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# Nature Of Religious Groups' Engagement In Preventing Youth Radicalization In Mombasa County, Kenya

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**Abstract-** The world is increasingly faced with a threat of extreme violence which is preceded by radicalization processes. In Kenya there has been rapid growth of radicalization in the last two decades. In Mombasa, radicalization of youth has spread given the existing strong structural foundations. The objective of this study was to examine the nature of religious groups' engagement in preventing youth radicalization in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study adopted a conceptual framework informed by Relative Deprivation and Functionalism theories. A descriptive research design entailing mixed methods focusing on qualitative and quantitative research approach was used. The study was carried out in 3 constituencies of Mombasa County namely; Likoni, Kisauni and Mvita. The study population comprised of radicalized, de-radicalized and non- radicalized youth, police, chiefs and County commissioner, media personalities, civil society organizations representatives, village elders and religious groups. The sample size was 228 respondents comprising 100 non-radicalized youth, 10 religious groups, 42 village elders, sampled using simple random method and 50 de-radicalized youth and 3 radicalized youth sampled using snowballing. Finally, purposive sampling technique was used to get 6 chiefs, 3 parents of the radicalized youths, 3 anti-terror police officers, 1 County commissioner, 5 media personalities and 5 Civil Society Organizations representatives. Data was collected by both structured and unstructured questionnaire, Key informant interviews and Focus group discussions. Quantitative and qualitative analysis methods were used to analyze data. Quantitative analysis was used for closed ended items in the questionnaire; using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 28.0. Qualitative data analysis included responses to open ended questions in the focus group discussions and interview schedules. Analysis was done using the content and interpretive analysis technique. The relevant data was organized according to themes of the study objectives. The presentation of data was done through tables, figures and verbatim quotations. The study established that the nature of religious groups' engagement in prevention of youth radicalization in Mombasa County is multi-faceted. However, for it to be effective, it must recognize the public and community as stakeholders and partners in preventing youth radicalization. The finding of the study is significant in informing policy formulation and contribution to existing academic knowledge. The study recommended that

religious groups should adopt a multi-stakeholder approach in developing strategies aimed at preventing youth radicalization.

**Index Terms-** Radicalization, Religious Groups, Youth

## I. INTRODUCTION

Religion is an influential part of cultural norms and values, intensely implicated in people and social notion of peace, since it tackles some of the most intense existential concerns of human life for example right/wrong, freedom/ inevitability, sacred/profane and fear/security (Gopin, 2000). Basically, religious institutions exert a lot of influence which can be used for peacemaking, reconciliation or prevention of vices.

From a global perspective, religious institutions have played a vital role towards pursuit of peace and social justice. The past few decades have seen increasing recognition of the significant role religious actor's play in peace and conflict. In a world in which the vast majority of people identify as religious, the religious peace-building field has evolved to consider ways in which people of faith can, should, and do have an impact on conflict, as both preventers and instigators (The Global Religious Landscape, 2012).

It is important to take cognizance of the fact that governments are increasingly considering the role of religion in various components of radicalization and in varying degrees and levels of effectiveness, recognizing that the religious sector can have positive roles in radicalization, especially on a local level (Mandaville & Nozell, 2017).

In Africa, the involvement of religious organizations in the fight for justice, humanitarian assistance and peacemaking has been prominent (Mawere & Marongwe, 2016).

In Kenya, the role religious groups and leaders in preventing radicalization cannot be underestimated. This is because radicalization in Kenya has religious aspects to it and that terror groups have had a degree of intentions to divide the country along religious lines and cause religious conflict. The attack at Garissa University saw the religious leaders coming together to condemn the attack, while demystifying the conflict between Muslims and Christians (Nzwili, 2015).

## II. METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design which was used to describe the effectiveness of religious groups' engagement in prevention of youth radicalization. Descriptive research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which questionnaires are administered to a small group of people (sample size) to identify trends in attitude, opinions, behaviors or characteristics of a large group of people called population (Creswell, 2008).

