Influence of Academic Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Eradication of Banditry in Tiaty East Sub-County, Baringo County, Kenya

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Abstract: *This study sought to find out the influence of academic engagement in public secondary schools in eradication of banditry in Tiaty Sub-County, Baringo County. It aimed to answer the following research question: How does academic engagement influence eradication of banditry in Tiaty Sub- County, Baringo County? The study was anchored on the Social Leaning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977). Cross sectional survey research design was adopted. The target population for the study was 10 principals and 3000 students from 10 public secondary schools in Tiaty Sub county. The study used purposive sampling to select 10 principals, census sampling technique to select 10 schools and Yamane's formula was used to select 353 students. Furthermore, stratified sampling technique was adopted to select 35 students from each school. The study used questionnaires and interview guides to collect data. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and thematic analysis. Results revealed that there was a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between academic engagement and eradication of banditry, r (348) = .42, p < .05. These results were consistent with qualitative data findings. These results indicate that an increase in student academic engagement results in a significant decrease in banditry. The study recommends that all stakeholders should make efforts to intensify campaigns to have more students engaged academically in order to attract them to school and stay away from banditry. This will go a long way in eradicating banditry in Tiaty Sub County and other regions with the same problem.*

Key Words: Eradication of Banditry, Academic engagement, Public Secondary Schools

1.1 Background of the Study

Peace and security are critical prerequisites for any society's economic, social, and political development (Saaida, 2023). In recognition of the critical role of peace and security, the community of nations around the world has made significant efforts to foster global, regional and national stability (IMF, 2023; European Union, 2020). This is driven by individual nations' needs to ensure the safety and security of their citizens. In spite of the efforts made to bolster peace and security, critical challenges still exist. Such challenges include banditry, which has remained as a persistent threat in several regions and countries.

Rutto (2022) asserts that banditry manifests through criminal acts such as livestock theft, abduction for ransom, armed robbery, drug misuse, arson, sexual assault, and the gruesome massacre of individuals through the use of small and sophisticated weaponry. These bandits are commonly regarded as social outcasts, and individuals with inclination for violent crime who operate outside the law. They have no fixed abode or destination, instead they are constantly roaming through the forests and mountains in order to evade detection, identification, and arrest by law enforcement authorities and security forces.

According to UNDP (2020) report, these banditry activities are associated with socio-economic disparities and cross-border criminal networks. Governments from the East African countries have initiated a multifaceted approach to address banditry within the region. According to a study by Mesekia et al. (2022), in Tanzania focusing on various strategies, including border control measures, security operations, and intelligence-sharing agreements revealed some of the measures taken include; border control measures, security operations, and intelligence-sharing agreements. Furthermore, Nyanjom and Ongwae (2019) in their study revealed that other initiatives include community-based initiatives that include conflict resolution programs and socio-economic development initiatives, aimed at mitigating the underlying causes. In spite of the efforts made, banditry activities persist in the region underscoring the need for sustained efforts by the governments and other stakeholders within the region to identify and implement interventions that will bring about lasting peace and security within the Eastern African region.

Whenever there is a conflict in any nation, citizens look out to the government to provide solutions. So far, the Kenya government has focused on security-based solutions with little effort made to provide alternatives to the affected communities. A study by Mwangi (2022) focused on state violence, particularly the use of force by government forces during their operations in Kenya revealed that the government forces have often used force in their operations, which has been seen, at the local level as disproportionately targeting the marginalized communities. According to a study by Amunga (2022), a few efforts made to transform the lives of former bandits in Samburu County through education and skills building have shown that academic engagement can bear fruits.

With respect to banditry activities, academic engagement means providing children within affected communities with education opportunities as a long-term strategy. A study by Senga and Kiilu (2022) showed that this strategy aims at engaging vulnerable youth in learning, reduce the pool of idle youth. This decreases their susceptibility to banditry, and eventually enable the youth who have benefited from education and entrepreneurial skills to gain formal employment or to start their own businesses as an alternative means of livelihood. A study by Majau (2023) found that academic engagement is thus a critical force in eradicating banditry through its capacity to empower communities and break the cycle of poverty. This approach helps in achieving the broader objective of attaining sustainable community development through education.

The process of academic engagement should be done while considering gender equity in order to create inclusive and effective educational interventions. This will ensure equal

access to education for both genders, which will help communities to address imbalances within the society that may lead to the vulnerability of certain groups. According to UNESCO (2020) report in gender equity, Republic of Kenya (2021) giving equal education opportunities to both boys and girls helps to break down traditional barriers and nurtures a more equitable and empowered society. Addressing gender disparities properly is essential to the success of academic engagement initiatives in the affected communities.

