


**Assessing Illicit Alcohol Intervention Strategies in Kenya: A National Security
Perspective**

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of current intervention strategies against illicit alcohol in Kenya, focusing on Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties in Western Kenya. Despite government efforts to curb production and consumption, illicit alcohol remains a persistent challenge with significant public health, economic, and security implications. Through interviews and focus group discussions with 42 participants including law enforcement officials, policymakers, community leaders, public health professionals, and affected community members—the research evaluates existing approaches, the impact, and key gaps in implementation. Findings reveal stark differences between the two counties: Kakamega struggles with small-scale, decentralized production and police-community tensions, while Trans Nzoia faces organized crime networks and cross-border smuggling. Common challenges include systemic corruption, politicized enforcement, and the lack of viable economic alternatives for those dependent on the illicit trade. While crackdowns have reduced alcohol poisoning incidents in Trans Nzoia, they have also exacerbated poverty and distrust in law enforcement, particularly where raids disrupt livelihoods without providing substitutes. The study recommends three key policy shifts: (a) differentiated interventions tailored to county-specific conditions, (b) strengthened anti-corruption mechanisms, including whistleblower protections and independent oversight, and (c) alternative livelihood programs to address the economic roots of illicit alcohol production. It further identifies critical areas for future research, including longitudinal studies of post-enforcement socioeconomic outcomes, cross-border trade dynamics, political economy analyses of protection networks, and gender-sensitive approaches to intervention design. By centering the voices of affected communities and frontline stakeholders, this research challenges the prevailing overreliance on punitive measures and advocates for a more holistic, evidence-based policy framework. The findings underscore the need to balance public health objectives with economic justice and governance reforms to achieve sustainable reductions in illicit alcohol prevalence.

Keywords: Illicit alcohol, enforcement strategies, corruption, alternative livelihoods, public health, organized crime, cross-border smuggling

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List of Abbreviations

EACC	-Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission
EM	-Enforcement Mechanisms
IARD	-International Alliance for Responsible Drinking
IAT	-Illicit Alcohol Trade
KEBS	-Kenya Bureau of Standards
KRA	-Kenya Revenue Authority
MC	-Multifaceted Challenges
NACADA	-National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse.
NGAO	-National Government Administration Officers
NPS	-National Police Service
RL	-Regulatory Landscape
SEF	-Socio-Economic Fabric
WHO	-World Health Organization



Definition of Terms

Term	Definition
Alcoholic Beverages	drinks that contain ethanol which is commonly referred to as alcohol and is produced through the fermentation of sugars by yeast (WHO, 2014).
Corruption	the misuse of public office or resources for private gain (Transparency International, 2022; Rose-Ackerman, 1999).
Criminal Networks	organized groups that engage in illicit activities, including the production, distribution, and sale of illegal alcohol (UNODC, 2020; Naylor, 2004).
Economic Impact	the consequences of illicit alcohol trade on the legal economy, including loss of tax revenue, increased healthcare costs, and the reduction of the demand for regulated products (Rehm et al., 2014; Chaloupka et al., 2019).
Illicit Alcohol	alcoholic beverages that are produced, distributed, or consumed in violation of legal standards (WHO, 2014; Lachenmeier et al., 2011).
Intervention Strategies	refer to the policies, programs, and actions designed and implemented by governments, NGOs, or other stakeholders to address and mitigate the problems associated with illicit alcohol (Parry et al., 2021; Babor et al., 2010).
National Security	the protection against internal and external threats to Kenya's territorial integrity and sovereignty, its people, their rights, freedoms, property, peace, stability and prosperity, and other national interests (Constitution of Kenya, 2010; Nye, 2004).
Public Health Crisis	a situation where the health and safety of a population are significantly threatened by widespread harm, such as from disease outbreaks or the consumption of toxic substances (Gostin, 2014; WHO, 2018).

Socio-Economic
Stability

the overall well-being of a society, encompassing factors like economic growth, social cohesion, and access to basic services (Sen, 1999; UNDP, 2022).

State fragility

a condition in which a government lacks the capacity to perform its essential functions effectively, including maintaining law and order, providing basic services, and enforcing the rule of law (Rotberg, 2004; Fukuyama, 2013).



Chapter One: Introduction of the Study

1.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the challenges of illicit alcohol in Kenya by evaluating intervention strategies aimed at reducing its trade and impact on national stability. Alcoholic beverages, defined as liquids containing ethanol produced through fermentation (Belitz, Grosch & Schieberle, 2009), are culturally and economically significant. Fermentation converts carbohydrates into alcohol and carbon dioxide (Walker & Stewart, 2016), with beverages classified by alcohol content, raw materials, and production methods (Marshall, 1979). While regulated alcohol is consumed recreationally and socially (WHO, 2018), illicit alcohol—including unlicensed brews and counterfeit products—operates outside legal frameworks, often containing toxic substances (WHO, 2018). Lack of regulatory oversight leads to severe health, economic, and social consequences (Madureira-Lima & Galea, 2018).

Historically, alcohol provided a safer alternative to water and a caloric source (Marshall, 1979), but illicit alcohol lacks quality control, posing significant health risks (Rehm et al., 2009). Illicit products evade safety, taxation, and licensing regulations, increasing public health hazards (WHO, 2014). In Kenya, methanol fortification in illicit alcohol has caused poisoning, fatalities, and socio-economic issues like domestic violence (Manning & Kowalska, 2021; Muthuri, 2019; Taleb & Bahelah, 2014). Up to 50% of alcohol in developing countries is unrecorded, disrupting economies and depriving governments of tax revenue (WHO, 2014; Oluwasanu et al., 2021).

Kenya faces acute challenges with illicit brews like *chang'aa*, *busaa*, and *muratina*, which contribute to crime, corruption, and public health crises (Mugo, 2020; Kipchumba, 2017). However, a recent court ruling (*Gitau & 11 others v. County Commander Kiambu & 3 others*, 2024) recognized some traditional brews as legal if regulated, balancing cultural heritage with public health. Despite government interventions, enforcement remains inconsistent due to corruption, poverty, and weak governance (Okedi & Wakoli, 2023; Limaye et al., 2014; Kariuki, 2015).

Illicit alcohol poses a significant threat to Kenya's national security, which is broadly defined as the protection of the country's sovereignty, stability, and the well-being of its people (Constitution of Kenya, 2010, Article 238(1)). This threat extends beyond

public health and social harm—it undermines law and order, erodes public trust in government institutions, fuels organized crime, and contributes to economic instability. As Walt (1991) emphasizes, national security is ultimately about the survival of the state. In this context, the widespread production, distribution, and consumption of illicit alcohol weakens state authority and exposes communities to risks that challenge both governance and the state’s ability to protect its citizens. The cumulative effect of these factors makes illicit alcohol not just a public menace, but a strategic threat to Kenya’s national integrity and resilience.

Richards (2012) identifies illicit alcohol as a non-traditional threat, undermining sovereignty and socio-economic stability. The human security framework (Sen, 1999; King & Murray, 2001) further highlights risks to individual health and economic stability. Illicit alcohol strains healthcare systems (Muthuri, 2019; Amakobe, Wakhungu & Wamocho, 2024) and fuels crime (Mark, 1996), while toxic consumption reduces productivity, deepening poverty (Lachenmeier et al., 2012).

Broken families and impoverished communities foster organized crime and extremism (Rotberg, 2004), and public health crises divert resources from national priorities (Fukuyama, 2013). Despite government efforts since the enactment of the 2012 NACADA Act, illicit alcohol persists, necessitating an evaluation of intervention strategies from a national security perspective from 2012 to the present.

1.2 Background

Illicit alcohol production, distribution, and consumption is a widespread global phenomenon with profound socio-economic, health, and security consequences. The World Health Organization (2022) reports that approximately 25% of all alcohol consumed worldwide is unrecorded, encompassing home or informally produced alcohol (legal or illegal), smuggled alcohol, surrogate alcohol not intended for human consumption, and alcohol obtained through cross-border shopping. This form of alcohol is often more harmful than regulated alcohol due to its lower cost—making it more accessible to low-income populations—irregular labeling that obscures ethanol content, and the presence of potentially toxic substances.

A more recent WHO report (2024) further emphasizes that the harm from unrecorded alcohol goes beyond toxicity, highlighting the rise of online sales as a growing

challenge. These online platforms bypass existing alcohol regulations, compounding the public health risks associated with unregulated alcohol consumption. These findings reinforce the global concern over the widespread impact of unrecorded alcohol on both public health and safety.

Beyond the direct health risks associated with illicit alcohol, the trade in unregulated alcohol has far-reaching socio-economic effects. It often serves as a funding source for organized crime, contributing to an increase in violence and criminal activity (Sidel & Levy (2002). This exacerbates corruption within law enforcement agencies, undermining public institutions' ability to maintain order and fostering economic instability (Jernigan, 2009).

Jernigan (2009) further argues that illicit alcohol consumption not only poses immediate health threats but also exacerbates broader social instability by impeding efforts to reduce crime and violence, thereby contributing to economic and social instability. This social-economic instability then becomes a threat to national security (Fukuyama, 2013; Lachenmeier et al., 2021; Muthuri, 2019; Rotberg, 2004).

Globally, the illicit alcohol trade contributes significantly to organized crime and corruption, which in turn weakens the rule of law and hampers the effectiveness of state institutions (Stockwell, 2017; Witt & Nagy, 2022). The global alcohol market was valued at approximately 1.7 trillion in 2022, reflecting its significant economic impact across legal and illicit sectors (Statista, 2023). A substantial portion of this market consists of illegal alcohol which poses severe public health risks due to potential contamination and lack of quality control, contributing to alcohol-related harm (WHO, 2022). Despite stringent regulations in many countries, illicit alcohol production and distribution persist, driven by factors such as poverty, unemployment, and weak law enforcement, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (Shaw et al., 2020).

The persistence of illicit alcohol in global markets illustrates the complex intersection of public health, economic stability, and national security. In nations with high levels of poverty and unemployment, illicit alcohol offers an affordable alternative to legal alcohol, maintaining consumer demand despite the associated risks (Jernigan & Mosher, 2016). Consequently, governments and international bodies continue to face significant

challenges in addressing this issue, as the underlying causes like economic inequality, weak governance and organized crime remain entrenched.

In sub-Saharan Africa, illicit alcohol consumption is particularly problematic. Countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania struggle with the proliferation of homemade brews, counterfeit alcohol, and smuggled products (Dumbili, 2013; O'Connor, 2019; Parry & Bennetts, 1998; World Health Organization, 2018). Traditional brews in many African communities have cultural and ceremonial significance, which sustains their production and consumption. However, the commercialization and adulteration of these brews for profit have significantly heightened public health risks (Willis, 2005; Dillon, 2020; Mugo, 2020).

In Kenya, the prevalence of illicit alcohol extends across both urban and rural areas, with poverty and high unemployment rates driving demand in economically disadvantaged regions (Muthuri, 2019). Amakobe, Wakhungu and Wamocho (2024) illustrate how affordability and accessibility fuel the consumption of illicit brews in rural areas, where economic hardships exacerbate the problem, threatening health and family food security. Similarly, Okedi and Wakoli (2023) document widespread consumption of illicit alcohol, linking it to socio-economic factors such as limited livelihood options and weak enforcement mechanisms. Despite intensified government efforts, including an increase in law enforcement operations, illicit alcohol remains pervasive. Data from NACADA (2024) reveals that alcohol seizures in Kenya peaked at 7.5 million liters in 2023, reflecting both the scale of the problem and ongoing gaps in regulatory enforcement. This trend aligns with Shaw et al. (2020), who note that illicit alcohol markets thrive in environments where poverty and weak governance undermine control measures.

Globally, various intervention strategies have been implemented to combat illicit alcohol production and consumption. For example, South Africa has introduced strict licensing regulations and severe penalties for illegal alcohol producers (Dillon, 2020). In India, where illicit alcohol is also a significant problem, the government has launched educational campaigns to raise awareness of the dangers of unregulated alcohol (IARD, 2018). However, these initiatives have seen limited success in rural regions, where traditional brews are culturally entrenched, and corruption and weak enforcement persist (D'Silva, 2015).

In Kenya, the government has implemented several intervention strategies, including the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act of 2010, aimed at regulating the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol (Mugo, 2020). Despite these efforts, enforcement remains inconsistent, particularly in rural areas, where the cultural acceptance of illicit alcohol is entrenched (Amakobe et al., 2024; Okedi & Wakoli, 2023). Eddah (2019) attributes this inconsistency to limited law enforcement resources, inadequate training, and logistical challenges, particularly in remote regions. Furthermore, widespread corruption within law enforcement agencies exacerbates the problem, allowing illicit brewers to operate with impunity (Omondi, 2016; Were, 2021).

The socio-economic conditions in rural areas, such as high poverty and unemployment rates, further perpetuate the demand for cheaper, unregulated alcohol, undermining government efforts (Amakobe et al., 2024). Scholars like Okedi and Wakoli (2023) emphasize that without addressing these systemic issues, including corruption and resource gaps, the implementation of alcohol control measures will remain ineffective. Recommendations from Were (2021) and Omondi (2016) stress the need for comprehensive reforms, including better resourcing of enforcement agencies, community education, and stricter oversight mechanisms to combat both the cultural and structural barriers that sustain the illicit alcohol trade.

Multi-agency operations involving the police, public health officers, and other stakeholders have been deployed in Kenya to combat illegal alcohol production and distribution, resulting in numerous arrests and seizures of illicit alcohol (Omondi, 2016; NACADA, 2024). However, these efforts have had limited success in curbing the trade, which continues to thrive. Several studies suggest that the persistence of illicit alcohol markets is driven by socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and cultural acceptance of traditional brews (Mugo, 2020; Okedi & Wakoli, 2023). Additionally, the limited resources and corruption within enforcement agencies further hinder the effectiveness of these interventions (Eddah, 2019; Amakobe et al., 2024).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The global illicit alcohol trade poses a persistent socio-economic and security threat because it not only undermines health systems but also fuels organized crime, exacerbating corruption, and weakening state institutions (Shelley, 2018; Witt & Nagy, 2022). In Africa,

the consumption of unregulated and often toxic alcohol has particularly severe public health consequences, contributing to high rates of alcohol-related diseases, poisonings, and deaths (Monteiro, 2001).

Poverty, unemployment and the prohibitive cost of legal alcohol drive the demand for cheaper illicit alternatives. This demand is further enabled by weak governance and corruption within enforcement agencies, which allows the illegal alcohol trade to flourish (Korieh, 2003). In many African nations, including Kenya, the illicit alcohol trade not only undermines public health but also destabilizes local economies (Hesse, 2015; Limaye et al., 2014; Taleb & Bahelah, 2014; Were, 2021).

The illicit alcohol trade also undermines the rule of law by fostering corruption among law enforcement and government officials (Omondi, 2016). The trade is frequently linked to organized crime, leading to higher rates of violence, theft, and other criminal activities, which further exacerbate security challenges, especially in areas with limited law enforcement resources (Mugisha et al., 2017).

The Kenyan government has implemented a variety of strategies to combat illicit alcohol, including public health campaigns, law enforcement actions, and inter-agency collaborations aimed at disrupting supply chains and enhancing regulatory oversight (NACADA, 2024; Mugo, 2020). However, despite these efforts, the trade in illicit alcohol remains a significant challenge, pointing to the need for sustained and more comprehensive approaches that address both enforcement and the underlying socio-economic factors driving illicit alcohol consumption (Eddah, 2019; Were, 2021).

Kenya provides a clear example of how the illicit alcohol trade intersects with national security concerns like public health risks, social instability and crime (Were, 2021). Beyond public health and security concerns, the illicit alcohol trade also has significant socio-economic implications. It also undermines legitimate businesses, reducing government tax revenues and leading to job losses in the formal alcohol sector (Shelley, 2018; Skehan et al., 2016). Communities affected by the illicit alcohol trade often experience heightened levels of social unrest, including domestic violence, petty theft and violent confrontations, which erode social cohesion and contribute to broader insecurity (Skehan et al., 2016).

This study assessed the intervention strategies employed by the Kenyan government and other stakeholders in combating the illicit alcohol trade from a national security perspective. Specifically, the research evaluated the effectiveness of these strategies in addressing the socio-economic and security implications of the illicit alcohol trade. The research focused on the Western Kenya region, which has been disproportionately affected by the illicit alcohol trade, to provide a localized analysis of the issue. By examining the interventions implemented since the passage of the NACADA Act in 2012, the study identified both the successes and shortcomings of current approaches and provided recommendations for enhancing efforts to combat illicit alcohol.

1.4 Objectives

The primary objective of this study was to understand the current intervention strategies against illicit alcohol in Kenya from a national security perspective. This involved evaluating the success or failure of these strategies through a national security lens. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Assess the existing intervention strategies aimed at reducing the prevalence of illicit alcohol in Kenya.
2. Analyze the impact of these strategies on the citizens, their rights, peace, stability and prosperity as elements of national security.
3. Identify gaps and propose recommendations for improving existing intervention strategies to enhance their impact on national security.

1.5 Research Questions

This study, which offered an in-depth analysis of illicit alcohol intervention strategies in Kenya from a national security standpoint, was driven by the following research questions:

1. What are the current intervention strategies aimed at reducing the prevalence of illicit alcohol in Kenya?
2. How do these illicit alcohol intervention strategies impact on the citizens, their rights, peace, stability and prosperity as elements of national security?
3. What are the existing gaps in the current intervention strategies, and how can they be improved to positively contribute to national security?

1.6 Justification of Study

The study of illicit alcohol in Kenya from a national security perspective was critical because the production and distribution of unregulated alcohol continued to pose significant public health and security threats. Amakobe et al. (2024) and Okedi and Wakoli (2023) highlighted the widespread use of illicit alcohol, often laced with dangerous substances such as methanol, which had led to a disturbing rise in fatalities and hospitalizations due to alcohol poisoning (Ministry of Health, 2020).

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) emphasized the government's responsibility to protect the health and safety of its citizens, yet these illicit activities undermined state authority and contributed to societal instability. As Mwangi (2008) argued, this not only posed a public health crisis but also threatened national security, as it fueled organized crime, strained healthcare systems, and undermined the rule of law. Addressing this issue from a national security perspective was essential for safeguarding the well-being of citizens and ensuring a positive impact on national security.

Despite concerted efforts to combat the proliferation of illicit alcohol, the persistence of the problem suggested that existing strategies were inadequate in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by the illicit alcohol trade. This study was therefore essential to critically assess the strategies and their effectiveness. Addressing this issue was not only a matter of public health but also a crucial step toward enhancing national security and promoting socio-economic development. The importance of this study stemmed from its potential to guide policymakers and stakeholders in enhancing intervention strategies, thereby supporting public health, socio-economic stability, and ultimately improving national security, in addition to enhancing scholarship in the subject matter areas.

1.7 Scope

The study focused on the illicit alcohol trade in Kenya, particularly examining the intervention strategies employed to combat illicit alcohol since the NACADA Act of 2012 was passed. The 2022 national survey conducted by NACADA on the status of drug and substance use in Kenya provided crucial insights into public perceptions regarding the prevalence of illicit brew production. According to the survey, 39 percent of the population perceived the production of illicit alcohol as being widespread within their communities.

Notably, this concern was most pronounced in the Western region, where a significant 68.2% of respondents reported such activities, followed by the Nyanza region at 53.2% (NACADA, 2022). These findings underscored the regional disparities in the perception and, potentially, the actual occurrence of illicit alcohol production, suggesting that localized factors may have contributed to the varying prevalence across different areas.

The study therefore focused on the Western counties of Kakamega and Trans Nzoia, while incorporating a national overview. These two counties were identified by NACADA's 2024 report as regions severely affected by the illicit alcohol trade. They were notorious for their high levels of illicit alcohol production, distribution, and consumption. In Kakamega, for instance, over 1.1 million liters of illicit alcohol were seized in 2023.

Similarly, Trans Nzoia faced entrenched issues related to illicit alcohol, exacerbated by weakened governance and enforcement mechanisms. These regions were selected based on the severity of the crisis, making them critical areas for focused analysis of intervention strategies. While these two counties served as the primary focus, the study also adopted a national perspective, allowing for a broader understanding of how intervention strategies, such as law enforcement and public health campaigns, were applied across the country.

1.8 Limitation

While this research aimed to provide a comprehensive assessment of illicit alcohol intervention strategies in Kenya from a national security perspective, several critical limitations were acknowledged. First, limited access to reliable data presented a significant challenge. Illicit alcohol production and distribution were largely clandestine activities, making it difficult to obtain accurate and comprehensive data. Illicit trade often operated in hidden networks, and reliable statistics on production, distribution, and consumption were hard to gather (Reuter & Majmundar, 2015). Consequently, the study relied on estimates or incomplete data, which could have affected the accuracy of the findings. Moreover, government agencies and enforcement bodies often lacked complete records of illicit alcohol activity, leading to potential data gaps (Muthuri, 2019).

Second, bias in stakeholder participation may have impacted the objectivity of the research findings. Given the illegal nature of illicit alcohol production, stakeholders such as law enforcement officers, community leaders, or individuals involved in the illicit

alcohol trade may have been reluctant to participate in interviews or focus groups, fearing legal consequences or reprisal (Schneider, 2016). Corruption and fear of exposure within enforcement agencies could have further complicated the ability to gather candid responses from key stakeholders (Kipchumba, 2017). This reluctance could have introduced bias in the data, as the perspectives of critical actors might have been underrepresented or missing altogether.

