

# Economic Factors Influencing the Increase in Insecurity in Gudele Payam

John Manut Wol Deng<sup>1,\*</sup>, Erick K. Bor<sup>2</sup>, and Kibet Ngetich<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

The rising insecurity in Juba, South Sudan, is a major concern for residents and a challenge for local security forces. This article examines the relationship between economic factors such as unemployment, poverty, and informal markets and the increasing insecurity in Gudele Payam, a district in Juba. Using a mixed-methods approach, including structured interviews and surveys, the research gathered community insights on how economic conditions impact safety. Data analysis revealed a significant link between economic hardships and insecurity, with 72% of participants citing unemployment as a key factor.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Insecurity, South Sudan.

Submitted: September 29, 2024

Published: December 11, 2024

 10.24018/ejsocial.2024.4.6.569

<sup>1</sup>Master of Arts in Security Management, Egerton University, Kenya.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Peace, Security, and Social Studies, Egerton University, Kenya.

\*Corresponding Author:  
e-mail: johnmanutw@gmail.com

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since gaining independence in 2011, South Sudan, the world's youngest nation, has faced significant challenges, particularly in urban areas like Gudele Payam in Juba, where security is a major concern. High unemployment leaves individuals, particularly youth, without legitimate income sources, driving them to criminal activities. Similarly, poverty fosters desperation that leads to theft and robbery. Meanwhile, inadequate public services exacerbate vulnerabilities, leaving communities exposed to increased crime. This study will examine how limited job opportunities, poor educational access, and inadequate infrastructure drive desperation and crime rates. It will also assess the broader impacts of insecurity on community dynamics and social cohesion, highlighting the need to understand the root causes for effective intervention. The findings aim to help policymakers and community leaders develop integrated strategies to address economic and security challenges in South Sudan. This article explores the link between economic challenges and insecurity in Gudele Payam, shedding light on factors contributing to crime and community vulnerabilities in South Sudan. The study aims to foster discussions and initiatives for creating safer, more resilient urban environments. A significant percentage of respondents emphasize the urgent need for job creation and employment opportunities to reduce crime and social unrest. Notably, 68% identified poverty as a key driver of criminal behavior, while 61% indicated that informal markets exacerbate insecurity. These findings suggest that rising crime rates in Gudele Payam are linked to economic conditions rather than individual actions. The research advocates for economic reforms aimed at reducing unemployment, alleviating poverty, and regulating informal markets to enhance community safety. A comprehensive strategy addressing these issues is essential, urging collaboration among government, NGOs, and community leaders to tackle the root causes of insecurity.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In rapidly growing urban areas, limited economic opportunities and poor infrastructure can increase insecurity. Research shows that economic distress, especially among disadvantaged groups, contributes to criminal behavior, with high unemployment and poverty linked to rising crime rates. Urban criminology indicates that neighborhoods facing these issues are more susceptible to theft and assault.



For example, [Ferrie \(2011\)](#) notes that economic decline in post-conflict regions like South Sudan leads to informal economies and increased crime. Similarly, [Wilson and Low \(2019\)](#) argue that a lack of legitimate job opportunities drives individuals to crime, worsening community insecurity. In Gudele Payam, unemployment and poverty are significant factors in insecurity, pushing many to crime for survival, while unregulated informal markets exacerbate illegal trade.

### *2.1. Routine Activity Theory*

In Gudele Payam, the lack of job opportunities aligns with [Cohen and Felson's \(1979\)](#) assertion that economic hardship increases the pool of motivated offenders, as evidenced by this study's finding that 72% of respondents identified unemployment as a key driver of insecurity. Economic hardships, such as unemployment and poverty, increase the number of motivated offenders seeking financial gain, leading to crimes like theft and robbery. These conditions create environments with vulnerable targets and reduce the presence of guardians, such as police. In Gudele Payam, this is evident in informal markets where a lack of security fosters criminal activity. Research shows these factors are more pronounced in economically disadvantaged areas, with [Cohen and Felson \(1979\)](#) noting that unstable economies and ineffective law enforcement contribute to criminal hotspots, particularly in informal settlements like Gudele Payam.

### *2.2. Social Disorganization Theory*

The Social Disorganization Theory, introduced by [Kubrin and Weitzer \(2003\)](#), connects crime rates to the decline of social institutions, worsened by economic issues like poverty and unemployment. In Gudele Payam, economic hardships have weakened community support, leading to reduced social cohesion and increased crime. Residents have lost trust in local authorities, with some resorting to vigilante justice due to ineffective law enforcement. [Sampson and Groves \(1989\)](#) argue that economic disinvestment undermines community efficacy and crime prevention. In Gudele Payam, job scarcity disrupts social networks, diminishing the community's ability to tackle insecurity. [Kubrin and Weitzer \(2003\)](#) highlight that social disorganization is more pronounced in areas with concentrated economic deprivation, correlating with higher crime rates.

