

Nature of Reintegration Programmes for Returnee Terrorist Fighters in Mombasa County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism is a global threat to peace, security, and prosperity. It also puts conflict resolution strategies to the test. The rise of global terrorism has led to the emergence of numerous extremist groups, which have attracted individuals from various regions, including Mombasa, Kenya. As these individuals return from engaging in terrorist activities, effective reintegration programs play a crucial role in countering further radicalization and promoting societal stability. The study sought to explore the nature of non-custodial reintegration programmes on returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa. Because of the increasing acceptance and adoption of non-custodial reintegration strategies for returnee terrorist fighters in several countries, there is a growing recognition of the importance of both governmental and non-governmental actors contributing to the development and implementation of the programs. Kenya is no stranger to returning terrorist fighters and the threat they pose to peace and security. The research methodology used for this study combined qualitative and quantitative methods. A sample size of 400 respondents was needed for investigation from the target population of Mombasa County. The County was shown to have the highest rates of violent extremism and recidivism in Kenya. Primary data was collected using questionnaires. Interviews and focus groups discussion with key informants, gave participants insight into the viewpoints and experiences of various participants in the reintegration process. A desk examination of the literature was used to gather secondary data for the investigation. The study findings revealed that Kenya is combining classic counter-terrorist measures such as arrests, detentions, and movement restrictions with policies and programs for prevention, intervention, and reintegration. Factors such as psychological trauma, socioeconomic reintegration, and community acceptance are identified as critical elements that influence the effectiveness of these programs. Religious leaders, community organizations, and government agencies facilitate successful reintegration processes. The study recommends non-custodial reintegration for returnee terrorist fighters to be the best strategy that would provide a perfect opportunity for enhancing community resilience in fighting radicalization leading to terrorism in Kenya.

Keywords: Foreign Terrorist Fighters, Non-custodial Reintegration, Reintegration Programmes, Returnee Terrorist Fighters

I. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is one of the biggest threats to the global order in the modern era (Rapoport, 2011). While there has been a global increase in terrorism, as well as an increase in its frequency and scope, there has also been a globalisation of the various impacts that terrorism has caused. The globalization of the impacts of terrorism has been facilitated by advancements in communication and transportation, allowing terrorist groups to spread their ideology and coordinate activities across borders (Weimann, 2005). The use of the internet and social media platforms has further amplified their reach, making it easier for radicalization and recruitment efforts. The willingness of nations around the world to use foreign mercenaries to fight their battles on their behalf has a long history (Grundy, 1968). Historically, the use of foreign mercenaries in conflicts is not a new phenomenon (United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures, 2018). Nations and rulers have often sought to bolster their military capabilities by employing foreign fighters, sometimes due to manpower shortages or to gain specialised expertise. From ancient times to the mediaeval period, foreign mercenaries were a common sight in various battles and conflicts. Without a doubt, therefore, the idea of foreign terrorist fighters predates both the current conflict against Al-Shabaab and even hostilities that have taken place in the twenty-first century.

Terrorism has indeed emerged as one of the most significant threats to global order in the modern era (Rapoport, 2013). Throughout history, various groups and individuals have resorted to terrorist tactics to achieve their

political, religious, or ideological objectives. The origins of terrorism can be traced back to ancient times, when groups like the Zealots and Assassins employed violent means to achieve their goals. Over the centuries, terrorism has evolved, taking different forms in different regions and periods. As the world entered the modern era, terrorism also underwent transformations, influenced by socio-political changes and technological advancements. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the rise of nationalist and anarchist movements that engaged in acts of terrorism to challenge colonial powers and established governments (Stepanova, 2008). The use of terrorism as a means of political protest continued throughout the 20th century, with groups like the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) making headlines with their actions.

Fast forward to the 21st century, and the world has witnessed a significant increase in terrorism, both in terms of frequency and scope. The emergence of radical Islamist groups, such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Al-Shabaab, brought a new wave of global terrorism (Grobelaar, 2023). These groups, inspired by extremist ideologies, sought to establish their own territories or challenge existing political orders through violent means. Al-Shabaab, a militant Islamist group operating primarily in Somalia and neighbouring regions, has been one of the most prominent actors in contemporary terrorism (Bryden, 2014). It was founded in the mid-2000s as an offshoot of the Islamic Courts Union and quickly grew to become a major security concern in the region. Al-Shabaab's violent activities, including suicide bombings, mass shootings, and kidnappings, have caused significant regional instability and humanitarian crises.

Returnee terrorist fighters pose a major threat to national security because of their prior military training, proficiency with a variety of weapons, and links to global terrorist networks (Gatimu, 2014). The potential threat posed by the returnees is influenced by a number of factors, including the chance that they participated in crimes like those that Al-Shabaab proudly publicises, desensitisation to violence, post-traumatic stress disorders - which typically develop after being in war, and other problems. Furthermore, it is important to stress that not all returned foreign combatants have the same potential urge to commit acts of terrorism or violent crime within their own countries (Cullen & Applegate, 1997). Without a doubt, there is a good chance that some terrorist fighters who have now returned to their home countries may attempt to engage in terrorism (United Nations, 2018). The study therefore sought to explore the nature of non-custodial reintegration programmes for returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa. In view of the threats that the returnees still pose, receiving communities must therefore develop effective reintegration strategies to help those who join extremist groups and later leave them fit back into their communities because of these concerns (Abrahms, 2008).

II. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used in this study combined qualitative and quantitative methods (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A descriptive survey design was utilised for the study to allow for data triangulation, which ultimately helped strengthen the credibility of the study's findings (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). The study's target group was taken from Mombasa County, which was shown to have the highest numbers of returnees and the highest rates of violent extremism and recidivism in Kenya. The target population consisted of various clusters of residents. These clusters comprised clan elders and chiefs; officials from the county governments who are essential participants and actors in the reintegration efforts; and scholars with substantial expertise in research on community policing and reintegration in Kenya. Participants in the study included not just nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) but also civil society actors (CSAs). They supplemented and validated the accounts provided by crucial respondents, who ranged from volunteers working with community-based organisations to the coordinators and executive directors of nongovernmental organisations. Notable religious figures from Christian and Muslim institutions, representatives from county, national, and international organisations, and returnee terrorist fighters who were already enrolled in non-custodial reintegration programmes All of these individuals served as additional vital informants. Officers of the National Intelligence Service, Kenya Prison Service employees, and the National Police Service were crucial participants in this study as security actors.

According to the most recent population count from 2019, Mombasa County has 1,100,173 people living there (KNBS, 2019). The study aimed to collect information from a sample size of 400 respondents taken from each of the several clusters of respondents. Cochran's formula, which is recommended to be used for studies with infinite or large populations (Cochran, 1977), was used in this study.

The formula is as shown below:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p(1 - p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

e = desired level of precision (the margin of error) assumed at 0.05 (5%) for this study.

p = the fraction of the population (as percentage) that displays the attribute (0.5 for this study)

z = the z-value, extracted from a z-table,

From the z-tables, the value for z is 1.96.

Therefore, the theoretical sample for Mombasa County which has a population estimated at 1,100,173 would be:

$$n = 1.96^2 * 0.5(1-0.5)/0.05^2$$

$$= 384.16 \approx 385$$

The sample was thus 385. To cater for attrition, the study added 15 participants to make an overall sample of 400.

To validate the dependability of the research tools, the researcher ensured that the instruments consistently produced the same findings throughout the study. The researcher utilized a test-retest methodology before collecting reliable data (Yeasmin, 2012). All the variations from this procedure were ironed out to ensure that the results were the same as if the research were to be conducted again in the same environment. The survey's degree of dependability was evaluated by applying the Cronbach Alpha method obtaining a reliability value of 0.8. The value discovered falls within the acceptable range (0.6 - 0.9) (George & Mallery, 2003). In addition, the researcher made use of criterion-related validity in order to evaluate the efficiency of the measures that were, in the end, implemented in order to carry out empirical estimation. The validity of the study tools, both in terms of their appearance and their content, was evaluated by the researcher. Because of this, the questionnaire was given the go-ahead to be utilized in the research. A total of 337 responses from the sampled returnee terrorist fighters, community members, government officials, and program facilitators was gathered via questionnaires. The researcher was able to conduct 21 interviews with key informants, such as returnees, community members, public servants, and non-governmental organizations, gave participants insight into the viewpoints and experiences of various participants in the reintegration process; and 5 focus groups discussions. The following participants made up each of the five FGDs: FGD 1 was made up of community elders and area chiefs; FGD 2 was made up of security officers, such as those from the police, the prison, and the National Intelligence officers; FGD 3 was made up of people who had previously lived in the area; FGD 4 was made up of religious leaders, including both Christian and Muslim figures; and FGD 5 was made up of officials from NGOs and community-based organizations. Desk examination of existing literature was used to gather secondary data for the investigation with the aim of reviewing current policies and develop new approaches and guidelines regarding the non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters. Collected data was analysed by use of descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages and means. Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences Version 20, (SPSS), was used to analyze the data. Quantitative findings are presented in the form of graphs, tables, figures, and charts, while qualitative findings are presented in prose or descriptive narratives.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Enactment of Anti-Terrorism Act

The parliamentary approval of a resolution by the Kenyan government strengthened the Prevention of Terrorism Act No. 30 of 2012, including the approval of the Anti-Terrorism Act's implementation rules and regulations (Laws of Kenya, 2012). The Act represents the most recent effort to combat terrorism and other similar crimes while upholding the civil and political rights of the citizens of Kenya. In order to determine how successfully

the Anti-Terrorist Act has aided in the rehabilitation and reintegration of returned terrorist fighters in Mombasa County, respondents were asked to rank the efficacy of the Act in combating terrorism.