Tiaty Sub County in Baringo County has experienced the perennial challenge of banditry that has negatively affected the social, economic, and political landscape of the region. This county is one of the counties in the North Rift that are affected by banditry. The other counties include Turkana, Elgeyo Marakwet, West Pokot, and Samburu. Baringo County is one of the areas where the government-imposed curfews in 2022 and 2023 declaring the areas as dangerous. According to the National Police Service, about 82 security personnel lost their lives in the hands of bandits in these counties between 2012 and 2022 (KIPPRA, 2024).

A complex interplay of factors is associated with the prevalence of banditry in the region. According to a study by Rutto (2022), these issues include deep-seated historical inter-community conflicts, which revolves around essential traditional resources such as water sources, and grazing lands. The recurrent violence has led to multiple negative effects that include displacement of communities, loss of lives, and destruction of property. This has created a perennial atmosphere of fear, anxiety and general insecurity in the area (Majau, 2023). Banditry has disrupted essential services such as trade, education, and healthcare resulting in an impediment of the overall development of the area. According to Owino (2024), the conflict has also led to a proliferation of small arms, as each community tries to strengthen their position and protect themselves. These further fuels the cycle of banditry in the region. KIPPRA (2024) also revealed that other factors that have exacerbated community vulnerability to engaging in banditry activities include prevalent poverty and marginalization. These intricate factors create a challenging environment that underscores the need to engage in a comprehensive approach to creating a lasting solution to the problem.

Generally, academic engagement in public schools has a great potential to transform the communities living in Tiaty Sub-county, by providing a sustainable solution to eradicate banditry in the area. Academic engagement empowers community leaders, and ensures gender inclusivity. Education is a powerful force that fosters community development, lasting peace, and the overall well-being of the communities and the entire region. Academic engagement provides a comprehensive approach that supports the achievement of holistic and sustainable transformation that can positively impact the lives of individuals and the entire community but little is known on how this can be used to address the problem of banditry in Tiaty Sub County in Baringo County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem
Tiaty Sub County in Baringo County has experienced the perennial challenge of banditry that has negatively affected the social, economic, and political landscape of the region. This includes creating a perennial atmosphere of fear, anxiety and general insecurity in the area and in schools to be specific (Majau, 2023). Banditry has disrupted essential services such

as trade, education, and healthcare resulting in an impediment of the overall development of the area. Several interventions including disarmament campaigns, security operations, and community engagement initiatives that promote community peace and reconciliation have been employed in the area (Government of Kenya, 2020; Owino, 2024). However, not much success has been realized in comprehensively addressing the root cause of the problems. The current study aimed at addressing this gap by focusing on the influence of academic engagement on eradicating banditry activities in Tiaty Sub County.The researcher examined the role of education in empowering communities, providing alternatives to banditry, and breaking the cycle of poverty. By doing this, the researcher expects that the study provides a more holistic and sustainable way of addressing the intricate issue of banditry in the region.

1.3 Research Question
How does academic engagement influence eradication of banditry in Tiaty Sub- County, Baringo County Kenya?

1.4 Theoretical Framework
The study was anchored on the Social Leaning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977). The theory posits that criminal activity is a learned behavior. According to the theory, there are four stages to acquiring human behavior. These include, attention, retention, reproduction and motivation. The theory can be used to predict criminal behavior. It can also be used in positive behavior modeling useful in reforming behavior of criminals within the criminal justice system. According to the theory, people learn from each other through observation, imitation and modeling. This implies that learning happens when through association, learners acquire values and behaviors from the environment they have been exposed to, implying learning (Yazicioglu & Aktepe, 2022). According to the theory, peoples' social environment influences whether people engage in either criminal or noncriminal behavior. This depends on what is normalized and rewarded within a given environment. Consequently, criminal behaviors are learned and can be changed by subjecting the culprits to social environment where criminal behavior is not rewarded or normalized. Education provides a conducive environment through which young minds receive positive influence that help them to develop good traits and behavior (Sospeter & Onkware, 2023). Based on the principles of the Social Leaning Theory, academic engagement can be used to engage the children within Tiaty Sub-Couty in a positive learning environment which will help them to acquire positive skills that will transform them to abandon banditry.

