

PREVENTING YOUTH FROM TERRORIST RADICALIZATION AND RECRUITMENT

Marjorie Omwega*, Elizabeth Role, & Lazurus Ndiku

University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, P. O. Box 2500-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

*Corresponding Author Email: marjorieomwega@yahoo.com

Abstract

In the current international security environment, there is little question that terrorism is among the gravest of threats. According to June (2011), all terrorist groups have an ideology espoused by extremists organization that seem attractive and compelling, sanctioning the use of violence as the only alternative. Therefore, these terrorist groups seek to ridicule and recruit young people to their cause. Education is the most effective weapon against the lure of the terrorists and extremists amongst the youth. This study therefore attempted to explore what measures were in place for preventing radicalization and recruitment of students into acts of terrorism in Uasin Gishu County among the 48 form three students. Critical theory guided the study. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data. The findings revealed that measures which were taken to prevent youth from terrorist radicalization and recruitment in students in Kenyan Secondary Schools were collectively below average. It was recommended that special resources about radicalization and recruitment should be made available to teachers and students. Teachers should be trained on how to challenge terrorism and extremism ideas supported by terrorists.

Keywords: Terrorism, radicalization, recruitment, ideology, pull factors, indicators, safety measures

Introduction

Terrorism is one of the biggest global challenges of the 21st century to be overcome by developed Western democracies, emerging nations and developing countries alike (Duffy, 2015; Karacasulu, 2015). Massive resources throughout the governments and private sectors have been allocated and re-allocated to the task of preventing terrorism. These efforts, however, often lack a conceptual foundation for understanding terrorists and their acts of violence. This void creates a serious challenge at many levels, from policy-level decisions about how a state should respond to terrorism, to individual-level decisions about how a given person who espouses extremist ideas truly poses a serious threat to a nation's personnel, assets, and interests (Shimko, 2014; Hendel, 2015). This has indeed extended to education level as to how educational institutions can create secure environments in preventing youths from terrorist radicalization and recruitment.

This has been witnessed by serious resurgence of homegrown terrorism aimed at establishing an East African Caliphate by al Qaeda and al Shabbab (Mohammed, 2015). University of Nairobi students are

on al Shabbab payroll. There are also high rates of radicalization and recruitment of youths in Kenyan that have been observed in schools such as Isiolo Boys High school, Marsabit Mixed high School, and Moi Girls High all in Marsabit. In Western Kenya we have Koseka Secondary, Birunda PAG Primary and St. Patrick Bumula Secondary. The majority of girls are to become terrorists' brides whereas boys have been pulled out of schools to be violent radicals and aggressive militants (Mukinda, 2015). This indeed poses utmost risk to our schools' and entire national security.

Limited studies have been carried out to solve this compounding problem and therefore it was imperatively urgent for this study to explore what measures are in place for preventing radicalization and recruitment of students into acts of terrorism in Kenyan secondary school institutions.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Radicalization

According to June (2011), all terrorist groups have an ideology espoused, disseminated and popu-



larised by extremist organizations that seem attractive and compelling, sanctioning the use of violence as the only alternative. These terrorist groups seek to ridicule and recruit young people to their cause. How, where, and to what extent vary across groups. Al Qaeda and many other groups like al-Shabaab aspire to ridicule and recruit large numbers to be part of an international network with an international agenda. This agenda draws selectively on militant Islamist ideologies of misrepresented theology that requires meticulous preventive and response strategies. Establishing Islamic states and ultimately a single Islamic caliphate has certified terrorism around the world against military and civilian targets as a legitimate means to this end.

A look inside an al-Qaeda manual is a manifesto of hate and war. It explains why the use of violence to spread Islam all over the world is divine sanction. The great segment of the manual gives narration to ideology, beliefs and philosophy that serve in the present day as caveats or warning of the intention, objectives and purpose of the militant Islamic fundamentalist who intent to destroy the western culture and modernization, and democracy and replace it with very strict Islamic religious caliphates (June, 2011).

There is no single profile that encompasses all terrorists, nor is there a clear-cut pathway that leads individuals to terrorism. The possible motivations, ideas and other factors that might drive off terrorist radicalization are varied and complex and no single factor is sufficient to account for terrorist radicalization. Profiles built on stereotypical assumptions based on nationality, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, etc. are not only discriminatory but are also futile (OSCE, 2014). However, terrorist radicalization and recruitment does not occur in a vacuum. Each case of terrorist radicalization and recruitment results from the unique intersection of an enabling environment and with the personal circumstances and psychology of a given person (Njogu, 2015). However, basic questions that need to be addressed concerning radicalization and recruitment include the following:

Who recruits school-aged youth?

