

Effectiveness 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. Religious institutions have played a vital role towards pursuit of peace and social justice. 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 purpose of this study was to assess the influence of religious groups' engagement in the prevention of youth radicalization in the County. A descriptive research design entailing mixed methods focusing on qualitative and quantitative research approach was used. The study population comprised of radicalized, de-radicalized and non-radicalized youths, police, chiefs and County commissioner, media personalities, civil society organizations representatives, village elders and religious groups. The sample size was 228 respondents sampled using snowballing, random and purposive sampling. Data was collected by questionnaire, Key informant interviews and Focus group discussions. The study established that inasmuch as there have been various interventions by religious groups addressing youth radicalization, the interventions are ineffective and therefore the influence is not able to attract many youths to desist from radicalization.

Key Words

Religious groups, Youth Radicalization, Deradicalization

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I. Introduction

The past few decades have seen increasing recognition of the significant role religious actor's play to realize global peace. In a world in which the vast majority of people identify themselves 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).

Governments are hence 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 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). The Anglican Archbishop Julius Kalu of Mombasa, a coastal city in south eastern Kenya, said the terrorists wanted to divide the country along religious lines and called for resistance to this religious conflict. Indeed, the Muslim leaders led by the Chairman of Supreme council of Kenya Muslims condemned the barbaric act and disowned terrorists, terming them as criminals using religion to commit crimes (Nzwili, 2015).

Religious actors are important in preventing radicalization because of their unique positions of authority, credibility, institutional resources and ties with communities. Not all radicalization is encased in religious terms, and not all radicalization is violent. In Kenya, religious groups are involved in training youths on peaceful political solutions and mentorship (Baku, 2016).

In partnership with civil society actors and organizations, religious groups in Kenya have attempted to build the capacity of, and amplified the efforts of, youth-focused initiatives. In particular, programmes that promote empowerment and skills related to leadership, communication and entrepreneurship have been

supported. According to Ruteere & Mutahi (2018) the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) helped start a self-help youth initiative in Kwale County.

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 Km² of the waters. It is the smallest County in the Country covering an area of 229.7 Km² 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 survey able 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 de-radicalized 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.

III. Data presentation and Discussions

Religious Groups Partnership with Non-state Actors

The study sought to find out the levels of engagement between religious groups and non-state actors as perceived by non-radicalized and deradicalized youth. The findings are presented in Fig 1.

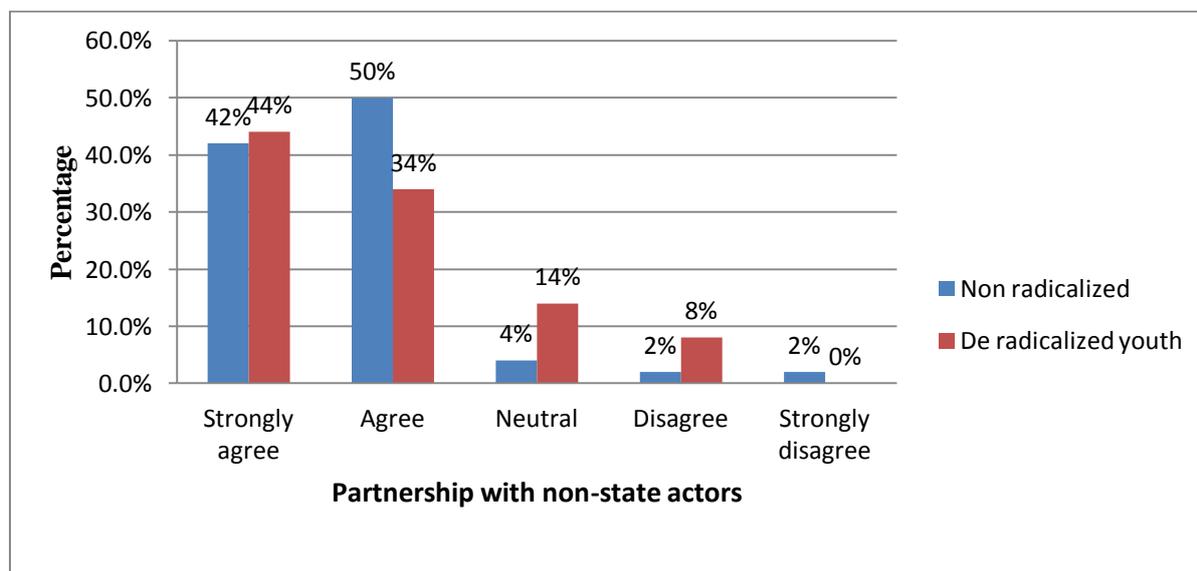


Fig 1: Religious Groups Partnership with Non-state Actors

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Data presented in Figure 1 shows that most of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 42(42%) strongly agreed and 50(50%) agreed with the statement that religious groups have been involved in preventing radicalization in partnership with non-state actors. Whereas 2(2%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. The other 4(4%) were neutral. On the other hand most of the deradicalized youth accounting for 22(44%) strongly agreed while 17(34%) agreed with the statement that religious groups have been involved in preventing radicalization in partnership with non-state actors. Whereas 4(8%) of them disagreed with the statement, the other 7(14%) were neutral.