Third, the reliance on self-reported data and anecdotal evidence posed a challenge to the reliability and validity of the study's findings. Self-reported data is prone to inaccuracies due to recall bias or intentional misrepresentation, especially when sensitive or illegal activities are involved (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Additionally, anecdotal evidence from interviews or focus groups might not always reflect broader trends, and participants' perceptions may vary significantly, depending on their role in the illicit alcohol trade or law enforcement. As a result, it may have been difficult to draw definitive conclusions or generalize the findings to larger populations.

Despite these limitations, the study adopted strategies to mitigate their impact. Efforts were made to triangulate data from multiple sources, including government reports, media coverage, and scholarly research, to enhance the reliability of the findings. Furthermore, careful consideration was given to selecting diverse and representative stakeholders to minimize bias in data collection and analysis. Overall, the research sought to offer actionable insights that could inform and improve illicit alcohol intervention strategies in Kenya.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of existing literature on the illicit alcohol phenomenon. Specifically, it explores the intersection between illicit alcohol interventions and national security in Kenya. The review will provide a foundation for understanding how illicit alcohol impacts national security. Through this exploration, the chapter aims to identify the existing intervention strategies aimed at reducing the prevalence of illicit alcohol, their impact in improving national security and gaps in implementing strategies against illicit alcohol.

Table 2.1: Illicit Brews Seizures between 2017 and 2023

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Seizures (Millions)	4.4	3.4	2.3	3.3	1.9	3.6	7.5

Note. This table shows the trends of illicit alcohol seizures which presents an increase. Illicit alcohol production and distribution therefore shows an upward surge (National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse, 2024).

Culture has also played a significant role in the persistence of illicit alcohol, as alcohol has traditionally played a significant role in social events, ceremonies, and rites of passage (Willis, 2005). Furthermore, the low cost of production and high profit margins make the illicit alcohol trade especially attractive in marginalized and economically disadvantaged communities (Kipchumba, 2017).

The link between illicit alcohol and national security is increasingly evident (Mitskaya & Kim, 2020). In Kenya, the production and distribution of illicit alcohol are frequently controlled by organized criminal networks involved in other illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, smuggling, and human trafficking (Were, 2021). These groups undermine law enforcement by bribing officials, perpetuating corruption, and weakening the rule of law (Kipchumba, 2017). Additionally, the illicit alcohol trade contributes to violent crime, particularly in areas where rival groups vie for control over production and distribution networks. It also contributes to increased cases of domestic violence, school

drop-outs, broken families and non-productivity of the consumers thus affecting household incomes (Chisholm et al., 2018; Manning & Kowalska, 2021; Yeomans, 2024).

Public health campaigns aim to raise awareness about the dangers of illicit alcohol consumption, emphasizing the health risks such as poisoning and long-term addiction (Amakobe et al., 2024). Law enforcement efforts, including raids and seizures, have been carried out, often in collaboration with public health officers and other relevant agencies, to curtail the illegal production and distribution of alcohol (Omondi, 2016).

Additionally, inter-agency collaborations, involving police, local government officials, and community leaders, are meant to enhance regulatory oversight and ensure that existing laws are effectively enforced (Okedi & Wakoli, 2023).

2.2 Theoretical Review

Kenya has adopted a multi-faceted approach to tackle illicit alcohol, focusing on economic, social and regulatory measures since 2012. Addressing illicit alcohol in Kenya from a national security standpoint requires understanding its intersections with regulatory frameworks, state capacity, and broader governance issues. The frameworks of regulatory enforcement and compliance, state capacity and national security, and state weakness each offer distinct perspectives for analyzing and mitigating the national security risks posed by illicit alcohol. Together, they emphasize the need to reduce harm, enforce laws effectively, strengthen governance, and address structural vulnerabilities within the state.

A theoretical review is therefore instrumental in assessing the success of Kenya's multi-faceted approach to combating illicit alcohol by providing a structured framework to analyze each intervention strategy.

2.2.1 Regulatory Enforcement and Compliance Theory

The regulatory enforcement and compliance theory as posited by Braithwaite, (2017) offers a structured framework for understanding regulatory implementation and compliance, especially in contexts like public health, environmental protection, and the complex regulatory landscape of the alcohol industry. Originating from the fields of public administration and criminology, the theory examines factors that drive compliance, including the effectiveness of enforcement, deterrence, and incentives. Its relevance is particularly significant in areas needing regulation to curb harmful or illegal activities, such as the illicit alcohol trade.

A central tenet of the theory is that enforcement must balance deterrence with positive incentives; the model promotes a regulatory approach that escalates from persuasion to punishment based on the level of compliance. This method allows regulators to start with educational measures and stakeholder cooperation before resorting to strict penalties for persistent non-compliance (Braithwaite, 1989). Such a structured escalation builds trust and cooperative relationships while maintaining the option of stringent action when necessary (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992).

The theory also highlights the role of regulatory agencies, including their capacity and regulatory clarity, as factors influencing compliance. The availability of resources therefore determines enforcement effectiveness, as underfunded agencies may struggle with regular inspections and response, leading to gaps that illicit actors can exploit (Braithwaite, 1989). In the context of illicit alcohol, the theory explains why some enforcement strategies succeed while others do not. For instance, if agencies rely solely on punitive measures without providing economic incentives or viable alternatives, individuals involved in illicit alcohol production may continue due to economic necessity (Friedman, 2009).

Another key aspect of the theory is the emphasis on community involvement and transparency in enforcement processes. When agencies mandated to deal with illicit alcohol engage communities by explaining regulations and demonstrating the benefits of compliance, they gain greater community support, which is crucial in areas where residents may have conflicting interests with regulatory goals. Transparent processes and updates on enforcement efforts build public trust and foster compliance (Gunningham & Sinclair, 1999).

In Kenya, strict enforcement measures such as fines, imprisonment, and property seizure have been implemented to deter illicit alcohol production and consumption. According to Mugo (2020), these legal measures are crucial in attempting to curb the trade of unregulated alcohol. Additionally, Omondi (2016) emphasizes that these punitive measures, while necessary, often face implementation challenges, such as corruption and inconsistent enforcement across different regions. The Alcoholic Drinks Control Act (2010) stipulates such penalties as part of the broader effort to regulate the alcohol industry, but, as noted by Eddah (2019), the effectiveness of these measures is hindered by

enforcement lapses, particularly in rural areas. Mwangi (2008) further highlights that while strict penalties may deter some individuals, the socio-economic drivers behind illicit alcohol consumption, such as poverty and lack of employment, require complementary strategies for sustainable impact.

These actions increase the risks for those involved in illicit alcohol production, ideally reducing appeal due to potential legal consequences (Mugisha et al., 2017). Deterrence theory, a sub-theory within this framework, posits that individuals are less likely to engage in illegal activities if the perceived costs outweigh the benefits (Becker, 1968). However, economic hardship and limited access to affordable legal alcohol fuel demand for illicit alternatives, challenging deterrence efforts as individuals continue to participate in illicit markets despite the risks (Hesse, 2015; Skehan et al., 2016).

The theory also promotes positive compliance strategies, including financial benefits, subsidies, or tax reductions for legal alcohol producers who meet health and safety standards (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992). For example, offering tax incentives to small brewers who shift from illicit to legal alcohol production could decrease unregulated alcohol. By creating legal economic opportunities, regulatory bodies encourage voluntary compliance, reducing reliance on enforcement which is a principal within the theory (Braithwaite, 2017).

The regulatory enforcement and compliance theory highlights the necessity of a strong, transparent regulatory framework to combat illegal activities and protect public order, particularly pertinent to the illicit alcohol trade. According to Maina (2019), effective regulation and enforcement are central to curtailing the supply chain and distribution networks associated with illicit alcohol. This theory's merit is that it proposes a structured approach to reducing the illicit trade's influence by emphasizing the importance of consistent enforcement of laws and regulations.

Kenya's enforcement agencies, such as NACADA, play a critical role in regulating alcohol production and distribution; however, their efforts are often undermined by challenges in resources and corruption, which weaken their impact (Maina, 2019). From a national security standpoint, stronger regulatory enforcement reduces the presence of organized crime linked to illicit alcohol, which often destabilizes communities by fostering criminal networks that may contribute to broader security threats. The theory also supports

the coordination of multiple agencies and stakeholders, enhancing Kenya's capacity to monitor and control illegal activities that threaten societal stability.

Responsive regulation, advocates a flexible approach to non-compliance. Instead of using a template for all approach method, responsive regulation suggests a tiered sanction system that escalates based on non-compliance severity (Braithwaite, 2011). For minor infractions, warnings or education may be sufficient, while severe offenders, like large-scale illicit alcohol producers, face stricter sanctions.

2.2.2 Theory of State Weakness

The theory of state weakness provides a framework to understand the inability of some states to effectively govern and fulfill their core functions, particularly in contexts where illegal or unregulated activities thrive according to Rotberg (2004). He posits that weak states lack the institutional capacity, political will, or resources needed to enforce laws, provide public goods, and maintain social order. This lack of capacity creates vulnerabilities that allow informal and often illicit markets to flourish, such as the illicit alcohol industry, which poses significant social and health risks.

Central to the theory is the idea that certain states experience internal structural weaknesses such as poor governance, pervasive corruption, inadequate law enforcement, and limited service provision that prevent them from effectively managing challenges and risks within their borders (Rotberg, 2004). These issues stem from a lack of cohesion among government agencies, insufficient resources, or competing priorities that undermine the state's ability to regulate economic and social activities effectively. The result is a limited capacity to enforce laws, implement policies, and uphold the rule of law, especially in regions with socioeconomic challenges or high levels of inequality.

One of the critical insights of this theory is its distinction between the nominal power of states and their effective power. In weak states, government institutions may hold authority in principle, but they lack the practical means to enforce that authority. As a result, informal or illegal economies can emerge and grow, filling the void left by the state's inability to provide essential services or regulate behaviors (Rotberg, 2004).

Rotberg's (2004) analysis also highlights how state weakness manifests through a lack of public trust and cooperation with authorities. When the public perceives state institutions as ineffective, corrupt, or indifferent to their needs, they may be more likely to

support or participate in illicit economies. This dynamic exacerbates the state's weakness by further eroding its legitimacy and reducing compliance with regulations. In some cases, communities may turn to local or informal systems to meet their needs, bypassing formal institutions entirely and further undermining the state's authority.

Furthermore, the theory underscores the implications for national security. When states lack the capability to manage and regulate their territories effectively, they become vulnerable to security threats, both internal and external. Organized crime, unregulated markets, and even extremist groups may exploit these weaknesses, using informal economies to fund their operations or destabilize regions. The illicit alcohol trade, for example, not only threatens public health but also destabilizes communities by contributing to crime and undermining the formal economy (Migdal, 1988).

2.2.3 State Capacity Theory

The theory of state capacity, proposed by Rotberg (2004), offers a valuable framework for examining governmental capability in addressing complex issues that impact national security, such as illicit alcohol production and distribution. State capacity is broadly defined as a government's ability to effectively design, implement, and enforce policies across areas like law enforcement, public health, and economic regulation (Fukuyama, 2013). High state capacity reflects a robust government that can maintain social order, regulate economic activities, and provide essential public services.

Conversely, low state capacity often manifests in weak governance, corruption, and inadequate enforcement, allowing illegal economies like the illicit alcohol trade to thrive. The connection between state capacity and national security is especially relevant in regions like Kenya, where the illicit alcohol market poses severe threats to public health, economic stability, and social cohesion, ultimately impacting national security (Rotberg, 2004).

A core tenet of the theory is that effective policy implementation requires adequate resources, bureaucratic competence, and strong institutional structures. Within the context of illicit alcohol, state capacity includes the ability to enact and enforce regulations governing alcohol production, distribution, and consumption (Mann, 1984). Kenya's government, for example, has put in place frameworks like the NACADA Act to combat illicit alcohol production and sales; however, the effectiveness of these policies depends

on the enforcement agencies' resources, such as funding and logistical support (Omondi, 2016).

Effective implementation of strategies relies on trained personnel, a strong bureaucratic structure, and cross-level governance coordination. When these elements are lacking, policies are often only symbolic, and enforcement efforts are undermined, allowing the illicit alcohol market to persist (Mitskaya & Kim, 2020; Omondi, 2016; Skehan et al., 2016).

A critical component of state capacity is the consistent and transparent enforcement of laws, free from corruption and political favoritism. The persistence of illicit alcohol in Kenya highlights the challenges posed by limited law enforcement and regulatory capacity (Omondi, 2016). Corruption and limited resources within law enforcement agencies can undermine efforts to dismantle illegal networks involved in the production and distribution of illicit alcohol (EACC, 2023; Mutonya, 2019; Omondi, 2016). These issues weaken the deterrent effect of enforcement, as offenders may bribe officials to evade consequences.

Furthermore, regulatory capacity to oversee alcohol production and distribution is essential for upholding legal standards and ensuring compliance with public health regulations. Weak regulatory institutions lead to governance voids, unregulated markets, and unsafe alcohol production practices which in turn allows illicit markets to flourish, leading to increased public health risks and economic instability (Rotberg, 2004; Shaw et al., 2020).

This theory asserts that a state's ability to enforce laws, regulate markets, and provide public services is critical to maintaining order and security. Mwagiru (2008) contends that a strong, capable state is essential to address complex security threats, including those posed by illicit economies. The production and distribution of illicit alcohol in Kenya highlight gaps in state capacity, where limited resources and challenges in inter-agency coordination have allowed the trade to flourish in certain areas.

In Kenya, the prevalence of unregulated alcohol has caused numerous health crises, including methanol poisoning deaths, underscoring the critical link between regulatory capacity and public safety (Hesse, 2015). Economically, the illicit alcohol market deprives the state of significant tax revenue, as transactions occur outside formal regulatory frameworks, which reduces government funds for essential services like health, education,

and security, further weakening state capacity (Chisholm et al., 2018). When state capacity is low, public health initiatives may be underfunded or poorly executed, leaving communities susceptible to the effects of illicit alcohol consumption (Amakobe et al., (2024).

Economic impact often extends beyond lost revenue; the illicit alcohol market fosters a parallel economy that destabilizes formal markets and erodes trust in legal businesses. As the state loses economic control, illicit economies grow, leading to broader weakening of state authority. This economic instability can foster a lawless environment that undermines national security and encourages other illegal activities such as smuggling and organized crime (Rotberg, 2004).

The theory underscores that governmental legitimacy and authority derive partly from its ability to provide for and protect citizens. In regions where the state struggles to regulate illicit alcohol, it risks losing public trust and may contribute to social discord. Communities affected by illicit alcohol often experience higher rates of violence, family breakdown, and other social issues, which further destabilize society. When state agencies are unable to address these challenges, public confidence in the government diminishes, potentially leading to social unrest and weakening national cohesion. In extreme cases, such conditions may create zones of weakened governance, where illicit activities proliferate and state authority is continuously challenged (Mann, 1984).

The connection between state capacity, illicit alcohol and national security is particularly evident in the threats posed by organized crime and informal networks in the illicit alcohol market. When state capacity is insufficient to enforce regulations, organized criminal groups may control illicit alcohol production and distribution. These groups, often well-resourced and connected to informal networks, evade state oversight and create lawless areas that foster other criminal activities. In Kenya, the illicit alcohol trade is partially driven by systemic issues of state weakness, where insufficient resources, corruption, and poor regulatory oversight enable illicit activities to persist (Omondi, 2016).

2.2.4 Interplay between the theories

The integration of regulatory enforcement and compliance theory, the theory of state weakness, and state capacity theory offers a multidimensional lens for understanding and addressing the persistent challenge of the illicit alcohol trade in Kenya. Each theory

provides a unique yet interconnected framework for analyzing the systemic, regulatory, and institutional issues underlying illicit alcohol production, distribution, and consumption.

The state capacity theory emphasizes that effective governance is dependent on a state's ability to implement policies, enforce laws, and deliver public goods (Fukuyama, 2013; Rotberg, 2004). High state capacity is critical for developing sustainable strategies against illicit alcohol by ensuring well-resourced regulatory bodies, transparent enforcement mechanisms, and responsive service delivery (Mann, 1984; Shaw et al., 2020). In this regard, the theory highlights the importance of bureaucratic competence, coordination among institutions, and resource mobilization, especially in rural and underserved areas where enforcement gaps are most pronounced (Omondi, 2016; Amakobe et al., 2024).

In contrast, the theory of state weakness underscores how limited institutional capacity, corruption, and poor governance undermine the state's authority and create an enabling environment for illicit markets to flourish (Rotberg, 2004). This theory is especially relevant in regions where informal economies have supplanted formal governance mechanisms, allowing criminal enterprises to fill the void left by the state (Migdal, 1988). Weak states fail to regulate effectively, thereby losing both legitimacy and the ability to control their territories, which fosters insecurity and diminishes public trust (Rotberg, 2004).

The regulatory enforcement and compliance theory adds another layer by examining how enforcement approaches and regulatory clarity influence compliance behaviors (Braithwaite, 1989; Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992). This theory argues for a responsive model of regulation, where enforcement actions are scaled based on the level of non-compliance, combining deterrence with incentives to encourage voluntary adherence (Braithwaite, 2011). It also acknowledges that over-reliance on punitive approaches without economic alternatives may fail to deter illicit alcohol activities, particularly in economically marginalized areas (Friedman, 2009; Skehan et al., 2016; Hesse, 2015).

From a national security perspective, the state capacity theory is instrumental in asserting that stronger state institutions—such as NACADA and law enforcement—are essential for dismantling organized criminal networks that profit from illicit alcohol

(Mwagiru, 2008; EACC, 2023). It promotes the enhancement of regulatory mechanisms and institutional investments as a safeguard against the destabilizing effects of illicit markets.

Meanwhile, the theory of state weakness provides insight into why current strategies may falter. It explains the systemic failures—such as corruption, underfunding, and poor inter-agency coordination—that hinder effective enforcement and policy implementation (Rotberg, 2004; Omondi, 2016). This theoretical approach is valuable in identifying governance reforms as a prerequisite to successful intervention.

The regulatory enforcement and compliance theory, in turn, operationalizes enforcement by advocating for a balanced approach that includes not just penalties but also community engagement, education, and economic incentives for legal compliance (Gunningham & Sinclair, 1999; Maina, 2019). For instance, small-scale brewers could be transitioned to the formal economy through tax incentives or subsidies, reducing their reliance on illicit operations (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992).

Collectively, these theories point to the need for a comprehensive and integrative strategy that transcends punitive enforcement. The state capacity theory supports building institutional strength, the theory of state weakness urges governance reform and anti-corruption measures, and the regulatory enforcement and compliance theory encourages strategic enforcement that blends deterrence with cooperation and economic inclusion. Together, they frame the illicit alcohol trade as a multifaceted issue that must be tackled through coherent policies that address public health, law enforcement, and socio-economic stability (Becker, 1968; Chisholm et al., 2018).

Therefore, the interplay of these theories underscores that successful intervention against illicit alcohol requires not only enforcement but also investment in state legitimacy, public trust, and economic alternatives. A strengthened regulatory environment—coupled with responsive governance—can mitigate the social harms of illicit alcohol, enhance national security, and restore institutional trust.

2.3 Literature Review

According to the Ministry of Health (2020), over 300 deaths were attributed to illicit alcohol consumption in 2020, with thousands more hospitalized due to alcohol poisoning and related health complications. This situation is exacerbated by the continued

consumption of methanol-laced brews, which are commonly found in Kenya's informal alcohol market. These brews contribute to public health emergencies that strain the healthcare system, leading to significant economic losses (Okedi & Wakoli, 2023; Amakobe et al., 2024). Moreover, the persistence of illicit alcohol trade fosters an environment conducive to organized crime, further complicating enforcement efforts (Mwagiru, 2008). The combination of these factors underscores the critical need for comprehensive, sustained interventions to effectively address the multifaceted challenges posed by illicit alcohol in Kenya.

Specific regions in Kenya, such as Kakamega, Trans Nzoia, and Nairobi, are particularly affected by the widespread availability of illicit alcohol. In 2023, over 3.9 million liters of illicit alcohol were seized nationally, with Kakamega accounting for the highest volume at 1.1 million liters, followed by Trans Nzoia and Nairobi respectively (NACADA, 2024). Despite these enforcement efforts, the trade persists, driven by high demand, poverty, and weak enforcement mechanisms (Mwangi, 2014).

Kenya has adopted varied strategies to deal with illicit alcohol production, distribution and consumption. Key amongst them include providing alternative livelihoods to reduce reliance on illicit brewing, launching targeted awareness campaigns on the dangers of unregulated alcohol, and incorporating informal alcoholic drinks into a regulated framework. Enhanced law enforcement and community policing have led to crackdowns on unlicensed distilleries, while awareness efforts address the rise of online trafficking.

To dismantle illicit networks, Kenya has strengthened cooperation among authorities and aligned strategies to combat organized crime linked to illegal alcohol. Collaborative efforts at national, regional, and international levels have been essential in reinforcing this framework, emphasizing the need for a unified approach to reduce illicit alcohol's impact on society and security. The government has implemented various intervention strategies, including public health campaigns, law enforcement actions, and inter-agency collaborations to curb the production, distribution, and consumption of illicit alcohol (Eddah, 2019; Mugo, 2020). However, despite these measures, illicit alcohol remains widespread, posing serious threats to public health, economic stability, and national security.