This design was preferred in this study because besides collecting and describing the relevant data for the study, it allowed the researcher to collect original information relating to the respondents experiences on religious groups' engagement to prevention of radicalization from the field using questionnaire and interview schedule and focus group discussion. The research design further provided the necessary detail and depth of data analysis to make findings relevant to practice.

### Study Area

The study was carried out in Mombasa County. Mombasa was selected mainly because it has been the hub of terrorist activities in Kenya. The County situated at Kenyan Coast is one of the five counties that border the Indian Ocean and enjoys 65 Km<sup>2</sup> of the waters. It is the smallest County in the Country covering an area of 229.7 Km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 1,208,333. (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). It is divided into six Sub Counties, namely: Mvita, Jomvu, Changamwe, Kisauni, Nyali and Likoni which are further divided into twenty locations and thirty-five sub-locations. Politically the sub-counties also form six constituencies which have been further sub-divided into thirty electoral wards. The study focused on Likoni, Kisauni and Mvita constituencies which consist of 5, 7 and 5 wards, respectively.

### Study Population

According to Babbie, (2013) a population can be defined as the complete group of objects or elements relevant to a particular research project because they possess the information the research project is designed to collect and analyze. The study focused on 3 Sub-counties of Likoni, Kisauni and Mvita which have a total population of 696,459. Mvita boasts of a population of 154,171 while Likoni has 250,358 and Kisauni 291,930 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

According to Lavrakas (2008), the target population should comprise an entire set of units of equally surveyable potentials and for which the survey data are used to make inferences. The population of Mombasa County is made up of a cross section of groups of people. However, the study was limited to the following categories; 188,093 youths which consisted of radicalized, non-radicalized and de-radicalized youths mostly targets and victims of acts of radicalization as well as the residents who are perceived to have been deradicalized, parents of the radicalized youths, 1 County commissioner, 19 chiefs, 426 village elders (County Commissioner's Office, Mombasa County, 2017), 3 Sub County anti-terror police unit (ATPU) officers, 35 media institutions and 55 civil society organizations, 35 religious groups from Christian and Muslim faiths.

### Sampling Strategy and Sample Size Determination

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study to represent the larger group from which they are selected. In this study, purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of the 3 Sub Counties of Mvita, Kisauni and Likoni on the basis of prominence to radicalization activities. This was done to ensure that there is high probability of respondents having the required information for the study.

Mombasa county has a total youth population of 188,093 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). In this regard therefore the target population for the non-radicalized and deradicalized youth was more than 10000. The desired sample population was determined using Fishers formula for sample size determination (Fisher *et al.* as cited in Mugenda & Mugenda, 2010). The sample size was 384.

Simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 non-radicalized youths from across the 3 Sub Counties. The snowballing technique was used to sample 50 deradicalized and 3 radicalized youths. Snowballing was used given the security sensitivity of the topic of radicalization and with the fear that deradicalized individuals may suffer stigma, it was predicted that a good number of the target population would be reluctant to provide information for fear of being targeted. The researcher therefore adopted the snowball sampling technique to mitigate this challenge hence sample an initial small group of respondents and then the sampled participants propose additional possible respondents from their networks. The process continues until the level of saturation where there is no new information and the researcher is satisfied with the data collected. Basically, the snowball sampling enabled the researcher to access in-depth stories and key data from the respondents.

Simple random sampling technique was also used to select the final respondents for the study for the 10 religious groups. 42 village elders were also selected randomly from the villages that form the selected locations. The village elders were involved since they live in the study area and are conversant with the study topic. Finally, purposive sampling technique was used to select 3 anti-terror police unit officers from the 3 sub counties. The officers were selected because they are directly involved in the mitigation and investigation of radicalization and terror related cases. Purposive sampling technique was also used to select 5 civil society organization representatives, 5 media personalities, 1 county commissioner and 6 chiefs and 3 parents of the radicalized youth.