From survey results, it is clear both non-radicalized and de radicalized youths support the statement that; religious groups have been involved in preventing radicalization in partnership with non-state actors in Mombasa County. The radicalized youth also supported the statement that religious groups partner with non-

state actors. This finding was supported by one of the respondents during the focus group discussion with the village elders who said that:

Nyali Non-Governmental Organization is partnering with Imams and Pastors to create awareness and prevent radicalization among the youth. (FGD with village elders on 25/2/2021 at Mvita).

Another respondent had the following to say about partnership with non- state actors;-

The religious groups partner with several organizations including Kenya Community Support Centre, Kituo cha Sheria, Coast Women in Development and Red Cross among others. These organizations together with the religious groups reach out to the youth to dissuade them from radicalization. They are also involved in programs with the parents to the youth. (Interview with a parent to a radicalized youth on 13/11/2021).

Generally, the work of Civil Society Organizations is very often constructive and results in efforts and programmes promoting good governance and anticorruption, rule of law, human rights protection and humanitarian assistance. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that civil society and grassroots organizations do not always and exclusively seek to advance the cause of peace, social progress and non-discrimination. In some cases, civil society associations have promoted caste and class prejudice, homophobia, sexism or oppression of the disabled (Ougaard & Higgott, 2002). In other cases, fringe faith-based organizations are known to have incited violence based on race, ethnicity, national origin, or religious affiliation.

Prevention of radicalization operations have revealed that entities sometimes operating formally or informally as so-called cultural associations, youth forums, or faith based charities have engaged in terrorism-related activities or have intimidated and targeted activists and investigative journalists who speak out against radicalization or expose it. Empirical research indicates that these fringe outfits have often operated in communities that have shown disproportionately high rates of participation in radicalization activities (Shtuni, 2016).

Training on Peaceful Political Solutions and Mentorship

The study sought to find out whether training youths on peaceful political solutions and mentorship by religious groups have diverted their attention from radicalization. Figure 2 presents the findings.

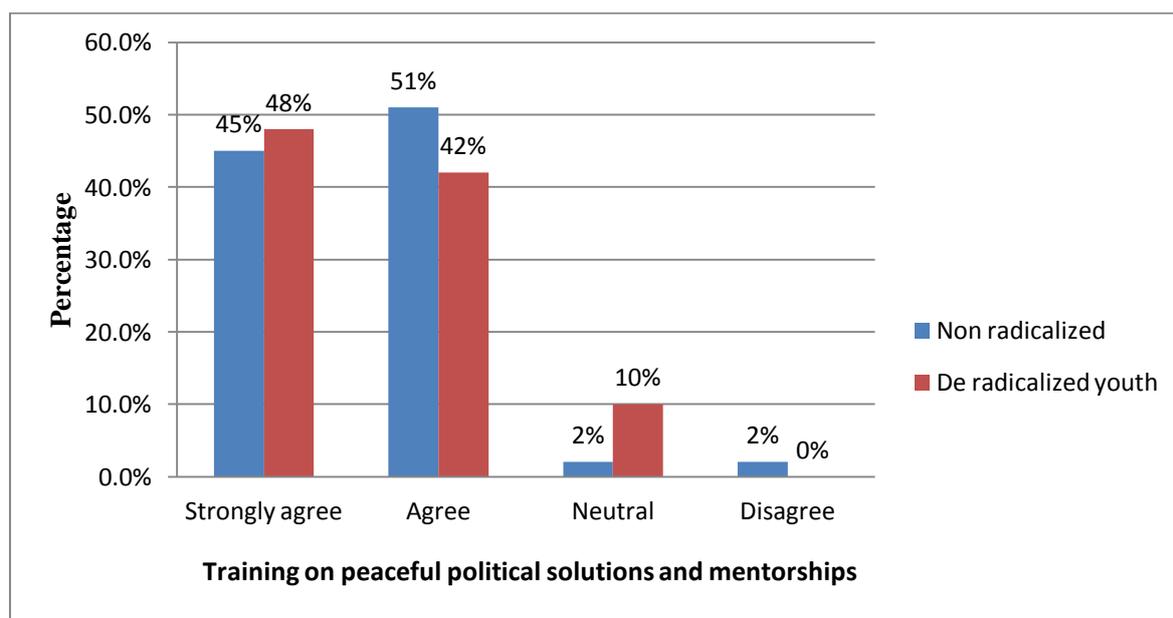


Fig 2: Training on Peaceful Political Solutions and Mentorships
Source: Field Data, 2021.

Data in Figure 2 shows that most of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 45(45%) strongly agreed and 51(51%) agreed with the statement that training youths on peaceful political solutions and mentorship by religious groups have diverted their attention from radicalization while 2(2%) disagreed and 2(2%) were neutral. On the other hand, most of the deradicalized youth accounting for 24(48%) strongly disagreed while 21(42%) agreed with the statement that training youths on peaceful political solutions and mentorship by religious groups have diverted their attention from radicalization. Finally 5(10%) were neutral.

The findings clearly shows that both the non-radicalized and deradicalized youth in Mombasa County agree that training youths on peaceful political solutions and mentorship by religious groups have diverted their attention from radicalization. One of the radicalized youth said that;-

The religious groups often partner with youth friendly organizations such as Likoni Community Development Program (LICODEP) and others to reach the youth on peacebuilding activities. (Interview with a radicalized youth 12/11/2021).

