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IN KENYA**

## **Influence of Social-Economic Status on the Prevalence of Economic Crimes in Mariakani Township, Kilifi County**

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### **Abstract**

*The study aimed to investigate the influence of socioeconomic status on the prevalence of theft, fraud, and embezzlement in Mariakani Township, Kilifi County, Kenya. Drawing upon Social Disorganization Theory and Rational Choice Theory, the research sought to elucidate the complex interplay between poverty and criminal behaviour within the specific context of Mariakani Township. A descriptive research design was adopted, utilizing guided questionnaires, interview schedules, and analysis of crime reports to systematically explore the research objectives. Sampling procedures involved purposive sampling to select Mariakani Township as the study area, followed by systematic random sampling to ensure unbiased representation of residents. Data analysis techniques included descriptive statistics to summarize quantitative data and thematic analysis to identify recurring themes within qualitative data. The study results revealed a widespread belief among respondents regarding the correlation between low socioeconomic status and theft occurrence, with a significant portion reporting frequent encounters with theft-related incidents in economically disadvantaged areas. Similarly, concerning proportions of respondents recognized the influence of socioeconomic status on fraud and embezzlement, with a substantial portion encountering these crimes frequently for fraud and for embezzlement in low socioeconomic status neighbourhoods. The findings underscore the significant impact of socioeconomic status on the prevalence of economic crimes in Mariakani Township, aligning with existing literature and highlighting poverty as a significant predictor of economic crimes. Addressing these disparities through targeted interventions, such as community-based initiatives, enhanced law enforcement efforts, public awareness campaigns, and policy reforms, will be crucial to effectively mitigate economic crimes and improve the socio-economic well-being of the community.*

**Key words:** Socioeconomic status; Theft; Fraud; Embezzlement

### **1. Introduction**

The study undertaken in Mariakani Township, Kilifi County, Kenya, is driven by a set of three primary objectives, all aimed at comprehensively understanding the influence of socioeconomic status on the prevalence of economic crimes within the community. Firstly, the research seeks to assess the influence of socioeconomic status on the prevalence of theft in Mariakani Township, considering the socio-economic conditions that may predispose individuals to engage in such criminal activities. Secondly, the study endeavors to analyze the influence of socioeconomic status on the occurrence of fraud within the community, aiming to elucidate the relationship between economic vulnerability and fraudulent behavior among residents. Lastly, the research aims to explore the influence of socioeconomic status on the occurrence of embezzlement in Mariakani Township, focusing on how economic disparities within the community may contribute to instances of embezzlement. These objectives collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between socioeconomic status and economic crimes specific to Mariakani Township, thereby informing the development of targeted interventions to address these issues and improve community well-being.



The relationship between socioeconomic status and criminal behavior, particularly economic crimes, has garnered considerable attention in academic research. This interest stems from the recognition that individuals' economic circumstances can significantly impact their propensity to engage in criminal activities. In the specific context of Mariakani Township, situated within Kilifi County, Kenya, understanding the influence of socioeconomic status on the prevalence of economic crimes is imperative for crafting interventions that address the unique needs of the local community. Mariakani Township's socio-economic landscape is characterized by disparities in access to resources and opportunities, which can exacerbate social inequalities and contribute to criminal behavior. By examining how socioeconomic factors intersect with the occurrence of economic crimes in Mariakani Township, researchers can gain insights into the underlying mechanisms driving such behaviors and identify targeted strategies to mitigate them. This understanding is crucial for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations seeking to develop effective interventions that address the root causes of economic crimes and promote social cohesion and well-being within Mariakani Township and similar communities.

