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REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AND SERVICE DELIVERY AMONG PRIVATE SECURITY SERVICE PROVIDERS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Private security firms play an important role in protecting people, property, and businesses in Kenya. To improve professionalism and accountability in the sector, the government introduced the Private Security Regulation Act of 2016. The Act requires private security providers to follow key rules, including mandatory guard training, official registration of personnel, and compliance with data protection requirements. The objective of this study was to examine how training requirements, registration requirements, and data protection requirements influence service delivery among private security service providers in Nairobi City County. The study was guided by Human Capital Theory, which explains that investing in workers through training and skills development improves their discipline, communication, productivity, and overall performance. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The target population included private security guards, supervisors, managers, union representatives, and regulatory officials involved in the private security sector in Nairobi City County. Data were collected using questionnaires and structured interview guides. The findings were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The study found that mandatory training improved guard skills, discipline, communication, and response to security incidents. Registration requirements also helped improve accountability because they made it easier to track personnel and hold firms responsible. Data protection requirements improved client trust, especially where firms handled visitor records, CCTV information, and other personal data carefully. However, the study also found that smaller firms struggled with high compliance costs, bureaucracy, limited technical skills, and weak support systems. The study concluded that the regulatory framework can improve service delivery, but stronger enforcement and more support for smaller firms are needed for the law to have a greater impact in Nairobi City County.

Keywords: *Regulatory Frameworks; Service Delivery; Private Security Providers; Mandatory Training; Registration Requirements; Data Protection.*

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INTRODUCTION

Private security providers constitute an important point of contact between citizens, clients, and formal law-enforcement systems. They protect people, property, and facilities through contractual security services offered for a fee (Diphoorn, 2016). Their functions include guarding, patrols, CCTV monitoring, access control, alarm response, and crime deterrence and detection (Jones & Newburn, 2006; Strom, 2010; Akoch, 2021). Service delivery in this sector depends on how effectively these activities are planned, supervised, regulated, and translated into protection for clients.

The expansion of private security has been especially significant in contexts where public policing capacity has struggled to meet growing security demands. In Africa, rapid urbanisation, commercial growth, and limited police resources have increased reliance on private security actors (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2017). Kenya reflects this wider trend. Since the 1990s, the industry has expanded rapidly, with reports indicating that by 2018 it had more than 500 registered companies and almost 700,000 employees (Muthee, 2018). This growth has made private security a major contributor to public safety and employment. However, it has also raised concerns about professionalism, accountability, service quality, and human rights.

The need for stronger regulation became more pressing as the industry grew. Weak regulation exposed the sector to poor working conditions, inconsistent training, abuse of authority, weak supervision, and uneven service standards (Nicolas, 2011; Diphoorn, 2016; Klein & Hemmens, 2018). Regulatory frameworks were introduced to standardise core practices, including licensing, training, registration, vetting, and ethical conduct. As Okech (2015) observes, such frameworks are intended to promote competence, accountability, and responsible conduct among private security providers.

In Kenya, the Private Security Regulation Act of 2016 marked a major policy shift. The Act introduced requirements relating to mandatory training, registration and vetting of personnel, licensing of providers, and compliance with data protection obligations. Standardised training was intended to equip guards with skills for patrol, access control, emergency response, client interaction, and coordination with law-enforcement agencies (Usalama, 2019). Registration and vetting were meant to make personnel identifiable, traceable, and accountable. Data protection became increasingly important because private security firms routinely collect personal information at entry points and through surveillance technologies. Compliance with privacy rules is central to client trust, especially where companies manage visitor records, CCTV footage, and sensitive information (Berg & Howell, 2017).

However, the existence of regulation does not automatically guarantee improved service delivery. Studies on Kenya's private security sector suggest that implementation has often been constrained by the operating realities of security companies and guards. These include limited financial resources, poor working conditions, inadequate supervision, low wages, weak managerial systems, and uneven enforcement of regulatory requirements (Wairagu et al., 2004; Mutuku & Sabala, 2007; Okech, 2015; Kostara, 2021). Many firms operate under tight budgets and competition, which can affect staff recruitment, training quality, deployment, monitoring, and client support. As a result, compliance may remain partial even where regulatory requirements are clearly stated.