This finding was supported during key informant interview by one of the media personalities who said;

One of the strategies used to lure de-radicalized youth back to their families, communities and larger society, is the provision of tools of trade, grants to start projects, and employing them on already running projects. So, training them, or mentoring them, in terms of skill and knowledge, helps them reduce or avoid failures. (KII with media personality on 18/2/2021 at Kisauni).

When conducting the focus group discussion with the village elders, it is noteworthy that they commended the religious groups for working together with the civil society organizations to train the youth on matters related to peace-building and security. The trainings on peaceful political solutions and mentorships by faith led organizations is precisely crucial in helping divert the youth attention from radicalization activities.

In a study by Finn *et al.* (2016) it was recommended that prevention of radicalization should involve providing focused workshops and professional development opportunities to school administrators, community/faith-based organizations, youth workers, mentors, and law enforcement. They applaud the 'grassroots level' of engaging the problem, while stressing how 'various stakeholders, especially law enforcement' would benefit from the education provided by community and professional development trainings.

According to Khalil & Zeuthen (2016) initiatives and interventions are most effectively implemented when they target at-risk individuals for such activities such as mentorship and career training, instead of conducting blanket programming. The authors also suggest that the desire to mitigate the potentially negative effects of radicalization programming such as stigmatization or causing implementing partners in the field to be vulnerable to attack should not cause developers to be risk-adverse.

Provision of Alternative Livelihoods

The researcher sought to find out whether religious groups have provided alternative livelihood projects for the youth. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Alternative Livelihoods by Religious Organizations

Response	Non radicalized		De-radicalized	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	37	37.0	16	32.0
Agree	47	47.0	21	42.0
Neutral	10	10.0	6	12.0
Disagree	1	1.0	5	10.0
Strongly Disagree	5	5.0	2	4.0
Total	100	100	50	100

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Data in Table 1 shows that most of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 37(37%) strongly agreed and 47(47%) agreed that religious groups have provided alternative livelihood projects for the youth while 1(1%) disagreed and 5(5%) strongly disagreed. 10(10%) were neutral. Likewise, most of the deradicalized youth accounting for 16(32%) strongly agreed while 21(42%) agreed with the statement. 5(10%) disagreed, 2(4%) strongly disagreed and 6(12%) were neutral.

From the findings in Table 1, it is reasonable to conclude that most of the non-radicalized and deradicalized youth in Mombasa County agree that religious groups have provided alternative livelihood projects for the youth.

This finding was further supported during the focus group discussion with the religious groups;-

Projects are given to the youth by the religious groups to sustain themselves. Tools of trade such as boda boda, carwash machines, beauty shops and welding machines are also provided to the youth to keep them busy and distract them from radicalization. (FGD with religious groups on 18/2/2021 at Likoni).

Ruteere & Mutahi, (2018) posit that in addition to promoting inter-faith dialogue, the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) helped start a self-help youth initiative in Kwale County. Kwale has been a hotbed for radical groups such as the Kaya Bombo group associated with the political violence of 1997 and recruitment of youth to

Al-Shabaab. The CICC piloted the Kwale Inter-Faith Youth Association (KIYA) microfinance project in 2006 which provided small loans to young people to start small businesses. The loans helped some of the youths in setting up motorcycle taxi businesses (boda boda) while others opened up beauty salons and others invested in farming. Between 2006 and 2008, a total of 2,000 participants benefitted from the project. The initiative has since branched out into an independent, youth-led organization that continues to provide business skills and credit opportunities to their members.

It is therefore vital to note that the solution to radicalization is linked to investment in livelihoods, development, and economic opportunities. As officials of the CICC note with regard to recruitment of coastal youth into Al-Shabaab, “people went to terrorism because of promises of economic gain.” According to CIPK officials, “these youths have been enticed with money- up to Kshs. 80,000” (about US\$1,000) to go to Somalia (International Crisis Group , 2014) This view is echoed by Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) officials who stress that “poverty is a major issue” in addressing youth recruitment into terrorism in the coastal region (Ruteere & Mutahi, 2018).

Addressing Socio-Economic Root Causes of Radicalization

The study sought to find out whether addressing the socio-economic inequalities by religious groups lead to prevention of radicalization. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Addressing Socio-Economic Root Causes of Radicalization

Response	Non radicalized		De-radicalized	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	43	43.0	21	42.0
Agree	42	42.0	19	38.0
Neutral	5	5.0	3	6.0
Disagree	4	4.0	7	14.0
Strongly Disagree	6	6.0	-	-
Total	100	100	50	100

Source: Field Data, 2021.

From the results presented in Table 2, most of the non-radicalized youth accounting to 43 (43%) of the sample strongly agreed while 42(42%) agreed with the statement that addressing economic and social root causes of radicalization such as unemployment and inequalities by religious groups lead to prevention of radicalization. 4(4%) disagreed while 6(6%) strongly disagreed and 5(5%) were neutral. On the other hand, most of the deradicalized youth accounting to 21(42%) strongly agreed and 19(38%) voiced their approval while 7(14%) disagreed and 3(6%) were neutral.