The persistence of illicit alcohol in Kenya highlights the limitations of existing intervention strategies, particularly their failure to address the underlying drivers of the trade, such as economic inequality and weak governance (Omondi, 2016). Economic disparities create a steady demand for cheaper, unregulated alcohol, especially among marginalized communities, where poverty and unemployment are prevalent (Amakobe et al., 2024). Governance issues, including inconsistent enforcement of regulations and widespread corruption, further enable the production and distribution of illicit brews (Eddah, 2019; Okedi & Wakoli, 2023).

In countries such as Kenya, the illicit alcohol market has grown substantially, fueled by socio-economic factors like poverty, limited access to affordable legal alcohol, and weak regulatory enforcement (Beyene, 2019; Farhoudian et al., 2021; Felbab-Brown (2018). Given the scope and complexity of the illicit alcohol trade in Kenya, a robust understanding of current intervention strategies and their effectiveness is essential for addressing its multidimensional impacts on public health, socio-economic stability, and national security. Studies such as Mugo (2020) highlight the critical role of regulatory frameworks like the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act (2010), which seeks to curb illicit alcohol through licensing, taxation, and penalties.

2.3.1 Assessing Existing Strategies

Globally, addressing illicit alcohol has involved regulatory reforms, public awareness campaigns, and enforcement measures, all implemented with varying levels of success (Parry & Bennetts, 1998; Manning & Kowalska, 2021).

In Kenya, the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act (2010) provides a regulatory framework, but its implementation is often undermined by inadequate resources, limited capacity in law enforcement, and cultural acceptance of informal alcohol production in rural areas (Mugo, 2020; NACADA, 2024). Without addressing these structural issues, intervention efforts such as public health campaigns, regulatory measures, and law enforcement actions are unlikely to yield sustainable results, leaving public health and national security vulnerable to the continued threat of illicit alcohol (Ministry of Health, 2020).

The introduction of the NACADA Act of 2012 marked a significant step toward mitigating the challenges of illicit alcohol. This legislation established a framework for

regulating alcohol production, sale, and consumption, while empowering the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) to lead intervention strategies (Okedi & Wakoli, 2023). The Kenyan government has since adopted a multifaceted approach that includes public health education, enhanced enforcement, and socio-economic interventions.

One key measure has been promoting alternative livelihoods for individuals engaged in the production and sale of illicit alcohol, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas. By offering vocational training, microfinancing, and access to legitimate markets, these initiatives aim to reduce economic dependence on illicit brewing and encourage compliance with regulatory frameworks (Mugo, 2020). Such approaches align with broader international strategies that emphasize poverty alleviation and economic empowerment as critical components of combating illicit alcohol (Beyene, 2019). However, the success of these efforts hinges on consistent enforcement, robust community engagement, and addressing the underlying socio-economic disparities that perpetuate the trade (Amakobe et al., 2024; Omondi, 2016).

Public awareness campaigns are integral to Kenya's strategy against illicit alcohol consumption. These campaigns target vulnerable populations and are delivered through both traditional and digital media platforms. The National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse frequently uses social media platforms, such as Twitter, to disseminate educational content, infographics, and updates about the dangers of consuming illicit alcohol. Social media has proven effective in reaching younger demographics, fostering real-time engagement, and amplifying public health messaging (Kimani & Munene, 2021). The primary goal of these campaigns is to educate communities on the adverse health, social, and economic effects of unregulated alcohol consumption, encouraging behavior change to reduce demand for illicit products (Ministry of Health, 2020).

The Kenyan government has also emphasized formalizing traditional alcoholic beverages by promoting Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and integrating informal brews into the formal regulatory framework. This strategy ensures compliance with health and safety standards while creating legal markets, reducing risks associated with unregulated production (Mugo, 2020). Strengthened enforcement measures complement

these efforts, with law enforcement agencies and community policing initiatives conducting regular crackdowns on illegal brewing sites, shutting down unlicensed distilleries, and destroying production facilities (Kimani & Munene, 2021). Intelligence-led policing and inter-agency coordination have been particularly effective in disrupting local networks of illicit alcohol producers, though challenges such as corruption and resource constraints remain significant barriers (Otieno & Wanyonyi, 2020).

Health interventions have been a key strategy in reducing the harm caused by illicit alcohol consumption. Scholars such as Limaye et al. (2014) and Madureira-Lima & Galea (2018) emphasize the importance of public awareness campaigns that educate the public about the dangers of illicit alcohol. For example, the government, through the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA), has conducted nationwide awareness campaigns highlighting the dangers of illicit alcohol consumption. These campaigns use mass media, community engagement, and public forums to educate people on health risks such as blindness, organ failure, and death caused by toxic brews adulterated with industrial chemicals like methanol.

Additionally, Kenya has established drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers to help individuals recover from addiction. For example, NACADA supports the establishment of treatment and rehabilitation facilities across counties, offering medical detoxification, psychological counseling, and skills training for reintegration into society. Some counties, such as Kiambu and Mombasa, have developed government-funded rehab centers to support affected populations.

However, these interventions face challenges in reaching the most vulnerable populations, particularly in rural areas where literacy levels are low, and traditional beliefs surrounding alcohol consumption remain strong (Musungu & Kosgei, 2015; Mwangi, 2014). The World Health Organization (2018) recommends a more integrated approach that combines law enforcement, public health, and economic strategies to address the underlying causes of the illicit alcohol trade.

Recognizing the role of online platforms in distributing illicit alcohol, the government has increased monitoring efforts and raised public awareness about online risks. Reports from the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC, 2021) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2022) emphasize the

need for advanced monitoring technologies, collaboration with digital platforms, and specialized cybercrime units to counteract the digital dimensions of illicit alcohol trade. Additionally, Kenya's strategies have addressed broader organized crime networks tied to the trade, including money laundering and corruption, by enhancing transparency and targeting financial networks (Chisholm et al., 2018; Mutonya, 2019).

International and regional partnerships have further strengthened Kenya's efforts, enabling intelligence sharing, joint operations, and capacity building to combat the transnational nature of illicit alcohol production and trafficking. These collaborations highlight the importance of unified and coordinated approaches to address the multifaceted challenges posed by illicit alcohol (UNODC, 2022; EACC, 2023). Through these multi-pronged strategies, Kenya continues to combat the detrimental effects of illicit alcohol on public health, economic stability, and national security.

Despite these comprehensive strategies, significant challenges persist. Corruption within law enforcement and regulatory agencies undermines enforcement efforts, while limited resources constrain the scale and effectiveness of interventions. Weak interagency collaboration further hampers the coordination required for an integrated response. These challenges underscore the need for an in-depth evaluation of the factors impeding success, as well as the refinement of existing strategies to ensure sustainable progress (EACC, 2023; Mutonya, 2019; Ndegwa, 2022).

Kenya's multifaceted approach reflects its commitment to mitigating the socio-economic and security impacts of illicit alcohol. However, addressing systemic weaknesses such as corruption, resource constraints, and interagency inefficiencies will be essential to achieving long-term success. Through continuous evaluation and adaptation of its strategies, Kenya can enhance its efforts to combat illicit alcohol, foster a healthier society, and safeguard national security.

2.3.2 Impact of The Strategies on Elements of National Security

The relationship between illicit alcohol and national security is well-documented in the literature, with researchers highlighting how unregulated alcohol markets often contribute to organized crime, violence, and economic instability (Lord et al., 2017; Nemtsov, 2005). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2021), the illicit alcohol trade is not only a public health issue but also a threat to public order and

state authority, as it undermines the legal economy and erodes trust in regulatory institutions. The expansion of the illicit alcohol market presents serious challenges to national security, with criminal networks capitalizing on regulatory gaps to proliferate their activities (Obot, 2013; Shaw et al., 2020). This association of illicit alcohol beverages with organized crime, public disorder, and cross-border smuggling amplifies the need for a security-centered approach to understanding and addressing the issue (Obot, 2013; Farhoudian et al., 2021; Shaw et al., 2020; Yeomans, 2024).

Lachenmeier (2012) highlights the severe health risks posed by the consumption of unrecorded and illicit alcohol, particularly due to contamination with harmful substances such as methanol. Lachenmeier (2012) emphasizes the direct threat to public health and the pressing need for robust health interventions in regions impacted by unregulated alcohol markets. This aligns with national security concerns by highlighting how unregulated alcohol consumption poses significant risks to individuals' safety, public health, and societal well-being.

Similarly, Witt and Nagy (2022) analyze the drivers and impacts of illicit alcohol trade within a national security context, pointing out that illicit alcohol affects both economic stability and public order. Their study finds that the illicit alcohol market thrives in environments with regulatory gaps, where criminal networks capitalize on weak enforcement. This illicit trade results in significant economic losses for governments due to reduced tax revenues, while consumers bear the financial and health burdens of unsafe alcohol consumption. By focusing on case studies, Witt and Nagy demonstrate that the informal alcohol economy not only destabilizes national economies but also exacerbates vulnerabilities within communities, impacting livelihoods and contributing to social unrest which by extension impacts national security.

Expanding on these dimensions, Manning and Kowalska (2021) delve into the health risks associated with methanol poisoning, a pervasive issue in illicit alcohol markets worldwide. They argue that addressing methanol poisoning and ensuring the safe production of alcoholic beverages are critical steps in reducing the public health crisis caused by the illicit alcohol industry. Furthermore, Manning and Kowalska (2021) propose a set of policy strategies that integrate public health and national security perspectives,

highlighting the importance of regulation, monitoring, and public awareness campaigns as essential tools for mitigating the harm caused by toxic alcohol.

The public health risks associated with illicit alcohol consumption have far-reaching implications for national security, as they affect the stability, functionality, and resilience of the state. Illicit alcohol is often adulterated with harmful substances, such as industrial solvents like acetone, benzene, and isopropanol, to enhance its potency or reduce production costs (McKee et al., 2019). The ingestion of these toxic chemicals causes severe health outcomes, including organ damage, neurological impairments, and even fatalities. Similarly, the use of denatured alcohol containing undrinkable additives like pyridine and methanol has been linked to blindness, organ failure, and death (Lachenmeier et al., 2007). These health hazards not only devastate individuals and families but also have significant socio-economic and governance consequences, which collectively threaten national security.

Firstly, the strain on public healthcare systems from treating the effects of illicit alcohol consumption weakens the state's ability to provide essential services. Hospitals and clinics in affected regions are overwhelmed with cases of poisoning, organ failure, and long-term neurological complications, diverting resources from other critical health needs. This overburdening undermines public trust in government institutions and exposes gaps in the state's capacity to protect its citizens, a key element of national security (Lachenmeier et al., 2007). In resource-constrained settings, this can lead to perceptions of state failure, particularly if the health crisis persists or worsens (McKee et al., 2019).

Secondly, the economic impacts of illicit alcohol consumption are profound, as the resulting health complications reduce workforce productivity. Many victims are economically active individuals who, upon falling ill or dying, leave families without income and weaken the local economy. Widespread economic losses, particularly in rural and low-income areas, exacerbate poverty and inequality, fueling grievances that can lead to social unrest, crime, and extremism (WHO, 2018). Economic instability, especially when combined with weakened state capacity, is a recognized driver of insecurity and conflict (UNODC, 2020).

The erosion of social stability is another critical dimension. Communities affected by illicit alcohol consumption often experience increased incidences of domestic violence,

broken families, and alcohol-related crime. These social disruptions undermine community cohesion and create environments conducive to criminal activities. Organized crime groups frequently exploit the production and distribution of illicit alcohol as a lucrative enterprise, evading taxes and corrupting law enforcement agencies (Lachenmeier et al., 2007). This weakens the rule of law and fosters a culture of impunity, further undermining governance and national stability (McKee et al., 2019).

Moreover, illicit alcohol production and trade often intersect with transnational crime networks. These networks smuggle raw materials, evade regulatory oversight, and exploit porous borders to sustain their operations. This cross-border dimension introduces risks such as money laundering, trafficking, and the expansion of criminal syndicates, all of which weaken state authority and destabilize national security (UNODC, 2020).

Lastly, the widespread consumption of adulterated alcohol directly threatens human security, which is integral to national security. Human security emphasizes the protection of individuals from threats to their safety, health, and livelihoods. By endangering lives and livelihoods, illicit alcohol exacerbates vulnerabilities, particularly in marginalized communities. The resulting human insecurity creates fertile ground for social and political instability, undermining the state's ability to maintain peace and order (WHO, 2018; UNDP, 1994).

In addition to alcohol-related chemicals, other hazardous agents are used in the production of illicit alcohol. Chemical agents such as battery acid, formalin, or detergents are sometimes introduced to accelerate fermentation or replicate the sharp taste of ethanol. These substances are highly corrosive and toxic, causing extensive damage to the gastrointestinal system, respiratory complications, and severe neurological disorders (Lachenmeier et al., 2007). Furthermore, sugar and pharmaceuticals, such as sucrose, caffeine, or even drugs like sedatives and stimulants, are occasionally added to fortify alcohol content or alter its flavor. However, these combinations can interact unpredictably with ethanol, exacerbating its toxic effects and increasing the likelihood of adverse outcomes (Manning & Kowalska, 2021).

Contamination with heavy metals such as lead, arsenic, and chromium is another common issue in illicit alcohol production, often resulting from the use of non-food-grade equipment or packaging materials. Chronic exposure to these metals is associated with

systemic toxicity and long-term health consequences, including cancer (Lachenmeier et al., 2007). Such practices not only compromise the safety of illicit alcohol but also exacerbate the public health burden, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where these products are more prevalent.

From a national security perspective, the public health crisis caused by heavy metal contamination in illicit alcohol places immense strain on healthcare systems. In resource-constrained settings, hospitals and clinics are often ill-equipped to manage the long-term and chronic effects of heavy metal poisoning. This diverts scarce resources from other pressing health priorities, weakening the state's ability to provide adequate healthcare. Such systemic failures in service delivery can erode public trust in government institutions, fostering perceptions of state incapacity and contributing to political instability (World Health Organization, 2018). A weakened healthcare system undermines the resilience of the state, a key element of national security.

Socio-economic disparities have been identified as drivers of social unrest, crime, and even insurgency, especially in contexts where the state is perceived as failing to address the root causes of such issues (UNODC, 2020). Thus, the economic instability linked to illicit alcohol consumption poses a direct threat to national security. Additionally, organized crime groups, which often dominate the production and distribution of illicit alcohol, exploit these vulnerabilities to expand their influence, evade taxes, and corrupt law enforcement agencies (McKee et al., 2019). This undermines the rule of law, fosters a culture of impunity, and weakens governance structures, all of which are critical to maintaining national stability.

The global morbidity and mortality linked to the consumption of adulterated illicit alcohol underscore the urgency of comprehensive intervention strategies. As emphasized by Manning and Kowalska (2021), these strategies must adopt a multi-faceted approach, combining strict regulation, robust enforcement of alcohol production laws, public awareness initiatives, and continuous monitoring of the market.

Similarly, the World Health Organization (2018) underscores the need for collaborative efforts between governments, public health agencies, and local communities to combat the harms associated with illicit alcohol. By addressing these challenges, it is

possible to mitigate the socio-economic and health impacts of illicit alcohol and safeguard vulnerable populations.

Expanding on these dimensions, Manning and Kowalska (2021) delve into the health risks associated with methanol poisoning, a common problem in illicit alcohol markets worldwide. They argue that addressing methanol poisoning and ensuring the safe production of alcoholic beverages are critical for reducing the public health crisis posed by the illicit alcohol industry. Furthermore, they propose policy strategies that integrate public health and human security perspectives, emphasizing the need for regulation, monitoring, and awareness campaigns to mitigate the harm caused by toxic alcohol.

These studies collectively highlight that illicit alcohol production and consumption pose a significant national security challenge by creating cascading effects on public health, economic stability, and social cohesion. Contamination with toxic substances like methanol and heavy metals leads to widespread poisoning, chronic illnesses, and fatalities, placing immense strain on healthcare systems and diverting resources from other critical needs (McKee et al., 2019). Economically, the incapacitation or death of economically active individuals reduces productivity, deepens poverty, and exacerbates inequality, fueling social unrest and economic instability, while governments lose substantial revenue due to tax evasion (UNODC, 2020).

Socially, illicit alcohol consumption weakens community cohesion, increases alcohol-related crime, and enables organized crime syndicates to profit from the trade, undermining governance through corruption and weakening the rule of law (Lachenmeier et al., 2009). Transnational criminal networks further complicate these challenges by exploiting weak regulatory frameworks and porous borders, introducing additional risks such as money laundering and regional destabilization (UNODC, 2020). Tackling these issues through a national security framework which encompasses individual safety, economic stability, and societal order that enables a more comprehensive approach that targets not only the consumption risks but also the root causes of illicit alcohol production and trade.

King and Murray (2001) argue that national security is essential for the overall stability and functioning of a state. In Kenya, the illicit alcohol trade undermines security by contributing to poverty (Amakobe et al., 2024; Mutonyi, 2007; Mwangi, 2014),

exacerbating public health crises (World Health Organization, 2014), and fostering environments where crime and corruption thrive (Were, 2021).

Poverty significantly undermines governance and political stability by eroding public trust in state institutions and fueling dissatisfaction with the government in addition to weakening governance by limiting the state's capacity to collect taxes and provide public services, further exacerbating inequality and disenfranchisement (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). This dissatisfaction can manifest in protests, resistance to state authority, or increased support for extremist groups, all of which threaten political stability (Rotberg, 2004).

Additionally, Gurr (1970) posits that the gap between societal expectations and economic realities often rooted in poverty can lead to grievances that fuel unrest. Similarly, Rotberg (2004) argues that when states fail to provide basic services due to poverty, they lose legitimacy, creating fertile grounds for rebellion, insurgencies, or even state failure. Weak governance in such contexts often leads to power vacuums that can be exploited by non-state actors, including terrorist organizations.

Economically, poverty weakens a nation's foundation by limiting its capacity to invest in critical sectors such as infrastructure, education, and defense. Collier and Hoeffler (2004) link poverty to the outbreak of civil wars, emphasizing how resource constraints reduce a state's ability to effectively respond to internal conflicts. Moreover, the lack of economic opportunities forces individuals to turn to illicit activities, such as organized crime or extremist groups, as a means of survival, further threatening national security.

Socially, poverty exacerbates inequalities, fostering divisions along ethnic, religious, or class lines. Stewart (2008) highlights how horizontal inequalities and disparities among identity groups intensified in impoverished societies, leading to communal tensions and violence. Such divisions weakened national cohesion and provided fertile grounds for extremist groups to exploit societal fractures for recruitment and mobilization.

Poverty also has significant transnational security implications. Nations with high poverty rates are more likely to experience issues such as uncontrolled migration, human trafficking, and the proliferation of arms and drugs. These destabilizing activities affect not only the source country but also neighboring states, creating broader regional insecurity.

For example, in Africa's Sahel region, poverty combined with weak state structures has facilitated the spread of terrorism and organized crime, threatening cross-border security (Raleigh, 2010).

Poverty is both a root cause and a consequence of national insecurity. Addressing it requires a multidimensional approach that includes economic development, good governance, and investments in education and healthcare to build resilient and inclusive societies. As Collier (2007) notes in *The Bottom Billion*, global security efforts must prioritize poverty reduction strategies to prevent fragile states from becoming hubs of instability. Without such measures, poverty will weaken the state's ability to provide essential services and maintain social order, ultimately threatening national security (Peter, 2023; Schuberth, 2014).

The production and distribution of unregulated, often toxic alcohol have led to public health emergencies, including poisoning, organ damage, and deaths (Muthuri, 2019; World Health Organization, 2018). The health crises stemming from these activities overwhelm healthcare systems, diverting resources from other critical areas, and ultimately weakening the state's capacity to ensure the well-being of its citizens (Fukuyama, 2013; King & Murray, 2001; Muthuri, 2019). Each of these scholars espouse valuable perspectives on how state capacity and security are compromised by these public health crises.

Fukuyama (2013) highlights that a state's effectiveness depends on its ability to uphold governance and provide resources. Essential services such as healthcare are central to this capacity, as they directly impact public trust and the state's legitimacy. These resources, which would otherwise be allocated to other aspects of national security, such as disaster preparedness, disease control, mental health services, and emergency response systems, become unavailable when used to address the impact of illicit alcohol.

Such misallocation compromises the state's ability to address broader security concerns, including pandemic response readiness, bioterrorism prevention, and the maintenance of public health infrastructure crucial for long-term stability. Moreover, the strain on healthcare systems undermines the state's legitimacy by exposing gaps in its capacity to protect its citizens from preventable harm. This erosion of legitimacy not only weakens public trust but also destabilizes governance structures, making it more

challenging for the state to manage other pressing security issues such as crime prevention, border security, and counterterrorism efforts. In this way, the diversion of resources caused by toxic alcohol consumption illustrates how public health emergencies can have far-reaching implications for national security and governance.

Muthuri (2019) builds on this concept by focusing on the strain illicit activities place on public health systems in African contexts. In her study, Muthuri highlights that healthcare resources in many African countries are already limited, and surges in cases due to preventable health crises, like those associated with methanol poisoning from illicit alcohol, add further stress. When healthcare facilities and professionals are forced to redirect their focus to address these preventable crises, it leads to a reduction in the resources available for other essential health services. The result is a cycle where both immediate and long-term healthcare priorities are jeopardized, leaving the state less equipped to manage its overall public health responsibilities.

