

SAFE STREETS THROUGH SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY.

Kamau S.^a, Kasiva S.^b, Abuje S.^c

^a Department of Landscape Architecture, JKUAT. Email: shaquillemburu@gmail.com

^b Department of Landscape Architecture, JKUAT.

^c Department of Landscape Architecture, JKUAT.

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ABSTRACT.

The urban environment is complex matrix of interdependent systems working together a whole. According to UNDESA (2018), about 55% of global population reside in urban environments and projects to rise 68% by year 2050. This shows the vital role cities play towards humanity's existence and well-being. Our increasing dependence on these environments, comes with strain on natural resources and existing infrastructure. This results to environmental degradation and social malaise expressed through vices such as crime.

The aim of this paper is to assess the quality of the urban environment and its relation to crime. It identified seven environmental quality indicators namely: urban morphology, street furniture, vegetation, pollution, land use, street network and street activities. The study gathers data through survey research design. It samples 84 streets in Juja town, Kenya, analyzes their character through observation method and interviews respondents on crime incidences. According to police records, the leading types of crime occurring at the street level was mugging (65%) and theft (25%) and burglary (15%).

The results show a correlation between the urban environmental quality and crime incidence in Juja. Streets characterized by single-storey buildings, unkempt vegetation, absence of street lighting, low visual permeability and high density of facilities such as liquor stores were prone to high crime incidences. Further, results indicated that streets with mixed-use structures, street lighting and high visual permeability experienced low crime incidences.

This paper argues that for sustainable urban development, streets need to be well-planned and adopts comprehensive crime prevention strategies. We propose that, safe and sustainable streets should incorporate the use of green energy lighting and encourage mixed-use development in commercial districts, promoting natural surveillance. Street should incorporate furniture at strategies locations to encourage activities, thus increasing the capable guardianship. Further, proper waste disposal and well kempt vegetation improves the city's 'image' eradicating the fear of crime.