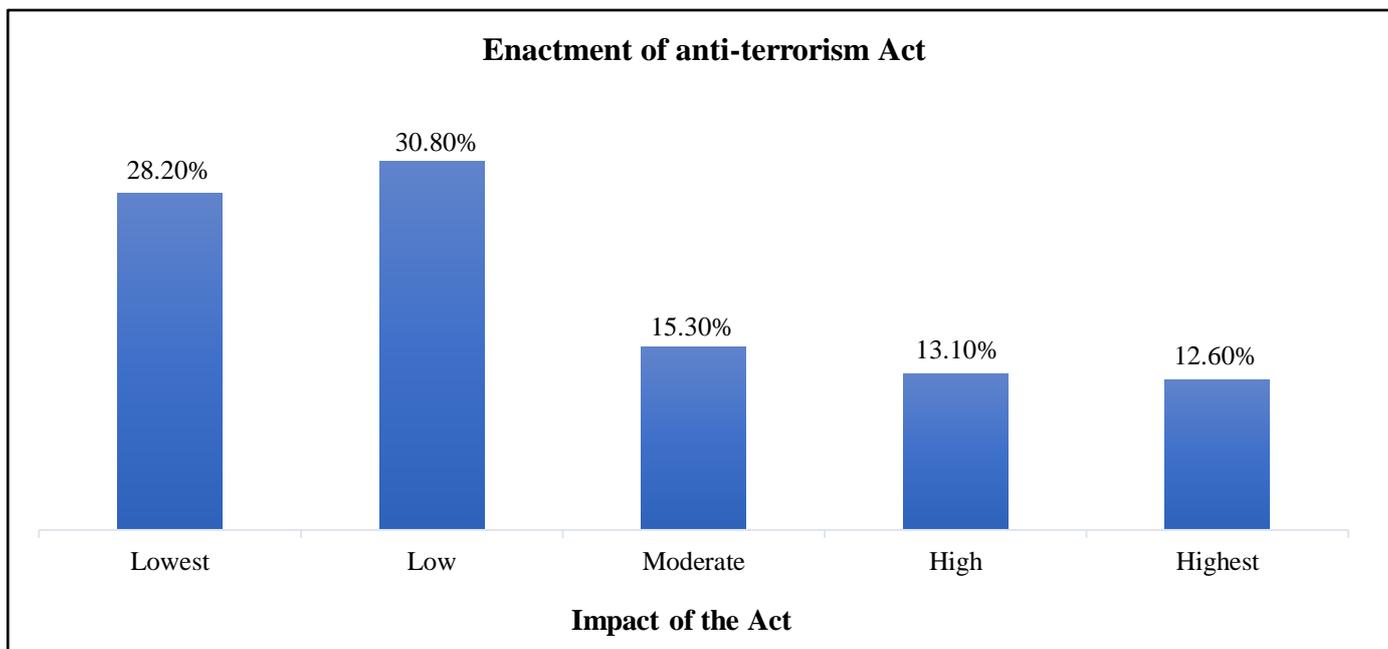


Figure 1
Enactment of the Anti-terrorism Act

The results show that 30.8% (104) of the respondents considered the Anti-Terrorism Act (2020) to have had the least impact on preventing terrorism in Mombasa County, while 28.2% (95) of respondents gave it the lowest impact. These findings contrast with the opinions of senior government officers who felt it had the greatest impact. The results of the poll showed that it had the greatest influence on 12.6% (42) of the respondents, a moderate impact on 15.3% (52) of the respondents, and a high impact on 13.1% (44) of the respondents. Non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters can be seen as an innovative strategy in the war on terror that moves away from tactics that rely on oppressing terrorist offenders harshly and holding them captive to a softer strategy that involves other stakeholders, especially the host community, religious institutions, community organisations, and the returnees' families.

While initiatives to reform and integrate terrorists in prisons have provided a platform for convicted terrorists to confess their sins, repent, or change their violent ideologies (RAN, 2019), this study disagrees because current prison and detention practises encourage the re-radicalization and hardening of terrorism offenders. Detainees and inmates who are not kept in isolation are more vulnerable to further indoctrination and training by their fellow prisoners and detainees (Farrall, 2002). In most jails and detention centres, detainees and inmates are housed together. Because certain facilities house both security detainees and criminal convicts, there is a transfer of knowledge, motivation, co-recruitment, and long-term connections.

After investigating the nature of such programs in Mombasa County and reviewing the results, this paper makes a case for the broad adoption of non-custodial reintegration as the best possibility for the reversal of radicalization that happens in custody and the recidivism associated with it (Mombasa County Countering Violent Extremism [MCCVE], 2018). Promotion of community-based initiatives that interact with indoctrinated extremists and rehabilitate active terrorists can help to halt the resurgence of violence. For efficacy and complementarity, reintegration programmes can be established in partnership with government officials, other key players, and community socialisation agents such as families and religious organisations.

3.2 Arrest and Prosecution of Terrorist Offenders

Respondents were also required to rate the impact of the arrest and prosecution of terrorist offenders and supporters in the counter terrorism efforts in Kenya.