### *2.3. Empirical Evidence Linking Economic Factors to Insecurity*

Empirical studies indicate that economic factors significantly contribute to urban insecurity. [Justino \(2012\)](#) found that economic inequality in conflict zones increases community tensions and crime. In South Sudan, [Schomerus and Allen \(2010\)](#) linked limited economic opportunities and poor governance to higher criminal activity. In the Gudele Payam study, 72% of participants identified unemployment as a key insecurity factor, while 68% cited poverty. Additionally, 61% noted that unregulated informal markets contribute to theft, supporting [Lacher's \(2012\)](#) claim that informal economies heighten urban insecurity. Routine Activity Theory and Social Disorganization Theory explain how poverty, unemployment, and informal economies escalate insecurity in Gudele Payam. Addressing these issues requires targeted economic reforms, community revitalization, and improved law enforcement.

## 3. METHOD

### *3.1. Research Design*

The study used a descriptive survey methodology to examine economic factors contributing to rising insecurity in Gudele Payam, Juba, South Sudan. This approach analyzed variables such as unemployment, poverty, and informal markets, allowing for both qualitative and quantitative data collection. A cross-sectional design captured data from participants at a single point in time, linking the economic environment to increasing insecurity and enabling statistical analysis of trends and correlations between economic hardship and crime rates.

### *3.2. Area of Study*

The study took place in Gudele Payam, a peri-urban area in Juba, South Sudan, selected for its blend of formal and informal housing and notable security challenges. As Juba's largest administrative division, Gudele Payam has densely populated informal settlements and structured neighborhoods, characterized by rapid urbanization, high unemployment, and poverty. These conditions, along with complex security issues, make it a crucial site for exploring the connections between economic factors and crime, particularly how socio-economic stressors contribute to criminal behavior and community vulnerability.

### 3.3. Study Population

The research focused on heads of households, local entrepreneurs, and community leaders in Gudele Payam to understand the area's economic challenges and insecurity. This group was chosen for their firsthand experiences. To reflect the region's socio-economic diversity, a representative sample was selected across various demographics, including age, gender, and socio-economic status, along with key informants like community leaders and local officials. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure the sample accurately represented the community's characteristics.

### 3.4. Sampling and Sample Size

The study employed stratified random sampling to select 250 participants from Gudele Payam, ensuring representation across various socio-economic and geographical demographics. Strata were based on geographical divisions and socio-economic factors like income and employment, with proportional representation from both informal settlements and structured neighborhoods. Key informants, including local officials and community leaders, were also included through purposive sampling to provide insights into local security issues. Of the 250 participants targeted, 230 completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 92%. Stratified random sampling ensured representation across socio-economic strata, while adjustments for non-response bias were made by weighting responses according to demographic proportions.

### 3.5. Data Collection Methods

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies to achieve a thorough understanding of the economic elements contributing to insecurity in Gudele Payam.

#### 3.5.1. Surveys

Structured surveys were administered to a chosen sample of residents. These surveys included a combination of closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items aimed at gathering quantitative data regarding perceptions of economic issues such as unemployment, poverty, and informal markets, alongside the prevalence of criminal activities. This method was selected for its effectiveness in obtaining standardized data from a broad sample, which was subsequently analyzed through statistical techniques. Research assistants, trained to maintain consistency and clarity in the data collection process, facilitated the administration of the surveys.

#### 3.5.2. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with key stakeholders, including community leaders, local entrepreneurs, and law enforcement representatives. These interviews yielded qualitative data that enriched the understanding of the relationship between economic factors and insecurity in the region. The semi-structured design enabled the interviewer to delve into participants' experiences, viewpoints, and insights regarding economic challenges and crime, while also permitting flexibility to address specific topics that emerged during the discussions.

#### 3.5.3. Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with resident groups to enable a collective examination of shared experiences concerning insecurity. These discussions proved particularly valuable in elucidating community perceptions regarding economic difficulties and criminal activity, as well as in identifying potential community-led strategies to address insecurity. Each focus group consisted of 8 to 10 participants, with discussions facilitated by a moderator who utilized a pre-established discussion guide.

#### 3.5.4. Document Review

In addition to the primary data collected, the study also examined secondary sources, including official police reports, government publications, and prior research studies. This review provided essential context and contributed to the triangulation of findings derived from the primary data. The documents analyzed included crime statistics from the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS) and reports from local government authorities concerning the economic conditions in Gudele Payam.

### 3.6. Data Analysis

The data analysis employed a bifocal methodology, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics and correlation analysis of variables like unemployment, poverty, and crime rates. Simultaneously, qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were thematically analyzed, revealing key themes such as

economic distress and community resilience. This combined approach enhanced the understanding of participants' perspectives on the economic factors contributing to insecurity in Gudele Payam.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Economic Factors Influencing Insecurity

The research identified three key economic factors driving insecurity in Gudele Payam: unemployment, poverty, and informal markets. These elements significantly impact crime rates in the region. The following sections will explore these findings and their implications for the overall security situation in Gudele Payam.