### Data Collection

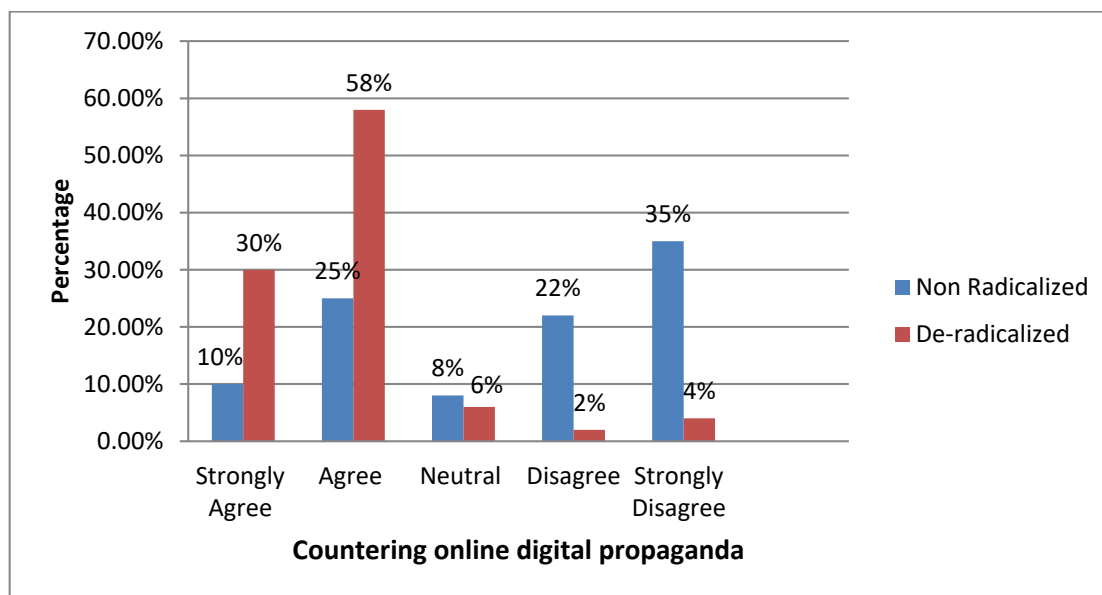
The research involved 2 types of data collection methods, primary and secondary data. In this study, 3 different tools were used for primary data collection; a questionnaire was administered to the non-radicalized and the deradicalized youths; an interview schedule was also used to collect data from the radicalized youth and their parents. Key Informant Interview was used to collect data from the Anti-terror police officers, chiefs, and civil society organization heads. Finally, the focus group discussion was used to collect data from the village elders and religious groups. This triangulation enabled the researcher to obtain a variety of information on nature and effectiveness of religious groups' engagement in prevention of youth radicalization in Mombasa

County. Secondary data was also reviewed as per the study objectives.

## Data Presentation and Discussion

### Countering Online Digital Propaganda

The study sought to find out if religious groups are involved in countering of digital propaganda. The findings are presented in Figure 1.



**Fig 1: Countering Online Digital Propaganda**  
Source: Field Data, 2021.

Results in Figure 1 show that majority of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 35(35%) strongly disagreed and 22(22%) disagreed with the statement that religious groups' counter online digital propaganda while 10 (10%) strongly agreed, 25(25%) agreed, and 8(8%) were neutral. On the contrary, majority of the de-radicalized youth accounting for 15(30%) strongly agreed and 29(58%) agreed that religious groups counter online digital propaganda, while 2(4%) strongly disagreed, 1(2%) disagreed and 3(6%) were neutral respectively. The radicalized youth affirmed that religious groups counter online digital propaganda and were quick to point out that more work needs to be done on this line.

Results from this study point to a mixture of reaction between the non-radicalized, radicalized and de-radicalized youth in Mombasa County on the role of religious groups in countering online digital propaganda to prevent radicalization. The non-radicalized youth reported that the religious groups do not counter online propaganda to prevent radicalization.

This finding resonates with that of one local administrator who reported that:

Religious groups may not be abreast with the technological changes thereby engaging the youth in countering online propaganda becoming a challenge for them. (KII with chief on 26/2/2021 at Likoni)

On the contrary, the de-radicalized and radicalized youth reported that the religious groups actively counter online propaganda to prevent radicalization.