In an interview with a radicalized youth, it was reiterated that unemployment is driving youths to radicalization. The recruiters promise the youth jobs and money which they desperately need.

From the findings, it is evident that most of the non-radicalized and deradicalized youth in Mombasa County agree that addressing socio-economic root causes of radicalization such as unemployment and inequalities by religious groups have to some extent lead to prevention of radicalization.

A study examining the social, economic factors affecting vulnerability and resilience to radicalization was conducted among communities in Nairobi and Mombasa that have been recruitment zones for Al-Shabaab. Researchers concluded that social and economic contexts are key drivers of community vulnerability and recruitment (International Alert, 2016).

Mombasa is one of the leading tourism hubs in Kenya, it has beautiful beaches, historical sites and other tourist attractions that have attracted foreign exchange for the country. However, since the surge of the wave of violent extremism and terrorist attacks targeting the coastal region, the tourism sector which drives the region’s economy, has seen a massive slump as travel advisories, and the security situation generally deteriorated (UNDP, 2017).

The communities that are hotbeds of recruitment for Al-Shabaab also happen to comprise of marginalized communities in Northern and the Coastal regions of Kenya. The rate of poverty is significantly higher in these areas, thus arguably ramping up the vulnerability of individuals being lured to join violent extremist groups. Some of the push and pull factors noted by researchers in this region include economic and ideological factors.

Finn *et al.* (2016) suggest that ‘hundreds of thousands’ of Kenyan youth, including young women, are vulnerable to the recruitment drives of Al-Shabaab and other regional militias with disenfranchised and unemployed youth in rural Kenya at risk to financial incentives and other ‘pull’ factors, and more educated and mobile youth of urban Kenya vulnerable to extremist messaging and ideology.

Trust and Enhanced Cooperation in the Communities

The study sought to find out whether religious groups initiatives have generated a climate of trust and enhanced cooperation in the communities. Table 3 presents the findings.

Table 3: Trust and Enhanced Cooperation in the Communities

Response	Non radicalized		De-radicalized	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	18	18.0	22	44.0
Agree	19	19.0	16	32.0
Neutral	8	8.0	7	14.0
Disagree	20	20.0	5	10.0
Strongly Disagree	35	35.0	-	-
Total	100	100	50	100

Source: Field Data, 2021

Based on the findings in Table 3, most of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 35 (35%) strongly disagreed while 20(20%) disagreed with the statement that the religious groups' initiatives have generated a climate of trust and cooperation in the communities. Whereas 18(18%) strongly agreed, 19(19%) agreed and 8(8%) were neutral. On the contrary, most of the deradicalized youths accounting for 22(44%) strongly agreed while 16(32%) agreed. 5(10%) disagreed and only 7(14%) were neutral.

The radicalized youth also agreed that the initiatives by the religious groups enhance trust and cooperation in the communities. They believe that the religious groups have been able to cultivate trust between the youth and some security organs.

From the findings it is clear that whereas the de radicalized and radicalized youths in Mombasa County agree that the initiatives by religious groups have built trust and enhanced cooperation in the communities, the non-radicalized youth disagree. This divergent position may be attributed to the fact that activities aimed at generating trust and enhanced cooperation have largely been focusing on the deradicalized youth to help them integrate back to the community. The religious groups' initiatives therefore need to be more inclusive to involve even the non-radicalized youths.

Lauren (2016), while exploring resilience and social cohesion, posits that communities with genuine associations with religious members from different groups experience less radicalization and violent extremist activity. Christian-Muslim association prevents the escalation of violence. Following violent extremist attacks, Christian leaders with trust in and association with Muslims prevent retribution. Surveys in communities with strong Christian-Muslim association reveal that Christians showed marked empathy with Muslim groups experiencing heavy-handed police actions and trusted that Muslim leaders were doing their best to counter extremist groups. Within family Christian-Muslim associations, the resilience may be more durable in comparison with other forms of association and should be validated. The study therefore proposed an interrelationship between Christian-Muslim and Muslim-Muslim associations, in which communities with both experience more working trust, which can prevent violent extremist actors from embedding in a community through fractures in the Muslim community as well as retributive cycles of conflict and violence following violent attacks.

Promotion of Dialogue and Protection of Human Rights

The study sought to find out if the religious groups were promoting dialogue and protecting human rights of the communities. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Promoting Dialogue and Protecting Human Rights

Response	Non radicalized		De-radicalized	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	39	39.0	27	54.0
Agree	49	49.0	17	34.0
Neutral	4	4.0	3	6.0
Disagree	6	6.0	3	6.0
Strongly Disagree	2	2.0	-	-
Total	100	100	50	100

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Data in Table 4 shows that most of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 39(39%) strongly agreed and 49(49%) agreed with the statement that religious groups are promoting dialogue and protecting human rights. While 6(6%) disagreed, 2(2%) strongly disagreed and 4(4%) were neutral. On the other hand, most of the deradicalized youth accounting for 27(54%) strongly agreed while 17(34%) agreed with the statement. 3(6%) disagreed and another 3(6%) were neutral.

One of the radicalized youth reported that:

Police are fond of violating our rights through arbitrary arrests and beatings. The religious groups in partnership with the civil society organizations have been defending the rights of the people. Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) has been on record to condemn the violence against the people. Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) has also been at the forefront for court representation and documentation of the evil carried out by the police. (Interview with a radicalized youth on 12/11/2021).