King and Murray (2001) also offer insights into the broader implications of health crises on state functionality by discussing the concept of health security which is a key element of national security. The World Health Organization (2007) defines health security as the capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to public health risks that threaten human lives and national stability. They argue that public health and security are intertwined, as a state's stability depends heavily on its capacity to safeguard its population's health. In this context, a surge in health crises related to illicit alcohol consumption becomes not only a public health issue but a national security concern. Health systems become vulnerable as resources are stretched thin, diminishing the state's resilience and weakening its capacity to respond effectively to both health and security threats (King & Murray, 2001).

Economically, illicit alcohol undermines national security by evading regulatory frameworks and tax obligations (Stockwell, 2004). Stockwell argues that unregulated alcohol markets deprive governments of vital tax revenue, which is essential for funding public services like healthcare, education, and law enforcement. This loss of revenue reduces the state's ability to provide for its population, thereby contributing to economic instability (Skehan et al., 2016).

According to Reuter and Majmundar (2015), illicit trade undermines tax revenues by diverting economic activity away from the formal sector. This revenue loss reduces the

government's ability to finance essential services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure, which are fundamental to promoting stability and human security. The inability to adequately fund these sectors erodes public trust in state institutions, creating governance challenges that increase the risk of unrest and social instability.

Furthermore, Cockayne (2016) highlights how the financial void left by lost revenue from illicit trade can lead to a lack of resources for law enforcement and border security, thereby allowing organized criminal networks to flourish. These groups often exploit weak enforcement mechanisms to expand their activities, which can destabilize regions and facilitate the proliferation of other illegal markets, such as human trafficking, arms smuggling, and drug trade. The cumulative effect is a weakening of the state's capacity to maintain sovereignty and internal security, both of which encompass national security.

Loss of revenue also hinders the state's ability to invest in intelligence gathering and counterterrorism efforts. Makarenko (2010) argues that illicit trade, including in alcohol, is often linked to transnational organized crime and terrorism. The financial gains from such activities enable criminal networks and extremist groups to fund operations that threaten both national and international security. At the same time, governments struggle to counter these threats due to reduced fiscal capacity, creating a vicious cycle of insecurity.

Additionally, the World Bank (2019) emphasizes that revenue losses from the illicit alcohol trade disproportionately affect developing countries, where tax revenues are already limited. In such contexts, reduced funding for public health and education exacerbates poverty and inequality, which are root causes of insecurity. This can lead to increased vulnerability to political instability, social unrest, and the emergence of extremist movements.

Furthermore, the illicit alcohol trade is often intertwined with organized crime, which poses a direct threat to the rule of law and state institutions (Mitskaya & Kim, 2020); Yeomans (2024). Stockwell's (2004) analysis of crime and public policy, notes that illicit markets, such as those for alcohol, are frequently associated with corruption and violence. In Kenya, criminal networks involved in the illicit alcohol trade often engage in other illegal activities, such as drug trafficking and smuggling, exacerbating the state's security challenges (Mutua & Mugume, 2020; Mutuku, 2013). These criminal networks erode

public trust in law enforcement and create an environment of lawlessness, weakening state institutions and contributing to national insecurity (Singer, 2008).

The prevalence of illicit alcohol often serves as both a reflection of and a catalyst for state fragility according to Rotberg (2004). He argues that when a state lacks the capacity or political will to regulate alcohol production and distribution effectively, illicit markets emerge to fill this regulatory void. He also asserts that state fragility is characterized by the inability of government institutions to provide essential services, enforce laws, and ensure the welfare of citizens. Further, the presence of large illicit alcohol markets also reveals gaps in a state's regulatory framework and enforcement capacity, allowing illegal enterprises to flourish.

Additionally, Farhoudian et al. (2021) notes that corrupt practices within state institutions and the complicity of local officials significantly deepen the fragility of a state by eroding public trust, weakening governance, and enabling the proliferation of illicit activities. Farhoudian et al. (2021) emphasize that corruption within state institutions undermines their capacity to deliver essential services and enforce laws, as resources are diverted away from their intended purposes toward personal enrichment or patronage networks. This mismanagement not only weakens institutional effectiveness but also delegitimizes the state in the eyes of its citizens, fostering grievances that can escalate into instability or conflict.

Corruption often creates a cycle of fragility by facilitating the operations of organized criminal networks, extremist groups, and other non-state actors. Johnston (2005) argues that when local officials are complicit in corrupt practices, they enable these groups to thrive, whether through the manipulation of law enforcement, the issuance of fraudulent permits, or the misallocation of public resources. Such actions weaken the rule of law and create environments where criminality becomes normalized, further destabilizing governance structures.

Additionally, corrupt practices hinder efforts to address public grievances and socioeconomic challenges. Rotberg (2004) highlights that in fragile states, corruption exacerbates inequality by limiting access to public goods and services, which disproportionately affects marginalized populations. This inequity fosters resentment and erodes social cohesion, providing fertile ground for unrest, insurgencies, and, in some

cases, violent extremism. Farhoudian et al. (2021) echo these concerns, noting that when local officials collude with illicit actors, it undermines state authority and reinforces the perception that the government is incapable of addressing citizens' needs or ensuring their security.

The complicity of local officials in corruption also facilitates the growth of shadow economies, including the illicit trade of alcohol, drugs, and arms. These unregulated markets further strain state institutions by diverting revenues away from formal channels, reducing the government's fiscal capacity to address pressing security and development needs (Cockayne, 2016). As Fukuyama (2013) notes, effective governance requires a functioning bureaucracy capable of enforcing laws and managing resources efficiently; corruption within these structures fundamentally undermines these functions, exacerbating state fragility.

Moreover, corrupt practices at the local level undermine counterinsurgency and peacebuilding efforts. According to Chayes (2015), systemic corruption alienates local populations, who may then turn to non-state actors or rebel groups for protection and services. This dynamic creates a vicious cycle of fragility, as weakened state institutions struggle to combat the dual challenges of internal dissent and external threats.

Fukuyama (2013) discusses the importance of state capacity in providing public goods and maintaining order, noting that the absence of effective institutions allows illegal activities to thrive. He argues that states with limited resources or weak institutional frameworks are more vulnerable to corruption, mismanagement, and a lack of effective law enforcement.

In the context of illicit alcohol, the lack of trained personnel, adequate infrastructure, and proper regulatory systems means that illegal alcohol production can continue unchecked, undermining both public health and lawful economic activities. When regulatory agencies are ill-equipped to monitor and control such markets, criminal networks often fill the gap, taking advantage of regulatory loopholes to proliferate illegal activities (Fukuyama, 2013).

Muthuri (2019) further explores the challenges that African countries face in managing the illicit alcohol trade, especially in regions with limited resources. She notes that the inability of regulatory agencies to effectively police illicit alcohol production is a

direct result of insufficient funding, lack of technical expertise, and limited infrastructural capacity. These weaknesses prevent authorities from monitoring production, enforcing laws, and prosecuting offenders, which in turn allows illicit alcohol markets to thrive. As Muthuri (2019) suggests, these institutional gaps contribute to a breakdown in governance, where illegal markets flourish, exacerbating public health problems, and undermining the rule of law. King and Murray (2001) extend the discussion by linking state capacity to national security, particularly in the context of public health and safety. They argue that the state's ability to safeguard its citizens from illicit activities, such as the distribution of toxic alcohol, is a core function of governance.

In Kenya, several agencies are tasked with addressing the illicit alcohol production and distribution using a multi-agency model. The National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) leads efforts to regulate alcohol consumption and reduce alcohol-related harm through public health initiatives and policy advocacy. The Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) and the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) are responsible for ensuring tax compliance and enforcing safety standards in the formal alcohol sector. The National Police Service (NPS) and National Government Administration Officers (NGAO) play key roles in enforcing laws against the illegal production and sale of alcohol. Despite these agencies' efforts, their effectiveness is often undermined by corruption.

According to the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), corruption among law enforcement and regulatory bodies enables the illicit alcohol trade to thrive. Bribery and collusion allow producers and distributors to bypass legal consequences, exacerbating public health and security risks (EACC, 2023). This corruption not only weakens law enforcement but also erodes public trust in these institutions, further complicating efforts to curb illicit alcohol.

2.3.3. Intervention Gaps and Recommendations for Improvement

Existing intervention strategies aimed at addressing illicit alcohol markets show promise but are hindered by notable gaps in implementation. The literature on illicit alcohol interventions highlights several critical gaps, particularly in the context of Kenya, that undermine the effectiveness of current strategies and have significant national security implications.

In the context of illicit alcohol, the lack of trained personnel, adequate infrastructure, and proper regulatory systems means that illegal alcohol production can continue unchecked, undermining both public health and lawful economic activities. When regulatory agencies are ill-equipped to monitor and control such markets, criminal networks often fill the gap, taking advantage of regulatory loopholes to proliferate illegal activities (Fukuyama, 2013).

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Another major gap is the socio-economic disparity that drives marginalized populations to consume cheaper, unregulated alcohol. Studies in Malawi and India highlight how poverty and economic pressures exacerbate illicit alcohol consumption, often leading to severe health risks like methanol poisoning (Limaye et al., 2014; D'Silva, 2015). However, these studies do not address how these markets undermine national security by fueling organized crime and eroding state authority. The literature suggests that addressing the socio-economic drivers of illicit alcohol consumption is crucial for effective intervention. Policy frameworks should consider creating economic opportunities and providing safer, more accessible alternatives to illicit alcohol, which could help mitigate the public health and security risks associated with unregulated markets (Felbab-Brown, 2018; Shaw et al., 2020).

Another critical gap is the influence of cultural norms and informal markets. As Hesse (2015) observes, cultural acceptance of local brews, particularly in African contexts, can perpetuate illicit alcohol consumption despite the health risks. Shaw et al. (2020) and Felbab-Brown (2018) argue that poverty and weak governance structures drive illicit alcohol markets, yet they overlook how cultural practices shape these markets.

In Kenya, where local alcohol markets are deeply ingrained in cultural practices, overly restrictive policies can drive consumers further into informal markets, making regulation even harder. Interventions should balance regulation with cultural sensitivity, integrating community-driven education programs that raise awareness about the risks of illicit alcohol while promoting safer consumption practices. This approach could help reduce the reliance on informal markets without alienating local populations (Beyene, 2019).

In terms of proposing recommendations, empirical research emphasizes the critical role of combining regulatory oversight with public education to mitigate the health risks and harms associated with illicit alcohol (Lachenmeier et al., 2012). Experiences from countries such as Brazil, where community-based interventions have proven successful, further underline the efficacy of localized approaches in reducing alcohol-related harm

(Caetano & Laranjeira, 2006). This is consistent with the broader findings of Madureira-Lima and Galea (2018), who conducted a comprehensive analysis of alcohol control policies across 167 countries. They found that stringent measures—such as taxation, age restrictions, and sales limitations—effectively curbed alcohol consumption and reduced related health issues.

In regulatory enforcement, studies emphasize the importance of strict measures such as taxation, age restrictions, and sales limits in reducing illicit alcohol consumption. However, the effectiveness of these regulations is often hindered by inconsistent enforcement, a problem that is particularly evident in Kenya, where enforcement agencies are under-resourced and corruption is prevalent (Beyene, 2019; Omondi, 2016). The literature suggests that strengthening enforcement mechanisms is essential, yet few studies fully explore the operational challenges faced by enforcement agencies, especially in developing countries.

The relationship between public health and security is critically discussed by Sidel and Levy (2002), who argue that the illicit alcohol trade exacerbates societal instability, particularly in countries with weak regulatory frameworks. They advocate for an integrated approach that combines health and security measures to create safe drinking environments and bolster community resilience. Similarly, Willis (2003) highlights the intersection of illicit alcohol and criminal activity, especially among youth influenced by economic changes and globalization, suggesting that unregulated alcohol production not only poses health risks but also fuels social instability and crime. Hesse (2015) expands on this by examining the dynamics of African beer markets, where informal alcohol markets thrive due to economic disparities, regulatory gaps, and cultural traditions. Hesse calls for a regulatory approach that balances respect for local customs with the need to address economic realities and curb unregulated alcohol consumption.

Sharma (2009) underscores the effectiveness of alcohol taxation in reducing consumption, particularly among young people and heavy drinkers, by raising prices to discourage excessive drinking. In contrast, Snowdon (2014) critiques minimum alcohol pricing, suggesting that it disproportionately affects low-income moderate drinkers without achieving significant health benefits. Taleb and Bahelah (2014) focus on methanol poisoning outbreaks, such as the one in Libya, which they attribute to ineffective alcohol

regulation. Their recommendations include policy reforms, public health campaigns, and improved healthcare readiness to prevent similar incidents.

D'Silva (2015) investigates toxic alcohol consumption in India, highlighting how socio-economic factors push marginalized populations toward cheaper, illicit alcohol, often leading to fatal methanol poisoning. This issue is similarly discussed by Beyene (2019), who explores alcohol policy in Ethiopia, noting that high consumption and health risks remain significant challenges despite efforts to implement alcohol control measures. Limaye et al. (2014) examine Malawi's informal alcohol market, revealing the health risks posed by unregulated production methods and advocating for policy reforms, community education, and regulatory enhancements, despite challenges like limited resources.

Omondi (2016) further explores regulatory challenges, particularly the role of corruption and weak policy frameworks in hindering effective regulation. The risks associated with unregulated alcohol markets are also highlighted by Audrine (2021), who calls for comprehensive policy reforms in Indonesia, and by Felbab-Brown (2018), who argues that illicit alcohol markets fuel violence and corruption, contributing to broader governance and security challenges. Skehan, Sanchez, and Hastings (2016) provide a comprehensive analysis of the global illicit alcohol market, documenting the economic losses and public health crises linked to organized crime.

Grant and Leverton (2021) emphasize the importance of collaboration among local governments, NGOs, and community groups in reducing harmful drinking behaviors, showcasing case studies where partnerships significantly mitigate alcohol-related harm. Shaw et al. (2020) further illustrate how poverty, corruption, and weak regulations facilitate the flourishing of illicit markets, calling for a comprehensive policy approach to address the root causes and build community resilience. Mugisha et al. (2017) focus on the relationship between alcohol consumption and mental health in Uganda, advocating for community-based interventions and policies that balance cultural acceptance with public health considerations.

In Kenya, Kariuki (2015) discusses the socio-economic impact of illicit alcohol, revealing its role in health issues and social disruption. Recent studies, such as Jackson et al. (2024), investigate the changing trends in alcohol consumption among younger demographics in Great Britain, recommending strategies to align with evolving consumer

preferences, including promoting non-alcoholic beverages. Mitskaya and Kim (2020) explore the forensic aspects of illicit alcohol trafficking, examining the public health and legal challenges posed by the illicit alcohol trade, and emphasizing the need for collaboration among law enforcement and public health officials. Yeomans (2024) re-conceptualizes illicit alcohol markets, urging a holistic approach that tackles socio-economic drivers while addressing public health concerns.

Amakobe, Wakhungu and Wamocho (2024) examine the health and food security impacts of illicit alcohol in Kenya, emphasizing the need for stricter enforcement and educational programs. Their findings align with those of Were (2021), who investigates the social, economic, and health consequences of illicit alcohol use among Kenyan youth, attributing the prevalence of illicit alcohol consumption to poverty, limited employment opportunities, and lax regulatory policies.

Recommendations to improve enforcement include increasing the capacity of law enforcement agencies through training and better coordination between national and local authorities. Stricter penalties for offenders and the use of technology to monitor production and distribution could also enhance regulatory oversight and deterrence (Kariuki, 2015; Lewis, 2022).

A further gap in the literature is the lack of focus on the national security implications of illicit alcohol markets. While studies like Felbab-Brown (2018) and Shaw et al. (2020) recognize that these markets can fund organized crime, foster violence, and weaken governance, few address how enforcement challenges in specific countries, like Kenya, exacerbate these security threats. Illicit alcohol markets not only contribute to social instability but also undermine state authority, particularly when law enforcement is ineffective. A national security perspective should be integrated into alcohol control policies, focusing not only on public health but also on strengthening state capacity to address organized crime and safeguard governance (Lewis, 2022).

Finally, emerging trends such as online alcohol sales and cross-border consumption further complicate alcohol regulation. Studies by Audrine (2021) and Jackson et al. (2024) emphasize the need for regulatory adjustments to address these new challenges, but they lack a focus on the operational difficulties enforcement agencies face in monitoring these trends.

As the global alcohol market evolves, regulatory bodies must adapt to include digital platforms and cross-border trade regulations. Age verification systems for online sales and enhanced international cooperation to combat cross-border trafficking will be critical to addressing these new vulnerabilities (Jackson et al., 2024). Enforcement agencies must be equipped with the tools and training necessary to tackle these emerging issues effectively.

The gaps in the literature suggest that illicit alcohol markets in Kenya, and globally, are shaped by a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, regulatory, and enforcement factors. These gaps undermine the success of intervention strategies and pose significant threats to national security. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach that integrates socio-economic programs, cultural sensitivity, enhanced enforcement mechanisms, and national security considerations. By strengthening the enforcement capacity of regulatory agencies and developing policies that address the root causes of illicit alcohol consumption, Kenya can improve the effectiveness of its interventions and safeguard both public health and national security.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

In the conceptual framework for assessing illicit alcohol intervention strategies in Kenya, the dependent variable is the effectiveness of illicit alcohol control strategies. This encompasses outcomes such as reduced prevalence of illicit alcohol, improved public health, and enhanced national security. These outcomes are used to measure the success of intervention efforts.

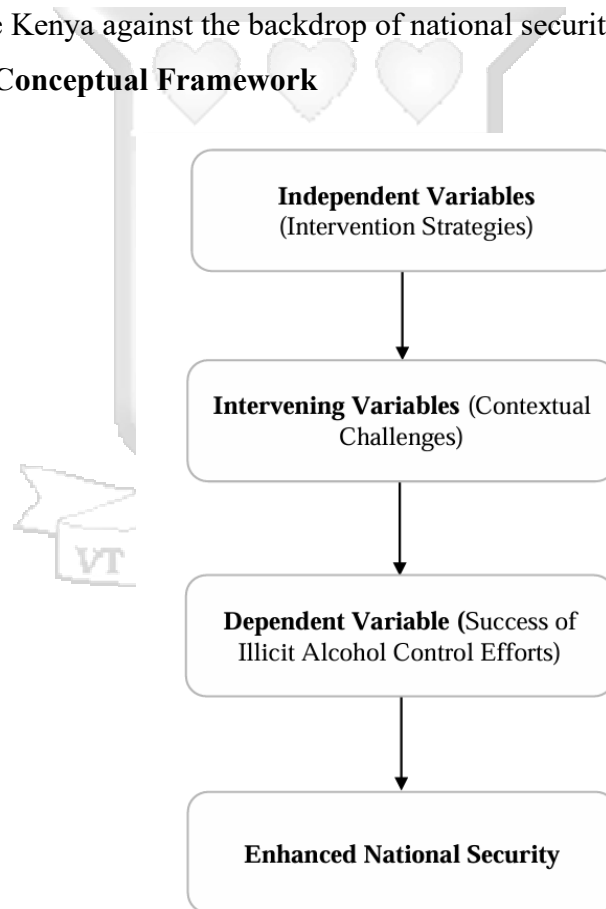
The independent variables include the specific intervention strategies being implemented. These involve harm reduction approaches, preventive measures, public awareness campaigns, public education, and community engagement. Other independent variables include regulatory enforcement mechanisms such as governance frameworks, legal structures, and informal social controls, as well as the state's capacity to enforce regulations, suppress illegal markets, and maintain public order.

The intervening variables are factors that influence the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. These include social determinants of health such as economic and cultural drivers of illicit alcohol consumption, as well as challenges faced by enforcement agencies, such as resource limitations, corruption, and poor interagency

collaboration. Systemic inefficiencies and gaps in strategy implementation, as identified through gap analysis, also act as intervening variables by either facilitating or hindering the effectiveness of intervention strategies.

Overall, the framework demonstrates how the interplay between intervention strategies and contextual challenges impacts the success of illicit alcohol control efforts. By addressing gaps and systemic inefficiencies, the framework aims to improve national security outcomes related to illicit alcohol trade which involves safeguarding public safety, strengthening governance, and reducing threats posed by unregulated markets. This approach not only advances the theoretical understanding of intervention strategies but also informs practical solutions for tackling illicit markets in complex socio-economic environments like Kenya against the backdrop of national security.

Figure 2.1: The Conceptual Framework



Note. This figure illustrates how intervention strategies (independent variables) interact with contextual challenges (intervening variables) to influence the success of illicit alcohol control efforts (dependent variable).

2.6 Research Gaps

The existing literature emphasizes the importance of multifaceted approaches encompassing policy reform, community engagement and health interventions to combat illicit alcohol markets. However, critical research gaps persist, particularly regarding the specific impacts of these strategies on Kenya's national security and the operational capacity of its enforcement agencies. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by evaluating the effectiveness of current intervention strategies, identifying enforcement challenges, analyzing the implications for national security, and highlighting implementation gaps. By addressing these issues within Kenya's unique socio-economic, regulatory, and security context, the study aims to provide actionable insights that enhance both public health and security outcomes.

A critical review of the literature reveals several research gaps concerning illicit alcohol intervention strategies, particularly in the Kenyan context. While much of the existing research highlights the socio-economic and health impacts of illicit alcohol, there is a lack of direct evaluation of the success of current intervention strategies. Studies such as those by Limaye et al. (2014) and Beyene (2019) offer policy recommendations but fail to assess their effectiveness over time, leaving a gap in understanding the real-world impact of these strategies. Additionally, most studies focus on the immediate outcomes of interventions, neglecting the longitudinal impact and the reasons behind the limited effectiveness of some strategies. There is also insufficient attention given to the long-term sustainability of interventions, such as taxation or community-driven initiatives, and their adaptability to shifting market dynamics.