This situation creates a practical and empirical problem. Although the Private Security Regulation Act of 2016 was designed to improve professionalism, accountability, and service quality, service delivery among private security providers in Nairobi City County remains uneven. Clients continue to experience differences in guard competence, response effectiveness, supervision standards, communication, and satisfaction. Previous studies have discussed general regulatory and operational challenges in the sector, but limited empirical evidence explains how specific administrative requirements, such as training, registration, vetting, and data protection, influence service delivery outcomes. It is unclear whether compliance with these requirements has produced measurable improvements in professionalism, client confidence, and operational effectiveness.

This paper addresses this gap by examining the influence of selected administrative regulatory mechanisms on service delivery among private security providers in Nairobi City County. It focuses on how compliance with training, registration, vetting, supervision, and data protection requirements affects service quality. By linking regulation to service delivery outcomes, the study contributes evidence on whether the 2016 regulatory framework has strengthened professionalism in practice or whether implementation gaps continue to limit its intended impact.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review

The empirical literature generally shows that regulation influences service delivery in private security by shaping training quality, registration compliance, accountability, data protection, and client confidence. Research on mandatory training shows that uniform standards are central to professionalism in private security. In the United Kingdom, Button et al. (2019) found that standardised training improved guards' understanding of operational roles and strengthened accountability. Similarly, Smith and Jones (2018) observed in Australia that effective training required cooperation between government and industry actors. However, Gupta and Sharma (2021) found that fragmented security firms in India made the implementation of common training standards difficult. These findings suggest that training improves service quality, but only where enforcement structures are clear and coordinated.

This relationship is also visible in African studies, where training has been linked to credibility and public trust. In South Africa, Abrahamsen and Williams (2020) found that clear training guidelines improved professional credibility and supported licensing systems. In Ghana, Adeoye and Oyeniyi (2021) reported that clients preferred firms that demonstrated commitment to staff development. In Kenya, Ochieng and Onyango (2023) found that trained guards were better prepared for conflict management and emergency response, while Mwangi and Wanjiru (2022) linked formal training to improved discipline. Conversely, Kamau and Wekesa (2021) noted that untrained guards were likely to ignore basic procedures, leading to security breaches and client dissatisfaction. However, Njenga and Ndungu (2020) found that smaller firms often lacked the financial capacity to provide quality training. Therefore, while training is strongly associated with better service delivery, limited resources and weak supervision continue to undermine compliance in Nairobi.

Beyond training, registration, and licensing are also presented in the literature as key indicators of accountability and service quality. In the United Kingdom, Button (2021) found that the Security Industry Authority licensing system improved consumer confidence through strict training and vetting requirements. Similar findings were reported in Canada, where Gill (2022) observed that regular assessment improved reliability, and in Germany, where Schreier (2021) found that strict certification reduced malpractice. In the United States, Jones and Newburn (2020) also linked registration requirements with better performance indicators. However, Sharma and Kumar (2021) showed that fragmented industries can weaken implementation.

African evidence presents a similar but mixed picture. In South Africa, Mofokeng (2019) found that strict audits supported quality control, although high compliance costs sometimes disadvantaged smaller firms. In Nigeria, Ogunleye (2020) linked weak regulatory compliance to customer dissatisfaction, while Adeoye and Oyeniyi (2021) found that licensing in Ghana helped firms prove professionalism. In Kenya, the Private Security Regulation Act of 2016 was intended to strengthen registration, vetting, and licensing. However, Mwangi and

Waweru (2023) found that weak control allowed unregistered companies to operate, while Njenga and Kimani (2022) reported that nearly half of Nairobi firms lacked valid licences. This suggests that registration can improve accountability, but bureaucratic procedures, weak enforcement, and limited police-private coordination reduce its impact.