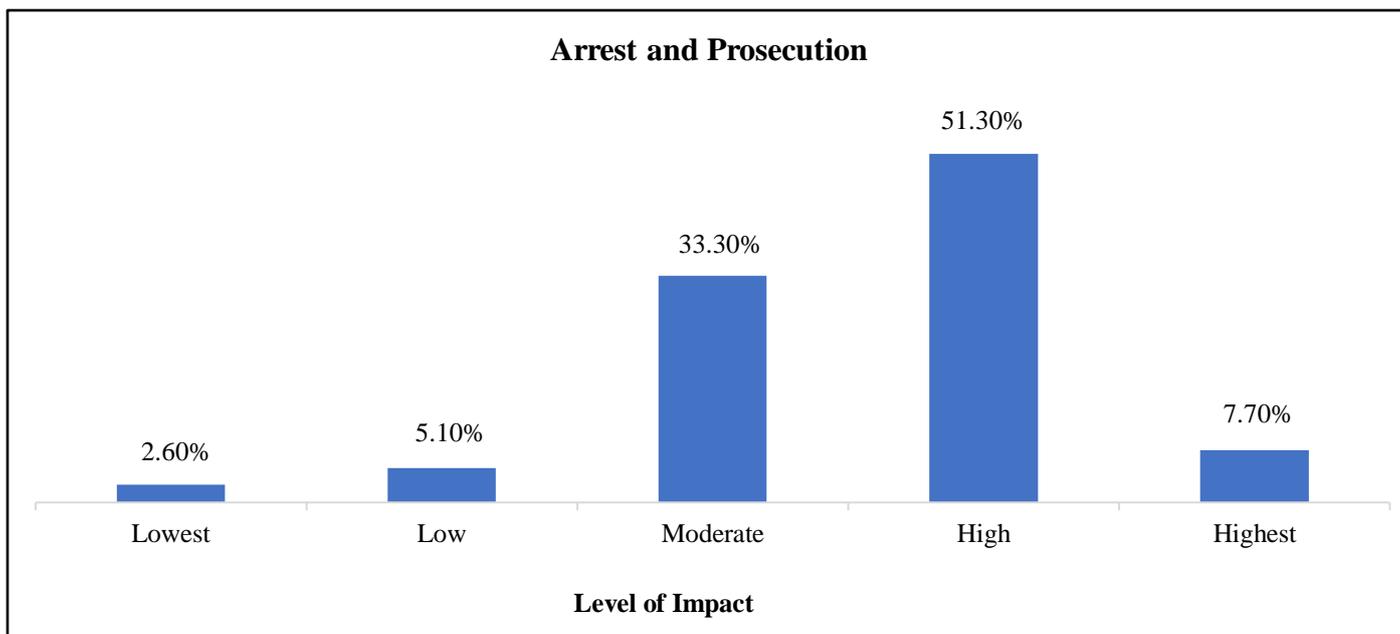


Figure 2
Arrest and prosecution

According to the findings, 51.3% (173) of respondents reported that the strategy had a strong impact. This is because it instills fear in young people and conveys a clear message about the dangers of participating in terrorist acts. 33.3% (112) believe it has a moderate influence, 7.7% (26) believe it has the most impact, 5.1% (17) believe it has the least impact, and the remaining 2.6% (9) believe it has no impact on combating terrorism.

The use of security forces to fight terrorism head-on by combating militia groups was the most pronounced government strategy. Another strategy the government has utilised to combat terrorism that has received high praise is the arrest and punishment of terrorists. In contrast to extrajudicial killings that has been rampant in Islam dominated community of Mombasa (Barrett & Bokhari, 2009), arresting and prosecuting suspected terrorists and their supporters has been reported to restore civility in society. Given that prison environments in many countries frequently do more to strengthen a combatant identity and devotion to the cause (Holmer & Shtuni, 2017), the key informants in the study described the disadvantage of arresting and prosecuting those who surrender from the terror group and instead strongly recommend putting them through non-custodial reintegration programmes that help them return to society and become productive members of their families.

“Prisons have evolved into a haven for hardening terrorist offenders. The government should use alternative and gentler methods of dealing with returnees who have chosen to surrender of their own volition, such as allowing them to register and admitting them to non-custodial reintegration programs where they can be monitored and assisted in becoming useful community members”(Interview with the Director Jiunge Project in Mvita, 24 August 2022).

During the process of non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters, communication plays a critical role in providing a forum within which to engage and examine the history of the conflict. The study revealed that thoughtful, consistent, balanced, and accurate communication helps to set positive expectations and build confidence in both the returnee and the host community during peacebuilding and eventual reintegration.

3.3 Ministerial Amnesty to the Returnee Terrorist Fighters on Surrender

Additionally, to address anti-terrorism measures in Mombasa County, respondents were asked to estimate the efficiency of the ministerial pardon and amnesty as a strategy for reintegrating the returned terrorist fighters after their surrender. After the terrorist incident that took place at Garissa University in 2015 carried out by Al-Shabaab, the Kenyan government reportedly extended amnesty to Kenyans who had previously been a part of Al-Shabaab (Kega,

2016). Many young individuals who had become radicalized and joined terrorist organizations abroad are now returning to Kenya as returnees because of the establishment of an amnesty policy by the government of Kenya in 2015 (Koehler, 2015).