From the findings, it is clear that most of the non-radicalized, radicalized and deradicalized youth in Mombasa agree that religious groups are promoting dialogue and protecting human rights. Robinson and Kelly (2017) believe that in order to deal with the violent radicalisation that happens so frequently within different societies, upholding the rule of law “is the fundamental component of any effort seeking to address radicalization and violent extremism in ways that are effective, sustainable and respectful of fundamental freedoms, civil liberties and human rights”.

Women Inclusion in Design and Implementation of Activities

The researcher sought to find out whether religious groups worked with women in the design and prevention of youth radicalization activities. The findings are presented in Figure 3.

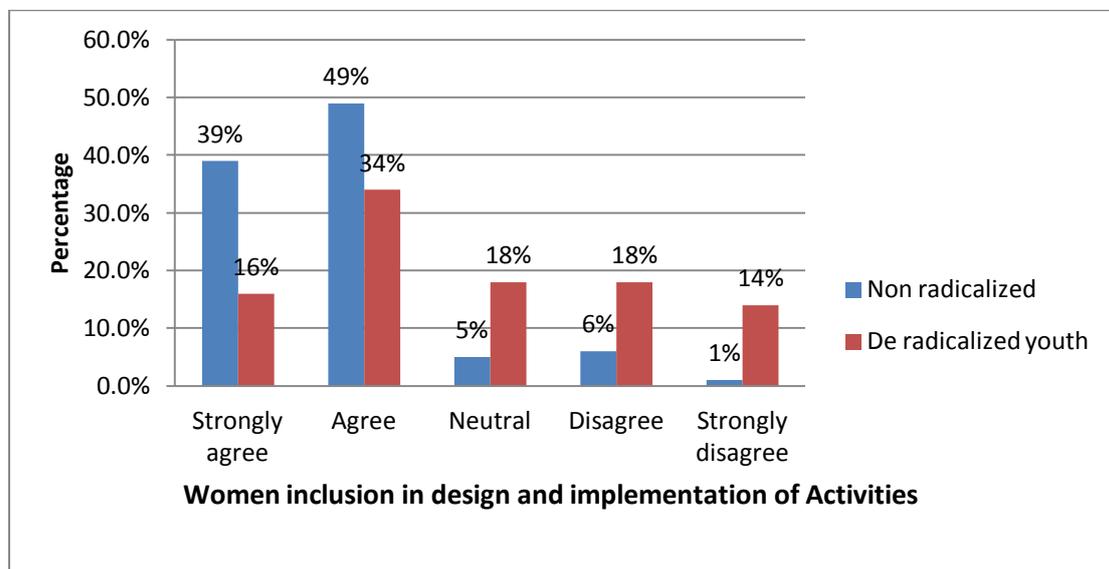


Fig 3: Women Inclusion in Design and Implementation of Activities
Source: Field Data, 2021.

Results in Figure 3 show that most of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 39(39%) strongly agreed and 49(49%) affirmed the statement that religious groups are working with women in design and implementation of radicalization prevention activities while 18(18%) disagreed and 14(14%) strongly disagreed. Only 5(5%) were neutral. On the other hand, most of the deradicalized youth accounting for 8(16%) strongly agreed and 17(34%) agreed with the statement while 9(18%) disagreed and 7(14%) strongly disagreed. Finally 9(18%) were neutral.

From the findings, it is clear that most of the non-radicalized and de-radicalized youth in Mombasa County agreed that religious groups’ are working with women in design and implementation of radicalization prevention activities.

In a study by Ambalong (2018), Mothers for Peace in the Philippines have organized an Imams’ League and Youth Affairs Council to prevent radicalization through Islamic Values Seminars and youth engagement in cultural and sports activities. They also raise awareness about early warning signs of radicalization and extremist violence in everyday behavior that affects women including changes in social

attitudes to women's and girls' dress and veiling, restrictions on women's mobility, use of derogatory language, and the exclusiveness of mosques.

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, (2000), calls for the United Nations and Member States to promote women's inclusion in decision-making processes on peace and security and recognize the ways in which women are affected by conflicts.

Counter terrorism and countering violent extremism are also seen to be linked to issues of women, peace and security as stipulated in UNSCR 2122 (2013) and UNSCR 2422 (2015). Resolution 2422 calls for countries to continue addressing women, peace and security, counter-terrorism, and countering violent extremism while ensuring that gender concerns are mainstreamed throughout their programmes. Resolution 2122 reiterates the United Nation's commitment to allocating resources and attention to the women, peace and security agenda while calling for increased women's leadership and representation within these efforts.

According to Qadeem (2018), mothers TOLANA of Pakistan hold sessions with other mothers in their respective communities and teach and preach nonviolent ways of addressing violent extremism. They are instrumental in identification of vulnerable and extremist youth for positive engagement and de-radicalization programme. They are also involved in the reintegration of transformed youth to the community. The mothers are involved in reconciliation through community networks and sharing information. They have educated and sensitized 15,000 female community members who are now involved in the prevention of radicalization and countering violent extremism in their area, thus sustaining the whole process of community peace-building. Mothers TOLANA keep an eye on their surroundings, staying alert for early signs of violent extremism within the family and in the community and reporting to the authorities for quick response.

