrorism measures to prevent their victimization.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks to Prof. Bor and Dr. Ichani for their guidance.

## FUNDING

The funding for this project was self-funded.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that he does not any conflict of interest.

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