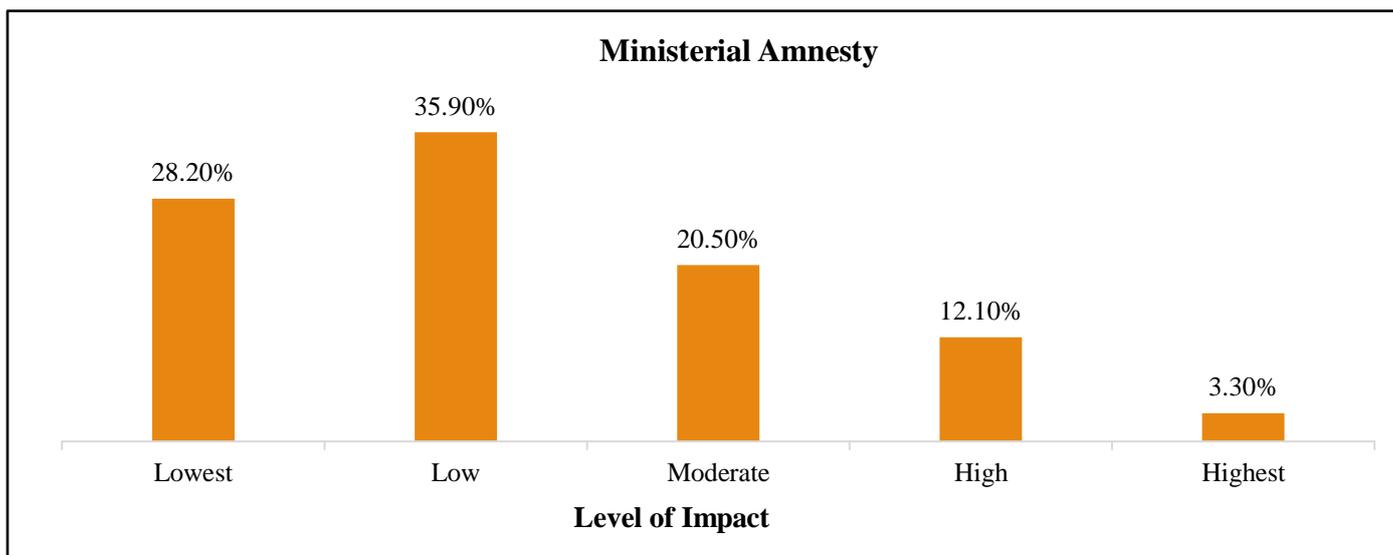


Figure 3
Ministerial Amnesty

From the findings, 35.9% (121) of respondents viewed ministerial amnesty as a low-effective technique for non-custodial reintegration of terrorist fighters into the community. 28.2% (95) of respondents said it was the least effective, 20.5% (69) thought it was moderate, 12.1% (41) thought it was more effective, and 3.3% (11) thought it was the most successful. Many of these returning terrorist fighters have already expressed a desire to integrate back into the community. As a result, avoid a scenario in which the returned terrorist fighters pose yet another serious threat to the country's security. To address the issue of the large number of returnees who break the law after reentering the country, the government requires the assistance of relevant non-state institutions and must work together (Mogire & Mkutu, 2011).

Those who have participated in the amnesty programme are eligible for protection as well as counselling and enrollment in reintegration services that do not include incarceration. The amnesty was promoted as a component of a plan to combat violent extremism, win over former combatants, and assist in de-radicalising the places where they reside. This was done to prevent violent extremism from spreading. As part of the amnesty programme, a screening mechanism has been developed for those who are returning to the country (Maruna & Lebel, 2003). This ensures that former combatants do not rejoin new criminal gangs or extremist networks. The primary goal of the screening procedure carried out by the government authorities is to determine and appreciate the level of responsibility and engagement held by these former fighters, as well as the way they will be reintegrated into the community once the screening process has been completed.

“Since 2015, there has been discussion over the possibility of amnesty; however, it has not yet been formally adopted as a policy. Because of this, the applicability of the guidance is not very strong, and it leaves room for users to interpret it in various ways. This has resulted in the torture and unlawful killing of some returns at the hands of the police.” (Interview with Mombasa County Commissioner, 28 September 2022)

The absence of policies to safeguard the amnesty process is cited as the reason why many returning terrorist fighters choose not to apply for amnesty, which has led to divisions among returnees. Returnees who are engaged in amnesty programs and whose names have not been made anonymous in their communities experience fear and envy over the alternative sources of income offered to them and incite hostility from other returnees. The amnesty approach, according to one scholar

“Continued to be ineffectual because the leadership of the government was not prepared to adopt amnesty from a long-term perspective. The policy did not provide any methods to maintain the

activity as a component of the programs offered by the correctional service.”(Interview with Dr. Mumo Nzau (Ph.D.) on 14 September 2022)

Several parties involved in non-custodial reintegration efforts think that returnee terrorist fighters will only accept amnesty if no other options are available. Returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa County believe they will be killed if they don't sign up for the non-custodial reintegration programs (Ombati, 2015).

3.4 Security Forces Fighting Terrorism

To improve the non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa County, respondents were asked to estimate the efficiency of the efforts of security forces against terrorism.

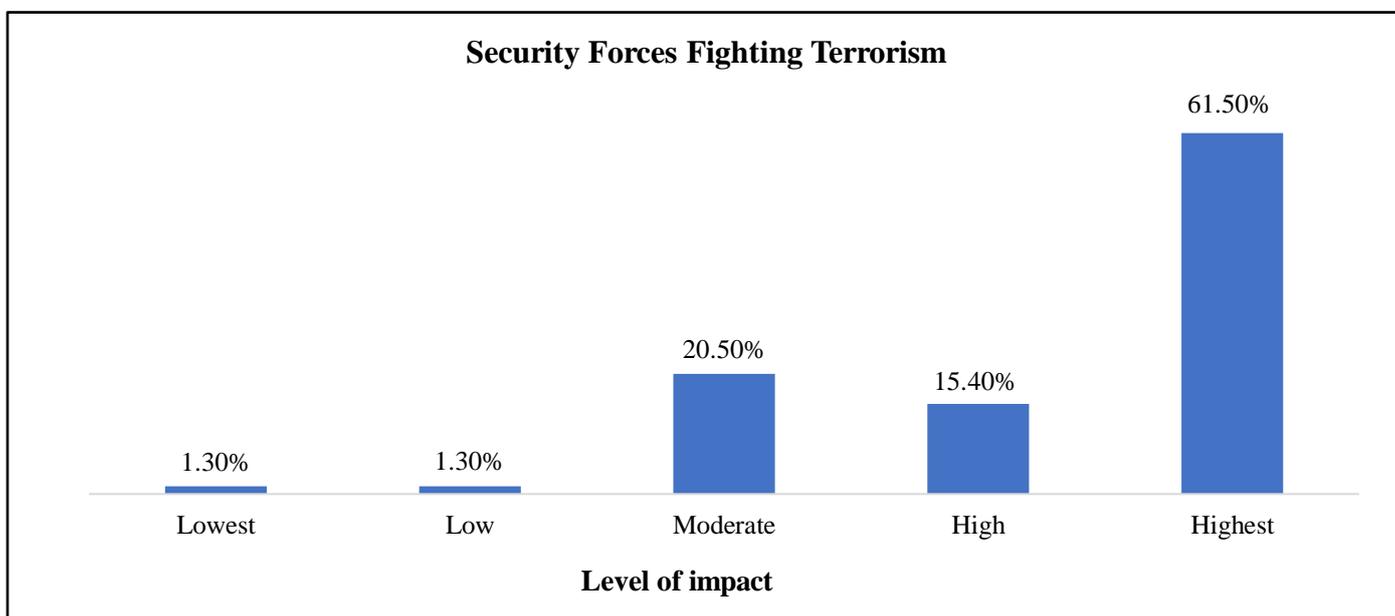


Figure 4
Security forces fighting terrorism.