#### 4.1.1. Unemployment

Unemployment is the main economic factor driving insecurity in Gudele Payam, with 72% of respondents associating it with rising crime. The absence of formal job opportunities has left many, particularly youth, susceptible to illegal activities like theft and robbery, as they often resort to crime for survival. For instance, the correlation between unemployment and crime rates was statistically significant ( $r = 0.65$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a strong positive relationship.

A key informant from the local community remarked:

We have many youths who are educated but have no jobs. They spend their days idling around, and in the evening, some of them engage in criminal activities just to make ends meet.

Rising unemployment due to slow economic growth and regional instability has fueled frustration in communities, leading to "motivated offenders" who view crime as a financial solution. In youth-heavy areas, especially informal settlements, theft and violence have surged. Social Disorganization Theory posits that unemployment undermines community structures and informal controls. As survival takes precedence, community participation declines, weakening cohesion and increasing vulnerability to crime.

#### 4.1.2. Poverty

Poverty is a significant economic issue tied to insecurity, with 68% of respondents identifying it as a primary concern. The study reveals that widespread poverty in Gudele Payam has led to increased petty crimes, as financially distressed individuals turn to theft and burglary to meet basic needs. Many households struggle to access food, healthcare, and education, fostering desperation and increasing the likelihood of criminal behavior.

One respondent expressed the severity of the situation:

Poverty is everywhere. When people have nothing, they will do anything to survive. This is why we see so much crime around here.

The relationship between poverty and crime in Gudele Payam aligns with [Ferrie \(2011\)](#), indicating that economic hardship heightens urban insecurity. Social Disorganization Theory posits that poverty undermines community cohesion, leading to less collective crime response. In Gudele Payam, higher poverty levels are linked to increased theft and burglary. Furthermore, poverty hampers reintegration for those in the criminal justice system, trapping them in a cycle of crime and instability, which perpetuates insecurity and undermines residents' safety.

#### 4.1.3. Informal Markets

61% of respondents noted that informal markets contribute to rising insecurity. Gudele Payam has several unregulated informal markets, which, despite providing economic opportunities, are often viewed as centers of criminal activity due to their lack of oversight and security.

A community leader described the situation as follows:

The informal markets are full of people, but there is no regulation. This allows criminals to hide among the traders and steal from customers or even engage in more serious crimes.

Informal markets, characterized by a lack of regulatory oversight and inadequate security measures, allow criminals to operate with impunity. For instance, traders and customers frequently report theft due to poor lighting and crowd density, creating opportunities for motivated offenders. The Routine

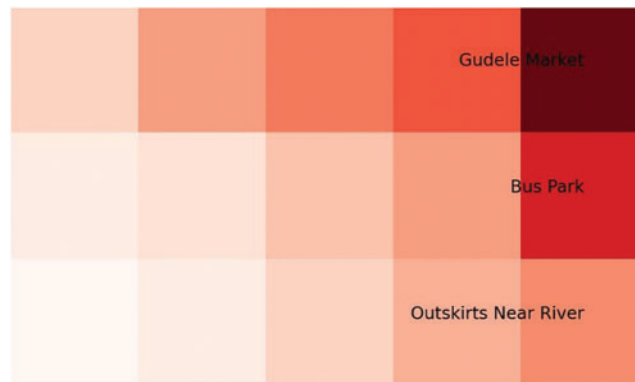


Fig. 1. Map of Gudele Payam highlighting crime hotspots.

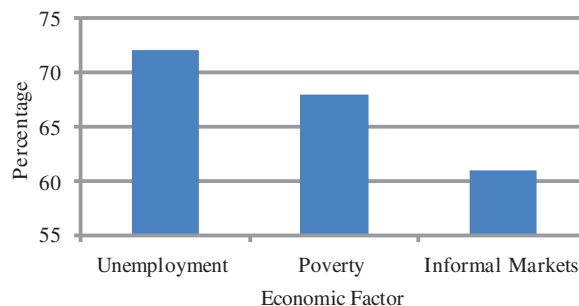


Fig. 2. Bar chart showing the distribution of economic factors contributing to insecurity.

Activity Theory indicates that motivated offenders target vulnerable individuals in areas with weak guardianship, like law enforcement. As shown in Fig. 1, the central market and bus terminal as the most dangerous locations due to high foot traffic and poor lighting, which enable unnoticed crimes.

The absence of formal regulations in these markets creates accountability issues, leading to frequent conflicts among vendors and between customers and traders, often escalating into violence. Participants noted that physical confrontations are common, worsening regional insecurity. Establishing formal structures and basic security protocols could significantly reduce criminal activity. Fig. 2 demonstrates the prevalence of economic factors like unemployment and poverty in contributing to insecurity, as evidenced by survey responses.