Another significant gap is the inadequate exploration of enforcement challenges, particularly in regions like Kenya. While studies note issues like resource allocation, corruption, and community cooperation, there is a lack of detailed analysis of the specific obstacles faced by law enforcement agencies. This leaves a critical gap in understanding how to strengthen law enforcement capabilities in combating illicit alcohol. Furthermore, while some studies touch on the effects of illicit alcohol on community stability, few focus on its broader implications for national security. The links between illicit alcohol and organized crime, as well as its effects on governance and law enforcement integrity, require further investigation.

Additionally, while community involvement is suggested in many studies, there is limited research on how local communities in Kenya perceive and engage with intervention strategies. This gap in understanding community dynamics undermines the design and sustainability of effective interventions. Moreover, generalized recommendations from existing reviews lack context-specific insights tailored to Kenya's unique national security posture and socio-economic environment.



Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the research design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques used to assess illicit alcohol intervention strategies in Kenya from a national security perspective. Given the complex and multifaceted nature of illicit alcohol production and consumption, a qualitative approach is adopted to provide a comprehensive analysis. The research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of current strategies, identify gaps, and propose recommendations for improving policy and practice. By employing qualitative method, this study ensures a robust and nuanced understanding of the issue, facilitating the development of actionable solutions to enhance national security and public health.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design, which proved well-suited for exploring complex social phenomena, such as illicit alcohol intervention strategies, in their natural settings. The qualitative approach allowed for triangulation, thereby enhancing the credibility, validity, and reliability of the findings by corroborating evidence from multiple sources and methods (Creswell & Plano, 2018; Denzin, 2012). Triangulation strengthened the qualitative inquiry by facilitating a deeper, more holistic understanding of the issue under study, particularly where quantitative data might have fallen short in capturing the full social context (Patton, 2015).

Qualitative methods such as key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were central to this design. These tools were instrumental in capturing the nuanced perspectives, experiences, and motivations of various stakeholders involved in the formulation, enforcement, and reception of intervention strategies for illicit alcohol (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As Flick (2018) observed, qualitative inquiry is essential in “unveiling the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems,” a principle that was critical for contextualizing the social, economic, and cultural drivers behind illicit alcohol use and the perceived effectiveness of regulatory responses.

Additionally, this research design facilitated the interpretive construction of knowledge, allowing for the identification of patterns, themes, and contradictions in stakeholder responses that might not have emerged through quantitative means alone (Charmaz, 2014). It also enabled the exploration of how enforcement challenges,

community dynamics, and governance capacity interact, thereby shedding light on the mechanisms through which national security and public health are affected by illicit alcohol (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

The flexibility and reflexivity embedded in qualitative research proved particularly appropriate for studying socially sensitive and policy-laden topics such as illicit alcohol interventions. According to Yin (2016), such a design allows the researcher to adjust data collection strategies in response to emerging insights—an approach that was indeed necessary during the course of this study, especially when navigating the evolving dynamics of public health and regulatory enforcement.

3.3 Population

The multidimensional nature of the threats posed by illicit alcohol straddling public health, economic stability, and the rule of law, necessitated a comprehensive perspective from key respondents operating within these domains. The target population specifically focused on individuals socio-economically affected by the illicit alcohol trade, as well as those involved in regulating its production, distribution, and consumption. The study therefore encompassed a diverse group of stakeholders, including law enforcement officials, policymakers, community leaders, public health professionals, and members of communities directly impacted by the illicit alcohol trade.

The study covered the period between 2012, when the implementation of the NACADA Act began, and 2024. The NACADA Act provided the legal framework guiding intervention strategies in Kenya. The National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) was therefore central to this study, with a particular focus on its strategies and policies related to the regulation and control of illicit alcohol under the Act. The Ministry of Health was also examined for its public health responses to alcohol-related crises, particularly incidents involving alcohol poisoning and long-term health complications arising from illicit alcohol consumption.

Additionally, the roles of the National Police Service (NPS) and the National Government Administration Officers (NGAO) were evaluated, particularly with regard to their enforcement efforts and the challenges they faced in implementing strategies to combat the production, distribution, and consumption of illicit alcohol. By examining these dimensions, the study provided a detailed evaluation of current intervention strategies and

offered policy recommendations for strengthening Kenya's efforts against illicit alcohol. The findings of the research contributed to enhancing national security, improving public health, and promoting socio-economic stability across the country.

3.4 Study Area

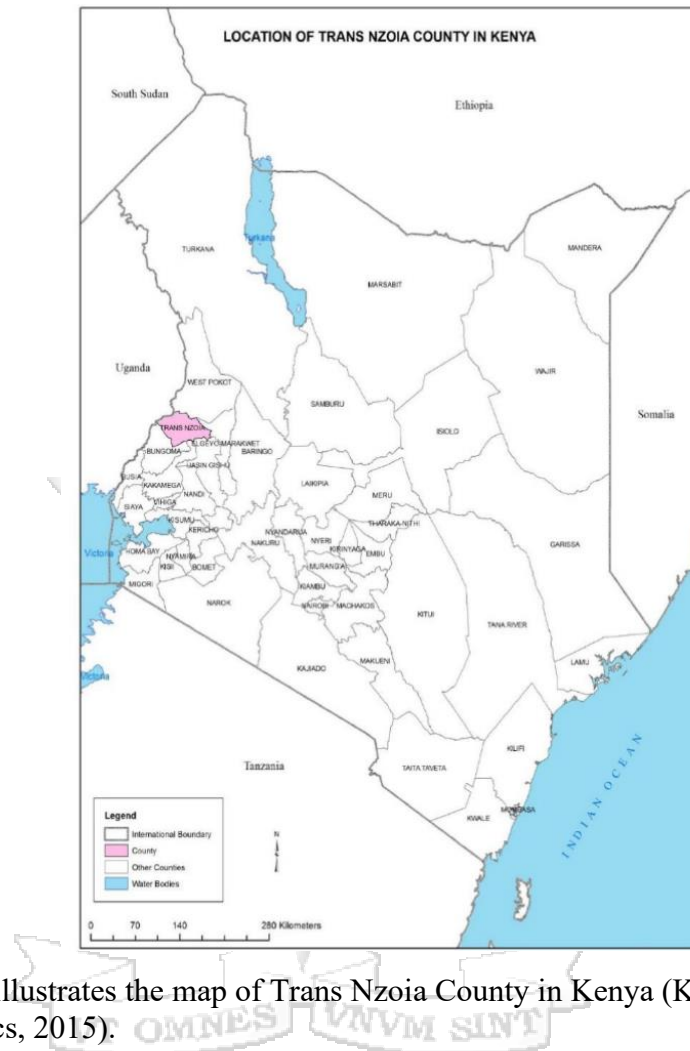
This study focused on Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties, regions strategically selected due to their documented vulnerability to the proliferation of illicit alcohol and their importance in shaping national intervention efforts. The decision was guided by recent findings in the NACADA (2024) report, which identified these counties as critical hotspots in the fight against illicit alcohol due to high prevalence rates, recurrent health crises related to toxic brews, and persistent enforcement challenges. Specifically, the study targeted law enforcers, policy makers, community leaders, public health officials and community members.

Figure 3.1: The Map of Kakamega County in Kenya



Note. This figure illustrates the map Kakamega County in Kenya (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

Figure 3.2: The Map of Trans Nzoia County in Kenya



Note. This figure illustrates the map of Trans Nzoia County in Kenya (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

3.4 Sample size

The study engaged a total of forty-two participants, comprising six law enforcement officials with three from each county, seven policymakers including four from Kakamega and three from Trans Nzoia, eleven community leaders with five from Kakamega and six from Trans Nzoia, nine public health professionals consisting of six from Kakamega and three from Trans Nzoia, and fifteen affected community members with eight from Kakamega and seven from Trans Nzoia.

The purposive selection of participants across these diverse stakeholder categories was designed to reflect the multifaceted nature of the illicit alcohol problem, which intersects with governance, public health, and community dynamics. Such stratified

representation aligns with best practices in qualitative research, which emphasize the importance of capturing varied perspectives to ensure rich, contextually grounded data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 3.1: Total Interview Respondents

Respondents	Law Enforcement	Policy Makers	Community Leaders	Public Health	Community Members
Number	6	7	11	9	15

Note. This table shows the sample size and distribution of the respondents who will be interviewed consisting of law enforcement officials, policymakers, community leaders, public health professionals and the affected community members.

Additionally, two focus group discussions were conducted with nine community leaders in Kakamega and eleven in Trans Nzoia, offering deeper insights into community-level perspectives on illicit alcohol intervention strategies. The selection of 42 interview respondents in this study was informed by both methodological rigor and contextual relevance. This sample size ensured a balance between the depth and diversity of perspectives while maintaining feasibility within the scope of the research. The number of participants was adequate to meet the study’s objectives, and interviews continued until the point of data saturation—the stage at which no new themes or information emerged from the data.

In qualitative research, the principle of data saturation is critical for determining sample size. As Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) assert, data saturation can often be achieved with relatively small sample sizes, particularly in studies involving homogenous populations. In this case, the participants—drawn from Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties—shared overlapping experiences and socio-economic contexts related to the illicit alcohol trade. Consequently, the 42 respondents provided rich and comprehensive insights while reflecting the diversity within this relatively homogenous population.

The sample included stakeholders from various sectors, such as law enforcement officials, policymakers, public health professionals, community leaders, and directly affected residents. This multi-sectoral representation allowed the study to examine the problem from multiple vantage points, thereby aligning with its objective of interrogating

the intersectional impacts of illicit alcohol on public health, economic stability, and governance. By incorporating perspectives from both regulatory authorities and community members, the study developed a nuanced and balanced understanding of the issues under investigation.

Furthermore, the selection of 42 participants was consistent with qualitative research practices and allowed for effective triangulation with secondary data sources. This triangulation strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell, 2013), enhancing the study's internal validity.

Finally, the insider perspectives provided by the selected respondents offered valuable, context-specific knowledge that enriched the evaluation of current intervention strategies. Their lived experiences and sector-specific expertise contributed to the depth and relevance of the findings. As Charmaz (2014) emphasizes, the strength of qualitative research lies in its ability to capture the nuanced realities of participants' lives—an objective effectively realized through the selected sample in this study.

3.5 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame for this study consisted of a comprehensive list of key stakeholders directly involved in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of intervention strategies against illicit alcohol in Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties. This frame was constructed from official records, directories, and databases maintained by government institutions such as the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA), the Ministry of Health, National Police Service (NPS), National Government Administrative Officers (NGAO), as well as relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and local community associations.

The use of a multi-institutional sampling frame ensured that the study included respondents with first-hand experience in combating illicit alcohol from various functional and institutional perspectives. This approach was critical in enabling the study to gather data from actors across different policy and implementation levels, enhancing the validity, credibility, and depth of the findings (Patton, 2015).

According to Maxwell (2013), a well-defined sampling frame is essential in qualitative research as it provides a strategic structure for identifying individuals with the

most relevant knowledge, experience, and insight into the phenomenon under investigation. In this case, the sampling frame was not limited to formal institutions but was expanded to include informal and community-level actors, who are often closest to the realities of illicit alcohol production, distribution, and consumption.

This inclusive approach was aligned with the study's goal of capturing the intersectional nature of the illicit alcohol trade, which spans public health, law enforcement, socio-economic conditions, and governance structures. By integrating stakeholders from both the formal enforcement side and grassroots community responders, the sampling frame allowed for triangulation of perspectives and the construction of a rich, multi-dimensional understanding of the effectiveness and limitations of current intervention strategies (Denzin, 2012).

Moreover, the sampling frame supported the purposive and snowball sampling strategies employed in this study, serving as a starting point for referrals and expansions based on participants' recommendations. As noted by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), a strategic and inclusive sampling frame increases the potential for discovering emergent themes and relationships, which is fundamental in qualitative analysis.

In sum, the carefully constructed sampling frame ensured that the study's participants were representative of the policy, enforcement, and community spectrum engaged in the fight against illicit alcohol. This inclusivity not only improved the credibility and transferability of the findings but also ensured that the research addressed the complex, layered nature of the problem in a manner that is relevant for both policy and practice.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Technique

This study employed the snowball sampling technique to identify and recruit participants from the target population. Given the sensitive nature of the illicit alcohol trade and its implications for national security, public health, and governance, this sampling method proved especially appropriate. Snowball sampling facilitated access to individuals who might otherwise have been reluctant to participate due to fears of legal consequences, social stigma, or community reprisal (Goodman, 1961; Heckathorn, 1997). This technique was essential for engaging actors such as community leaders, law enforcement officers, and individuals directly or indirectly affected by the illicit alcohol economy.

In practical terms, initial participants—such as key policymakers, public health professionals, and local enforcement officials—served as referral agents, identifying other potential participants with relevant knowledge and experience. This referral chain enabled the researcher to reach hidden, hard-to-reach, or marginalized groups who are typically underrepresented in research of this nature (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Atkinson & Flint, 2001). For instance, community members who had experienced or witnessed the adverse effects of illicit alcohol were more willing to participate once they had been referred by a trusted acquaintance.

From a methodological perspective, snowball sampling also allowed the study to uncover social networks and informal policy communication pathways, which are often critical in understanding how interventions are formulated and implemented at the grassroots level (Handcock & Gile, 2011). In this context, the technique provided access to a comprehensive range of policy actors, from national-level decision-makers to sub-county enforcement personnel and civil society actors.

The technique also supported the study's objective of understanding the local socio-economic and cultural drivers behind the production and consumption of illicit alcohol. As Noy (2008) notes, snowball sampling is particularly useful in exploring social structures and capturing the depth of participants' lived experiences within their cultural context. This was instrumental in understanding not only the official narratives of enforcement but also the community perceptions, resilience mechanisms, and informal responses to alcohol-related harms.

Moreover, snowball sampling was cost-effective and time-efficient, aligning with the resource constraints of qualitative fieldwork. It also helped to build trust and rapport, which was crucial for eliciting candid responses from participants whose insights were central to evaluating the effectiveness of current intervention strategies (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). By employing snowball sampling, the study captured a holistic, contextually grounded perspective on the illicit alcohol trade and its broader social, health, and security implications. This method aligned with the study's interpretive paradigm, which emphasizes the value of insider perspectives and emergent, relational knowledge (Charmaz, 2014).

3.7 Instruments

Data collection for this study was conducted using a combination of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). These instruments were carefully selected for their capacity to elicit rich, contextualized, and triangulated insights necessary for exploring the complex dynamics of illicit alcohol intervention strategies in Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties.

Semi-structured interviews were administered to key informants, including policymakers, law enforcement officials, public health professionals, and community leaders. This instrument was chosen because it allows for both consistency across interviews and flexibility to probe deeper into emergent issues. According to Kallio et al. (2016), semi-structured interviews are particularly effective for exploring participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and policy knowledge while allowing room for clarification and elaboration.

In addition, two focus group discussions were conducted—one in Kakamega and another in Trans Nzoia—with community members who have been socio-economically impacted by the illicit alcohol trade. FGDs provided a platform to capture collective views, shared experiences, and community-level dynamics that are often overlooked in one-on-one interviews. As noted by Krueger and Casey (2015), focus groups are instrumental in generating interaction-driven data and uncovering the social norms and group-level attitudes that shape behavior and perceptions around sensitive topics like illicit alcohol consumption.

The study also utilized secondary quantitative data, drawn from NACADA reports and Ministry of Health surveillance records. This data helped contextualize the qualitative findings by providing information on the prevalence. As Bryman (2016) argues, the integration of secondary data enhances the analytical depth of qualitative research by grounding it in empirical trends and official documentation.

The combination of these instruments aligns with a methodological triangulation strategy, which improves the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study findings (Denzin, 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach ensured that the study captured both individual experiences and institutional realities, thus facilitating a

comprehensive understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in Kenya's response to the illicit alcohol problem.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

This section outlines the approach to be used for primary data collected through interviews and focus groups. The data collection procedure for this study was carefully designed to gather rich, in-depth insights into the effectiveness of illicit alcohol intervention strategies in Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties. Primary data were collected using two qualitative methods: semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. These tools were selected for their suitability in capturing both institutional and community-level perspectives on a complex, sensitive, and often concealed social issue such as the illicit alcohol trade (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 42 key informants purposively selected from law enforcement agencies, NACADA, the Ministry of Health, National Government Administration Officers (NGAOs), community-based organizations, and local leadership structures. These interviews allowed for flexibility in the questioning process, enabling the interviewer to probe emerging themes and clarify ambiguous responses, thereby generating a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Kallio et al., 2016). Each interview session lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or virtually, depending on the availability and preference of the respondents.

In addition to the interviews, two focus group discussions (FGDs) were held—one in Kakamega with nine participants and another in Trans Nzoia with eleven. The FGDs comprised community leaders and residents directly impacted by the illicit alcohol trade. Focus groups were especially useful for understanding collective experiences, cultural norms, and community-based interpretations of intervention strategies. According to Krueger and Casey (2015), focus group discussions are an effective method for uncovering shared social meanings and generating interactive dialogue that often leads to insights not easily obtained through individual interviews.

The selection of these data collection methods was also guided by their ability to accommodate the ethical and logistical complexities of the research context. Given the sensitivity of the topic, participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained prior to the commencement of each session. Ethical

procedures were strictly followed to ensure the dignity, safety, and voluntary participation of all respondents, in line with guidelines established by Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2001).

The iterative nature of data collection was a core feature of the research process. As themes emerged from the early stages of data collection, subsequent interviews and discussions were refined to further explore these insights. This reflexive approach aligns with the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participants (Charmaz, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). It also enhanced the credibility of the study by allowing for triangulation—comparing findings across different methods and sources to ensure consistency and accuracy (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

In conclusion, the data collection procedure effectively balanced methodological rigor, ethical responsibility, and contextual sensitivity. By employing semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the study captured both the depth and breadth of stakeholder perspectives on the illicit alcohol problem. This approach contributed significantly to the study's goal of offering actionable insights and policy recommendations rooted in the lived realities of those most affected.

3.9 Data Processing and Analysis

Data processing and analysis were integral to deriving meaningful insights in this study, enabling the transformation of raw qualitative data into coherent findings that inform policy and practice. The analysis involved a rigorous and systematic approach to managing data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, ensuring both depth and credibility in interpreting the complexities surrounding illicit alcohol intervention strategies.

The first step in processing the data involved the verbatim transcription of all interviews and focus group discussions. This process preserved the accuracy of participants' responses while allowing for careful review and cleaning of the transcripts to eliminate irrelevant or erroneous information. To protect participant anonymity and uphold ethical standards, all identifying information was removed, and unique identifiers were assigned to each transcript (Creswell, 2013). Once cleaned, the transcripts were imported

into NVivo software to facilitate the organization, coding, and retrieval of data during thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis served as the principal analytical technique for this study. As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), this method enables the identification, examination, and interpretation of recurring patterns and themes across the data set. Through thematic analysis, the research captured a nuanced understanding of stakeholder perspectives, revealing both the explicit content and the underlying meanings conveyed during discussions and interviews. This method allowed for a comprehensive exploration of key issues such as policy implementation challenges, community engagement, enforcement limitations, and socio-economic impacts of illicit alcohol.

Transcripts from the focus group discussions underwent the same process of transcription, cleaning, and thematic analysis. Particular attention was paid to group dynamics and interactive dialogue, which offered valuable insights into community perceptions, collective attitudes, and the social norms shaping responses to illicit alcohol interventions (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The group setting further enriched the data by allowing participants to build upon each other's ideas, providing a more robust understanding of shared experiences and contested viewpoints.

In addition to primary data, the study incorporated secondary data from government reports, policy documents, and NACADA publications to provide historical, contextual, and regulatory perspectives. This secondary data was subjected to content analysis—a method effective for systematically coding textual materials to identify specific concepts, categories, and policy trends (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Yin, 2014). The integration of secondary data enabled triangulation with findings from interviews and focus groups, enhancing the validity and reliability of the study (Denzin, 2012).

Triangulation, as a methodological strategy, was employed not only to cross-verify data from different sources but also to uncover inconsistencies or complementary insights, thereby strengthening the overall analytical framework. As argued by Patton (2015) and Denzin (2012), triangulation is essential in qualitative research for establishing credibility and trustworthiness. Framework analysis, as proposed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994), was also applied to structure the interpretation of findings, especially when aligning emerging themes with the study's objectives. This analytical approach allowed for systematic

indexing, mapping, and interpretation of qualitative data based on key thematic areas such as enforcement, policy coordination, community resilience, and public health implications.

Ultimately, the integration of thematic and content analysis, supported by triangulation and framework analysis, provided a holistic and evidence-based understanding of the effectiveness of illicit alcohol intervention strategies. The methodological rigor, combined with the interpretive depth of qualitative inquiry, enabled the study to offer actionable policy recommendations grounded in lived experiences and institutional realities.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were central to the conduct of this study, given the sensitivity surrounding the topic of illicit alcohol and its implications for public health, socio-economic stability, and national security. Throughout the research process, strict adherence was maintained to established ethical principles to safeguard the rights, dignity, and welfare of all participants.

Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to their involvement in the study. Participants were fully briefed on the study's objectives, the nature of their participation, the procedures involved, and any potential risks or discomforts they might encounter. This process ensured that participation was entirely voluntary and based on a clear understanding of the research purpose and scope. As Israel and Hay (2006) emphasized, informed consent is not merely a procedural formality but a cornerstone of ethical research that upholds the autonomy and agency of participants.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained rigorously to protect the privacy of respondents. Pseudonyms and coded identifiers were used in transcripts and analysis to ensure that individuals could not be identified. Data were securely stored and access was restricted to the principal researcher, in compliance with data protection protocols. According to Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2015), ensuring confidentiality is critical in studies involving sensitive topics, as it fosters a safe environment for participants to share honest and potentially vulnerable accounts.

Given the sensitive nature of the study topic—particularly the discussion of illicit activities and enforcement gaps—the ethical imperative of do-no-harm was upheld at all times. Care was taken to avoid exposing participants to risks such as legal consequences,

reputational damage, or social stigma. This aligns with the guidance of Resnik (2018), who underscores the importance of minimizing harm and ensuring participant safety as foundational ethical obligations in social research.

Ethical clearance was secured from the Strathmore University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee (SU-ISERC) and all research activities were conducted in accordance with research ethics guidelines prescribed by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). By upholding these ethical standards, the study not only protected participants but also enhanced the credibility, reliability, and academic integrity of the research findings. Adhering to sound ethical principles ensured that the research process was marked by respect, trustworthiness, and accountability—qualities essential for the study's contribution to policy and practice in combating the illicit alcohol trade.

3.11 Utilization and Dissemination

The findings of this study will be utilized to inform national security policies, refine illicit alcohol intervention strategies, and contribute to scholarly and professional discourse on substance control and governance in Kenya. By generating evidence-based recommendations, the research contributes directly to the policy-making ecosystem, targeting key institutions such as the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA), the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government, county governments, and law enforcement agencies. The study illuminates specific gaps and inefficiencies within existing intervention frameworks and provides actionable insights aimed at strengthening regulatory enforcement, enhancing inter-agency coordination, and improving the reach and efficacy of community-based rehabilitation and prevention efforts.

The application of the research findings was anchored in the principle of evidence-informed policy-making, which emphasizes the translation of empirical research into actionable governance solutions (Nutley, Walter, & Davies, 2007). By aligning its output with the pressing needs of national security and public health frameworks, the study will support the development of policies grounded in local realities and contextual complexities of the illicit alcohol economy. The research underscored the interdependence of law

enforcement, public health, and community-led initiatives, thereby advocating for a multidimensional response to a multidimensional challenge (Muggah, 2012).

Beyond the policy domain, the study made a significant contribution to academic scholarship by expanding the theoretical and empirical literature on human security, governance, and informal economies in sub-Saharan Africa. Drawing on the frameworks of state weakness (Rotberg, 2004) and human security (UNDP, 1994), the study contextualized illicit alcohol as both a governance failure and a community-level survival strategy, offering a nuanced understanding of the drivers and consequences of unregulated trade. The thesis will be prepared for submission to peer-reviewed journals specializing in criminology, public policy, African studies, and national security, thereby facilitating knowledge dissemination to researchers and scholars working on similar thematic areas.

To further ensure practical relevance, the study findings will be synthesized into a concise policy brief tailored for policymakers, regulatory authorities, and civil society organizations. This brief was disseminated to NACADA, relevant ministries, and county governments in the study areas of Kakamega and Trans Nzoia. According to Weiss (1979), policy briefs serve as an essential interface between research and practice, translating complex academic findings into accessible and actionable knowledge for decision-makers. The brief will emphasize practical recommendations, including strategies for enhancing community participation, improving enforcement mechanisms, and integrating rehabilitation services into existing public health frameworks.

Stakeholder engagement will be prioritized in the dissemination strategy. Findings will be presented in multi-stakeholder forums comprising government officials, community leaders, public health practitioners, and law enforcement personnel. These workshops will foster dialogue on implementation pathways and provide opportunities for stakeholders to co-create localized intervention models. Such engagement aligns with the principles of participatory policy development, which advocate for the inclusion of diverse voices in shaping governance solutions (Fischer, 2000).

In addition to formal dissemination, the study will support public awareness initiatives in collaboration with NACADA and local community-based organizations. Campaigns can then be launched to educate communities about the socio-economic and security risks associated with illicit alcohol consumption and trade. These initiatives will

be designed to promote grassroots mobilization and enhance public participation in policy implementation, consistent with the findings of empirical studies that link civic engagement to improved policy compliance (Putnam, 1993).

From a legislative and enforcement perspective, the research findings inform recommendations for amending current laws governing the production, distribution, and consumption of alcohol. Detailed insights into enforcement challenges, corruption, and community resistance will be shared with security agencies and policymakers, equipping them with knowledge to refine enforcement strategies, improve accountability, and address structural vulnerabilities in supply chain monitoring. The study also contributes to institutional capacity building through the development of training modules for policy and enforcement personnel. These modules will integrate real-world findings from the research and were designed to enhance understanding of the socio-political dynamics that complicate alcohol regulation in rural and peri-urban settings.

Finally, the thesis lays the groundwork for future research by offering a robust empirical and theoretical foundation for comparative studies on illicit economies, human security, and governance failures. By focusing on Kenya, the study provided region-specific insights that may inform transnational research across East Africa and other parts of Africa facing similar regulatory challenges. As posited by George and Bennett (2005), in-depth case studies not only generate context-specific knowledge but also enrich theory-building for broader comparative analysis.

Through this multi-pronged dissemination strategy—spanning academic, policy, and community domains—the study will effectively bridge the gap between research and practice. The integration of scholarly insights with actionable policy recommendations ensures that the research findings contribute meaningfully to efforts aimed at curbing the illicit alcohol trade and enhancing national security in Kenya.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of data collected from interviews and focus group discussions conducted in Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties, located in Western Kenya. The study engaged a total of forty-two participants, comprising six law enforcement officials with three from each county, seven policymakers including four from Kakamega and three from Trans Nzoia, eleven community leaders with five from Kakamega and six from Trans Nzoia, nine public health professionals consisting of six from Kakamega and three from Trans Nzoia, and fifteen affected community members with eight from Kakamega and seven from Trans Nzoia. Additionally, two focus group discussions were conducted with nine community leaders in Kakamega and eleven in Trans Nzoia, providing deeper insights into community perspectives.

The findings are structured according to the three research questions guiding the study. First, the chapter examines current intervention strategies in reducing illicit alcohol prevalence. Second, it analyzes the impact of these strategies on citizens, their rights, peace, stability, and prosperity. Third, it explores existing gaps in intervention strategies and potential improvements. Each section presents detailed findings from both Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties, supported by direct quotations from participants to provide authentic voices and perspectives.

The data reveals distinct patterns and challenges in each county while also highlighting common themes across the region. Kakamega County's experiences with enforcement measures and community engagement differ in notable ways from Trans Nzoia's approach, particularly in terms of cross-border issues and organized crime. Public health professionals in both counties provided valuable insights into the health implications of illicit alcohol, while community leaders and affected members offered ground-level perspectives on the socioeconomic impacts of intervention strategies.

By presenting these findings in a structured manner, this chapter lays the foundation for understanding the complex dynamics of illicit alcohol trade and its regulation in Western Kenya. The subsequent sections will delve deeper into each research question, providing a nuanced analysis of the strategies employed, their effectiveness, and the challenges faced by various stakeholders in combating this persistent issue.

The methodology ensured representation across key stakeholder groups, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the problem from multiple angles. Law enforcement officials provided insights into operational challenges, policymakers shared their perspectives on regulatory frameworks, while community leaders and affected members highlighted the real-world consequences of both illicit alcohol consumption and the measures taken to curb it. This multi-faceted approach enables a holistic understanding of the issue, setting the stage for meaningful analysis and future policy recommendations.

Through this detailed presentation of findings, the chapter aims to provide policymakers, researchers, and community stakeholders with valuable data to inform more effective strategies for addressing the illicit alcohol trade in Kenya. The comparative analysis between the two counties offers particularly useful insights into how geographical, cultural, and administrative differences influence the implementation and outcomes of intervention measures.

The following sections will systematically explore each research question, beginning with an examination of current intervention strategies, followed by their impacts on communities, and concluding with an analysis of existing gaps and potential areas for improvement. This structure ensures a logical flow of information while maintaining focus on the study's key objectives.

By maintaining a clear distinction between findings from Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties, the chapter preserves important contextual differences that might otherwise be lost in a generalized presentation. This approach allows readers to appreciate how local factors shape both the illicit alcohol trade and the effectiveness of interventions designed to combat it.

The inclusion of direct participant quotations throughout the chapter serves to ground the findings in real experiences and perspectives, adding depth and authenticity to the analysis. These voices from the field provide crucial insights that quantitative data alone cannot capture, particularly regarding community perceptions and unintended consequences of intervention strategies.

This chapter also discusses the current state of illicit alcohol regulation in Western Kenya, the human and social costs of both the problem and its attempted solutions, and the systemic challenges that continue to hinder more effective action. This foundation will

prove invaluable for subsequent discussions on policy implications and recommendations for more effective interventions.

The careful balance between county-specific findings and broader regional patterns allows for both localized understanding and generalizable insights. This dual perspective is particularly important for a problem like illicit alcohol, which manifests differently across communities while sharing certain fundamental characteristics throughout the region.

Through this rigorous presentation of research findings, the chapter makes a significant contribution to the ongoing discourse on illicit alcohol in Kenya, providing evidence-based insights that can inform more targeted and effective policy responses. The subsequent sections will build upon this foundation to present a detailed analysis of each key aspect of the study.

4.2 Current Intervention Strategies in Reducing Illicit Alcohol Prevalence

4.2.1 Government-Led Enforcement Measures

The study revealed that Kakamega County primarily employs conventional law enforcement approaches to combat the illicit alcohol trade. Participants consistently reported that police raids, licensing regulations, and targeted crackdowns on known brew dens constituted the backbone of intervention strategies in the region. A law enforcement officer provided crucial insight into the operational realities of these measures, stating:

“We conduct weekly raids in hotspots like Shinyalu and Ikolomani, but brewers often relocate or bribe officers to avoid arrest. Corruption remains a major challenge” (Participant LE-K1, personal communication, March 20, 2025).

This account highlights the cyclical nature of enforcement efforts, where temporary disruptions fail to produce lasting impact due to the adaptive strategies of illicit operators and systemic corruption within enforcement structures.

The multi-agency approach involving NACADA presents another layer of intervention in Kakamega. A public health officer elaborated on this collaboration, noting:

“Many youths still consume illicit brews because they are cheaper than regulated alcohol. Awareness alone is not enough; we need economic alternatives” (Participant PH-K2, personal communication, March 20, 2025).

This observation underscores a critical limitation of current strategies, that while interagency cooperation exists, the interventions often fail to address the fundamental economic drivers that sustain demand for illicit alcohol. The price disparity between regulated and unregulated alcohol products emerges as a persistent challenge that current enforcement measures cannot adequately resolve.

The enforcement landscape in Trans Nzoia presents both similarities and distinct differences from Kakamega's approach. While maintaining the basic framework of raids and crackdowns, Trans Nzoia's strategies incorporate more structured coordination mechanisms, particularly to address its unique cross-border challenges. A NACADA official explained the complexities of border control:

“We work with Kenya Revenue Authority and Uganda's authorities to monitor border points like Suam, but illicit brewers use hidden routes” (Participant PM-T1, personal communication, March 14, 2025).

This statement reveals the sophisticated evasion tactics employed by illicit alcohol networks and the limitations of even well-coordinated cross-border enforcement efforts.

The role of local administrative structures in Trans Nzoia adds another dimension to enforcement strategies. A community leader provided critical insight into this dynamic:

“Chiefs help identify illegal brewing sites, but some take bribes to protect brewers. This undermines enforcement efforts” (Participant CL-T3, personal communication, March 13, 2025).

This account demonstrates how the effectiveness of decentralized enforcement mechanisms becomes compromised when local power structures are co-opted by illicit networks. The tension between the theoretical advantages of community-based surveillance and the practical challenges of corruption at the local level emerges as a recurring theme in Trans Nzoia's enforcement landscape.

The comparative analysis between the two counties reveals that while both employ similar foundational strategies of raids and multi-agency cooperation, their execution differs significantly in scope and effectiveness. Trans Nzoia's approach demonstrates a higher degree of formalization, integrating structured enforcement frameworks that emphasize sustained coordination between local, national, and regional authorities. Given its proximity to Uganda, the county has developed robust cross-border coordination

mechanisms to track supply routes, curb smuggling, and disrupt illicit alcohol networks through intelligence-led interventions. This structured and collaborative model enables authorities to proactively address the problem, reducing the recurrence of illicit brewing and distribution. In contrast, Kakamega’s efforts are more localized and reactive, relying heavily on periodic raids and community tip-offs that, while effective in the short term, do not result in lasting solutions.

The absence of a well-defined cross-jurisdictional strategy limits the county’s ability to combat the trade comprehensively, leading to cyclical enforcement patterns where illicit brewers and traders temporarily halt operations only to resume once enforcement efforts wane. This contrast underscores the need for Kakamega to adopt a more structured, intelligence-driven, and collaborative approach, drawing on Trans Nzoia’s best practices to enhance the sustainability and long-term impact of its interventions.

However, both counties share common challenges of corruption and the adaptive resilience of illicit networks, suggesting that enhanced enforcement alone may be insufficient without addressing these systemic vulnerabilities. The participants’ accounts consistently point to the need for more holistic strategies that complement enforcement with economic interventions and governance reforms to reduce corruption vulnerabilities in the enforcement chain.

4.2.2 Public Awareness and Community Engagement

The study found that public awareness campaigns in Kakamega County predominantly utilize conventional communication channels including radio talk shows, school-based programs, and traditional community meetings commonly known as *barazas*. While these platforms provide broad coverage and facilitate information dissemination, their effectiveness appears constrained by socioeconomic realities. An affected community member's poignant observation captures this limitation:

“People know illicit alcohol is harmful, but poverty pushes them to drink it. The government should provide jobs, not just warnings” (Participant ACM-K4, personal communication, March 14, 2025).

This statement reveals a critical disconnect between awareness efforts and the underlying economic desperation that drives consumption patterns, suggesting that informational campaigns alone cannot address the complex push factors sustaining illicit alcohol demand.

The reliance on traditional communication methods in Kakamega raises questions about their ability to engage younger demographics effectively. While school programs target youth directly, the radio and *baraza* approaches may struggle to resonate with tech-savvy younger generations who increasingly consume information through digital platforms. Furthermore, the temporal nature of these campaigns - often implemented as short-term initiatives rather than sustained programs - limits their potential for creating lasting behavioral change within communities.

Trans Nzoia's approach to public awareness demonstrates more innovative utilization of existing community structures, particularly through the engagement of religious leaders and women's groups. A policymaker explained this strategy:

“Churches and women's groups help spread messages on alcohol abuse, but rural areas still lack adequate outreach” (Participant PM-T2, personal communication, March 15, 2025).

This approach capitalizes on the moral authority of religious institutions and the organizational capacity of women's groups, potentially creating more culturally-grounded and trusted messengers for prevention messages.

However, the policymaker's acknowledgment of persistent rural gaps highlights a significant coverage challenge. The geographical and logistical difficulties in reaching remote areas result in uneven access to prevention messaging, leaving vulnerable populations underserved. This urban-rural divide in awareness efforts inadvertently contribute to higher rates of illicit alcohol consumption in rural regions where alternative entertainment options and economic opportunities are more limited.

The comparative analysis reveals that while both counties employ community engagement strategies, Trans Nzoia's incorporation of established community institutions offers potential advantages in message credibility and penetration. However, both approaches share common limitations in addressing the fundamental socioeconomic drivers of illicit alcohol use and in achieving comprehensive geographic coverage. The findings suggest that future awareness campaigns need to combine Kakamega's broad-

reach methods with Trans Nzoia's community-embedded approaches, while simultaneously addressing the economic vulnerabilities that undermine prevention efforts. Additionally, both counties could benefit from more rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems to assess campaign effectiveness and guide resource allocation to the most impactful strategies.

4.2.3 Security Enhancement

The research findings reveal distinct patterns in the relationship between illicit alcohol operations and criminal activity in Kakamega County. Law enforcement participants consistently characterized the illicit brew trade as primarily consisting of small-scale, localized operations rather than sophisticated criminal networks. As one officer explained:

“Most brewers are small-scale operators. The real problem is police corruption, not organized crime” (Participant LE-K3, personal communication, March 16, 2025).

This assessment suggests that while illicit alcohol production remains widespread in Kakamega, it operates more as a decentralized survival economy than as an organized criminal enterprise.

The security implications in Kakamega appear to manifest mainly through the corruption of law enforcement personnel rather than through violent criminal networks. The officer's candid acknowledgment of police corruption as the primary challenge highlights how systemic governance issues can perpetuate illicit markets even in the absence of large-scale organized crime involvement. This creates a paradoxical situation where enforcement efforts inadvertently contribute to the problem by creating opportunities for rent-seeking behavior among officers tasked with suppressing the trade.

In striking contrast to Kakamega, Trans Nzoia's illicit alcohol trade demonstrates clear characteristics of organized criminal activity with deeper political entanglements. A focus group discussion participant provided critical insight into these networks:

“Some politicians and police protect brewers in exchange for votes and bribes. This makes enforcement difficult” (FGD-Trans Nzoia, March 17, 2025).

This statement reveals a troubling nexus between political actors, law enforcement, and illicit alcohol producers that fundamentally undermines regulatory efforts.

The organized nature of Trans Nzoia's illicit alcohol trade suggests more sophisticated operations with established protection systems. The political dimension introduces additional complexity, as enforcement actions may be compromised by electoral considerations and patronage networks. This organized criminal-political nexus presents qualitatively different security challenges compared to Kakamega's more fragmented landscape, requiring distinct policy responses that address both the criminal and political dimensions of the problem.

The border proximity of Trans Nzoia likely contributes to this more organized trade pattern, facilitating larger-scale operations and cross-border smuggling networks that differ from Kakamega's localized production. This geographical factor, combined with the apparent political protections, creates an environment where illicit alcohol operations can achieve greater scale and resilience against enforcement efforts.

These findings have significant implications for intervention strategies, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all approach to illicit alcohol regulation may be ineffective. Kakamega's challenges call for anti-corruption measures within law enforcement combined with alternative livelihood programs, while Trans Nzoia March require more sophisticated operations targeting organized networks and their political enablers. Both situations, however, underscore how illicit alcohol markets often thrive through their ability to corrupt and co-opt the very institutions designed to regulate them.

The findings also highlight that community engagement is vital in both preventing the production and consumption of illicit alcohol and mitigating its social harms. Local leaders, religious institutions, and grassroots organizations can spearhead awareness campaigns to educate residents on the dangers of illicit brews, including their health risks and links to crime. Establishing neighborhood watch groups and whistleblower protections can encourage residents to report illicit brewing operations without fear of retaliation. Additionally, community-driven economic programs, such as cooperative societies and vocational training, can offer alternative livelihood opportunities for those involved in the illicit alcohol trade, reducing their economic dependence on this illegal activity.

Additionally, a public health official can complement law enforcement efforts by addressing the demand side of illicit alcohol consumption. Harm reduction strategies, such as the establishment of rehabilitation and counseling centers, can help individuals

struggling with alcohol addiction transition to safer alternatives. Health authorities can also promote regulated, affordable alcohol options to curb demand for illicit brews, which are often consumed due to their low cost and easy availability. Furthermore, mass screening and treatment programs for alcohol-related illnesses, particularly in high-prevalence areas, can help mitigate the long-term health consequences of illicit alcohol consumption.

A holistic intervention framework must therefore integrate law enforcement, community-led initiatives, and public health strategies. In Kakamega, anti-corruption measures within law enforcement should be paired with community awareness programs and economic support for at-risk populations. In Trans Nzoia, where illicit alcohol networks are more organized, interventions should combine intelligence-driven enforcement with targeted rehabilitation and harm reduction initiatives. Ultimately, both cases underscore the reality that illicit alcohol markets flourish by exploiting weaknesses in governance, making it imperative to build community resilience, strengthen institutional accountability, and enhance public health responses to create a sustainable, long-term solution.

4.3 Impact of Intervention Strategies on Citizens and National Security

4.3.1 Economic and Livelihood Effects

The enforcement measures implemented in Kakamega County have yielded complex socioeconomic consequences that reveal fundamental tensions between public health objectives and livelihood security. The crackdowns on illicit alcohol production have disproportionately affected vulnerable households that depended on the trade for subsistence income. As one community member poignantly testified:

“This was my only income. Now, my children are starving. The government should have given us alternatives before banning our business” (Participant ACM-K5, personal communication, March 18, 2025).

This statement encapsulates the human cost of uncompensated enforcement actions, highlighting how abrupt prohibition without economic alternatives can exacerbate poverty and food insecurity among marginalized populations.

The livelihood disruptions in Kakamega appear particularly acute because many illicit brew operators were small-scale producers operating at a subsistence level rather than large commercial enterprises. The absence of transitional support mechanisms has left

these individuals without viable alternatives, potentially driving some toward more dangerous criminal activities or deepening cycles of poverty. This situation underscores the need for sequenced interventions that couple enforcement with economic rehabilitation programs to prevent the collateral damage of well-intentioned public health measures.