Research conducted globally has firmly established a discernible link between socioeconomic status and the heightened prevalence of economic crimes, encompassing theft, fraud, and embezzlement (Gupta & Smith, 2020). This connection is deeply rooted in the economic pressures experienced by individuals residing in impoverished conditions, compelling them to resort to illicit activities as a means of fulfilling their fundamental needs (Benson & Johnson, 2018). However, while these global studies offer invaluable insights into the overarching relationship between socioeconomic status and economic crimes, it is imperative to delve into the intricacies within specific localities to formulate interventions that are finely attuned to the distinct challenges and dynamics of each community. Understanding the localized manifestations of this relationship is essential for developing targeted interventions that effectively address the underlying socio-economic determinants of criminal behavior, thereby fostering community resilience and well-being. Through a focused examination of the dynamics within Mariakani Township, located in Kilifi County, Kenya, this research endeavors to contribute nuanced insights that can inform the development of tailored interventions aimed at mitigating economic crimes and promoting socio-economic development within the local context.

Studies conducted in East Africa have initiated an exploration into the intricate relationship between socioeconomic status and criminal behavior. Mukami and Wambui (2022) contributed to this growing body of literature by uncovering a significant correlation between areas characterized by low socioeconomic status and heightened prevalence of economic crimes. Their findings underscore the imperative of delving into localized contexts to comprehend the nuances of this relationship. Specifically, the study highlights the relevance of considering the unique socio-economic landscape of Mariakani Township within Kilifi County, Kenya, in tackling economic crime effectively. By acknowledging the localized manifestations of socioeconomic influences on criminal behavior, policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and community stakeholders can devise targeted interventions that address the root causes of economic crimes and foster sustainable socio-economic development within Mariakani Township and analogous communities in East Africa.

Furthermore, local studies conducted in rural and peri-urban communities neighboring Mariakani Township have shed light on the distinct challenges encountered by these localities (Wambua & Mutua, 2020; Akinyi & Omondi, 2018). These investigations have underscored the significant influence of socioeconomic status on criminal behavior and have emphasized the necessity for interventions that are intricately tailored to the specific nuances of the local context. By recognizing the interplay between socioeconomic factors and criminal activities in these adjacent communities, these studies provide valuable insights into the complexities of addressing economic crimes in Mariakani Township. Incorporating the findings of these localized studies into the broader examination of the influence of socioeconomic status on economic crimes in Mariakani Township enables a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. This holistic approach is crucial for informing the development of effective interventions that address the root causes of economic crimes and promote community well-being within Mariakani Township and its surrounding area.

Despite the wealth of research examining the relationship between socioeconomic status and criminality, there remains a conspicuous gap in the literature pertaining to this issue within the distinct context of Mariakani Township. Thus, the primary objective of this study was to fill this void by conducting a comprehensive analysis of how socioeconomic status influences the prevalence of economic crimes in Mariakani Township, located within Kilifi County. By narrowing the focus to this specific locality, the study aimed to offer nuanced insights that could inform the



development of targeted interventions and policies geared towards mitigating economic crime and ameliorating poverty within the community. Through a meticulous examination of the socio-economic dynamics unique to Mariakani Township, this research endeavors to contribute to the body of knowledge on the subject while offering practical implications for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and community stakeholders striving to enhance the socio-economic well-being and safety of Mariakani Township's residents.

The economic landscape of Mariakani Township, situated within Kilifi County, Kenya, exhibits a distinct correlation between socioeconomic status and the prevalence of economic crimes. Despite being part of a region where overall crime rates may not be as pronounced, Mariakani Township stands out due to disproportionately high levels of economic offenses such as theft, fraud, and embezzlement. This disparity becomes particularly evident when considering the prevalence of individuals living in low socioeconomic conditions within Mariakani Township compared to adjacent areas. Limited access to essential resources and opportunities exacerbates social tensions and conflicts over employment, land, and basic services, fueling the perpetuation of economic crimes. Through statistical data and anecdotal evidence, it is evident that the socioeconomic vulnerability of a significant portion of Mariakani Township's population plays a pivotal role in sustaining various forms of economic criminal activities.