The literature further shows that data protection has become increasingly important as private security firms adopt CCTV, biometrics, GPS tracking, and cloud-based reporting. In Europe, Smith (2021) found that GDPR compliance improved operational efficiency and client trust, while Brown and Williams (2020) observed that California's CCPA improved transparency in handling personal information. Patel and Green (2022) also reported that strong data laws reduced breaches in Australia and Canada. However, Lopez (2021) found that fragmented laws in parts of Asia and Latin America weakened trust by making compliance unclear.

Moyo (2021) found that South Africa's POPIA improved data safety and confidence through consent requirements. However, Okeke and Mensah (2020) reported weak enforcement and frequent breaches in Nigeria and Ghana. In Kenya, the Data Protection Act of 2019 provides the legal basis for managing personal data, but Mukuru (2021) found that many Nairobi firms lacked the resources and legal knowledge to comply. Waweru and Oyugi (2022) also found that rapid adoption of GPS and cloud surveillance created privacy risks, while Kamau and Maina (2022) linked staff training in data protection to stronger client retention. Overall, the empirical literature indicates that training, registration, and data protection can improve service delivery, but their effectiveness in Nairobi depends on affordability, enforcement, supervision, and practical support for firms.

Theoretical Review

The study was based on the Human Capital Theory (HCT), which was applied to uncover the reasons why formal training and capacity development of professional skills are significant in the private security industry. Human Capital Theory was proposed by Theodore Schultz (1961) and further elaborated by Gary Becker (1964). The theory explains the direct relationship between investing in the workforce through education, training, and skill development and improved job performance, productivity, and organisational output.

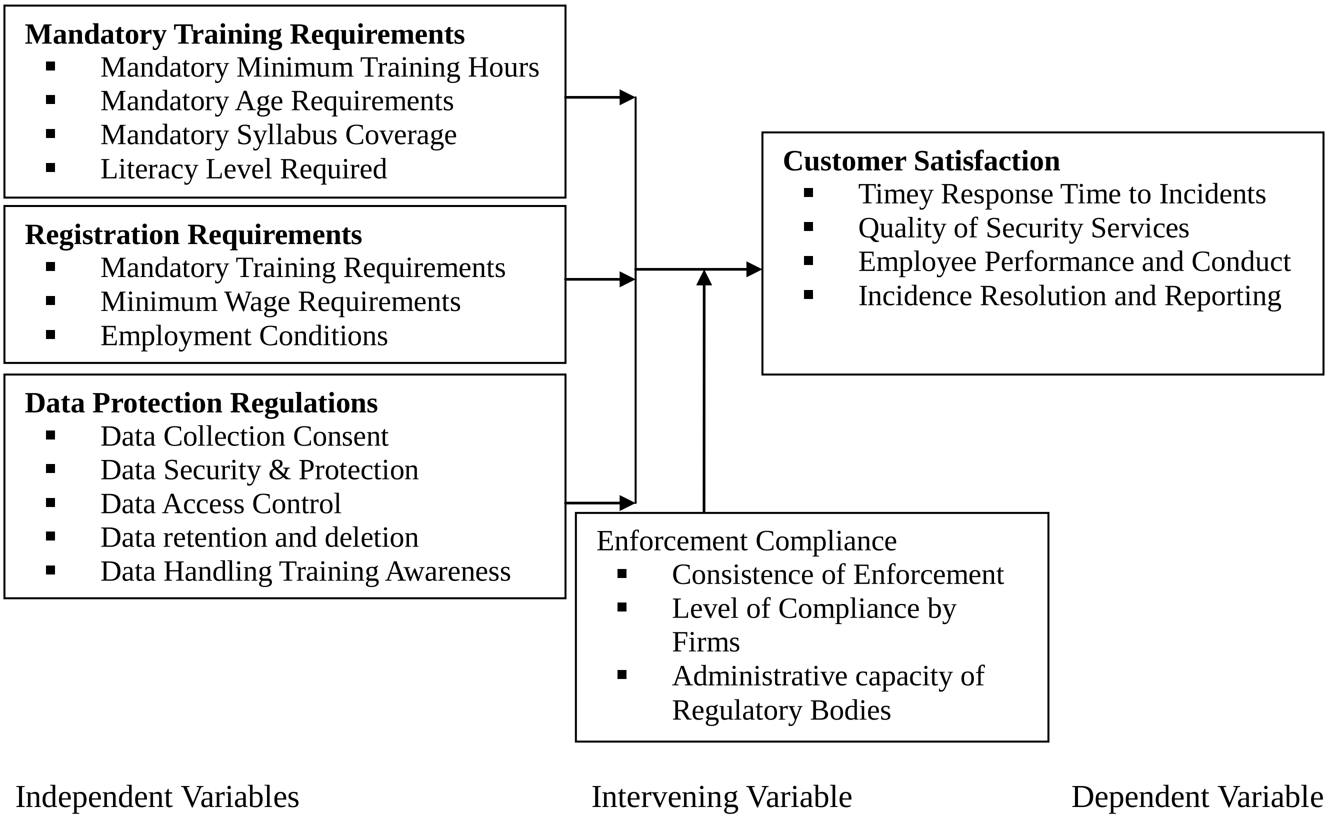
In this study, HCT provided a crucial prism for understanding how mandatory training regulation affected service delivery among private security providers in Nairobi City County. The theory was applied on the assumption that guards who receive structured training are better positioned to perform their duties correctly, respond to threats, observe legal requirements, and interact professionally with clients. Therefore, mandatory training was not treated only as a legal requirement, but also as a human capital investment that could improve professionalism, dependability, and service quality.