Working with National and County Governments

The researcher sought to ascertain if religious groups were working with national and county governments in preventing radicalization. The findings are presented in Figure 4.

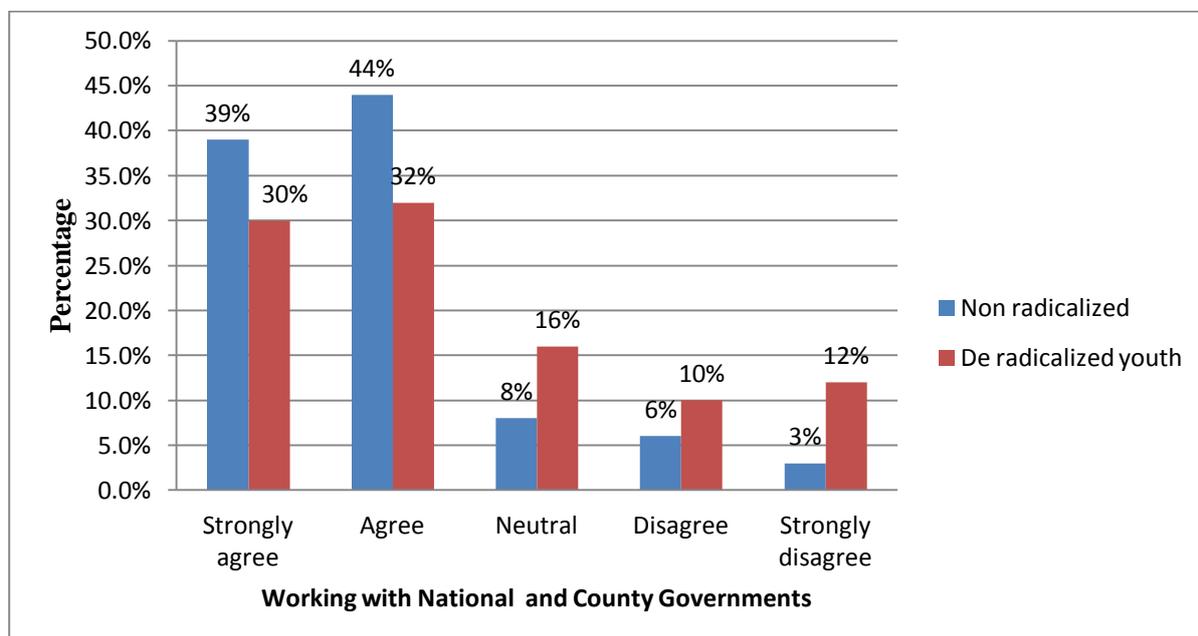


Fig 4: Working with National and County Governments
Source: Field Data, 2021.

From the findings presented in Figure 4, majority of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 39(39%)strongly agreed and 44(44%) agreed with the statement that, religious groups are working with county and national government in preventing radicalization through, policy development and action plans, while 6(6%) disagreed and 3(3%) strongly disagreed. Only 8(8%) were neutral. On the other hand most of the deradicalized youth accounting for 15(30%) strongly agreed and 16(32%) agreed with the statement while 5(10%) disagreed and 6(12%) strongly disagreed. A paltry 8(16%) of the respondents were neutral.

From the findings, it is reasonable to conclude that most of the non-radicalized and deradicalized youth in Mombasa County agree that religious groups are working with county and national government in preventing radicalization through, policy development and action plans.

This finding was echoed by one of the chiefs during the key informant interview who said that:

The national and county governments recognize the religious groups as key players in prevention of radicalization (KII with a chief on 26/2/2021 at Mvita).

During the key informant interview with the Mombasa County Commissioner, he observed that:

The National and County governments work together and co- chair the county prevention of radicalization meetings. An additional social pillar in the County Action plan provides an opportunity to collaborate with religious groups such as the interfaith council of Kenya and other stakeholders for sensitization on prevention of youth radicalization (KII with the County Commissioner on 15/5/2020 at the office in Mombasa).

In a focus group discussion, the religious groups affirmed their partnership with both national and county governments. They indicated their involvement in the development of the Mombasa county counter terrorism Action plan. They also noted that the Kazi kwa Vijana and Kazi Mtaani programmes facilitated by the national government have been very effective in meaningfully engaging the youth hence preventing them from being idle. Through T.V.E.T sponsorships, many young people have been enrolled to pursue vocational training. However, it was observed that some misguided youth who have been admitted into the institutions demand to be given the cheques instead of learning.

Vidino (2010) avers that a large number of experts believe governments should partner with non-violent Islamists in prevention of radicalization. They genuinely oppose violence, are in a unique position to influence those likely to engage in violence and have the legitimacy and street credibility to be listened to by young Muslims on the path to radicalization. Governments should therefore empower the work of these groups which constitute the ultimate bulwark against violent radicalization. Efforts to counter radicalization, especially its theological components, are best conducted in partnership with the Muslim community.