According to Homeland Security Institute (2009), some terrorist groups utilize a vetting process to identify new recruits looking more educated, skilled, or committed young individuals to fill a particular role in the organization (e.g., future leaders or operational planners), while in other cases the groups appear to be interested in simply filling the ranks. The types of persons that appear to play a key role in recruiting school-

aged youth include (but are not limited to) religious figures and teachers, as well as family members and peers. In most cases, as supported by Onuoha (2014), these individuals are members or supporters of the terrorist group and have access to the youth, such as in schools, religious institutions, or social situations. In regions where the terrorist organization has broad community endorsement, family members (who may also belong to the group) have been known to influence or encourage their son/daughter, sibling, niece/nephew, or grandchild to support the group

Teachers at the elementary, secondary and university levels have recruited or attempted to recruit students to join or support various terrorist organizations. It is unclear whether these individuals go into the profession for the purpose of being in a position to radicalize youth, or if they take advantage of their role as a mentor to encourage recruitment or radicalization. Young persons are not always recruited by others. In some instances, youth appear to become acquainted with the group or radicalized of their own volition.

How are Youth Recruited?

Four broad categories were identified to describe the way in which young persons were recruited: born into a radical environment; forced into it; recruited or persuaded and self-radicalization. Born into a radical environment involves where there is a culture of violence that is reinforced by the community, and many within the community are members or supporters of the group. In some cases, young persons have been forced into joining by being kidnapped from locations such as schools and refugee camps (Njogu, 2015). A range of approaches and tactics have been utilized to recruit or persuade youth to join or support the terrorist group's cause. Abdi (2015) informs that the internet, individual reading, videos, and other materials have also enabled some youth to become self-radicalized. Abdirahim Mohammed Abdullah, who plotted the Garissa attack, Kenya, spent hours on the internet reading materials on jihad before he was recruited by al-Shabaab talent spotters.

What are the Pull Factors into Terrorist Radicalization and Recruitment?

Psychological and cognitive factors, such as

one's self-image, a sense of identity and belonging, expectations, beliefs and attitudes, are dynamic and shape how a person experiences and reacts to his or her environment and events. They can have an impact on the development of negative feelings of displacement, feelings of exclusion, rejection, relative deprivation, humiliation, victimization, injustice, frustration, revolt or superiority. Youth have proved more susceptible to the appeal of terrorism due to these as they grapple with questions of identity and their place in the world and their future.

Social interactions, group dynamics and interpersonal relationships therefore play a primary role as pull factors. An interactive process between the individual and external influences includes terrorist propagandists and recruiters, who identify, prey on and groom vulnerable youths, gain a hold on them by providing material and/or psychological support, and abuse their trust to manipulate them or indoctrinate them into becoming involved with terrorism (Lombardi et al., 2015).

Madrasa and mosque schools are chief generators of extremist ideology and incubator for terrorism due to the contents of their curriculum. They produce violent radicals and aggressive militants e.g., Afghan Taliban (Hogan & Braddock, 2012). Terrorist radicalization facilitated by the Internet has also become of particular growing concern to countries throughout the world and education systems in particular. The spread of, and exposure to, ideas and narratives that legitimize terrorism and foster its appeal are critical pull factors. Many terrorists and violent extremists skilfully tailor, package and disseminate their narratives in a way that will reach and resonate with the particular individual or group targeted for radicalization and recruitment.

Indicators of Youth Radicalization and Recruitment

During the process of radicalization according to Secretary of State for the Home Department (2011), behaviours as well as opinions change which may be apparent to friends, families, and work colleagues of the person concerned. Identification must be made carefully and against a range of possible indicators: expressed support for violence and terrorism; possession of extremist literature; attempts to access or contribute to violent extremist websites; possession of materials regarding weapons and/explosives; and possession of materials regarding training, skills and techniques.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation

in Europe (OSCE) (2014) enlightens the public towards the need to pay attention to personal history in regard to: claims in involvement in organizations espousing violent extremist ideology; claims of attendance at training camps; and claims of involvement in combatant or violent activities on behalf of violent extremist groups. Statutory partners and voluntary groups should actively raise awareness and help frontier staff to identify signs of vulnerability in the educational establishments. Vulnerable persons should be provided with support such as; counselling, faith guidance, civic engagement, working with support networks and mainstream services.