The findings indicate that, for 61.5% (207) of the respondents, security forces are the most successful at combating terrorism. Of the respondents, 20.5% (69) of them gave it a moderate rating, while 15.4% (52) gave it a more effective rating, and the remaining 0.5% (2) gave it a low rating. Notably, 1.3% (44) of the respondents gave this counter-terrorism tactic a negative effectiveness rating, and 1.3% (4) gave it a negative effectiveness rating.

In enhancing non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters, it is necessary to put in place formal police and protection measures, community-based early warning systems, and information management systems that actively oppose rumours (that are not vigilante organisations) to keep the community secure (Farrall, 2002). According to the findings of the study, the security operations in Mombasa are internally focused. This implies that they defend the entire community as opposed to just protecting select individuals or organisations. Not only does the implementation of stringent security measures make it more likely that a violent extremist act will be carried out, but it also undermines the relationships within the community and its ability to bounce back from adversity.

The government of Kenya is countering terrorism in several different ways, one of which is by bolstering the country's security infrastructure. It monitors individuals who have the potential to become terrorists, identifies swiftly those who show signs of becoming extremists, and enhances the security afforded to vulnerable people and infrastructure. It has also come to light that the government's approach to terrorist organisations and violent extremist groups has been characterised by using force rather than delicate measures.

All the returnee respondents accused security personnel of targeting returnees with excessive force and unlawful killings. According to a County Commission official, some people might mistakenly feel that returnees are being specifically harassed if they see arrests of returnee terrorist fighters who are involved in criminal activity or who are not registered in the amnesty programme. Additionally, it has been reported that local elders who had ties to security personnel, such as respected informal community leaders and members of the peace committee, have been murdered by some returnees (Kazungu, 2020).

When a genuine security concern is evident, comprehensive criminal justice procedures are needed to manage the returnees, but not all nations have these in place. In Mombasa, little has been done to ensure that returnees relinquish their commitment to violent action and identities as combatants due to human rights abuses within the court and penitentiary systems. As a result, the returnees occasionally experience torture, extrajudicial execution, or other grave human rights abuses, including arbitrary detention or denial of a fair trial. This violates the international legal responsibility of non-refoulment.

3.5 Monitoring and Intercept of Money Transaction

As a further measure to combat terrorism in Kenya, the respondents were asked to evaluate the efficiency of the government's strategy of observing and intercepting financial transactions intended to fund terrorist organizations.

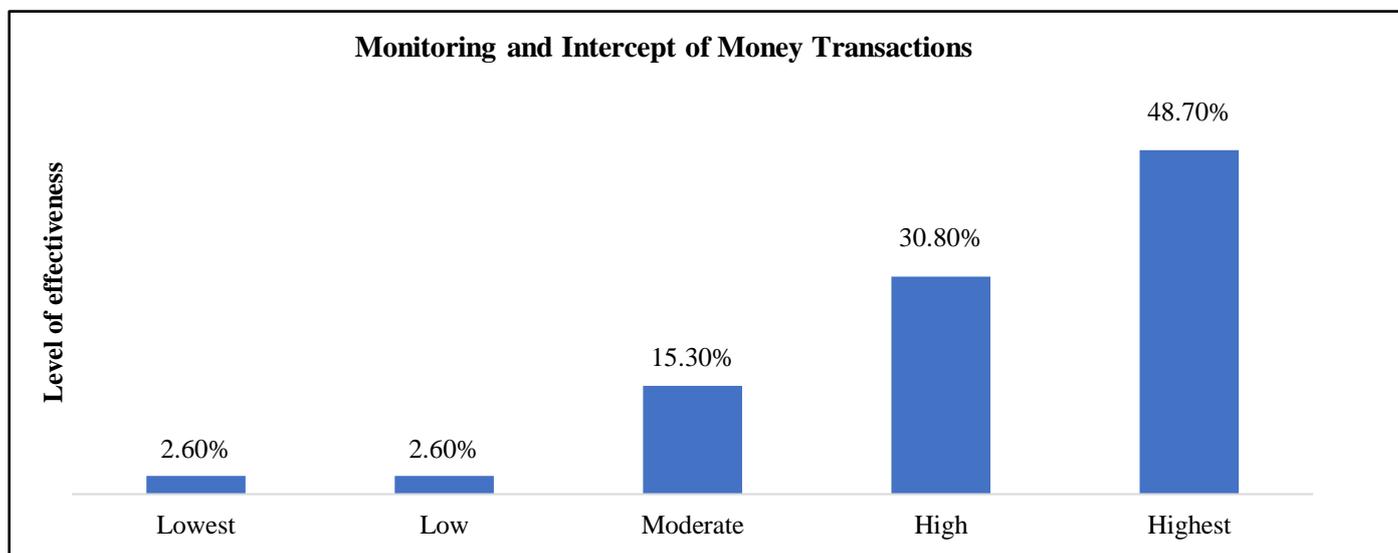


Figure 5
Monitoring and Intercepting of Money Transactions

It was clear from the results that 48% (161) of the respondents thought this method was the most successful. Another 30.8% (104) of the respondents gave it a higher effectiveness rating, and 15.3% (52) gave it a moderate effectiveness rating. Monitoring and intercepting financial transactions were judged ineffective by 2.6% (9) of respondents and least effective by another 2.6%, constituting 9 respondents.