Nonviolent Islamists have the credibility to challenge the narrative of al-Qaeda and influence young Muslims who might be on the path to violent radicalization. He advocates for police negotiation leading to partnership with Muslim groups (Lambert, 2008) STREET (Strategy to Re-Empower and Educate Teenagers), a counter-radicalization program run by strict Salafists in the Brixton area of London has been particularly successful in countering the recruitment efforts of al-Qaeda-linked preachers in the area, thanks to its combination of “street skills and religious integrity” (Mazer and Lambert, 2010).

Youth Involvement in Religious Led Activities

The researcher sought to find out if non-radicalized and deradicalized youth are actively involved in the religious led activities. The findings are presented in Figure 5.

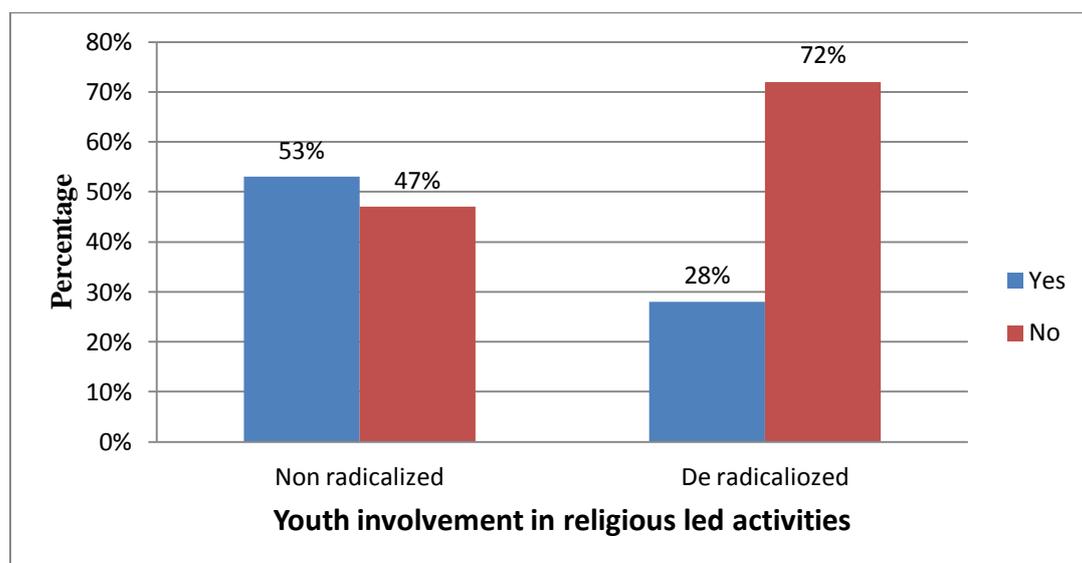


Fig 5: Youth Involvement in Religious Led Activities

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Data presented in Figure 5 shows that most of the non-radicalized youth accounting for 53(53%) are actively involved in the religious led activities while 47(47%) reported on the contrary. On the other hand, most of the deradicalized youth accounting for 36(72%) reported that they are not actively involved in the religious led activities while 14(28%) reported on the contrary.

In an interview with one of the radicalized youth, he observed that most youth are not involved in activities led by religious groups because of fear of victimization from the police. More so, if it is about religious teachings, the police will always take it as a radicalization activity.

From the findings, it is clear that whereas most of the non-radicalized youth in Mombasa County are actively involved in the religious led activities, those who are radicalized and the deradicalized are not. Those who are actively involved in the activities indicated that they had participated in a number of activities such as preaching peace, youth seminars, youth peace campaigns, attending mosque on jihadi, radio shows, panel discussions on jihadi, holding rallies for peace, business initiatives, interfaith dialogue, community service, chief barazas and youth camps.

During the key informant interview with a chief, the respondent said;

Religious groups are exposing the youth to other opportunities and scholarships that can better their lives economically and broaden their thinking. These engagements dissuade the youth from radicalization. (KII with a chief on 26/2/2021 at Likoni).

The finding that most of the deradicalized and radicalized youth are not actively involved in the religious led activities may be due to the fact that there is no proper structure for communication with the youth on religious led activities. Also, it could be attributed to the fact that they fear victimization by the security forces.

Young people remain the main target of recruitment and mobilization efforts by violent extremist organizations. Irrespective of country, religion, social background or level of education, youth constitutes the social group most vulnerable to violent extremism. By implication, youth can also be one of the most strategic source of resilience against radicalization and violent extremism if their energy, activism and innovative ideas are given due support and channeled constructively.

The United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism report (2015-2016) highlights the importance of paying particular attention to the world's 1.8 billion young women and men who constitute invaluable partners in prevention of radicalization, and urges United Nations Member States to identify the right instruments for supporting and empowering youth as they take up the cause of peace.

The OSCE (2015) calls for engaging and empowering youth by: creating opportunities for them to participate in public life through the promotion of human rights, dialogue and democratic principles; facilitating their access to social services; and enhancing educational opportunities and access to employment. Youth representatives, activists, volunteers and young professionals often engage effectively in preventive programming at the local level both offline and online by engaging their peers and/or their communities, and raising awareness about the potential negative consequences of terrorist groups and providing positive alternative ideas.