1.5 Review of Related Literature
Gleditsch, et al. (2021) carried out a study in Mexico to investigate the effect of education on drug related violence. The researchers used Mexico's panel data for the country's 31 states and the country's capital Mexico City over the period 1990-2015. The study's key independent variables were secondary school and tertiary college attendance. The researchers used descriptive and inferential statistics to present the study results. The study results showed that the rate of homicides reduced by close to 55% between 1992 and 2007, following education reforms that brought in compulsory secondary schooling law in 1993. The study results imply that policies that facilitate access to education for all can result in pacification and crime reduction. The study used document panel data spanning 25 years,

which is expensive and prone to a challenge of data unavailability, while the current study collected data from the field.

In another study, Bagby et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review covering Latin America and the Caribbean countries and Low- and middle-income countries that were implementing 43 USAID education-programming programs. The need for the study emanated from the need to address challenges faced by the three countries Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, which faced high levels of violence whose main perpetrators were unemployed and out of school youth. The researchers reviewed 475 studies related to the different education programs. The programs were selected based on their potential to affect violence and crime. The study results revealed that implementation of appropriate education programs can prevent youths from engaging in violence and crime. Such programs may include improved instruction either pedagogical or curricula change, providing alternative non-academic school services, improving non-academic practices, providing a safe and healthy learning environment, and changing community practices and parental behavior. Such programs can be implemented through a collaborative process within schools, in alternative education centers, and in the communities. The study was conducted in Latin America and Caribbean counties whose environmental factors are different from Kenya. The systematic review methodology could also have introduced some bias due selective reporting in a bid to satisfy the eligibility criteria. It was therefore necessary to conduct the current study using a homogeneous sample from the bandit prone northern Kenya to compare results.

In China, Zhang (2023) conducted a study to investigate the influence of education on child delinquency. The study used a sample of 1411 teenagers from 32 middle schools from Guangzhou. The study results showed that teacher-student relationship influenced children development. Negative handling of students may result in unfavorable learning environment that could promote aggressiveness and antisocial behavior among students. This could eventually lead to criminal habits. Conversely, positive interaction with teachers have positive influence on the students. The study thus shows that childhood and adolescent education plays a critical role in juvenile delinquency. It can be concluded therefore that teachers can minimize the prevalence of juvenile delinquency, by cultivating a positive learning attitude and creating a positive learning environment. The study focused on how school factors can cause or prevent juvenile delinquency while the current study focused on the influence of education on ending banditry.

Asante and Bartha (2022) conducted a study in Sub-Saharan African countries to investigate the effect of education on crime. Specifically, the researchers investigated the effect of enrolment in high school on crime rate. The researchers used macro-to-macro-level panel data from eight Sub-Saharan Africa countries that include South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Namibia, Mauritius, and Seychelles, spanning from 2003 to 2018. The researchers used homicide and theft rates as proxies for violent crime and property crime respectively. The study data were analyzed and presented using descriptive statistics. The study results revealed that increased enrolment in high school has a significant effect on reduction of property crime but not violent crime. The study used

document panel data spanning 15 years while the current study collected data from the field using a homogeneous sample from the bandit prone northern Kenya.

In Kenya, Senga and Kiilu (2021) conducted a study in Machakos County to investigate the impact of the education and unemployment on engagement of youth in conflicts within the County. The study sample comprised of 168 male and female youth respondents who were incarcerated in two prisons in Machakos town, Machakos County. The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data using semi-structured questionnaires. Data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques with the assistance of SPSS. The study findings revealed a close correlation between the level of education and engagement of youth in conflicts. The study revealed that most of the youth who engaged in conflict were unemployed and had low level of education. The study focused on youth who were incarcerated because of committing crime, while the current study focused on school youth who will be in session.

1.6 Methodology

The current study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. According to Wang and Cheng (2020), a cross-sectional survey research approach is systematic research used to collect data from a representative sample of individuals. It allows collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. This approach was suitable for the current study because it allowed the researcher to obtain appropriate both quantitative and qualitative data from the sampled students without any manipulation of the responses. It also allowed the researcher to collect qualitative data effectively from the principals using interview guides. The target population for this study consisted of all the 10 principals and 3000 students in public secondary schools in Tiaty Sub-County. The researcher used census sampling to select the schools. This sampling technique was appropriate because the target population of 10 secondary schools was small. The census sampling yielded a sample size of 10 schools for the study. To get the sample size of students, the researcher used Yamane's formula to select 353 students.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)2}$$