In Kenya, the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) are engaged in designing counter narratives against

extremist content and empowering online actors to be vigilant (Ali, 2008)

### Media Campaigns

The study sought to find out the impact of media campaigns by religious groups in preventing youth radicalization. The findings are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Media Campaigns**

Response	Non radicalized		De-radicalized	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	60	60.0	18	36.0
Agree	31	31.0	18	36.0
Neutral	2	2.0	8	16.0
Disagree	4	4.0	4	8.0
Strongly Disagree	3	3.0	2	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Data, 2021

Data in Table 1 show that most of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 60(60%) strongly agreed, 31(31%) agreed that religious groups using vernacular radio stations, TVs and other sources can dissuade youths from joining terror organizations while 4(4%) disagreed, 3(3%) strongly disagreed and only 2(2%) were neutral. On the other hand, majority of the de-radicalized youth accounting for 18(36%) strongly agreed and

the same number agreed respectively that religious groups using vernacular radio stations, TVs and other sources can dissuade youths from joining terror organizations while 4(8%) disagreed while 2(4%) strongly disagreed and 8(16%) were neutral. The radicalized youth confirmed that religious groups are involved in media campaigns to prevent youth radicalization. One of them shared his experience;-

Religious groups are constantly involved in media campaigns against radicalization. They mostly organize talks and other shows on radio Salam. This radio station is friendly to the religious groups and the station is also keen on prevention of radicalization programs (Interview with a radicalized youth on 12/11/2021).

Media personalities who gave views during the interview did confirm that print, radio and other media sources including booklets and bulletins exist. There is existence of partnerships between religious groups and the media. According to one of the interviewees:

The media especially radio carries out sensitization programs through debates involving panelists, seminars and radio talk shows. (KII with a media personality on 18/2/2021 at Mvita). This finding is in tandem with that of Badurdeen & Goldsmith (2018) who reported that the role of the media is vital in building bridges between and within different communities, in reducing the appeal for radicalization and violent extremist ideologies, and facilitating constructive discussions mitigating youth radicalization and recruitment.

The finding also corroborates that of Patterson (2015: 22) who aptly notes that in Kenya radical jihadist ideology has been increasingly disseminated through the radical publication of the *al-Misbah*, which is published by the Muslim Youth Centre (MYC) as well as the *Weekly Muslim News Update*. These publications use the Quran to inculcate a radical attitude as well as an avenue to criticize the Kenyan Government over a range of issues including perennial marginalization and economic disparities, political targeting through arbitrary police arrests and land issues (Mwinyihaj & Wanyama, 2011).

### Interfaith Dialogues

The study further sought to find out the involvement of religious groups in inter-faith dialogues to strengthen the understanding of each other and recognize the importance of integrating religious identities. The findings are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Inter-faith Dialogues**

Responses	Non radicalized		De-radicalized	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	40	40.0	20	40.0
Agree	19	19.0	16	32.0
Neutral	4	4.0	1	2.0
Disagree	19	19.0	4	8.0
Strongly Disagree	18	18.0	9	18.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Data, 2021.

From the findings presented in Table 2, most of the non-radicalized youths accounting for 40(40%) strongly agreed, and 19(19%) agreed that, inter-faith dialogues are held by religious groups to strengthen the understanding of each other and recognize the importance of integrating religious identities while 18(18%) strongly disagreed and 19(19%) disagreed. The rest accounting for 4(4%) were neutral. On the other hand, most of the de-radicalized youth agreed with the statement accounting for 20(40%) strongly agreed, 16(32%) agreed while 4(8%) disagreed and 9(18%) strongly disagreed. Only 1(2%) was neutral.

From the findings it is evident that interfaith dialogues in Mombasa County are held by religious groups to strengthen the understanding of each other and recognize the importance of integrating religious identities. This finding was supported by one of the religious groups during the focus group discussion who stated the following:

Religious groups from across the divide should hold crusades and other religious gatherings on awareness creation and sensitization on youth radicalization. (FGD with religious groups on 17/2/2021 at Mvita).

The religious groups, who participated in FGDs reported that they have partnerships such as; Inter Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK), Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics Trust (CICT) and Women Clergy. These different religious groups often come together to share their ideologies and strategies for preventing youth radicalization. Besides, they are involved in interfaith dialogues. The Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (C.I.P.K), are also actively involved in inter religious dialogue.