Focusing on building relationships with local communities with an eye to preventing radicalization and addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism is key. More specifically, this entails challenging violent or extremist rhetoric and supporting mainstream opinion, disrupting those who spread messages of violence, supporting individuals vulnerable to terrorist recruitment, increasing the resilience of communities to extremist propaganda and addressing the grievances which may make individuals and communities vulnerable to such exploitation (Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2011: Romaniuk & Fink, 2012). The strongest weapon in our arsenal against terrorism is precisely the facet of our society that appeals to the potential recruits for terrorism. The potential recruits are the students/youth who come from the communities from which the terrorists derive their support who should become the focus of counterterrorism policies (OSCE, 2014).

Safety Measures in Preventing Youth from Terrorist Radicalization and Recruitment

Education is the most effective weapon against the lure of the terrorists and extremists. Students are taught and advised towards academic engagement and career goals and away from brainwashing terror and jihad toward positive self-attributions (Langer & Lietz, 2015). Teaching youth new ways of building coping mechanism and cognitive schemes insulates them from future crisis. Dissuading youths from being drawn into radicalization and recruitment (attracting and compelling ideologies of extremists and terrorism that are destructive defensive mechanisms) is thus a critical proactive remedy in Kenyan education system today.



Coker (2015) introduced some of the safety measures that can be taken in minimizing the risk of radicalization including tutorial and workshop sessions. Welfare, pastoral care, chaplain supports provide sufficient care and support for vulnerable learners. However, students must be protected in such spaces whereby extremist rhetoric or grooming takes place. Another approach is introducing external speakers in order to deal with possible instances of extremism. The internet has on the hand proved as the most famous site for radicalization and recruitment for new members. Coker (2015) therefore suggested online safety measures such as blocking access to dangerous or illegal sites by filtering and using firewall systems. This also helps to identify curious students susceptible to radicalization.

Schools must have curricula and programs aimed at preventing youth from terrorist radicalization and recruitment. The staff in charge of prevention in school (counselors, teachers, health professionals, administrators) plays a vital role in preparing young people to challenge extremism and the ideology of terrorism and effectively rebut those who have sympathy with terrorism. This calls for a shared responsibility by different agencies such as education, faith, health, criminal justice and charities including internet. Establishing new sets of standards of ethics and behaviours for teachers which clarifies obligation regarding extremism enables schools to take stern actions against staff who demonstrate unacceptable views (Secretary of State for Home Department, 2011).

This should apply to universities and colleges in ensuring secure environments for the incoming secondary school students. While still upholding their commitment to freedom of speech, academic freedom and learning, universities have a key role in preventing terrorism and extremism. The university societies and student groups should have a clear and unambiguous role in safeguarding the young people from radicalization and recruitment by terrorist groups. Similar strategy involves funding Religious Education Council of Kenya in providing training and materials for helping teachers of religious education in discussing contentious extremism issues and violent views.

Teacher should be trained in helping to identify, and refer to relevant agencies, students whose behaviours suggest they are being drawn into terrorism and extremism ideology. Lombardi et al. (2015) inform that, in Kenya, the ministry of education has

launched a counter- radicalization program in schools across the country in Nairobi and Mombasa because the government has reported that al- Shabaab has infiltrated the school system in order to radicalise students. However, the impact of such a school- based program has not yet been properly assessed.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study was descriptive survey in nature as it was exploring to what extent schools are prepared to respond to terrorism (Forzano, 2011; Babbie, 2016). Quantitative research method was employed to collect and analyze data, integrate the findings, and draw inferences in order to give a much comprehensive picture of the level of school practices in preventing youths from radicalization and recruitment (Hartas, 2010; Geortz & Mohoney, 2012; Role, 2015).

Population and Sampling Techniques

Population. The population for this study included: the school administrator, deputy principal, class teacher, teachers instructing Christian Religious Education, History, and Languages (English and Kiswahili), the school guidance counselor, and 48 form three students in one of the secondary schools in Eldoret.