Fig. 2 shows the distribution of economic factors contributing to insecurity, illustrating unemployment (72%), poverty (68%), and informal markets (61%) as major drivers. Routine Activity Theory suggests unstable jobs allow offenders to target vulnerable individuals, while Social Disorganization Theory indicates that poverty weakens social cohesion and crime control. These trends are common in post-conflict urban areas, where economic struggles and poor governance increase crime. To enhance security and living standards, interventions like job creation, poverty alleviation, and formalizing informal markets are crucial. The research emphasizes the importance of community engagement and stronger social structures to address insecurity, advocating for solidarity and expanded economic opportunities to mitigate the effects of unemployment and poverty on public safety.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study highlights key economic factors contributing to insecurity in Gudele Payam, such as unemployment, poverty, and unregulated informal markets. High youth unemployment has led to increased crime, while ongoing poverty drives individuals to commit crimes for survival. Addressing these issues requires job creation, poverty reduction, and formalizing informal markets. The research underscores the need for community engagement and social cohesion to deter crime, along with reforming law enforcement for a stronger police presence in high-crime areas. In summary, a comprehensive approach that combines economic development, regulatory reforms, and community cooperation is essential to enhance security and stability in Gudele Payam.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1. Address Economic Factors Contributing to Insecurity



Fig. 3. Recommendations flowchart.

Fig. 3 provides targeted interventions to address economic factors contributing to insecurity in Gudele Payam, focusing on reducing unemployment, alleviating poverty, and regulating informal markets to enhance regional security and stability.

### 6.2. Job Creation and Vocational Training Programs

Creating job opportunities and vocational training programs is crucial for the unemployed youth in Gudele Payam. Collaboration among the government, private sector, and NGOs is needed to establish vocational centers that offer relevant skills. Incentives like tax breaks can attract businesses and improve local employment. Promoting micro-financing initiatives will also help community members start small businesses by providing capital and financial training. These strategies aim to reduce unemployment and the risk of crime due to financial hardship.

### 6.3. Poverty Alleviation Programs

Comprehensive strategies are essential to tackle poverty and insecurity in Gudele Payam. Suggested measures include conditional cash transfers for vulnerable households to boost community security and skill development. Strengthening social safety nets by enhancing access to healthcare, education, and food security can alleviate crime-related pressures. Promoting agricultural development and urban farming will also help residents achieve self-sufficiency and reduce dependence on informal economies.

### 6.4. Formalization and Regulation of Informal Markets

The unregulated informal markets in Gudele Payam contribute to insecurity. Proposed strategies to combat crime include formalizing markets by registering vendors, improving infrastructure, creating market security committees with traders, community leaders, and law enforcement, and offering small business training and micro-financing to transition informal businesses to the formal economy. These measures aim to regulate operations, deter illegal activities, and reduce crime.

### 6.5. Strengthening Community Policing and Social Cohesion

Enhancing the relationship between law enforcement and the community is crucial for addressing insecurity. Community policing initiatives can promote collaboration between residents and police, rebuilding trust. Outreach programs, such as sports events and interfaith dialogues, can strengthen social cohesion. Furthermore, neighborhood watch groups empower residents to actively protect their communities and support community-led security efforts.

### 6.6. Improving Law Enforcement Effectiveness

Gudele Payam's security apparatus must enhance its capabilities to address rising insecurity by increasing police presence in high-crime areas, training law enforcement in community engagement, and investing in advanced surveillance technologies like CCTV. These measures will improve safety, reduce crime, and foster economic development.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

## REFERENCES

- Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American Sociological Review*, 44(4), 588–608.

- Ferrie, J. (2011). Urban poverty and violence in post-conflict settings: The South Sudan context. *Journal of Peace and Security Studies*, 7(2), 45–67.
- Justino, P. (2012). War and poverty. In M. R. Garfinkel, & S. Skaperdas (Eds.), *Handbook of the economics of peace and conflict* (vol. 2, pp. 543–561). Oxford University Press.
- Kubrin, C. E., & Weitzer, R. (2003). New directions in social disorganization theory. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 40(4), 374–402.
- Lacher, W. (2012). South Sudan: The challenges of insecurity and instability. *International Crisis Group Report*, 19(1), 1–27.
- Sampson, R. J., & Groves, W. B. (1989). Community structure and crime: Testing social-disorganization theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(4), 774–802.
- Schomerus, M., & Allen, T. (2010). Governance and insecurity in South Sudan. *African Affairs*, 109(436), 301–317.
- Wilson, J. Q., & Low, K. (2019). Economic challenges and urban insecurity in post-conflict societies. *Urban Studies Journal*, 56(8), 1458–1475.