On the contrary, a parent to one of the youth added his voice to the discussion by mentioning that interfaith dialogues have also contributed to radicalization.

Public debates and preaching has been going on especially among the Islamic faith. The comparative preaching on the streets has created more radicals from both Christian and Muslims hence worsening the efforts of prevention on radicalizations. (Interview with a Parent to a radicalized youth in Likoni 13/11/2021)

RAN (2019), indicates that interreligious dialogue is one of the main prevention tools in which religion and religious institutions may play a role. Interfaith initiatives hold tremendous potential for supporting dialogue across communities. They explain misunderstandings of scripture, develop peaceful counter-narratives, and promote critical and inclusive thinking in religious institutions. (United Nations Development Program, 2016).

### Civic Education by Faith Based Organizations

The researcher sought to establish whether civic education provided by faith based organizations is effective in prevention of radicalization. The findings are presented in Table 3



**Table 3: Civic Education by Faith Based Organizations**

Response	Non radicalized		De-radicalized	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	48	48.0	25	50.0
Agree	44	44.0	20	40.0
Neutral	3	3.0	3	6.0
Disagree	4	4.0	2	4.0
Strongly Disagree	1	1.0	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data, 2021.**

From the results presented in Table 3, most of the non-radicalized youths accounting for 48(48%) strongly agreed and 44(44%) agreed with the statement that civic education provided by faith based institutions is effective in addressing prevention of radicalization. Whereas 4(4%) disagreed, 1(1%) strongly disagreed while 3(3%) were neutral. On the other hand, most of the de-radicalized youths accounting for 25(50%) strongly agreed while 20(40%) gave affirmation to the statement. Whereas 2(4%) disagreed, 3(6%) were neutral.

From the findings, it is reasonable to conclude that civic education provided by faith based institutions are effective in addressing prevention of radicalization among the youth in Mombasa County.

On the contrary one respondent during a key informant interview said that;- Inasmuch as education provided by faith based institutions are effective in addressing prevention of radicalization among the youth, it should not be lost that some religious groups and leaders take advantage of this situation to promote radicalization and religious extremism.

Some Imams are just too extreme in their understanding of Islam and its teachings. These extreme groups can radicalize the

whole Muslim community in a particular mosque. Their teachings border on religious intolerance and hate against non-Muslims. These teachings intoxicate the minds of the youths and breed extremism from the already radicalized youth. (CSO representative on 19/2/2021 at Mvita).

This assertion was supported by another respondent during the key informant interview who said:

The religious groups failed to concretely deal with youth radicalization at Masjid Musa and Masjid Sakina mosques leading to their closure in 2011. (KII with a police officer on 16/2/2021 at Likoni).

One of the youth also mentioned that from his experience;