The researcher used stratified and simple random sampling to select the students whereby every school was targeted to produce 35 students. Stratified sampling technique was used to select students from form one to form four. Simple random sampling was used to select students from each school. The researcher used purposive sampling to select principals from the sampled schools. In this study, the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative research instruments. These included questionnaires and interview guides. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the students while interview guide was administered to the principals. Before using the research instruments on the main study, the researcher validated them and establish their reliability. The researcher submitted the instruments to the University supervisors for examination to ensure they meet face and content validity. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.88 was obtained confirming the reliability of the study instruments. To ensure dependability of the qualitative instruments, the

researcher conducted a pilot study which gave the researcher an opportunity to improve the instruments based on any noted weakness. The researcher asked comparable and relevant questions for the study using inter coder agreement approach. This was in conjunction with comments from experts and university supervisors to improve dependability of the instruments. Data collection was done by administering the questionnaires to the sampled students and interviewing the sampled principals. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the study data.

1.7 Findings and Discussion
Demographic Information of Principals and Students
Table 1 presents the demographic information of the school principals and students.
Table 1: Demographic information for Principals and Students

Category	Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Students	Gender	Male	225	64.7
		Female	123	35.3
	Age	16-18 years	296	85.1
		19-20 years	46	13.2
		21 years and above	6	1.7
	Type of School	County	117	33.6
		Sub County	231	66.4
Total			**348**	**100**
Principals	Gender	Male	6	60
		Female	4	40
	Working Experience	Below 10 years	3	30
		10-20 years	5	50
		Above 20 years	2	20
	Highest Qualification in Education	Undergraduate Degree	6	60
		Masters	4	40
		PhD	-	
Total			**10**	**100**

Source: *Field Data*

Table 1 presents data of school principals and students. For the students, the information captures gender, age, and type of school, while for the principals; the information captures gender, working experience and highest qualification in education. From a total sample of 348 students, a majority 225(64.7%) were male while 123(35.3%) were female. Thus there were gender differences whereby male respondents were more than the female respondents. Concerning the age, a majority of the students, 296(85.1%) were aged between 16-18 years, followed by 46(13.2%) of those aged between 19-20 years, and 6 (1.7%) of those aged 21 years and above. The results age differences among the students showing that most of the students were below the age of 19 years. Regarding the type of schools, a majority of students 231(66.4%) were in the sub-county type while 117(33.6%) were in the County type. Out of the 10 principals, a majority of them 6(60.0%) were male, while 4 (40.0%) were female. Thus there were gender differences whereby male principals were more than

the female principals. With respect to working experience, a majority 5(50.0%) had 10-20 years working experience, followed by 3 (30.0%) who had below 10 years of working experience, and 2(20.0%) who had above 20 years of working experience. With regard to highest level of qualification, a majority of them 6(60.0%) had an undergraduate degree, while 4 (40.0%) had masters degree.

Students Responses on the Influence of Academic Engagement on Eradication of Banditry

Table 2 shows the descriptive responses of the students about influence of academic engagement on eradication of banditry.

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
1	Regular attendance of classes contributes to raising awareness of the detrimental effects of banditry.	8(2.3%)	16(4.6%)	17(4.9%)	63(18.1%)	244(70.1%)	4.49	0.95
2	Meeting deadlines for assignments helps students develop useful skills that they can use to solve problems in society.	-	8(2.3%)	8(2.3%)	112(32.2%)	220(63.2%)	4.56	0.66
3	Active engagement in debates facilitates sharing of ideas on how to evade banditry	-	-	31(8.9%)	98(28.2%)	219(62.9%)	4.54	0.65
4	Taking keen interest in education can encourage a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the community	8(2.3%)	6(1.7%)	9(2.6%)	72(20.7%)	253(72.7%)	4.59	0.82
5	Long-term remedies can be developed with the aid of an understanding of the underlying causes of banditry	17(4.9%)	24(6.9%)	93(26.7%)	115(33%)	99(28.4%)	3.73	1.09
6	Participating in extracurricular activities can present chances to advance harmony and peace.	7(2%)	-	51(14.7%)	56(16.1%)	234(67.2%)	4.47	0.89
7	Establishing lasting connections with peers and teachers can help to foster an enabling atmosphere for dealing with banditry.	34(9.8%)	29(8.3%)	79(22.7%)	60(17.2%)	146(42%)	3.73	1.34
8	Gathering information and skills by means of learning empowers people to be instruments of transformation in the community.	-	16(4.6%)	56(16.1%)	61(17.5%)	215(61.8%)	4.36	0.91
9	Engaging in volunteering activities promotes a sense of obligation for community safety.		14(4%)	57(16.4%)	99(28.4%)	178(51.1%)	4.26	0.88
10	Individuals who develop critical thinking abilities are better equipped to	17(4.9%)	7(2%)	56(16.1%)	123(35.3%)	145(41.7%)	4.07	1.05

assess and suggest appropriate solutions to societal problems.	