The impact profile in Trans Nzoia presents a more mixed picture, demonstrating both the public health benefits and persistent economic challenges of enforcement actions. A public health officer reported measurable improvements:

“Hospital admissions from methanol poisoning dropped significantly after recent raids, but economic hardship persists” (Participant PH-T1, personal communication, March 19, 2025).

This dual outcome illustrates the complex trade-offs inherent in illicit alcohol regulation - while successful in reducing acute health crises, the interventions have failed to address the underlying economic vulnerabilities that initially drove participation in the illicit trade.

The significant reduction in poisoning cases represents a significant public health achievement, potentially saving lives and reducing the burden on healthcare systems. However, the persistence of economic hardship suggests that the benefits have been unevenly distributed, with health gains coming at the expense of livelihood security for certain population segments. This dichotomy raises important questions about how to balance immediate public health protections with sustainable economic solutions that prevent recidivism into illicit markets.

The differential impacts between the counties reflect variations in the scale and organization of the illicit alcohol trade. Trans Nzoia's more organized networks might have greater capacity to adapt and persist despite enforcement, while Kakamega's smaller operators appear more vulnerable to sudden crackdowns. Both cases, however, demonstrate that enforcement-dominated approaches fail to resolve the economic root causes of illicit alcohol production and inadvertently compound poverty-related vulnerabilities in affected communities.

These findings highlight the need for more holistic intervention frameworks that integrate health protection with economic development strategies. Future policies might consider establishing transitional support funds, vocational retraining programs, or licensed micro-distillery initiatives to provide alternative livelihoods while maintaining

public health safeguards. The current disconnect between enforcement actions and economic rehabilitation measures appears to be generating preventable human costs that undermine the long-term sustainability of illicit alcohol reduction efforts.

4.3.2 Peace, Stability, and Human Rights Concerns

The enforcement of illicit alcohol intervention strategies in Kakamega County has had mixed outcomes in terms of peace, stability, and human rights. While some respondents acknowledged a reduction in the availability of illicit brews, others expressed concerns about the heavy-handed nature of law enforcement interventions. Community leaders and affected residents reported that police crackdowns often involved excessive force, leading to destruction of property, arbitrary arrests, and deepening mistrust between law enforcement agencies and local populations.

One community leader recounted instances where enforcement officers raided households suspected of brewing illicit alcohol, indiscriminately arresting individuals without sufficient evidence:

“Officers destroy property and arrest innocent people during raids, creating fear rather than trust.” (Participant CL-K4, personal communication, March 20, 2025). Such actions, according to community members, undermine the legitimacy of government interventions, as affected populations perceive these efforts as punitive rather than corrective. The fear instilled by such operations discourages community cooperation with law enforcement, making it difficult to sustain long-term solutions to the illicit alcohol problem.

Moreover, some respondents highlighted that aggressive policing disproportionately affected low-income households, further marginalizing vulnerable populations. There were reports of elderly individuals and women being arrested during operations, despite their limited involvement in illicit brewing. Affected community members argued that alternative interventions, such as economic empowerment programs and rehabilitative approaches, would be more effective in addressing the root causes of illicit alcohol consumption and production.

Public health professionals in Kakamega also raised concerns about human rights violations linked to the criminalization of illicit alcohol users. Some enforcement strategies, they argued, failed to consider the socio-economic vulnerabilities of those

dependent on illicit alcohol, treating them as criminals rather than individuals in need of medical and psychological support. One health official explained that many illicit alcohol users suffer from addiction but lack access to rehabilitation services:

“Instead of jailing them, we should be looking at ways to treat and reintegrate them into society.” (Participant PH-K2, personal communication, March 20, 2025).

The absence of structured rehabilitation programs means that once arrested, individuals often return to alcohol use, creating a cycle of criminalization and relapse. Consequently, while enforcement efforts have sought to disrupt the illicit alcohol supply chain, they have also resulted in unintended social and human rights challenges, exacerbating tensions between authorities and communities.

In Trans Nzoia County, the impact of intervention strategies on peace and stability varied across different localities. While some areas reported an improvement in security following the crackdown on illicit alcohol, others faced lingering challenges due to inconsistent enforcement and community resistance.

Several respondents, particularly law enforcement officers and policymakers, indicated that the reduction of illicit alcohol consumption had positive effects on social stability. A decline in alcohol-related offenses, such as domestic violence, theft, and disorderly conduct, was observed in regions where enforcement was sustained. One law enforcement officer noted:

“Domestic violence and theft reduced where illicit alcohol was eradicated.” (Participant LE-T2, personal communication, March 21, 2025).

This sentiment was echoed by community leaders, who observed that households previously destabilized by alcohol abuse had begun to experience improvements in economic productivity and family cohesion. Reduced alcohol consumption meant that more men were actively participating in income-generating activities rather than spending their earnings on illicit brews.

However, some community members expressed concerns that the aggressive nature of enforcement led to displacement of the illicit alcohol trade rather than its eradication. There were reports of brewers relocating their operations to more remote areas, making it harder for authorities to track and dismantle their businesses. One policymaker explained:

“The problem has not disappeared—it has just moved to places where law enforcement presence is weak.” (Participant PM-T3, personal communication, March 21, 2025).

Additionally, the absence of alternative livelihood programs for individuals engaged in illicit brewing led to economic distress in some communities. Women who previously depended on brewing traditional alcohol as a source of income struggled to find alternative means of survival, leading to increased poverty levels in affected households. This situation raised concerns about the sustainability of current interventions, as the economic hardships caused by enforcement measures could eventually push individuals back into illicit alcohol production.

Another critical issue raised by public health officials in Trans Nzoia was the emergence of more dangerous and unregulated alcohol products. As enforcement tightened, some illicit brewers resorted to producing alcohol with hazardous chemicals to evade detection, posing serious health risks to consumers. A public health professional warned:

“We've seen cases where people suffer severe poisoning because illicit brewers are now using industrial chemicals to avoid detection.” (Participant PH-T3, personal communication, March 21, 2025).

This unintended consequence highlights the complexity of illicit alcohol control, where stricter enforcement inadvertently leads to more harmful consumption patterns rather than eliminating the problem altogether.

The findings from Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties reveal significant challenges in balancing enforcement efforts with the need for community trust, human rights protection, and sustainable intervention strategies. In Kakamega, the heavy-handed approach by law enforcement has led to concerns over police brutality and human rights violations, with community members advocating for alternative strategies that focus on rehabilitation and economic empowerment.

In contrast, Trans Nzoia has experienced some improvements in social stability, with reduced crime rates and enhanced economic participation in regions where illicit alcohol was eradicated. However, challenges persist, including the displacement of the

alcohol trade, the lack of alternative livelihoods for former brewers, and the increased risk of toxic alcohol production.

Overall, while the intervention strategies have contributed to short-term gains in curbing illicit alcohol trade, their long-term effectiveness depends on adopting a more holistic approach that addresses the socio-economic drivers of illicit brewing while ensuring that law enforcement operations do not violate human rights or undermine community cooperation.

4.3.3 Public Perception of Government Interventions

Public perception of government-led interventions against illicit alcohol in Kakamega County was largely skeptical, with many respondents expressing doubts about the consistency and sincerity of enforcement efforts. Community members and local leaders argued that crackdowns were often temporary and appeared to serve political rather than public interest objectives. Several participants indicated that government interventions were reactive rather than proactive, only gaining momentum when incidents related to illicit alcohol, such as mass poisoning or public outcry, occurred.

One community leader criticized what they perceived as the performative nature of these interventions:

“Government agencies come in strong after a tragedy, making arrests and shutting down dens, but within weeks, the brewers are back in business.” (Participant CL-K3, personal communication, March 20, 2025).

Such inconsistencies have led to widespread disillusionment, with many residents believing that illicit alcohol control is not a genuine priority for the government but rather a convenient tool for political maneuvering.

Additionally, some community members expressed frustration with the selective enforcement of laws. Affected individuals argued that while small-scale brewers and consumers faced frequent arrests, major suppliers and distributors operated with impunity. Some participants alleged that powerful individuals within local administrations benefited financially from the illicit alcohol trade, allowing it to persist despite periodic crackdowns. One affected community member stated:

“The real bosses behind this trade are untouchable. Police go after the poor woman selling *chang’aa*, but the big suppliers are protected.” (Participant ACM-K6, personal communication, March 21, 2025).

This perception of corruption and selective enforcement has fueled public distrust, making it difficult to garner community support for intervention programs. Some policy-makers acknowledged these challenges, admitting that systemic corruption within enforcement agencies and local governance structures hindered the success of anti-illicit alcohol campaigns.

Moreover, public awareness campaigns which is one of the key strategies employed by the government was viewed as inadequate and poorly executed. Many respondents noted that educational initiatives about the dangers of illicit alcohol were sporadic and rarely reached the most affected populations. A public health professional observed:

“We see billboards and hear radio messages, but real engagement with at-risk communities is missing.” (Participant PH-K4, personal communication, March 21, 2025).

As a result, while there was general acknowledgment that the government was making efforts to address illicit alcohol, these efforts were widely perceived as politically motivated, inconsistent, and susceptible to corruption.

In Trans Nzoia County, similar sentiments were expressed, with many respondents criticizing the opportunistic nature of government interventions. Several affected community members and local leaders observed that anti-illicit alcohol measures became more pronounced during election periods, only to fade away afterward. This pattern led many to believe that political leaders used crackdowns to gain public favor rather than as part of a sustained effort to curb illicit alcohol production and consumption. One affected community member articulated this frustration:

“Crackdowns intensify before elections, then disappear. Leaders profit from this business.” (Participant ACM-T3, personal communication, March 22, 2025).

This view was echoed by law enforcement officers, some of whom acknowledged that political interference influenced their ability to carry out sustained operations against illicit alcohol networks. According to one officer:

“We are sometimes instructed to slow down enforcement efforts, depending on who is in power.” (Participant LE-T3, personal communication, March 21, 2025).

Beyond political interference, community members in Trans Nzoia also voiced concerns about the lack of community involvement in government interventions.

Several respondents argued that top-down approaches, where policies were designed and implemented without grassroots participation, had limited impact. A community leader emphasized the need for more inclusive strategies:

“People in Nairobi make policies that don’t consider our realities on the ground. They don’t consult us.” (Participant CL-T5, personal communication, March 22, 2025).

Furthermore, some respondents criticized the punitive nature of government interventions, arguing that they failed to address the root causes of illicit alcohol consumption, such as unemployment and economic hardship. A public health professional warned that without offering economic alternatives to those involved in the illicit alcohol trade, enforcement efforts would continue to fail:

“If we don’t create jobs or provide support, people will find ways to survive, legal or not. (Participant PH-T2, personal communication, March 21, 2025).

The findings from both Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties indicate that while government interventions against illicit alcohol exist, they are widely perceived as politically motivated, inconsistently enforced, and often compromised by corruption. The public expressed frustration with selective enforcement, where small-scale brewers and consumers faced penalties while major suppliers remained untouched.

Additionally, respondents highlighted the lack of sustained engagement with local communities and the failure to address underlying socio-economic factors driving illicit alcohol trade. Without addressing these concerns, public trust in government interventions remains low, making it difficult to achieve lasting solutions in the fight against illicit alcohol.

4.4 Gaps in Current Strategies and Recommendations for Improvement

Despite various intervention strategies aimed at combating the illicit alcohol trade in Kenya, significant gaps remain, hindering the overall effectiveness of these efforts. Key issues include weak enforcement, corruption, inadequate resources, poor interagency

coordination, and cultural resistance to existing policies. These gaps, as identified by respondents in both Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties, point to the need for more comprehensive and community-centered approaches.

4.4.1 Weak Enforcement and Corruption

One of the most pervasive challenges identified in Kakamega County was corruption within enforcement agencies. Respondents across different categories, including law enforcement officers themselves, acknowledged that bribery and favoritism significantly undermined efforts to curb the illicit alcohol trade. Some police officers reportedly accepted bribes to allow illicit brewers and traders to continue their operations without interference. A law enforcement officer openly admitted:

“Some officers take bribes, making enforcement ineffective.” (Participant LE-K2, personal communication, March 23, 2025).

This lack of accountability within enforcement agencies has fueled public distrust, making it difficult to implement sustainable intervention measures. Community leaders and affected members reported that even when illicit alcohol dens were raided, many resumed operations shortly afterward, often under the protection of corrupt officials.

Similar issues were noted in Trans Nzoia County, where corruption was identified as a major factor enabling organized crime and cross-border smuggling of illicit alcohol. Respondents in the policymaking sector emphasized that unless corruption was addressed, any intervention would have limited success. One policymaker stressed the need for stronger anti-corruption mechanisms, stating:

“We need stricter penalties for corrupt officials and better whistleblower protections.” (Participant PM-T3, personal communication, March 24, 2025).

The call for whistleblower protections reflects the fear many individuals have in reporting corruption within enforcement agencies. Community members expressed reluctance to report illicit activities due to fear of retaliation, both from corrupt officials and powerful individuals involved in the illicit alcohol trade.

4.4.2 Inadequate Resources and Coordination

Another critical challenge identified in both Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties was the lack of adequate resources allocated to combating illicit alcohol. Public health professionals and policymakers pointed out that rehabilitation programs for individuals

affected by illicit alcohol addiction were severely underfunded. Many individuals who wished to seek treatment and reintegration into society had no access to proper rehabilitation services, leaving them trapped in the cycle of addiction.

Moreover, respondents noted that interagency coordination was weak, leading to fragmented and ineffective enforcement efforts. Law enforcement agencies, public health departments, and NACADA (National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse) often worked in silos, failing to share critical information and resources. A public health official observed:

“We work in isolation, with little communication between agencies. This weakens our efforts.” (Participant PH-K3, personal communication, March 23, 2025).

The lack of structured collaboration has resulted in duplication of efforts, inefficient allocation of resources, and inconsistent policy implementation. Respondents emphasized the need for a more coordinated and integrated approach, where different agencies actively share intelligence and work towards a common goal.

4.4.3 Cultural and Policy Gaps

Cultural factors were also cited as a major challenge in addressing illicit alcohol, particularly in Trans Nzoia County. Community leaders highlighted that traditional brews such as *chang'aa* and *busaa* have long been part of local customs and social gatherings. Many residents viewed government crackdowns as an attack on their cultural heritage rather than a necessary public health and security measure. One community leader explained:

“Traditional brews are part of our culture. Banning them without alternatives creates resistance.” (Participant CL-T5, personal communication, March 25, 2025).

The lack of alternative livelihoods for traditional brewers has further compounded this problem. Without viable economic options, many individuals, particularly women who rely on brewing for income, continue producing illicit alcohol despite government bans. Some respondents suggested that instead of outright bans, the government should consider regulating and formalizing traditional brewing, ensuring that production meets health and safety standards while still respecting cultural practices.

Additionally, gaps in existing laws and policies were highlighted as a key limitation in the fight against illicit alcohol. Some enforcement officers pointed out that penalties for

offenders were often too lenient, allowing repeat offenders to resume operations shortly after being arrested. Others noted that inconsistencies in regulations, particularly between national and county governments, created loopholes that illicit alcohol traders exploited. A law enforcement officer in Kakamega County summarized this challenge:

“We arrest the same people multiple times, but weak laws allow them to walk free and continue brewing.” (Participant LE-K1, personal communication, March 23, 2025).

Respondents recommended reviewing current policies to ensure stronger deterrence measures, including higher penalties for offenders, increased regulation of traditional brewing, and enhanced support systems for those seeking alternative livelihoods.

4.5 Findings from Focus Group Discussions

The focus group discussions conducted in Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties provided valuable insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of the illicit alcohol trade. Although initially characterized by hesitation and apprehension, the focus group dynamics revealed important cultural and psychological nuances that influenced participant engagement. Notably, participants were initially reluctant to speak candidly, likely due to fears of reprisal or social judgment. However, once one elder participant in Kakamega spoke out boldly, the group dynamic shifted significantly. Other members began to nod in agreement, interject supportive affirmations, and eventually share their perspectives. This phenomenon underscores the power of peer affirmation and generational leadership in fostering open dialogue on sensitive issues. As one elderly male participant in Kakamega County put it:

“We have said these things many times, but nothing changes. Even if we speak, will they really do anything?” (Focus Group Discussion, Kakamega, 2025).

His courageous statement seemed to give others permission to voice long-held frustrations. Following his remarks, several participants expressed similar sentiments about institutional inaction and deep-seated corruption among law enforcement officers. One respondent observed,

“Police know the brewers. They even collect money from them. So, who are they going to arrest?” (Focus Group Discussion, Kakamega, 2025).

These comments reflect the deep mistrust between the community and enforcement agencies and validate the broader finding that corruption significantly impedes effective intervention strategies.

In Trans Nzoia County, the discussions revealed a slightly different set of challenges. While the atmosphere of initial fear and silence mirrored that of Kakamega, the presence of older and more confident participants similarly helped to break the ice. Here, participants highlighted the structural complexity of the illicit alcohol trade, which they described as highly organized and transnational in scope. One respondent noted,

“These drinks come from across the border. They are cheaper and more dangerous, but no one stops them. Why? Because big people are involved.” (Focus Group Discussion, Trans Nzoia, 2025).

This statement not only pointed to cross-border smuggling as a key issue but also suggested the involvement of high-level actors, possibly including political figures, in perpetuating the trade.

Several respondents across both counties expressed concerns about the politicization of enforcement efforts. They observed that crackdowns on illicit alcohol typically intensified around election periods, only to fade away soon afterward. One participant commented,

“When elections are near, they pretend to care. But after voting, they forget about us and the alcohol flows again.” (Focus Group Discussion, Trans Nzoia, 2025).

Such remarks lend credence to the perception that interventions are driven more by political expediency than by genuine concern for public health and security.

Cultural resistance to alcohol control measures also emerged as a consistent theme. Many older participants expressed frustration at the blanket criminalization of traditional brewing, which they viewed as an attack on cultural identity and livelihoods. In Kakamega, one elderly female respondent asserted,

“We brewed for weddings and funerals. Now they say it is illegal. How do they expect us to live?” (Focus Group Discussion, Kakamega, 2025).

This testimony illustrates how regulatory policies that fail to account for local customs can provoke resistance and ultimately undermine compliance.

Additionally, a notable gender dimension surfaced in the discussions. Women participants in both counties highlighted the role of illicit brewing as a survival strategy in contexts of economic marginalization. One woman stated,

“We don't do this because we want to. We have no jobs, no land, no help. What choice do we have?” (Focus Group Discussion, Trans Nzoia, 2025).

This underscores the urgent need for alternative livelihood programs, especially for women who rely on the informal alcohol economy to support their families.

Overall, the focus group discussions revealed a collective yearning for honest governance, culturally sensitive policy approaches, and economic empowerment. Although initially subdued, the respondents demonstrated deep awareness of the systemic failures that perpetuate the illicit alcohol trade. Their voices, particularly those of the elderly and economically marginalized, emphasized the necessity of grounding interventions in community realities. As one participant aptly summarized,

“If they really want to stop this, they must start by listening to us—not just coming with guns and threats” (Focus Group Discussion, Kakamega, 2025).

These findings reinforce the broader conclusion that effective intervention strategies must integrate grassroots voices, address structural corruption, and promote interagency collaboration, while also respecting cultural practices and providing viable economic alternatives. The courage displayed by older participants in catalyzing honest discussions further suggests that community elders can play a pivotal role in facilitating policy dialogue and mobilizing grassroots support for sustainable change.

4.6 Summary of Findings

The research findings revealed several pressing challenges in the fight against illicit alcohol in Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties. In Kakamega County, the primary issues revolved around police-community tensions and the persistence of small-scale illicit brewing operations. Law enforcement efforts were often undermined by corruption, where some officers accepted bribes, allowing the illegal trade to thrive. Additionally, a lack of meaningful community engagement further weakened enforcement measures, leading to a cycle where illicit alcohol production and consumption continued despite government crackdowns. The disconnect between enforcement agencies and local communities created an atmosphere of mistrust, making it difficult to implement sustainable solutions.

In contrast, Trans Nzoia County faced a more organized form of illicit alcohol trade, characterized by cross-border smuggling and the involvement of criminal networks. The county's proximity to neighboring countries facilitated the illegal importation and distribution of unregulated alcoholic products, making enforcement efforts particularly challenging.

Furthermore, political interference played a significant role in protecting illicit alcohol traders, with some respondents alleging that certain political figures benefited from the trade. Cultural resistance to prohibition measures further complicated intervention efforts, as some community members viewed the government's crackdown on traditional brews as an attack on their customs and economic livelihoods.

Across both counties, several common challenges were identified. Corruption among enforcement agencies emerged as a critical issue, significantly weakening the impact of intervention strategies. Respondents noted that illicit alcohol traders often bribed officials to evade arrest, rendering enforcement efforts largely ineffective. Additionally, inadequate funding for rehabilitation programs left many affected individuals without access to proper treatment and reintegration services, perpetuating the cycle of addiction.

Weak interagency coordination also hindered progress, as different institutions, including law enforcement, public health agencies, and regulatory bodies, operated in silos with limited collaboration. The lack of economic alternatives for those involved in the illicit alcohol trade further exacerbated the problem, as many individuals, particularly women who relied on brewing as a source of income, found themselves with few viable livelihood options.

Another major concern highlighted by respondents was the politicization of enforcement efforts. Many community members and policymakers observed that crackdowns on illicit alcohol tended to intensify in the lead-up to elections, only to diminish once the political climate stabilized. This inconsistency in enforcement undermined public trust, with some respondents expressing skepticism about the government's commitment to addressing the problem in a sustained manner. The perception that political leaders benefited from the trade further contributed to widespread disillusionment with intervention efforts.