Understanding the complex interplay between socioeconomic status and economic crimes within Mariakani Township holds practical implications for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations. By delving into the underlying socio-economic factors driving criminal behaviors, this research aims to provide valuable insights to formulate targeted interventions aimed at reducing crime rates and fostering community well-being. Furthermore, the focus on Mariakani Township fills a critical void in existing literature, shedding light on the unique socio-economic dynamics of smaller, localized communities often overlooked in broader studies. The insights garnered from this research not only inform policy and practice within Mariakani Township but also hold relevance for analogous communities across Kenya and beyond. Through strategic resource allocation and implementation of targeted interventions, local authorities and community organizations can address root causes such as poverty and unemployment, facilitating pathways to socio-economic empowerment and contributing to crime prevention efforts.

## 2. Research Methods

The research employed a descriptive research design to systematically investigate the influence of poverty on criminal activities in Mariakani Township, aligning with the study's objectives. This approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics, behaviors, and patterns associated with the phenomena being studied. Data collection methods included guided questionnaires, interview schedules, and analysis of crime reports, aiming to gather both qualitative and quantitative insights from residents, law enforcement officials, and community stakeholders. Sampling procedures involved purposive and systematic random sampling to ensure representation from within the township, with a sample size of 395 residents and 10 key informants determined using Slovin's formula. Data collection activities were conducted by trained enumerators and interviewers, adhering to ethical guidelines to safeguard participants' rights and privacy. Data analysis techniques encompassed descriptive statistics, thematic analysis, and data visualization to examine numerical data, identify recurring themes within qualitative data, and visually represent trends and relationships present in the findings.

The utilization of a mixed-methods approach and systematic data collection and analysis techniques enabled a thorough exploration of the research questions, providing a nuanced understanding of the influence of poverty on criminality in Mariakani Township. This approach facilitated the provision of detailed insights into the factors shaping this relationship, informing both academic discourse and practical policy-making endeavors. Through rigorous sampling procedures, meticulous data collection methods, and comprehensive data analysis techniques, the study aimed to contribute valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge on the subject while offering practical implications for addressing economic crime and poverty within Mariakani Township and similar communities.

The data collected in this study underwent analysis using a variety of techniques and procedures tailored to explore the influence of poverty on criminality in Mariakani Township. The analysis began with descriptive statistics to examine and present quantitative data. Measures of central tendency, such as mean, median, and mode, were calculated for variables such as income, crime rates, and education levels. These statistics provided a clear summary of the numerical data, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of key factors related to poverty and criminal behavior. Qualitative data obtained through interviews with residents, law enforcement personnel, and community organizations



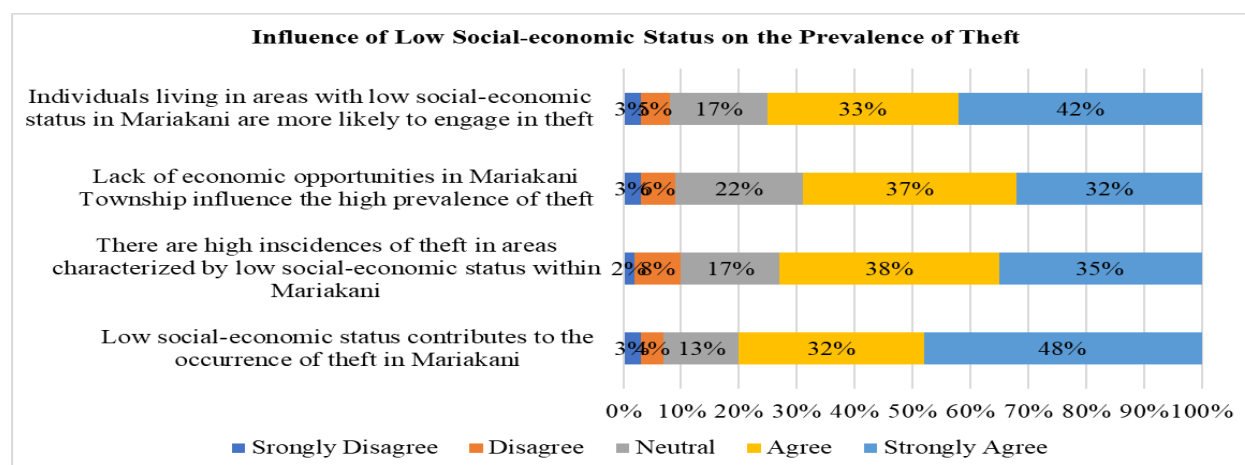
underwent thematic analysis. This technique involved identifying recurring themes and patterns within the qualitative data, thereby offering valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of individuals and groups within the community. Thematic analysis facilitated the exploration of complex issues surrounding poverty and criminality, capturing diverse perspectives and narratives.