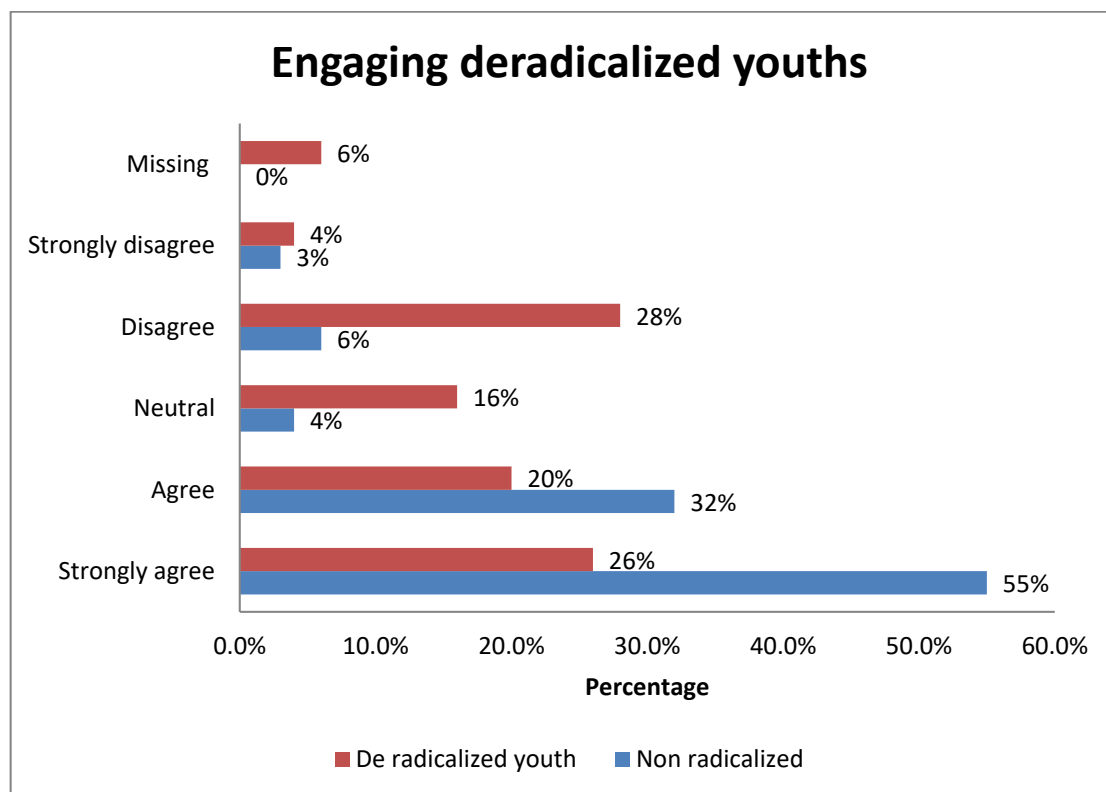
Some religious groups have inadequate knowledge on radicalization and therefore lack content to give to the youths. Some of them become radicalized instead of preventing radicalization among the youth (Interview with a radicalized youth on 12/11/2021).

Stewart (2018) avers that building young people's resilience is a good start to prevent radicalization and violent extremism because it not only provides them with the ability to utilize the opportunities that exist but also gives them opportunity to create new ones. Consequently, they are less likely to conclude that violence is an option and when confronted with problems they manage them positively. There is evidence that this resilience can be built through formal and informal education as it can act as the vehicle for engagement even with the most vulnerable young people (Schomerus *et al.*, 2017).

The youth, in a study by Finn *et al.* (2016) highlighted the important role of religion as being both a source of education, as well as a means for positive community engagement to combat recruitment into extremist groups.

### Engaging De-radicalized Youths

The study sought to find out whether religious groups were engaging with de-radicalized youth. The findings by the non-radicalized and de-radicalized group are presented on the Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Engagement with De radicalized Youth**  
**Source: Field Data, 2021.**

Results in Figure 2 show that most of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 55(55%) strongly agreed and 32(32%) agreed with the statement that religious groups were engaging with de-radicalized youth while 6(6%) disagreed and 3(3%) strongly disagreed. Only a paltry 4(4%) were neutral. On the other hand, most of the de-radicalized youth accounting for 13(26%) strongly agreed and 10(20%) agreed with the statement that religious groups were engaging with de-radicalized youth while 14(28%) disagreed and 2(4%) strongly disagreed. Only 8(16%) were neutral. The de-radicalized youth who did not respond to the statement accounted for 3(6%).

From the findings it is reasonable to conclude that most of the youth, both non radicalized and de-radicalized agreed that religious groups were engaging with de-radicalized youth and religious authorities in Mombasa County.

A respondent had this to add;-

The religious groups work with de-radicalized youth, however there are some religious leaders within the groups that are police informers and therefore compromise the lives of the de-radicalized youth. (Interview with a radicalized youth on 12/11/2021).

The same statement was echoed by one of the respondents from the civil society during the key informant interview who said:

Some religious groups have it upon themselves to start counter narrative teachings both online and within the religious institutions. However, this has not picked up much because of the fear of victimization from both the radicalizers and the security agencies. (KII with a civil society representative on 19/2/2021 at Kisauni).

According to a police officer, most returnees are considered a security risk by the security agencies because they have military training. He noted that;-

Returnees have military training; some have been sent on mission and have become part of criminal groups which have been involved in murders of moderate clergy and government workers who they suspect to be informers. (KII with a police officer on 22/02/ 2021 at Kisauni).