Money laundering and terrorism financing are extremely sophisticated and pervasive activities (Hummer, 2015). Money laundering and terrorism funding may be related in various ways. Money laundering associated with terrorist offences is also a serious felony because it qualifies as a predicate offence (Mogire & Mkutu, 2011). Unmistakable evidence exists that terrorists conduct crimes to pay for their terrorism-related activities. Money laundering therefore refers to activities that involve obtaining, converting, transferring, hiding, disguising, or using the illegal proceeds of terrorist crimes, such as kidnapping for ransom, trafficking in arms and drugs, exploiting natural resources without permission, and trafficking in cultural property without permission. Among the other common crimes committed by terrorists are bank robberies, item smuggling, credit card fraud, insurance and loan fraud, and tax offences (FATF, 2015).

According to several law enforcement investigations and prosecutions, there is a relationship between corporate enterprises, such as used car dealerships and restaurant franchises, and terrorist organisations in Kenya. The money made through commercial ventures is used to finance terrorist groups in these circumstances. Kenya's government is a part of the ESAMLG (Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group). Because of this, it has been successful in preventing the funding of terrorist organisations such as Al-Shabaab by disrupting the money laundering networks of these groups. This has been of great assistance in maintaining control over the various security services in Kenya. As a direct result of these measures, Kenya has not been subject to any attacks by Al-Shabaab in recent memory.



3.6 Media Reportage of Non-Custodial Reintegration Activities for Returnee Terrorist Fighters

The non-custodial reintegration of the returnees calls for media dialogue to successfully reintegrate them back into society (Apikyang & Diamond, 2014). One of the most effective ways to oppose the violent rhetoric of terrorists is to launch a broad media campaign to highlight the success of anti-terrorist initiatives, expose the wrongdoing of extremists, and disseminate sermons aimed at educating people, particularly young people (Fairhurst & Star, 1996). News coverage in the mainstream media is supposed to provide the public with factual information without jeopardising efforts to combat terrorism (Gewald, 2004). The study aimed to determine the degree to which participants agreed or disagreed with various claims made about the mainstream media's objectivity and accuracy in reporting on the non-custodial reintegration efforts of returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa County as a crucial component of anti-terrorism messaging.

Table 4

Media Reportage of Non-custodial Reintegration Activities

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
News media reporting glorifies terrorist activities	33	9.8	175	51.9	76	22.6	42	12.4	11	3.3
Media reports on the non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters are accurate	9	2.7	11	3.3	68	20.2	204	60.5	45	13.4
Media reporting of non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters promotes anti-terrorism fight	152	45.1	90	26.7	57	16.9	34	10.1	4	1.2
The accuracy of media news reports on the non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters is highly influenced by the accuracy of the source of the information	166	49.3	96	28.5	51	15.1	24	7.1	0	0

Where F=Frequency

From the data collected, accumulative 61.7% (208) of the respondents agreed that mainstream media reporting glorifies terrorist acts, with 22.6% (76) being neutral and 15.7% (53) being in disagreement. Also, accumulative 6% (2) of the respondents agreed that media reports on reintegration activities of returnee terrorist fighters are accurate, 20.2% (68) remained neutral, while 73.9% (249) disagreed. In contrast, an accumulative 71.8% of the respondents agreed that mainstream media reporting of the non-custodial reintegration activities of returnee terrorist fighters promotes anti-terrorism fights, with 16.9% (57) remaining neutral while 11.3% (38) disagreeing. On the level of accuracy of media news reports, accumulative 77.8% (262) of the respondents agreed that the source of information highly influences the accuracy of mainstream media news reports on the non-custodial reintegration activities of returnee terrorist fighters, with 15.1% (51) being neutral while a minority 7.1% (24) being in disagreement.

The findings of the study noted that not all the facts as reported by mainstream media reports on non-custodial reintegration activities of returnee terrorist fighters were accurate; the cause could have been due to the fact that the mainstream media news reports were always glorifying terrorism activities. To achieve accuracy in reporting and media objectivity, the mainstream media need to draw from accurate and verifiable sources of information to avoid their news messaging being aligned towards supporting and promoting the anti-terrorism fight (Nacos, 2007). Supporting sentiments to this was shared by key informants in the study who noted that;

“Lack of objectivity by the mainstream media influenced the accuracy of the new reports on non-custodial reintegration activities of the returnee terrorist fighters.” (Respondent A, Mombasa, June 8, 2022).

A sense of responsibility should always go hand in hand with freedom of expression, which is something that media operators all over the world strive for and preserve. Journalists are held accountable for their reporting even if they are allowed the freedom to conduct research and write articles. If journalists are to be held accountable for the stories they cover, there needs to be some kind of standard against which they may evaluate whether the work they do is ethical (Munteanu, 2014). This brings up the question of whether media journalists should have access to self-regulating systems and codes of ethics. When reporting news regarding reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters,

journalists are expected to adhere to the principle of objectivity, which dictates that there should be no overlap between the two categories of information (news and opinion). To maintain objectivity in their reporting, journalists need to ask themselves the following questions. Do we make a clear distinction between the editorials, opinion pieces, and news articles that appear within our organization? Are our news reporters and staff who provide opinions treated differently from one another? (Firmstone, 2019). The deputy County Commissioner interviewed noted that;

“Reports on accurate news can only be obtained by journalists if the sources they use are reliable and can be confirmed. And one of these sources is us, the provincial administration because we are a component of the security system for the government. If the government’s security agencies are not involved, there is a high likelihood that journalists may publish false information.” (Interview with DCC, 25 August 2022).