In addition to descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, data visualization techniques were employed to enhance the interpretation of findings. Bar charts, line graphs, and scatter plots were used to visually represent trends and relationships present in the data. These visualizations provided a clear and intuitive way to communicate key findings, allowing for easier interpretation and understanding by both researchers and stakeholders.

### 3.0 Result and Discussions

#### 3.1 Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Prevalence of Theft

The section delves into the influence of low socioeconomic status on the prevalence of theft in Mariakani Township, Kilifi County, Kenya. By analyzing survey responses regarding perceptions of theft and socioeconomic status, the study endeavored to shed light on the dynamics underlying this form of economic crime. Theft, encompassing various forms of property crime, often reflects broader socio-economic disparities and challenges faced by individuals in economically disadvantaged areas. The results are presented in figure1.



**Fig 1: Influence of Low Social-economic Status on the Prevalence of Theft**

Firstly, 80% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that low socioeconomic status contributes to the occurrence of theft in Mariakani Township. This substantial agreement among respondents underscores a widespread belief in the direct association between poverty and theft. This aligns with existing literature, such as studies by Gupta and Smith (2020) and Benson and Johnson (2018), which emphasize the economic pressures faced by individuals living in poverty, often leading them to resort to criminal activities for financial gain.

Moreover, regarding the frequency of theft observations in economically disadvantaged areas within Mariakani Township, 73% of respondents reported encountering theft occasionally, frequently, or very frequently. This indicates a significant prevalence of theft-related incidents in neighborhoods with low socioeconomic status. These findings echo those of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Report (2021) and studies by Mukami and Wambui (2022), which highlighted the higher prevalence of theft in regions with high poverty rates.

Furthermore, 68% of respondents believed that the lack of economic opportunities in Mariakani Township influences the prevalence of theft among individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This perception underscores the community's recognition of the impact of economic disparities on criminal behaviors. This finding is consistent with research by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2019) and Kariuki and Ndungu (2020), which have emphasized the link between poverty and theft driven by limited economic opportunities.