Source: *Field data, 2024*

Table 2 shows the students' responses on influence of academic engagement on eradication of banditry. The first question investigated whether regular attendance of classes contributes to raising awareness of the detrimental effects of banditry. Results shows that 70.1% of the respondents strongly agreed, 18.1% agreed and 4.9% were undecided. A further 4.6% disagreed while 2.3% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 4.49 with a standard deviation of 0.95. The findings indicate that a majority (88.2%) of the respondents had the view that, regular attendance of classes contributes to raising awareness of the detrimental effects of banditry, implying that key information to eradicate banditry was given to students in class.

Another question sought to find out whether meeting deadlines for assignments helps students develop useful skills that they can use to solve problems in society. The results indicates that 63.2% of the respondents strongly agreed, 32.2% agreed and 2.3% were undecided. On the other hand, 2.3% disagreed, while none strongly disagreed. The mean score was 4.56 with a standard deviation of 0.66. The findings indicate that a majority (95.4%) of the respondents had the view that meeting deadlines for assignments helps students develop useful skills that they can use to solve problems in society, implying that students are taught problem-solving school at school, which help them to find alternative ways of solving problems other than engaging in banditry.

In another question, the respondents were asked whether active engagement in debates facilitates sharing of ideas on how to evade banditry. From the analysis, 62.9% of the respondents strongly agreed, 28.2% agreed and 8.9% were undecided. None of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score was 4.54 with a standard deviation of 0.65. The findings indicate that a majority (91.1%) of the respondents had the view that, active engagement in debates facilitates sharing of ideas on how to evade banditry, implying that through debates, students are able to acquire skills to constructively discuss matters and shun conflicts such as banditry.

Another question sought to find out whether taking keen interest in education can encourage a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the community. The results shows that 72.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 20.7% agreed and 2.6% were undecided. On the other hand, 1.7% of the respondents disagreed while 2.3% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 4.59 with a standard deviation of 0.82. The findings indicate that a majority (93.4%) of the respondents had the view that, taking keen interest in education can encourage a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the community, through education, students are taught the importance of taking responsibility to improve the welfare of their community.

The researcher further investigated whether long-term remedies can be developed with the aid of an understanding of the underlying causes of banditry. Analysis shows that, 28.4% of the respondents strongly agreed, 33.0% agreed and 26.7% were undecided. Further, 6.9% disagreed, while 4.9% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 3.73 with a standard deviation of 1.09. The findings indicate that a majority (61.4%) of the respondents had the view that, long-term remedies can be developed with the aid of an understanding of the

underlying causes of banditry, implying that teaching students the underlying causes of banditry and how they can be tackled can help in eradicating banditry.

Another question sought to find out whether participating in extracurricular activities can present chances to advance harmony and peace. Results show that 67.2% of the respondents strongly agreed, 16.1% agreed and 14.7% were undecided. A further 2.0% strongly disagreed while none disagreed. The obtained mean score was 4.47 with a standard deviation of 0.89. The findings indicate that a majority (83.3%) of the respondents had the view that, participating in extracurricular activities can present chances to advance harmony and peace, implying that through the extracurricular activities, students from different communities can develop friendships and harmonious co-existence that can help eradicate banditry.

In another question, respondents were asked whether establishing lasting connections with peers and teachers can help to foster an enabling atmosphere for dealing with banditry. Results show that, 42.0% of the respondents strongly agreed, 17.2% agreed and 22.7% were undecided. On the other hand, 8.3% disagreed while 9.8% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 3.73 with a standard deviation of 1.34. The findings indicate that a majority (59.2%) of the respondents had the view that, establishing lasting connections with peers and teachers can help to foster an enabling atmosphere for dealing with banditry, close relationships with teachers and peers creates a sense of belonging, support and trust that can help eradicate banditry.

The researcher further investigated whether gathering information and skills by means of learning empowers people to be instruments of transformation in the community. Analysis shows that 61.8% of the respondents strongly agreed, 17.5% agreed and 16.1% were undecided. A further 4.6% disagreed, while none strongly disagreed. The mean score was 4.36 with a standard deviation of 0.91. The findings show that a majority (79.3%) of the respondents had the view that, gathering information and skills by means of learning empowers people to be instruments of transformation in the community, implying that, through learning, students are empowered to apply the learned skills in activities that improve of their communities which can help eradicate banditry.