Additionally, the Administration Police Officer interviewed reiterated that;

“The media can only aid in promoting the non-custodial reintegration of terrorist fighters by providing accurate and favorable information to the public through transparent and objective fact-finding and information sourcing. Otherwise, if they are motivated to make headlines and sell stories and documentaries, they just serve to glorify terrorism and support terrorists against us.”(Interview with an Administration Police Officer, 25 August 2022).

The above key informant interview findings may be correlated to Catherine Dean's (2006) writing on *Truth and Media News Reporting*. She establishes that as an essential principle of journalism, the pursuit of truth is imperative in the news reporting about non-custodial reintegration activities of the returnee terrorist fighters. Even though it is occasionally viewed or criticized as doing so, the quest for truth while reporting on terrorism also entails the right and duty to explain (Spencer, 2012). To avoid murky journalism, the facts acquired must be carefully verified for media reporting to be objective.

Media journalists in Kenya must make a clear distinction between comment, speculation, and truth in their reports. They must write so that the reader can tell the difference between opinion, speculation, and fact (Mwaura, 2016). Media editors should verify the sources of the information before making news to establish credibility. Unnamed sources of news should not be used unless the pursuit of the truth will best be served by not naming the source, which the editor and writer must know. When a report uses material obtained from sources other than the reporter's own, it is required to provide citations for those sources (Benson, 2018). It is important to properly attribute statements, whether they were made by individuals or by other news media outlets. Images, sounds, and quotations must not be presented in a context that is deceptive to keep the accuracy of the reporting high and conform to the criteria for factual reporting. Because they have a limited amount of time to prepare articles and a limited amount of space to work with, news reporters are expected to provide information that is as accurate as possible. If mistakes are made, they ought to be rectified and publicized as soon as they are discovered (Karanja, 2000).

The difficulty that arises when reporting on terrorist fighters who have returned to their home countries and are now facing accusations is of particular significance. Returnees in this situation should only be portrayed as having "allegedly" committed crimes prior to their conviction, which is the customary time when their crimes are reported as facts. The only exception to this rule is if there is a significant disagreement concerning wrongful conviction. The returnees should not be deemed guilty until their innocence has been proven, yet this does occur periodically in our media when such individuals are genuinely named and displayed in photos while they are still waiting to be tried for the crimes they are accused of having committed.

Media news reporting about terrorism and reintegration programmes for returnee terrorist fighters should be framed in a manner that does not glorify evil and instead should be targeted at discouraging any support for such acts (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2001). While reporting on the non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters, media news should focus more on the success story to encourage more terrorist offenders to surrender and register with the programmes (Ogega, 2012). Positive reporting will also help enhance community resilience towards readmitting the returnees into the community.

IV. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

The nature of reintegration programmes for returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa County requires a holistic and collaborative approach. Only through comprehensive strategies, active community engagement, and targeted support systems can successful reintegration be achieved. The study's results also showed that other steps were taken in the non-custodial reintegration of the returnee terrorist fighters. These included the creation of community-focused

rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for the returnees, giving youth better access to funds to give them more power and get them involved in income-generating activities, raising public awareness about how important it is to bring the returnee terrorist fighters back into the community, and creating social support networks.

The majority of the existing programmes in Mombasa County for rehabilitating returnee terrorist offenders are centered on providing technical and vocational training to the returnees. This provides the returnees with the skills they need to become economically stable. Computer training, formal primary and secondary education, agricultural training, hairdressing, catering, pottery, dressmaking, knitting, and counselling are just a few of the activities that are included in the reintegration programmes and have something in common with one another.

Building a gender-responsive reintegration programme requires the incorporation of vocational and technical training programmes since these programmes are one of the most effective means of empowering women offenders, leading to an increase in both their self-esteem and their sense of their own ability. Unfortunately, the existing reintegration programmes are insufficient on their own to address additional psychological and welfare requirements leading to criminality. Due to this, it is impossible to achieve effective rehabilitation of returned terrorist offenders when utilized primarily in custodial reintegration.

4.2 Recommendations

The employment of a multisectoral approach and the participation and inclusion of community members in the non-custodial reintegration process are key factors in ensuring sustainable and effective programmes that are impactful on the welfare of the returnee terrorist fighters. To enhance the effectiveness of reintegration programmes in promoting the welfare of returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa County, the study recommends the nesting of non-custodial reintegration programmes into large economic and social stability efforts at county governments to enhance structural plans in development, implementation, and evaluation, emphasising the importance of community engagement, capacity building for programme facilitators, and the establishment of sustainable support systems that encompass social, psychological, and economic aspects.

The study recommended the following additional measures to improve the implementation of non-custodial reintegration programmes for the returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa County in light of the existing approaches that the government has put in place: Review of education curricula within training institutions to include counter-terrorism measures; examination of religious and Islamic studies in all communities; implementation of the National Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism announced by the president in May Global collaboration with other nations to combat terrorism; participation in peace support operations through a multi-agency approach by the military, police, and civilians in the fight against terrorism; review of education curricula within training institutions to include counter-terrorism measures; examination of religious and Islamic studies in all communities The management of post-traumatic stress disorders for the returnee terrorist fighters through NGOs and civil societies as a way of demilitarising and de-radicalising them

Finally, mainstream media should avoid broadcasting non-factual news just to sell news and make profits. The mainstream media should not dwell on explaining the news to the public, which would be construed as the perception that the media justifies terrorism.

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