These findings emphasize the need for a more holistic and community-centered approach to tackling the illicit alcohol trade. Strengthening enforcement through targeted anti-corruption measures is crucial to ensuring accountability within law enforcement agencies. Improved interagency collaboration, where different institutions actively share intelligence and resources, would enhance the effectiveness of intervention strategies. Additionally, allocating sufficient resources for rehabilitation programs would provide affected individuals with a pathway out of addiction while addressing the root causes of illicit alcohol consumption.

Recognizing cultural traditions and integrating them into policy frameworks such as regulating and formalizing the production of traditional brews rather than imposing outright bans could also help reduce resistance and encourage compliance with alcohol control measures. By adopting a multi-faceted approach that balances enforcement with community engagement and economic empowerment, Kenya could develop more sustainable and effective strategies to combat the illicit alcohol trade while strengthening national security.



Chapter Five: Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Discussion of Key Findings

The study's findings reveal a complex and uneven landscape of illicit alcohol intervention strategies in Western Kenya, with significant contextual differences between Kakamega and Trans Nzoia counties. The dominant reliance on enforcement-based strategies has yielded both measurable public health gains and substantial socio-economic costs. In Trans Nzoia, a notable reduction in methanol poisoning cases was reported following a series of enforcement raids (Participant PH-T1, personal communication, March 19, 2025).

However, in Kakamega, where similar enforcement efforts were carried out, no corresponding public health improvement was observed. Instead, the crackdown disproportionately affected small-scale brewers, many of whom lost their livelihoods without being offered any alternative sources of income or rehabilitation pathways (Participant ACM-K5, personal communication, March 18, 2025).

These findings resonate strongly with Braithwaite's (2017) Regulatory Enforcement and Compliance Theory, which underscores the limitations of punitive-only strategies. The theory advocates a more responsive and graduated approach to regulation, beginning with education and support mechanisms and escalating only when non-compliance persists. The Kenyan context, particularly in Kakamega, demonstrates an over-reliance on deterrence through punishment without the balancing force of positive incentives or socio-economic support. Focus group data corroborated this perspective: participants, particularly women, articulated that brewing was often their only source of income in the face of landlessness, job scarcity, and economic exclusion. "We don't do this because we want to. We have no jobs, no land, no help. What choice do we have?" (FGD – Trans Nzoia, 2025), one woman emphasized.

The focus group discussions further illustrated how enforcement-only interventions can alienate local communities. Many respondents questioned the sincerity of state actions, noting that alcohol crackdowns intensified during election periods and vanished afterward. "When elections are near, they pretend to care. But after voting, they forget about us and the alcohol flows again," a participant lamented (FGD – Trans Nzoia, 2025). Such

statements highlight the political instrumentalization of enforcement and reinforce the perception that regulatory efforts are inconsistent, opportunistic, and largely symbolic.

Moreover, the study highlights how the structural characteristics of each county shape the effectiveness of interventions. Kakamega’s illicit alcohol market is largely decentralized, sustained by many small-scale producers, while Trans Nzoia is grappling with more organized networks and cross-border smuggling (Participant PM-T1, March 14, 2025; Participant LE-K3, March 16, 2025).

Focus group participants in Trans Nzoia identified the transnational nature of the problem, with one noting,

“These drinks come from across the border. They are cheaper and more dangerous, but no one stops them. Why? Because big people are involved” (FGD – Trans Nzoia, 2025).

This divergence exposes the limitations of applying uniform national policies to a problem with highly localized dynamics. The Theory of State Weakness (Rotberg, 2004) helps explain this disconnect, suggesting that weak states—those lacking the capacity, will, or institutional coherence—struggle to tailor policy to local conditions. In both counties, but especially in Kakamega, state institutions have failed to adequately engage with communities or develop interventions that reflect the socioeconomic realities on the ground.

The persistence of corruption, acknowledged candidly by law enforcement officers (Participant LE-K1, March 20, 2025; Participant LE-K2, March 23, 2025), and affirmed by community members (FGDs – Kakamega and Trans Nzoia, 2025), further illustrates the state’s regulatory fragility. “Police know the brewers. They even collect money from them. So, who are they going to arrest?” one participant asked (FGD – Kakamega, 2025), pointing to the deeply entrenched complicity of local authorities. According to the Theory of State Weakness, this kind of systemic corruption contributes to the erosion of public trust, enabling illicit markets to entrench themselves within the fabric of society. When political protection shields major brewers or smugglers from prosecution, enforcement efforts become selective and superficial. Communities, in turn, become reluctant to cooperate with state actors, perceiving the enforcement apparatus as either politically co-opted or ineffectual.

These challenges are compounded by broader deficiencies in state capacity, as outlined by Rotberg (2004) and Fukuyama (2013). State Capacity Theory emphasizes that effective policy implementation relies on strong institutions, competent bureaucracy, and adequate resource allocation. In both counties, enforcement agencies were reportedly underfunded, lacked inter-agency coordination, and were constrained by insufficient logistical and human resources. These deficits have impaired not only the enforcement of alcohol control laws but also the development of alternative interventions such as treatment, public education, or economic empowerment programs. The absence of such alternatives was a recurring complaint in focus group discussions. As one elderly woman in Kakamega explained,

“We brewed for weddings and funerals. Now they say it is illegal. How do they expect us to live?” (FGD – Kakamega, 2025).

This statement emphasizes how culturally tone-deaf regulations can provoke resistance rather than compliance.

Importantly, the discussions also highlighted community-led solutions and the social dynamics that can facilitate dialogue. In both counties, focus groups were initially characterized by silence and fear. However, once respected elders spoke candidly, others followed. This reveals the potential role of community elders as intermediaries in mobilizing honest discussion and supporting culturally sensitive policy implementation. As one participant urged,

“If they really want to stop this, they must start by listening to us—not just coming with guns and threats” (FGD – Kakamega, 2025).

The findings thus align with all three theoretical lenses. Braithwaite’s regulatory theory explains why the absence of supportive, incentive-based strategies leads to community resistance and ineffective outcomes. The theory of state weakness illustrates how governance vacuums and corruption allow illicit markets to flourish. State capacity theory reinforces the need for institutional investment, transparency, and strategic coordination to make interventions effective. Together, these theories converge on a core insight: that enforcement alone cannot succeed in the absence of trust, institutional integrity, and socio-economic inclusion.

The implications are clear. To effectively combat the illicit alcohol trade and its attendant public health and security threats, Kenya must adopt a multi-dimensional strategy. This includes reconfiguring enforcement to incorporate community engagement and public health perspectives, addressing corruption and governance gaps, and building institutional capacity to sustain locally responsive, evidence-based interventions. Focus group discussions have revealed that solutions must be grounded in the lived realities of affected populations—particularly women, elders, and the economically marginalized. Only through such an integrated approach—one that balances deterrence with support, and state authority with legitimacy—can the country hope to reduce the harms associated with illicit alcohol while enhancing national security and public welfare.

5.2 Conclusions

Three primary conclusions emerge from the study. First, current intervention strategies demonstrate limited effectiveness due to their overreliance on enforcement measures that fail to address root economic drivers. While enforcement has occasionally reduced visible harms—such as methanol poisonings in Trans Nzoia—it has also produced unintended consequences, including economic displacement and deepened community resentment, particularly in Kakamega. Focus group discussions emphasized that many small-scale brewers, especially women, engage in the trade out of economic necessity, not malice. As one woman put it,

“We don’t do this because we want to. We have no jobs, no land, no help. What choice do we have?” (FGD – Trans Nzoia, 2025).

These lived experiences underscore the urgent need for socio-economic alternatives, rather than blanket criminalization, as a foundation for sustainable reform.

Second, the research reveals a significant implementation gap between national policy design and localized realities. Uniform enforcement measures have been applied in diverse contexts, leading to mixed and often counterproductive outcomes. In Kakamega, enforcement disproportionately impacted decentralized, community-based brewing networks without yielding public health gains, while in Trans Nzoia, cross-border smuggling operations proved resilient and politically insulated. These findings highlight the need to design context-specific interventions grounded in a nuanced understanding of local markets, power dynamics, and structural vulnerabilities. Participants voiced deep

skepticism about the sincerity of state actions, citing political opportunism, corruption, and selective enforcement as core obstacles to legitimacy and compliance. The perception that “big people are involved” (FGD – Trans Nzoia, 2025) and the observation that crackdowns intensify around elections before dissipating afterward (FGD – Trans Nzoia, 2025) reflect broader concerns about the politicization and inconsistency of regulatory efforts.

Third, the study confirms that illicit alcohol regulation lies at the complex intersection of public health, economic development, cultural identity, and national security. Interventions that fail to consider this intersection—particularly the social and cultural significance of traditional brewing—are likely to provoke resistance and undermine cooperation. Elders and other respected community figures emerged in the focus groups as crucial enablers of honest dialogue and collective problem-solving. Their role in breaking the silence and mobilizing community perspectives points to the value of participatory policy approaches. As one participant stated,

“If they really want to stop this, they must start by listening to us—not just coming with guns and threats” (FGD – Kakamega, 2025).

This underscores the necessity of co-producing interventions with communities rather than imposing them unilaterally.

Overall, effective responses to the illicit alcohol trade must move beyond coercive control toward inclusive, integrated strategies that prioritize community engagement, economic empowerment, institutional reform, and cultural sensitivity. Only by addressing the underlying structural conditions—poverty, governance weaknesses, and capacity gaps—can Kenya hope to transform its response to illicit alcohol from reactive suppression to sustainable prevention.

5.3 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The study's findings necessitate a fundamental rethinking of current approaches to combating illicit alcohol in Western Kenya. The first and perhaps most critical recommendation calls for the development of differentiated intervention frameworks that account for the distinct socioeconomic and geographical realities of each county. In Kakamega, where small-scale, subsistence-level production dominates, interventions should prioritize economic transformation over punitive measures. This could involve establishing small-business incubators that provide former illicit brewers with access to

microfinance, equipment, and training to transition into legal enterprises such as licensed traditional brew production or alternative microbusinesses. The success of such programs would depend on parallel efforts to streamline licensing procedures and reduce regulatory barriers that currently push many operators into informality.

For Trans Nzoia, with its more organized networks and cross-border dimensions, recommendations must address the complex criminal-political nexus that sustains illicit operations. Enhanced cross-border coordination mechanisms should be institutionalized through permanent joint task forces comprising Kenyan and Ugandan law enforcement, revenue authorities, and community surveillance teams. These could be modeled after successful regional initiatives against cattle rustling, incorporating intelligence-sharing protocols and synchronized enforcement operations. Simultaneously, targeted anti-corruption measures must focus on disrupting the protection networks that participants revealed are maintained through political patronage (FGD-Trans Nzoia, March 17, 2025). This would require specialized investigative units with prosecutorial powers specifically dedicated to alcohol-related corruption cases.

The second recommendation builds directly from participant insights calling for “stricter penalties for corrupt officials and better whistleblower protections” (Participant PM-T3, personal communication, March 24, 2025).

Current anti-corruption efforts require substantial strengthening through the establishment of independent oversight bodies with authority to investigate and sanction misconduct within enforcement agencies. These bodies should operate transparent reporting systems that allow for anonymous tip-offs and guarantee witness protection. Importantly, reforms must address both the supply and demand sides of corruption by simultaneously increasing public sector wages to reduce vulnerability to bribes while implementing harsh, mandatory penalties for officers caught compromising enforcement activities.

5.4 Future Research Directions

The study identifies several crucial gaps that demand scholarly attention to inform more effective policy responses. Longitudinal impact studies represent a particularly pressing need, as current understanding of the long-term socioeconomic trajectories of individuals transitioning out of illicit alcohol production remains speculative. Rigorous cohort studies tracking former brewers over 3-5 year periods could generate vital evidence

about which alternative livelihood programs demonstrate sustainable impacts, and which factors predict successful transitions to legal income generation. Such research should employ mixed-methods approaches to capture both quantitative outcomes (income levels, recidivism rates) and qualitative experiences (subjective wellbeing, community reintegration).

Cross-border trade dynamics constitute another critical area for future investigation. While the study identified border vulnerabilities (Participant PM-T1, personal communication, March 14, 2025), deeper ethnographic research could map the precise routes, actors, and financial flows that characterize transnational illicit alcohol networks. Such inquiry should employ methodologies from critical border studies to examine how brewers exploit jurisdictional discontinuities and what regulatory harmonization between Kenya and Uganda might most effectively disrupt these networks.

Political economy analyses could significantly advance understanding of the structural barriers to effective enforcement. Systematic investigation of the political protection networks described by participants would require innovative methodologies to navigate issues of access and sensitivity, potentially including forensic analysis of campaign financing, land ownership patterns around production sites, and the revolving door between political offices and alcohol licensing boards. Such research could identify specific pressure points for anti-corruption interventions.

The final research priority involves developing gender-sensitive approaches to understanding and addressing illicit alcohol economies. Preliminary evidence suggests women and men experience both production and consumption dimensions differently, yet current interventions remain largely gender-blind. Future studies should examine how women's participation in illicit brewing relates to gendered economic marginalization, how alcohol-related domestic violence patterns intersect with enforcement cycles (Participant LE-T2, personal communication, March 21, 2025), and whether alternative livelihood programs require gender-specific design elements to be effective.

This research contributes substantively to policy debates by bridging the gap between theoretical discussions of illicit economies and the grounded realities captured through extensive fieldwork. The authentic voices of stakeholders - from struggling

community members to reform-oriented officials - provide a human dimension often absent in policy formulation.

Moving forward, Kenya's approach to illicit alcohol regulation must transcend its current overreliance on enforcement to embrace evidence-based, multidimensional strategies that acknowledge the complex interplay of economic desperation, governance weaknesses, and cultural factors that sustain illicit markets. Only through such comprehensive, empirically-grounded approaches can policymakers hope to achieve sustainable reductions in illicit alcohol prevalence without inflicting collateral harm on vulnerable populations.



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Appendices

Appendix A: Similarity Report

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7	Simon Rushton, Jeremy Youde. "Routledge Handbook of Global Health Security", Routledge, 2014 Publication	<1%
8	Anita Kalunta-Crumpton. "Pan-African Issues in Drugs and Drug Control - An International Perspective", Taylor & Francis, 2016 Publication	<1%
9	www.medrxiv.org Internet Source	<1%
10	www.mdpi.com Internet Source	<1%

Appendix B: Ethical Clearance Confirmation



28th February 2025

Dr Omerikwa Anthony,
anthony.omerikwa@strathmore.edu

Dear Dr Omerikwa,

RE: Assessing Illicit Alcohol Intervention Strategies in Kenya: A National Security Perspective

This is to inform you that SU-ISERC has reviewed and **approved** your above **SU-masters** proposal. Your application reference number is **SU-ISERC2673/25**. The approval period is from **28th February 2025 to 27th February 2026**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements:

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used.
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by SU-ISERC.
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to SU-ISERC within 72 hours of notification.
- iv. Any changes anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to SU-ISERC within 72 hours.
- v. Clearance for the export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to the expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days of completion of the study to SU-ISERC.

Before commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke/> and obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ambrose Rachier".

Mr Ambrose Rachier,
Chairperson; SU-ISERC

Appendix C: Letter of Introduction

Anthony Opare Omerikwa
Master of Arts in Diplomacy, Intelligence, and Security
Strathmore University
Nairobi, Kenya

Participant's Name/Organization and Address

Dear Participant,

My name is Anthony Opare, and I am currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Diplomacy, Intelligence, and Security Studies at Strathmore University in Nairobi, Kenya. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a thesis titled "Assessing Illicit Alcohol Intervention Strategies in Kenya: A National Security Perspective."

The primary objective of my research is to evaluate the effectiveness of various intervention strategies aimed at curbing the production, distribution, and consumption of illicit alcohol in Kenya. This study seeks to understand the socio-economic, regulatory, and enforcement dimensions of the issue and their collective impact on national security.

In conducting this research, I am reaching out to key stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and experts in the field of public health and security. Your organization has been identified as a crucial player in this area, and your insights and experiences would be invaluable to my study.

I kindly request your assistance in the following ways:

- a) Providing access to relevant reports, publications, and data that your organization has compiled on the subject of illicit alcohol; and
- b) Participating in a semi-structured interview to share your expert opinions and experiences regarding illicit alcohol intervention strategies.

The information collected will be utilized exclusively for academic purposes, and I guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants and the data they provide. I am committed to adhering to the highest ethical standards in research and ensuring that the information is handled with the utmost care and respect.

Your participation and support would greatly enhance the quality and depth of this research. I am available at your earliest convenience to discuss this further and answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me via email at anthony.omerikwa@strathmore.edu or by phone at +254722543697.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to the possibility of collaborating with you on this important study.

Sincerely,
Anthony Opare

Appendix D: Interview Guide

- a) Research Question 1: What are the current intervention strategies in reducing the prevalence of illicit alcohol in Kenya, particularly from a national security perspective?**

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have been implemented by the government to reduce the prevalence of illicit alcohol in Kenya?
2. How do these strategies address the production, distribution, and consumption of illicit alcohol?
3. To what extent are these strategies informed by national security concerns?
4. Are there specific measures taken to address the links between illicit alcohol and organized crime, corruption, or other security threats?
5. What role do enforcement agencies (e.g., police, NACADA) play in combating illicit alcohol trade?
6. How effective are public awareness campaigns in reducing illicit alcohol consumption?
7. Are there partnerships with communities or civil society organizations in implementing these strategies? If so, how effective are they?
8. What role does regional or international collaboration play in addressing the issue of illicit alcohol in Kenya?

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Questions

1. What strategies or programs have you observed being implemented to address the issue of illicit alcohol in your community or region?
 2. How effective do you think these strategies are in addressing the production, distribution, and consumption of illicit alcohol?
 3. Have you seen any efforts that link these strategies to broader national security concerns? If yes, can you share examples?
 4. What role do government agencies (e.g., law enforcement, NACADA) and community leaders play in these interventions?
 5. Are there any public awareness campaigns about the dangers of illicit alcohol? If so, how impactful are they?
 6. In your opinion, how do these interventions differ across urban and rural areas?
- b) Research Question 2: How do these illicit alcohol intervention strategies impact citizens, their rights, peace, stability, and prosperity as an element of national security, especially in the regions affected by the illicit alcohol trade?**

Interview Questions

1. How have intervention strategies affected the livelihoods of individuals and communities involved in the illicit alcohol trade?
2. What has been the impact of these strategies on the economic stability of affected regions?
3. Are there instances where these strategies have infringed on citizens' rights? If so, how have these issues been addressed?
4. How have these strategies influenced peace and stability in regions where the illicit alcohol trade is prevalent?
5. In what ways have intervention measures contributed to improving the prosperity of communities affected by illicit alcohol?
6. Are there observable changes in crime rates, domestic violence, or other societal issues since the implementation of these strategies?
7. How do local communities perceive the government's interventions in tackling illicit alcohol?
8. Are there any unintended negative consequences of these interventions on the affected populations?

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Questions

1. How have these strategies affected the livelihoods of individuals involved in illicit alcohol production or trade in your region?
2. Do you think these strategies have contributed to peace and stability in your community? Why or why not?
3. Have you observed any changes in crime rates, domestic violence, or other societal issues since the implementation of these strategies?
4. Have the interventions had any negative effects on citizens' rights or economic activities? If so, could you provide examples?
5. What do you think has been the impact of these measures on community prosperity and development?
6. How do community members perceive and respond to these intervention efforts?

c) Research Question 3: What are the existing gaps in the current intervention strategies, and how can they be improved to positively contribute to national security?

Interview Questions

1. What challenges do enforcement agencies face in implementing the current intervention strategies?

2. Are there any weaknesses in the existing laws or policies governing illicit alcohol control?
3. How adequate are the resources allocated for combating illicit alcohol production and trade?
4. What role does corruption play in hindering the success of current strategies?
5. Are there gaps in interagency coordination when addressing the illicit alcohol issue?
6. How inclusive are the current strategies in addressing the needs of vulnerable groups affected by illicit alcohol?
7. What role do cultural practices and traditions play in complicating the regulation of traditional brews?
8. What specific improvements or new strategies would you recommend to enhance the effectiveness of interventions from a national security perspective?
9. How can community involvement be strengthened to address illicit alcohol issues more effectively?
10. Are there any successful case studies or best practices from other regions or countries that Kenya could adopt?






Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Questions

1. In your view, what are the main challenges or weaknesses of the current strategies for combating illicit alcohol?
2. Are there any groups or areas that are overlooked or inadequately addressed by these interventions?
3. What role do corruption or lack of resources play in limiting the success of these strategies?
4. How well do different agencies (e.g., NACADA, police, local government) coordinate their efforts to address the illicit alcohol trade?
5. What suggestions would you make to improve the effectiveness of these strategies?
6. Do you know of any successful approaches from other communities or countries that could be adopted in Kenya?

d) Closing Questions

1. Is there anything else you would like to share that we haven't covered in this interview?
2. May I contact you for any follow-up questions or clarification?
3. Would you be willing to recommend other experts or stakeholders I should speak with?

Appendix E: NACOSTI Clearance Certificate

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
RefNo: 312083	Date of Issue: 11/March/2025
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Dr.. Anthony Omerikwa of Strathmore University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Kakamega, Transzoia in the topic: Assessing Illicit Alcohol Intervention Strategies in Kenya for the period ending : 11/March/2026.	
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