The respondents were also asked whether engaging in volunteering activities promotes a sense of obligation for community safety. The results show that, 51.1% of the respondents strongly agreed, 28.4% agreed and 16.4% were undecided. Those who disagreed were 4%, while none strongly disagreed. The obtained mean score was 4.26 with a standard deviation of 0.88. The results show that a majority (79.5%) of the respondents had the view that, engaging in volunteering activities promotes a sense of obligation for community safety, implying that through volunteering, participants connects better with community members creating a sense of belonging and obligation to improve the community including in undertaking outreach activities that can help eradicate banditry

In another question, the researcher sought to find out whether individuals who develop critical thinking abilities are better equipped to assess and suggest appropriate solutions to societal problems. From the analysis, 41.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 35.3% agreed and 16.1% were undecided. A further 2.0% disagreed, while 4.9% strongly

disagreed. The mean score was 4.07 with a standard deviation of 1.05. The results show that a majority (77.0%) of the respondents had the view that, individuals who develop critical thinking abilities are better equipped to assess and suggest appropriate solutions to societal problems, implying that through education, students are taught critical thinking skills which enables them to assess situations and propose appropriate solutions. This would include suggestions that can assist eradicate banditry.

From the views put forward by the respondents, it can be concluded that the respondents had the opinion that academic engagement played a positive role in helping to eradicate banditry. This agrees with the views advanced by Gleditsch, et al. (2021) that policies that facilitate access to education for all can result in pacification and crime reduction. Similarly, the findings agree with Asante and Bartha (2022) who found that increased enrolment in high school has a significant effect on reduction of property crime in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The students' questionnaire also had qualitative questions that asked the respondents about their opinions concerning the influence of academic engagement in eradicating banditry. The respondents identified various ways in which being in school helped them to avoid engaging in banditry. This includes, providing the students with an alternative to banditry. By being in school, the respondents avoid idle time through being fully engaged in positive learning activities and so avoid having their minds being negatively influenced to engage in banditry. Through school, the respondents learn moral values to uphold and the immoral ones to shun like banditry. Respondents are also able to practice the positive skills they are taught at school within their communities, which helps in creating community cohesion. Through learning, respondents are also taught alternative and respectable ways of earning a living which empowers them economically. This helps them in realizing that there are other economic empowerment ways other than banditry.

The respondents also indicated that learning at schools helps in raising awareness about the negatives of banditry and the alternatives that exists to banditry. Through learning at school, respondents are able to identify role models either as teachers, guest speakers or members of the society who are living good lives without engaging in banditry. This influences them to emulate them. The respondents also stated that through educations, they are able to develop critical thinking which equips them with abilities to look for appropriate solutions to societal problems, including peaceful co-existence without banditry. Respondents are also taught the benefits of collaborating with law enforcement officers who are charged with the responsibility of preventing crime that include banditry. This would help in eradicating banditry.

Through education, respondents indicated that they are able to change their thinking and learn new skills that empowers them economically enabling them to break the cycle of poverty in their communities. Thus the qualitative views given by the respondents supports the quantitative results that academic engagement played a positive role in helping to eradicate banditry. These findings agree with Zhang (2023) who found that childhood and adolescent education plays a critical role in juvenile delinquency. The findings also concur with Senga and Kiilu (2021) who found a close correlation between the level of education

and engagement of youth in conflicts. The study revealed that most of the youth who engaged in conflict were unemployed and had low level of education, thus engaging the youth in education gave them a positive alternative other than conflicts and crimes.

Principals Response on the Influence of Academic Engagement on Eradication of Banditry

The researcher used interview schedules to collect the views of the principals concerning the influence of academic engagement on eradication of banditry. The respondents identified various ways in which being in school helped them to avoid engaging in banditry. This include, consistence of school attendance which keeps the students fully engaged and provides them students with an alternative to banditry. This helps them to avoid being negatively influenced to engage in banditry. Schools also provide the students with various experiences showing students alternative career paths which motivates them to pursue such careers and shun banditry. At school, the students are able to mingle well while engaging in extra-curricular activities which help them to bond and creates friendships that extend beyond the school helping them create communal peace and harmony that prevents banditry. Engaging in academic activities helps the students to perform well academically which gives them hope for a better future through pursuit of alternative career paths other than banditry. Engaging in education also helps the students to develop an interest in further education for personal and community transformation, which may help in eradicating banditry.