The study used HCT to examine the influence of structured training programmes on the performance of safety personnel. The findings confirmed that where training was mandatory, guards had a greater ability to manage modern safety threats and remain within the limits of the law. This supported the main pillars of HCT: that training produces productivity (Schultz, 1961), skills development results in actual operational payoffs (Becker, 1964), and a skilled workforce contributes to enhanced ethical practices (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004; Barro & Lee, 2013).

However, the empirical evidence also revealed a disturbing fact on the ground. A large number of personnel entered the workforce with little or no proper training, which lowered the standard of service. The challenges included high training costs, a lack of accredited training institutions, and weak government control. Njenga and Kimani (2022) observed that more than 60 percent of guards in Nairobi had not received proper training, resulting in poor client interactions and slow responses to threats. This local battle fit perfectly with HCT's warning that a lack of investment in people constrains service quality and future growth.

In conclusion, the theory showed that compulsory training was an important human capital investment in Kenya's private security sector. Firms that invested in their personnel were likely to achieve stronger legal compliance, client trust, professionalism, and improved service delivery.

Figure 1 shows the study's conceptual framework.



Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey design to examine how selected administrative regulatory requirements influenced service delivery among private security providers in Nairobi City County. The target population comprised 4,000 stakeholders, including private security officers, supervisors, managers, PSRA officials, and union representatives involved in private security regulation and service delivery. These groups were selected because they represented both frontline implementation and regulatory oversight of the Private Security Regulation Act of 2016. The study used stratified, simple random, purposive, and convenience sampling techniques. A sample size of 190 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula, with proportional allocation across the different strata. Data were collected using questionnaires and structured interview guides to obtain information on regulatory compliance, training standards, and service delivery. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative responses from interviews were reviewed thematically to support interpretation of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

These findings are based on 150 duly filled questionnaires completed by private security officers, supervisors, managers, PSRA officials, and union representatives in Nairobi City County. Descriptive statistics and thematic findings are presented and discussed to show how administrative regulatory requirements influenced service delivery among private security providers.