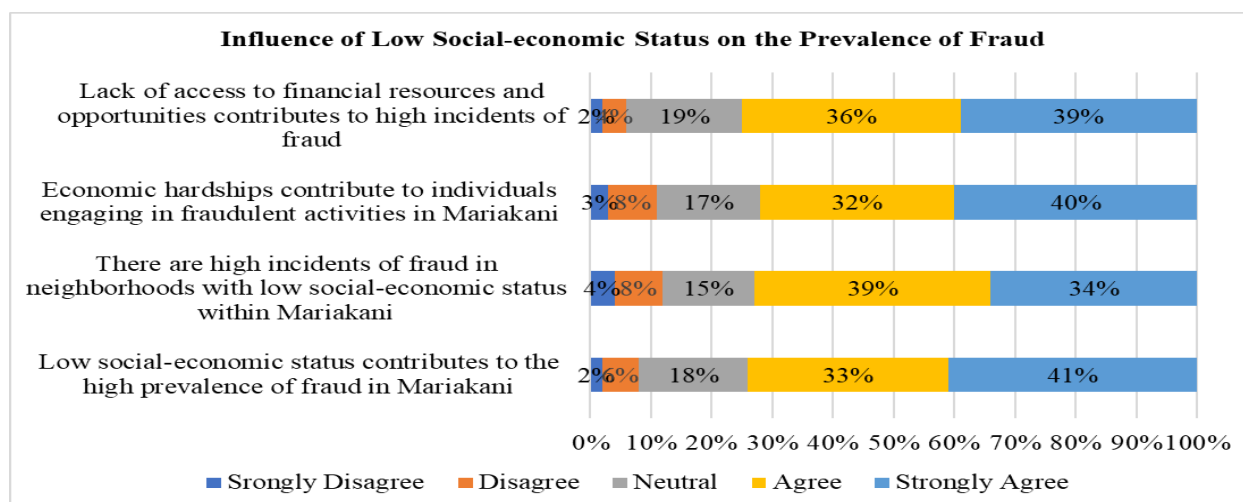


Lastly, 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that individuals from areas with low socioeconomic status are more likely to engage in theft compared to those from higher socio-economic backgrounds. This perception reflects a widespread belief in the increased susceptibility of economically disadvantaged individuals to engage in theft-related offenses. These findings align with studies by Gupta and Smith (2020) and the East African Community (EAC) Economic Crime Report (2021), which have highlighted the higher incidence of theft in economically deprived regions.

Overall, the study's findings resonate with existing literature, emphasizing the intricate relationship between poverty and theft prevalence. Addressing economic disparities and enhancing economic opportunities are crucial steps in mitigating theft-related offenses in Mariakani Township and similar communities globally

### 3.2 Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Occurrence of Fraud

Fraud, a prevalent economic crime, poses significant challenges to communities, particularly those characterized by low socioeconomic status. This section explores the influence of low socioeconomic status on the prevalence of fraud in Mariakani Township, Kilifi County, Kenya. By analyzing survey responses regarding perceptions of fraud and socioeconomic status, this study aimed to illuminate the dynamics underlying this form of economic crime. Fraud encompasses various deceptive practices aimed at financial gain, often reflecting broader socioeconomic disparities and financial pressures faced by individuals in economically disadvantaged areas. The results of the analysis are presented in Figure 2.



**Fig 2: Influence of Low Social-economic Status on the Prevalence of Fraud**

The survey results indicate that a substantial majority (74%) either agree or strongly agree that there exists a correlation between low socioeconomic status and the prevalence of fraud in Mariakani Township. This perception aligns with existing literature, particularly the findings of Gupta and Smith (2020) and the IMF report (2021), which both highlighted a strong link between poverty and economic crimes, including fraud. Gupta and Smith's cross-national study emphasized the economic pressures faced by individuals in poverty, which can drive them towards criminal activities such as fraud. The literature consistently supports the notion that individuals living in economically deprived areas are more likely to engage in fraudulent activities due to financial desperation and lack of opportunities. Thus, the survey results are in agreement with the literature regarding the perceived correlation between low socioeconomic status and fraud.

The survey findings reveal that a considerable portion (73%) of respondent's report encountering incidents of fraud frequently or very frequently in neighborhoods characterized by low socioeconomic status within Mariakani Township. This observation resonates with the literature provided, particularly the EAC Economic Crime Report (2021) and Mukami and Wambui's (2022) regional study, which both highlighted a higher prevalence of economic offenses, including fraud, in economically deprived regions. The literature consistently suggests that areas with high