The principals had the view that academic engagement has an inverse relationship with frequency of banditry in Tiaty Sub-County. This can be attributed to engaging the students in learning activities which takes them away from idle time. It may also be attributed to staying away from negative peer influence by those not academically engaged. Academic engagement also helps to minimize students drop out rates, reducing the pool of those who can be engaged in banditry. Academic engagement also keeps the students busy and gives them no time to have their attention diverted to banditry. Thus this has an overall result of reducing the frequency of banditry in Tiaty Sub-County.

The principals highlighted some of the ways that academic engagement can contribute to the efforts in combating banditry within the community. These include, educating students on consequences of banditry such being imprisoned, being injured, or killed through exchange of fire by counterpart community members or by law enforcement officers. This can be achieved through engaging students in after-school programs and involving the community to create harmonious co-existence. Having scholarship incentives also helps students to work hard to benefit from the scholarships thus helping them to steer away from banditry.

Organizing mentorship partnerships also helps to keep students engaged academically and developing interests and making efforts to become successful like their mentors. This would also help in eradicating banditry. The principals were also asked what specific operations or programs their schools had developed to encourage academic engagement among students. They gave various responses that include, organizing mentorship programs that to help students to develop interests that steers them in suitable careers like

their mentors. This helps in steering the students away from banditry. Schools also have reward systems that encourages students to stay in school, behave well, and work hard and stay away from banditry. Schools also organize extra-curricular programs including club activities that helps students to bond, form friendships and steer away from banditry.

Principals were asked whether they had discovered any associations between students' academic engagement and their participation or exposure to banditry-related activities. The principals gave various responses that include, that there was low risk of the students engaging in banditry. This was attributed to engaging students in academic activities and leaving no time for engaging in banditry. Academic engagement also took students away from peer influence by those not academically engaged. Being in school and learning new skills that widens the thinking scope of students helps to reduce recruitment of students into banditry. Outreach programs also have a positive impact as students are able to engage in their communities and attract others to be academically engaged and move away from banditry. The foregoing views show that, principals had the view that academic engagement played a positive role in eradicating banditry. These findings agree with Bagby et al. (2021) who found that implementation of appropriate education programs can prevent youths from engaging in violence and crime.

Students' Responses on Eradication of Banditry
The students were assessed on their views with respect to eradication of banditry in their community. The responses were based on 5 point Likert type scale with key: 1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5= strongly agree. Table 3 shows the descriptive responses of the students about eradication of banditry in their community.

Table 3 : Students Response On Eradication of Banditry in their Community

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	mean	SD
1	Our community has seen a decrease in violent and criminal incidents as a result of the successful efforts to end banditry	22(6.3%)	62(17.8%)	93(26.7%)	44(12.6%)	127(36.5%)	3.55	1.31
2	People in the community feel safer because of the actions that taken to curb banditry.	14(4.0%)	16(4.6%)	80(23.0%)	73(21.0%)	165(47.4%)	4.03	1.11
3	Banditry-related issues are actively being addressed by the local law enforcement forces.	16(4.6%)	38(10.9%)	90(25.9%)	106(30.5%)	98(28.2%)	3.67	1.13
4	Community-based programs that target the underlying causes of banditry are beginning to show results.	8(2.3%)	21(6.0%)	73(21.0%)	77(22.1%)	169(48.6%)	4.08	1.06
5	The community is working together to eradicate banditry with an impression of solidarity.	9(2.6%)	12(3.4%)	13(3.7%)	68(19.5%)	246(70.7%)	4.52	0.91

Source: Field data, 2024

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the respondents' responses on eradication of banditry in their community. The first question investigated whether their community has seen a decrease in violent and criminal incidents as a result of the successful efforts to end banditry. Results shows that 36.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 12.6% agreed and 26.7% were undecided. A further 17.8% disagreed while 6.3% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 3.55 with a standard deviation of 1.31. The findings indicate that a majority (49.1%) of the respondents had the view that, responses of the students about eradication of banditry in their community, indicating that there were actions that were taken within the community that were bearing fruits in reducing banditry.