Sampling techniques. Judgmental sampling was used to select a school in the township. Since terrorists aim at publicity, they attack schools mainly in the city (Aday, 2007). Cluster sampling to pick form three class from the rest of the grades and simple random sampling techniques was used to select form three classes.

Research Instruments

The research instruments used involved self-constructed questionnaires for principals, teachers and students that were developed from the review of literature.

Validity of the Instruments

All the instruments were subjected to face and content

validity by the supervisors from the School of Education in the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton. They judged the appearance, relevance and representativeness of its elements with the aim of establishing the accuracy and connection among the questions asked and variables measured.

Data-gathering Procedures

A letter of request to the School Principal to allow the researcher to conduct the study in the selected school was obtained from the Director of Graduate studies and Research. The students who participated were guided on how to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire for students was administered in a form three classroom. The principals and teachers filled their questionnaire independently at their convenient time and then sealed in provided envelopes.

Statistical Treatment of Data

After collecting data, the researcher encoded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentage, mean, and standard deviation was used to analyze the data to answer the research.

Ethical Considerations

The counsel by Lodico, Spandling and Voegtle (2010) is that a researcher seek informed consent by requiring participants to sign permission form before the study was conducted. A cover letter or introductory statement that identifies the researcher and motivation for the study was provided to the potential respondents. It was critical to preserve subject matter confidentiality whereby only the researcher had access to

data collected. Envelops was provided to the concerned principals and teachers in which to seal filled questionnaires. Only numbers was used to identify respondents on their questionnaires.

Results and Discussion

The objective of this study was to explore what measures were in place for preventing radicalization and recruitment of students into acts of terrorism in Kenyan secondary school institutions. In order to answer this problem, descriptive statistics was applied. The following scale was used to interpret the means:

1.0 – 1.49	Poor
1.50 – 2.49	Fair
2.50 – 3.49	Good
3.50 – 4.00	Very Good

Table 1 shows that measures which were taken to prevent youth from terrorist radicalization and recruitment in students was altogether **below average** ($\bar{X} = 2.2783$). This was contributed by, scarcity of special teaching resources about radicalization and recruitment were scarce ($\bar{X} = 1.4255$), and students were not exposed to special learning materials that addressed terrorism and radicalization ($\bar{X} = 1.4468$). Measures taken by teachers in teaching how to challenge terrorism and extremism ideas supported by terrorists were relatively below average ($\bar{X} = 1.7760$). This as well implied into how students were taught to spot and report cases of radicalization and recruitment ($\bar{X} = 2.2128$). Measures taken by the principal to encourage



Table 1

Preventing Youth from Radicalization and Recruitment

Item	Mean	Level
Teachers are taught how to challenge terrorism and extremism ideas supported by terrorists.	1.7660	Below average
There are special learning resources about radicalization and recruitment	1.4255	Poor
Teachers have taught students to spot and report cases of radicalization and radicalization	2.2128	Below average
The principal has most of the time encouraged us not to be convinced in joining terrorism	2.4894	Below average
My parents are aware of terrorism and have warned against joining terrorism	3.0652	Average
Students are exposed to special learning materials that address terrorism and radicalization	1.4468	Poor
Moral and ethical principles such as honesty, integrity, respect for others, and loyalty are taught in molding us to civic responsibility and citizenship	3.3404	Average
Students are encouraged to critically think and challenge information that they may across on terrorism	2.5957	Average
The principal has introduced external speakers in order to deal with possible instances of radicalization and recruitment	2.7447	Average
The school has introduced filtering or firewall systems for blocking access to dangerous or illegal sites for curious learner susceptible to radicalization	2.3404	Below average
Teachers have taught peace education which enables us to have an enhanced perspective of achieving goals and proper ways of fitting into the society without having to turn to radicalization or terrorism	1.6170	Below Average
Preventing Youth from Terrorist Radicalization and Recruitment	2.2783	Below average

students not to be convinced in joining terrorism most of the time was relatively below average ($\bar{X} = 2.4894$). This was also observed in measures were taken by schools in teaching peace education which enabled students to have an enhanced perspective of achieving goals and proper ways of fitting into the society without having to turn to radicalization or terrorism ($\bar{X} = 2.3404$).