Service Delivery and Mandatory Training Requirement

The first objective of the study was to determine how the mandatory training requirements affect service delivery among private security firms in the city of Nairobi, in the city council's county. To explore this, the paper has focused on four pillars: minimum training hours required, age restrictions, syllabus coverage, and personnel literacy requirements. Participants rated their degree of agreement on a 5-point Likert Scale, with options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These responses were processed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage distributions, to assess overall workforce concordance.

Table 1: Mandatory Training and Service Delivery Statement

	SA (%)	A (%)	NS (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
The current number of mandatory training hours is adequate for effective service delivery.	40	30	15	10	5	3.7	1.0
The standardized training syllabus adequately prepares personnel for real life security challenges.	38	32	12	10	8	3.6	1.1
Setting a minimum age requirement ensures maturity and responsibility in service delivery.	45	30	10	10	5	3.8	0.9
Minimum literacy level is necessary for effective service delivery.	42	28	15	10	5	3.7	1.0
Overall Mean						**3.7**	**1.0**

The research determined that the minimum age requirement had the highest level of agreement with a standard deviation of 0.9 and a mean of 3.8. It implied a degree of consensus that maturity was among the fundamentals of professional practice. Quite to the contrary, the training syllabus recorded the highest standard deviation of 1.1, indicating the participants' perceived relevance and practical application of the syllabus. Besides, when only 45 percent of the individuals interviewed believed that the companies were fully adhering to these provisions, it pointed to a wide disparity between the policy and practice.

These results are consistent with the Human Capital Theory, which holds that systematic investment in training has a positive effect on the competence and quality of the service. Nevertheless, the statistics also highlighted some impediments, including the expensive nature of it, lack of access, and the curriculum that was not believed to be relevant to the field by some. These gaps were mentioned in the direct feedback provided by the participants:

> “We are trained, yes, but there are too many abstract things. We get danger on the ground unaddressed in the lecture room.” A security officer, 33 years old, with 9 years of experience.

> “Some companies are hasty in training to be licensed. No annotation of field preparedness.” Supervisor 36 years, 12 years experience.

Overall, the results indicated that the workforce tended to have an optimistic opinion that the forceful training had a positive impact on service delivery in Nairobi. The cumulative mean of 3.7 was an indicator that the following factors were perceived as contributing to improved professional performance, namely, training hours, literacy standards, and age requirements. The score on the age requirement, especially, was high, which meant that maturity was considered to be the key to sound decision-making and responsible behavior in the case of security incidents. In the same manner, literacy requirements were perceived as a mechanism of enhancing communication and accuracy in reporting of incidents.

Regardless of this optimism, the findings showed that there were some grave concerns over the pragmatic orientation of the existing education programs. The dichotomy in views about the syllabus indicated that, in order to be effective, training needs to transcend beyond theory and be much more congruent with actual security threats. The low compliance also posed the risk of regulatory objectives being compromised due to ineffective implementation. The issues are likely to require a combination of stricter regulations, a revised curriculum, and the specific context of the Nairobi security environment.

Registration Requirement and Service Delivery

The study also assessed the impact of the registration requirements, i.e., background checks, licensing, inspections, and audits, on the quality of service delivery. The participants rated these regulatory components for their impact on trust, professionalism, and organizational accountability.

Table 2: Registration and Service Delivery

Statement	**SA (%)**	**A (%)**	**NS (%)**	**D (%)**	**SD (%)**	**Mean**	**SD**
Criminal background checks improve trust.	50	30	10	5	5	3.9	0.8
Certification and licensing enhance service delivery.	48	28	12	7	5	3.8	0.9
Regular inspections improve service quality.	42	30	15	8	5	3.7	1.0
Regular auditing ensures accountability.	45	25	15	10	5	3.6	1.1
Overall Mean						**3.8**	**0.9**

These results showed that the respondents felt registration requirements were important for enhancing service standards in Nairobi. The level of agreement was high, with an overall average of 3.8, indicating that the role of vetting and formal licensing in the sector's credibility was cut-and-dried. Criminal background checks were the most supported and received the highest score of 3.9, as they were deemed the most valuable tool for building trust between security staff and citizens. On the same note, formal certification was seen as a way to ensure that only qualified firms survive in the industry.