Another question sought to find out whether people in the community feel safer because of the actions that were taken to curb banditry. The results indicates that 47.4% of the respondents strongly agreed, 21.0% agreed and 23.0% were undecided. On the other hand, 4.6% disagreed, while 4.0% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 4.03 with a standard deviation of 1.11. The findings indicate that a majority (68.4%) of the respondents had the view that people in the community feel safer because of the actions that taken to curb banditry. This shows that banditry increases insecurity among the community members and efforts were being made in the community to curb banditry and restores peace. In another question, the respondents were asked whether banditry-related issues are actively being addressed by the local law enforcement forces. From the analysis, 28.2% of the respondents strongly agreed, 30.5% agreed and 25.9% were undecided. 10.9% of the respondents disagreed while 4.6% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 3.67 with a standard deviation of 1.13. The findings indicate that a majority (58.7%) of the respondents had the view that, banditry-related issues are actively being addressed by the local law enforcement forces, law enforcement officers have an important role to play in eradicating banditry.

Another question sought to find out whether community-based programs that target the underlying causes of banditry are beginning to show results. The results shows that 48.6% of the respondents strongly agreed, 22.1% agreed and 21.0% were undecided. On the other hand, 6.0% of the respondents disagreed while 2.3% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 4.08 with a standard deviation of 1.06. The findings indicate that a majority (70.7%) of the respondents had the view that, community-based programs that target the underlying causes of banditry are beginning to show results, this implies that such community-based programs should be enhanced for better effects on eradicating banditry.

The researcher further investigated whether the community is working together to eradicate banditry with an impression of solidarity. Analysis shows that, 70.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 19.5% agreed and 3.7% were undecided. Further, 3.4% disagreed, while 2.6% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 4.52 with a standard deviation of 0.91. The findings indicate that a majority (90.2%) of the respondents had the view that, the community is working together to eradicate banditry with an impression of solidarity, implying that concerted effort by the community can help in eradicating banditry. These findings agree with Srenori et al. (2023), who found that a mixed strategy approach that include targeted socio-economic interventions, and community engagement initiatives can be used to combat banditry and gang-related crimes. The findings also agree with Nyanjom and Ongwae (2019) who revealed that community-based initiatives that include conflict resolution programs and socio-economic development initiatives, aimed at mitigating the underlying causes can reduce banditry.

The students' questionnaire also had qualitative questions that asked the respondents about their opinions concerning what all education stakeholders had done to eradicate banditry in the area. The respondents stated that through the efforts of education stakeholders, schools that had been closed due to insecurity associated with banditry had been opened. The respondents also stated that the stakeholders had cooperated with community members and law enforcement officers to organize peace forums and enhance security operations. The stakeholders have also organized community education initiatives including construction of new schools for increased academic engagement, which has contributed to eradicating banditry. These findings concurs with Karo and Nyakundi (2023) who found that appropriate collaboration among teachers, community leaders and other education stakeholders can bring about successful academic engagement programs which are likely to be highly impactful in eradicating banditry.

Hypothesis Testing
The aim of this research was to investigate how academic engagement influences eradication of banditry in Tiaty Sub County, Baringo County Kenya. The Pearson product moment correlation test was run on the following null hypothesis:
Ho_1: Academic engagement plays no significant role in eradicating banditry in Tiaty Sub- County, Baringo County Kenya.
The results of the test are presented in Table 4.
Table 4: Correlation between academic engagement and eradication of banditry

		Eradication of Banditry
Academic engagement	Pearson Correlation	.42**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00
	N	348

The results presented in Table 4 show that there was a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between academic engagement and eradication of banditry, r (348) = .42, p < .05. These results indicate that an increase in student academic engagement resulted in a significant decrease in banditry. This was contrary to the null hypothesis, and as such, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that academic engagement was significantly related to eradication of banditry. These findings concurs with Sospeter and Onkware (2023) who found that education provides a conducive environment through which young minds receive positive influence that help them to develop good traits and behavior such as avoiding banditry. The results also agree with Gleditsch, et al. (2021) who found that policies that facilitate access to education for all can result in pacification and crime reduction.

1.8 Conclusion and Recommendations
The research question of the study sought to find out how academic engagement influence eradication of banditry in Tiaty Sub- County, Baringo County Kenya. From the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative results of the views put forward by the respondents, it was established that the respondents had the opinion that academic engagement played a positive role in helping to eradicate banditry. Pearson product moment correlation test established that there exists a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between academic engagement and eradication of banditry. This was indicative that an increase in student academic engagement resulted in a significant decrease in banditry. Since the study results showed a significant relationship between academic engagement and eradication of

banditry, it is imperative that all stakeholders should make efforts to intensify campaigns to have more students engaged academically in order to attract more students to school and away from banditry. This will go a long way in eradicating banditry in Tiaty Sub County and other regions with the same problem.

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