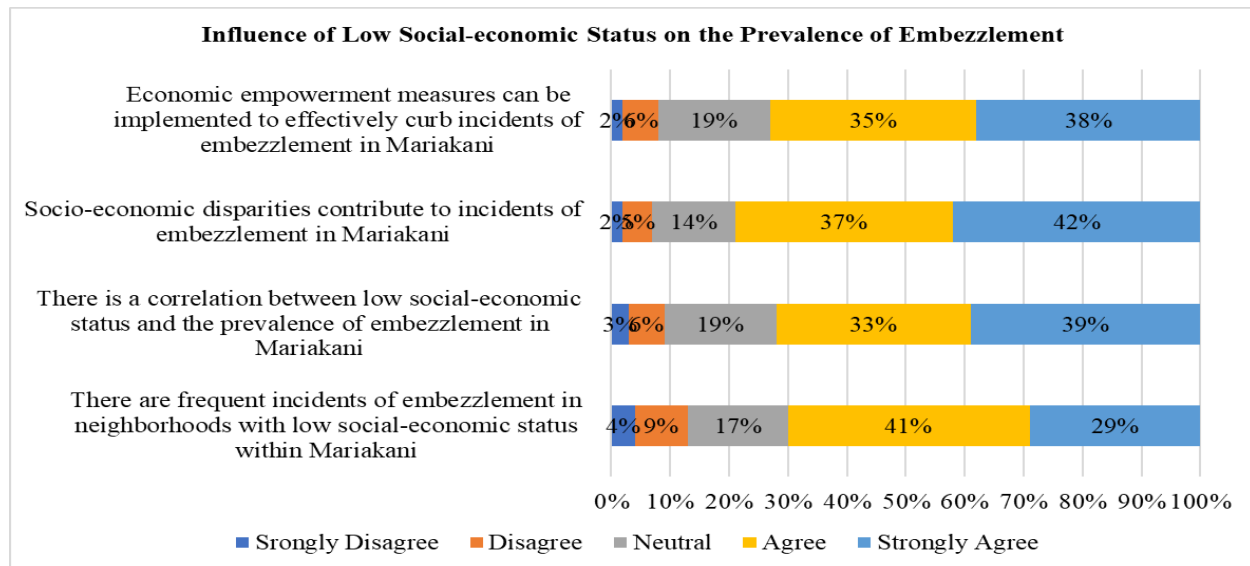
poverty rates are more susceptible to economic crimes due to limited resources, opportunities, and enforcement mechanisms. Hence, the survey results are consistent with existing literature in indicating a high frequency of fraud in low socioeconomic status areas.

According to the survey, a significant majority (72%) either agree or strongly agree that economic hardships contribute to individuals engaging in fraudulent activities in Mariakani Township. This finding mirrors the conclusions drawn from the literature, particularly the UNODC Report (2019) and Mukami and Wambui's (2022) study, which emphasized the role of poverty in driving individuals towards economic crimes like fraud. The UNODC Report specifically highlighted the impact of socioeconomic factors on criminal behavior, indicating that financial desperation resulting from poverty often leads individuals to resort to fraudulent activities as a means of survival. Therefore, the survey results are consistent with existing literature regarding the contribution of economic hardships to engagement in fraudulent activities.

The survey results demonstrate that a significant majority (75%) either agree or strongly agree that the lack of access to financial resources and opportunities plays a role in driving individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds to engage in fraud. This perception is in line with the findings of Benson and Johnson's (2018) global meta-analysis and Kariuki and Ndungu's (2020) study, both of which highlighted the impact of economic disparities on criminal behavior related to financial offenses. Benson and Johnson's meta-analysis revealed a higher incidence of fraud in impoverished communities, emphasizing the role of limited financial resources and opportunities in driving individuals towards fraudulent activities. Therefore, the survey results corroborate existing literature regarding the influence of the lack of access to financial resources and opportunities on engaging in fraud among individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

### 3.3 Influence Socioeconomic Status on Occurrence of Embezzlement

Economic crimes pose significant challenges to communities worldwide, particularly in areas marked by low socioeconomic status. In Mariakani Township, Kilifi County, Kenya, the prevalence of economic crimes, including embezzlement, remains a pressing concern. This section analyzes the influence of low socioeconomic status on the prevalence of embezzlement within Mariakani Township. The results are presented in Figure 3.