The statement shows how vulnerable the religious groups are in their engagement with the de-radicalized youth and how the returnees are always on the lookout for people who may report them to the police. However, it also reinforces the findings by Nasser *et al.*, (2011) that defection does not necessarily equate to de-radicalization.

Ruteere & Mutahi (2018), contend that faith-based groups, community and rights organizations are well-placed to offer support to the de-radicalized and traumatized youth. However, they are themselves paranoid that engagement of this kind “could expose them to charges by the State that they are providing ‘material support’ to terrorists because of the expansive nature of the Prevention of Terrorist Act (2012).”

According to Gang (2020), religious and community leaders have been known to be a conduit for speaking to and educating families on the personal challenges they face with youth radicalization.

## Religious Groups Led Activities Used in Prevention of Radicalization

The study sought to establish whether there were religious led activities used in prevention of youth radicalization. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Religious Groups Led Activities Used in Prevention of Radicalization**

Response	Non radicalized	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Mentorship with parents and individual counseling sessions	48	48
Alternative livelihoods	30	30
Partnerships with non-state actors	10	10
Talk shows	7	7
Partnerships with state actors	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data, 2021.**

Data in Table 4 shows that most of the non-radicalized youth reported that mentorship with parents and alternative livelihood programmes were the most common religious groups led activities used in prevention of youth radicalization accounting for 48(48%) and 15(30%) respectively. Partnerships with non-State actors, talk shows and partnerships with state-actors were reported by 10(10%), 7(7%) and 5(5%) of the non-radicalized youth respectively. On the other hand, most of the de-radicalized youth reported that alternative livelihood and mentorship with parents' programmes were the most common religious led activities used in prevention of youth radicalization accounting for 40(20%) and 15(30%) respectively. Partnerships with non-State actors, talk shows and partnerships with state actors were reported by 7(14%), 5(10%) and 3(6%) of the non-radicalized youth respectively.

From the findings, it is evident that there are several religious groups led activities used in prevention of youth radicalization in Mombasa County. However, mentorship with parents and alternative livelihood programmes are the most dominant. During the key informant interview, one of the respondents said:

Religious groups hold forums with youths and their parents, from which the youth get opportunities to converse about radicalization. These forums are always organized and facilitated in mosques and churches. Religious leaders use these forums to counter religious propaganda normally spread by religion extremists. (KII with media personality on 17/2/2021 at Likoni).

A parent to one of the youth observed that the religious groups offer mentorship with parents and individual counseling sessions for the both the parents and the youth. He went further to state that this has been a great support for parents whose children are vulnerable to radicalization and even those who are already radicalized or de-radicalized.

State actors, government officials and government agencies also actively partner with religious groups on several fronts. This was confirmed by the Mombasa county commissioner during the key informant interview. He said that:

As officials of the government of Kenya, we do vetting of religious leaders at the mosques to determine their orientation toward extremism and radicalization. We also stop scholarships offered to youth by suspicious organizations to forestall any ill motives of such scholarships. I also chair prevention of radicalization meetings together with other county government officials. Together with government officials at county level, we hold joint campaigns against radicalization with other stakeholders. (KII with the County Commissioner on 15/2/2021 at Likoni).

During the key informant interviews, the chiefs affirmed their support for the activities of religious groups on countering extremist narratives. For example, they reported that they often attend and participate in seminars held by religious groups on youth radicalization. As representatives of national government at local level, the chiefs often invite religious groups to *barazas* to dialogue on the importance of youth empowerment. According to the chief for Mvita:

Through partnership with religious groups and International organizations to help prevent youth radicalization, we have built a youth resource center in conjunction with a German based NGO in Mvita. (KII with a Chief on 26/2/2021 at Mvita).

Another chief interviewed also confirmed that, they partner with the Kenya Muslim alliance, NCIC, SUPKEM, Haki Africa, MUHURI and other civil society groups to create awareness and training among the youth and general public, as well as organize *barazas* to enlighten and sensitize youth. This was further affirmed by the village elders during the focus group discussion. They pointed out that some non- state actors such as Sauti ya Wanawake, Interfaith council, KECOSCE, LICODEP, Manyatta sports, Women groups and Nyali NGOs are engaged in partnership with Imams and pastors to create awareness and prevent radicalization.

Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) is a human rights and advocacy organization principally focused on the coastal region. It focuses on human rights among marginalized social groups and Muslim communities. They partner with police as well as influencing leaders at constituency and sub county levels (Ruteere & Mutahi, 2018).

## Knowledge on International Terrorist Organizations

The study sought to find out if the youths had knowledge about International terrorist organizations. The findings are presented in Table 5.



**Table 5: Knowledge on International Terrorist Organizations**

Response	Non radicalized		De-radicalized	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	84	84.0	46	92.0
No	16	16.0	4	8.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data, 2021**

From the findings in Table 5, most of the non-radicalized youths accounting for 84(84%) confirmed that they know about International extremists groups while only 16(16%) of them were not aware of the existence of these groups. On the other hand, 46(92%) of de radicalized youths reported that they know about international terrorist groups while a paltry 4(8%) were not aware. Collectively, both groups reported that the main International terrorist groups which are known to them are Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, ISIS, Bokoharam and Taliban.

The radicalized youth in an interview also reported that they were aware of the international terrorist groups especially Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda.

From the findings it is clear that most of the youth in Mombasa County are aware of the existence of international terrorists groups.

According to Dahl and Zalk (2014), Muslim subjects who reported that one of their peers had traveled to Somalia were more likely to exhibit higher radicalization.

### Frequency of Internet Access

The study sought to find out the frequency of youth access to the internet. The findings are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Frequency of internet Access**

Response	Non radicalized		De-radicalized	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Frequent	-	-	-	-
Frequent	81	81.0	38	76.0
Not too frequent	15	15.0	6	12.0
Not at all	4	4.0	3	6.0
No response	-	-	3	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data, 2021.**

The study sought to find out the level of access to internet by the non-radicalized and de-radicalized respondents. Most of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 81(81%) frequently had access to the internet. On the other hand, respondents who did not have access to the internet too frequently accounted for 15(15%) while those who never had access at all were at 4(4%). The study further sought to find out the level of access to internet by the de-radicalized respondents. Results show that most of the de-

radicalized youth accounting for 38(76%) frequently had access to the internet. On the other hand, those who did not have access to the internet too frequently accounted for 6(12%) while the respondents who never had access at all were at 3(6%). The de-radicalized youth who did not respond to the item accounted for 3(6%). In an interview by the radicalized youth they confirmed that they have frequent access to the internet.

From the findings, it is clear that most of the non-radicalized, radicalized and de-radicalized youth in Mombasa County have access to the internet. More than ever before, the lives of young people are lived online. As access to the internet spreads, more people have the ability to use, and with the internet enabled devices such as phones, young people spend more time on the cyber space given the proliferation of social media sites, entertaining, consuming information and creating virtual communities. Terrorist organizations are also exploiting these easily available communication platforms to reach a broad cross section of communities to recruit, groom and facilitate radicalization to violent extremism (Alarid, 2016).

Although there is consensus that the internet alone is not a cause of radicalization and recruitment, it remains a catalyst or a facilitator into extremism (Meleagrou & Kaderbhai, 2017). The role of the internet in radicalisation and recruitment is well-described as a medium which ‘complements in-person communication’ and ‘not a substitute for in-person meetings’ with the ability to create more opportunities for radicalisation (Von *et al.*, 2013).

According to Weimann (2014), the internet provides radical recruiters a fertile ground for recruitment and facilitates interaction with people who cannot be reached through conventional means. Scholars have demonstrated that terrorist organizations use online social networks to identify potential recruits for recruitment, glorification and planning and information, target selection, training and fundraising (Mahmood, 2012).

### III. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the nature of religious groups’ engagement in preventing youth radicalization in Mombasa County is multi-faceted. The religious groups should adopt a multi-stakeholder approach in developing strategies aimed at preventing youth radicalization. Besides, they should proactively induct them on the same to enhance their capacity and preparedness in preventing radicalization.

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