However, average measures were observed in the principals introducing external speakers in order to deal with possible instances of radicalization and recruitment ($\bar{X} = 2.7447$), and to critically think and challenge information that they may across on terrorism ($\bar{X} = 2.5957$). Parents were as well aware of terrorism and had warned their children against joining terrorism ($\bar{X} = 3.0652$). This table also signifies that at average levels teachers taught moral and ethical principles such

as honesty, integrity, respect for others, and loyalty in molding students to civic responsibility and citizenship ($\bar{X} = 3.3404$).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The finding from this study shows that the measures which were taken to prevent youth from terrorist radicalization and recruitment in students in Kenyan Secondary Schools were collectively below average.

All measures which were taken to prevent youth from terrorist radicalization and recruitment in students in schools should be advanced to high levels above average so that schools are responsive. This study therefore recommends that special attention should be paid on the following: Teachers should be trained on how to challenge terrorism and extremism ideas supported by terrorists. They should be provided with special teaching resources about

radicalization and recruitment. Peace education need be reinforced which will enable students to have an enhanced perspective of achieving goals and proper ways of fitting into the society without having to turn to radicalization or terrorism.

Special teaching resources about terrorist radicalization should be made available in schools and counter radicalization programs introduced both in the schools and curriculum. Teachers should be trained how to identify and refer to relevant agencies, students whose behaviors suggest they are being drawn into radicalization and recruitment.

References

- Abdi, R. (2015, April 10). Kenyan Jihadism now targeting cream of society. *Daily Nation*, p. 6.
- Aday, L. A. (2007). *Designing and conducting health survey* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Babbie, E. (2016). *The practice of social research*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Coker, R. (2015, April). *Prevent toolkit*. London, SW: 157 Group Publishers.
- Duffy, H. (2015). *The war on terror and the framework of international law*. Cambridge, UK: University Press.
- Forzano, L. (2011). *Research methods for behavioral sciences*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Geortz, G., & Mohoney, J. (2012). *A tale of two cultures: Quantitative and qualitative research in the social sciences*. New Jersey, UK: Princeton University Press.
- Hartas, D. (2010). *Educational research and inquiry: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group
- Hendel, H (2015). 'Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under 't': Mimicking behaviour of growth-oriented terrorist organizations. *Defence and Peace Economics*, DOI: 10.1080/10242694.2014.996006
- Homeland Security Institute. (2009, April 23). *Recruitment and radicalization of school-aged youth by international terrorist groups*. Arlington, VA: Author.
- Hogan, J. & Braddlock, K. (2012). *Terrorism studies: A reader*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- June, D. L. (2011). *Terrorism and homeland security: Perspectives, thoughts and opinions*. Broken Sound Pathway, NN. CRC Press.
- Karacasulu, N. (2015, Sept). *Security challenges and U.S. strategy*. Retrieved from <http://csis.org/program/security-challenges-and-us-strategy-middle-east>.
- Langer, C. L., & Lietz, C. (2015). *Applying theory to generalist work practice*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- Lodico, M. G., Spandling, D. T., & Voegtle, C. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons.
- Lombardi, M., Ragab, B., Chin, V., Dandurand, Y., de Divitiis, V., & Burato, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Countering radicalization and violent extremism among youth to prevent terrorism*. Amsterdam: IOS Press.
- Mohamed, A. (2015, Dec 6). UoN students on al-Shabbab payroll-police. *The Star*. Retrieved from <http://www.the-star.co.ke:8080/news/uon-students-al-shabaab-payroll-police#sthash.BoYYPHN0.dpuf>
- Mukinda, F. (2015, Aug 18). Schools on security radar over terror. *Daily Nation*, p. 3.
- Njogu, R. (2015, April 20). Kenya's anti-terrorism strategy must evolve to target all facets of this war. *Daily Nation*, p. 13.
- Onuoha, F. C. (2014, June). *Why do youth join Boko Haram?* (Unites States Institute of Peace Special Report No. 348). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- OSCE. (2014, Feb). *Preventing terrorism and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism: A community-policing approach*. Vienna: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.
- Role, E. (2015). Handbook of quantitative and qualitative research methods. *Notes presented in class*. University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya.
- Romaniuk, P., & Fink, N. C. (2012). *From input to impact: Evaluating terrorism prevention programs*. Canada, UK: Center on Global Counterterrorism Corporation. Secretary of State for the Home Department. (2011, June). *Prevent strategy*. Norwich, UK: TSO (The Stationery Office). Retrieved from <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>



Shimko, K. (2015). *International relations: Perspectives, controversies and readings*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.