**Fig 3: Influence of Low Social-economic Status on the Prevalence of Embezzlement**

The data reveals that a significant portion of respondents (41%) frequently encounter incidents of embezzlement in neighborhoods characterized by low socioeconomic status within Mariakani Township. This finding suggests a pervasive issue within the community, highlighting the prevalence of embezzlement despite efforts to mitigate such crimes. This result aligns with findings from Mukami and Wambui's regional exploration (2022), which indicated a



heightened prevalence of economic crimes, including embezzlement, in economically deprived areas. Similarly, Benson and Johnson's meta-analysis (2018) highlighted increased rates of embezzlement in impoverished communities, supporting the notion that low socioeconomic status correlates with a higher incidence of economic crimes like embezzlement.

A substantial majority of respondents (72%) perceive a correlation between low socioeconomic status and the prevalence of embezzlement in Mariakani Township. This perception underscores the community's awareness of the socioeconomic factors contributing to economic crimes, particularly embezzlement, within their locality. The community's perception aligns with existing research by Gupta and Smith (2020), which found a strong correlation between poverty levels and increased rates of economic crimes globally. Mukami and Wambui's regional exploration (2022) also supported this perception, emphasizing the link between economic deprivation and the prevalence of embezzlement.

The data reflects a strong belief among respondents (79%) that socioeconomic disparities significantly contribute to incidents of embezzlement in Mariakani Township. This acknowledgment of the role played by socioeconomic factors further emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to address underlying disparities and prevent economic crimes. This belief aligns with findings from the International Monetary Fund's Report (2021) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Report (2019), which highlighted poverty's contribution to economic crimes, including embezzlement. Mukami and Wambui's regional exploration (2022) also supported this perspective, emphasizing the impact of socioeconomic disparities on the prevalence of embezzlement.

Regarding measures to curb embezzlement, the majority of respondents (73%) advocate for significant or comprehensive measures. This indicates a recognition of the severity of the issue and the necessity for robust interventions tailored to the socioeconomic challenges faced by Mariakani Township. The community's recommendation for significant or comprehensive measures aligns with the emphasis on targeted interventions highlighted in existing literature. Mukami and Wambui (2022) and the East African Community's Economic Crime Report (2021) both underscored the importance of implementing comprehensive measures to address economic crimes like embezzlement effectively. Similarly, the recommendation aligns with Kariuki and Ndungu's (2020) findings, which emphasized the need for robust interventions to mitigate economic crimes in impoverished areas.

The analysis of the influence of low socioeconomic status on the prevalence of embezzlement within Mariakani Township underscores the significant impact of economic disparities on community dynamics. The findings reveal a concerning frequency of embezzlement incidents, coupled with a strong perception of correlation with low socioeconomic status and a recognition of the role of socioeconomic disparities in driving such crimes. These results align with existing literature, which highlights poverty as a significant predictor of economic crimes, including embezzlement. To address these challenges, comprehensive measures tailored to the socioeconomic context of Mariakani Township are imperative.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The findings underscore the significant of socioeconomic status on the prevalence of economic crimes in Mariakani Township. There is a clear consensus among respondents regarding the correlation between poverty and the occurrence of theft, fraud, and embezzlement. These results align with existing literature, highlighting poverty as a significant predictor of economic crimes. It is evident that socioeconomic disparities contribute to the vulnerability of economically disadvantaged communities to such offenses. Addressing these disparities through targeted interventions and community-based initiatives is crucial to mitigate economic crimes effectively.

#### **5. Recommendations**

Based on findings indicating a significant influence of low socioeconomic status on the prevalence of economic crimes such as theft, fraud, and embezzlement in Mariakani Township, a multifaceted approach to addressing these issues is imperative. Community-based interventions, including poverty alleviation programs, vocational training, and entrepreneurship opportunities, must be implemented to tackle the root causes of these crimes. Furthermore, enhancing law enforcement efforts through increased patrols, surveillance, and community collaboration is crucial for effective deterrence and combatting of economic crimes, particularly in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Public awareness campaigns should also be launched to educate residents about the risks and consequences of engaging in



such criminal activities, fostering a culture of integrity within the community. Additionally, advocating for policy reforms to address systemic issues contributing to socioeconomic disparities is essential, ensuring equal access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for all residents of Mariakani Township.

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