Effectiveness of Initiatives by Religious Groups in Preventing Youth Radicalization

The study sought to find out the success rate of the religious groups initiatives in preventing radicalization among the youth. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Effectiveness of Initiatives by Religious Organizations

Response	Non radicalized		De-radicalized	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	6	6.0	13	26.0
Agree	18	18.0	7	14.0
Neutral	7	7.0	10	20.0
Disagree	27	27.0	17	34.0
Strongly Disagree	42	42.0	3	6.0
Total	100	100	50	100

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Data in Table 5 shows that most of the non - radicalized youths accounting for 27(27%) disagreed and 42(42%) strongly disagreed with the statement that initiatives by religious organizations in preventing youth radicalization are effective while 18(18%) agreed and 6(6%) strongly agreed while 7(7%) were neutral. As for the deradicalized youths, 17(34%) disagreed and 3(6%) strongly disagreed with the statement. Only 7(14%) agreed and 13(26%) strongly agreed. Those who were neutral accounted for 10(20%).The radicalized youth and their parents observed that the religious groups are working well with communities in preventing radicalization but their initiatives are not effective.

From the findings, it is reasonable to conclude that inasmuch as there were initiatives by religious organizations to prevent youth radicalization in Mombasa County, they were not effective. This position was supported by the village elders and the County Commissioner during the focus group discussion and key informant interview sessions respectively. However, the County Commissioner was quick to observe that the youth listen to religious leaders, when they counter extreme religious teachings bordering on propaganda.

A local administrator during a KII stated as follows:

These groups have not been very effective. I think it is because they also do not understand the concept of radicalization very well and so they need more capacity building on such matters. It is unfortunate that some of these group members have ended up being radicalized in the process of trying to prevent radicalization. However, there have been isolated cases of some Imams being radicalized. (KII with a chief on 26/2/2021 at Kisauni).

During the focus group discussion with the village elders, one of the respondents said:

Some religious leaders have weaknesses and therefore cannot be relied on fully. For example, some religious leaders were reported to have raped girls in different areas of the County. Religious leaders are important in preaching the word but it is the duty of parents to encourage the youths to attend services. *'Dini zinapeana chakula cha kiroho, wazazi wasipoenda msikiti watoto hawatoenda.'* Charity begins at home. (FGD with village elders on 17/2/2021 at Kisauni).

On the contrary during the key informant interview, a respondent from the media fraternity said that:

The success rate of religious groups' engagement is 50-50. Religious groups are trying their best but they cannot work alone on this venture. (KII with a media personality on 18/2/2021 at Likoni).

According to the participants, religious groups have organized interfaith community workshops aimed at helping the youth disengage from radicalization. Unfortunately, these have been devoid of much success since there have been no follow up meetings. One of the participants was very categorical when he said that:

These meetings have failed because the Muslims are often neglected due to difference in religious beliefs and doctrines. (FGD with religious groups on 18/2/2021 at Kisauni)

This assertion probably points to the existence of religious intolerance by other faiths. It is important to note that religious groups hold illiberal and even extremist views, and promote intolerant ideas. To this end therefore, engaging with ideologically extreme but nonviolent religious groups can be counterproductive in prevention of radicalization.

Vidino (2010) posits that measuring the effectiveness of prevention to radicalization programs is an inherently difficult task. Even the most comprehensive and well-thought-out deradicalization programs are unlikely to be completely successful. The success of radicalization prevention is even more challenging to evaluate because it requires planners to prove a negative: the number of individuals who did not become terrorists because of the program. Governments have attempted to set clear metrics to empirically verify the effectiveness of their actions, ranging from simple quantitative analyses of program participation to more complex indexes seeking to determine the level of community engagement. Yet all these attempts fall short of providing a clear assessment. Nevertheless, measuring effectiveness is increasingly necessary. In times of deep budget cuts, demonstrating that the resources dedicated to counter-radicalization programs are allocated for a reason is of paramount importance.

Religious leaders can essentially play a powerful role as mediators between communities. The resulting partnerships are useful in addressing a range of public safety concerns that include preventing radicalization. According to Mandaville & Nozell (2017), faith communities are some of the well-organized civil institutions in the world. Religious leaders serve not only as spiritual guides, but also as influential decision-makers in a community, and have both popular and political influence. The role of religious groups in preventing radicalization thus transcends the domain of religious doctrine. Beyond "theological antidotes to extremist interpretations of religion", it is possible to engage religious actors in preventing radicalization in wider roles and harness their influence in governance, human development and peace-building (Mondaville & Nozell, 2017).

As Barzegar *et al.* (2016) correctly observes, religious groups can be impactful in a range of efforts from early stage prevention to the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders and returning foreign fighters. As credible actors with unique knowledge of what messages resonate with vulnerable members of the community, they can be highly effective communicators of alternative narratives. They can especially leverage their position of authority, credibility, and close ties to community members to mentor youth on the values of peace and tolerance, and build resilience against messages of hate.

IV. Conclusion

Religious groups' engagement in preventing youth radicalization in Mombasa County is not as effective as anticipated. Inasmuch as there are initiatives by religious groups to prevent youth radicalization in Mombasa County, its operations are poorly coordinated. The fight against youth radicalization should involve all stakeholders for acceptability and ownership. Prevention of radicalization strategies should also take into account and address the prevailing circumstances and conditions on the ground such as religious intolerance as well as marginalization and socio-economic factors for them to be successful.

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