However, the data also showed high rates of frustration with how these rules were being applied. The standard deviation was greater in regular auditing 1.1, and the split opinion was evident, as many participants disagreed on whether these audits could be consistent. This was supported by even qualitative remarks that the benefits of registration were often undermined by red tape and patchy supervision.

One of the field officers argued that background checks worked, but the certification process was too long; in other instances, the firms worked without a license for up to as many months. One of the managers also mentioned that the inspections were not always accessible and that some companies had not been audited in years.

This disclosure highlighted a difference between the theory of the Private Security Regulation Act and the reality on the ground.

The registration system has been observed, and to some extent, companies can get away with not adhering to standards and avoid punishment due to the lack of a standardized monitoring method. Lastly, the effectiveness of such actions was not dependent on the regulations but on the enforcers' ability to enforce and ensure that all the rules are adhered to within the county.

Service delivery and Data protection requirements

The third objective of the study was to determine how adherence to data protection regulations affected service quality in private security companies. The importance of ensuring that client information was safe and of obtaining pertinent consent was also rated by the respondents as actually important in making their firms appear more professional to the outside world.

Table 3: Data Protection and Service Delivery

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	NS (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
Obtaining customer consent enhances service delivery.	42	28	15	10	5	3.7	1.0
Compliance with data protection laws improves service delivery.	40	30	15	10	5	3.7	1.0
Protecting customer data improves service delivery.	38	28	20	10	4	3.6	1.0
Compliance with data retention regulations enhances service delivery.	35	30	20	10	5	3.5	1.1
Overall Mean						**3.6**	**1.0**

The results showed that most industry members had a clear correlation between data privacy and better service. With an average of 3.6, the majority agreed that complying with data protection laws increased the trustworthiness of their work. Specifically, customer approval and client data safeguarding achieved the same mean of 3.7. This means that the more privacy a security company respects, the more trust is established between the security company and the client. These findings are consistent with the Control Theory of Privacy, which holds that there should be strict control over information as a professional conduct and reliability factor.

However, despite this positive outlook, the statistics showed that some streets had unkempt areas. The most unpleasant was the data retention regulations, with a standard deviation of 1.1. Such a division of opinion could not have gone unaddressed, leading to the different ways companies handled their paperwork. Certain firms were definitely being stifled by already existing systems, and others were struggling to keep afloat. One of the supervisors mentioned that the idea of data protection is a fantastic concept on paper. Yet, so many records were still stored in open files, and anyone could approach the table and view them. One of the officers asserted that they had been aware they were supposed to seek permission, but that their companies never informed them of how it would work in the real world.

This indicates that a law is as good as the instruments provided to enforce it. In Nairobi, small business owners were typically not tech savvy or trained to maintain digital records securely, and therefore, obedience was more of an assumption than a guarantee. As a result, the Data Protection Act was supposed to have a positive impact, but in most cases, this was canceled out by poorly managed files.

To ensure that these rules improve service delivery, firms should not just rely on a list of requirements to guide them; they should also have the systems and sufficient training in place to make the above rules routine.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that regulatory provisions on mandatory training, registration, and data protection influenced service delivery among private security providers in Nairobi City County. However, their practical effect remained limited by weak enforcement, high compliance costs, inadequate supervision, and limited technical capacity among smaller firms. Mandatory training improved guard competence, discipline, professionalism, and response to security incidents. Registration requirements also promoted accountability through licensing and background checks. However, bureaucratic delays, inconsistent audits, and unauthorized operations reduced the ability of these provisions to fully improve service quality across the sector. The study recommends stronger enforcement by the Private Security Regulatory Authority, wider access to accredited training, simplified registration processes, and practical support on data protection. Further research should examine long-term regulatory effects across different counties and include client perspectives to strengthen private security governance in Kenya.

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