

# **Influence of Community Policing Strategies by Non-State Actors on Youth Radicalization in Kamukunji Sub-County: A Case of Kamukunji Community Peace Network**

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the role of non-state actors in countering youth radicalization, focusing on community policing strategies adopted by the Kamukunji Community Peace Network (KACPEN) in Nairobi County, Kenya. The objective was to identify the forms of community policing strategies associated with counter-radicalization in Kamukunji Sub-County. The study was guided by Schemas Theory, which explains how cognitive frameworks shape community responses to radicalization. A cross-sectional quantitative design was used, targeting 4,242 registered KACPEN members, including religious leaders, youth groups, and peace builders. A sample of 98 respondents was selected. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics (SPSS v24) and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that community involvement, police foot patrols, and partnerships were central strategies, while public participation occurred mainly through community-based programs and youth engagement. However, most respondents were unaware of media laws related to radicalization. The study concludes that non-state actors significantly enhance resilience to extremism and recommends stronger state, community collaboration, awareness of legal frameworks, and sustained support for community policing initiatives.

**Keywords:** KACPEN, radicalization, youth, strategies, community policing, countering, non-state actors.

## **Introduction**

### **Background**

Youth radicalization has become a major problem highlighting the need to develop mechanisms to address this problem towards ending the resulting terrorist activities. In Kenya, there are various regions that have reported an increased number of young people being recruited into extremist groups. Such areas include Majengo and Pumwani in Eastlands which has been categorized as reporting high number of cases of radicalization. In an effort to contain this issue, non-state actors such as Kamukunji Community Peace Network (KACPEN) have joined efforts to develop measures and strategies tailored towards countering youth radicalization.

Non-state actors in regions like Nigeria have considered different strategies to mitigate radicalism (Botha, 2014). Their major focus has been on the root cause of extremism, creating counter-radicalization program, job creation for idle youths who are vulnerable to radicalization, and opening renunciation and amnesty to radicalized youths willing to change (Bartlett & Miller, 2012). Other strategies have been facilitated by the government which involves investigation, prosecution, and jailing politicians who fund youth to purchase arms (Byman, 2013). Another area of interest has been on civil education for students and national rehabilitation centres for the youth (Briggs, 2010).

In Kenya, it is important to note that most counter radicalization programmes and strategies are a result of collaboration between non-state actors and the government (Cherney & Hartley, 2017). Some of the strategies

focus on adopting a diplomatic approach comprising of bilateral and multilateral initiatives with aim of building partnerships with nations that have experienced such threats (Dunn et al., 2016). Another mechanism has been to build intelligence operations and shut down terror cells through national intelligence service. The judicial system has also played a crucial role by introducing security laws, interagency collaboration, and community outreach projects (Gad, 2012).

Kamukunji sub-county represents one of the areas in the country beset by high unemployment and radicalization. The large number of youths without employment or National Identification Cards have been susceptible to radical groups. The level of youth unemployment in the country has been a major problem for a very long time. Therefore, assessing the vulnerability to radicalization in Kenya, it is critical to note that radical groups especially the al Shabab have focused on radicalizing the youth in the country besides the attacks and killings. The group has profited from long-standing complaints against religious doctrine and the central government.

Kamukunji Community Peace Network (KACPEN) is among the non-state organizations that have come forward to introduce strategies and measures that can be used to address youth radicalization at community level. The organization has developed different strategies by working with the locals and community leaders with aim of helping those who are at greatest risk of joining the extremist groups. Operating in one of the vulnerable communities, KACPEN has played a critical role in the fight against youth radicalization. Despite this role, there are few studies that have shed light on the crucial part that non-state actors such as KACPEN play in the fight against terrorism. Therefore, there is a need for a critical investigation into the functions and strategies adopted by such organizations in the fight against youth radicalization tailored towards addressing terrorism in the country.

The focus of the current study will be assessing the community policing strategies that have been employed and their impact on reducing or countering radicalization at community level. By critically analyzing how these strategies are utilized to influence radicalization and interact with youth in a meaningful and organized way, this study aims to close that gap. Therefore, this study was considered critical for this location to determine some of the strategies that non-state actors such as KACPEN use in countering radicalization and fighting terrorism.

### **Problem Statement**

Non-state actors and organizations have been reported to use a variety of strategies to combat radicalization in light of the pervasive terror actions brought on by it, particularly among young people. Building public-private collaborations and implementing educational initiatives are two examples of non-state actors' counter-radicalization tactics (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008). But it's important to remember that terrorism remains a significant issue in the nation. Counter-radicalization strategies have gained widespread acceptance with most regions implementing and strengthening community resilience to violent extremism and radicalization (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2014). Most of the adopted strategies are geared towards enhancing community consciousness, knowledge, and comprehension of violent extremism and radicalization. These strategies are also used to reduce vulnerability to radicalization and violent extremism among the youth with central objective of enhancing their sense of purpose and to improve life opportunities (Ahmed et al., 2018). However, it is important to note that the role of non-state actors in countering radicalization has not been adequately studied hence the need for the current research. Therefore, this study explored the community policing strategies adopted by the non-state actors such as KACPEN in countering radicalization in Kamukunji sub-county, Kenya.

### **Objective**

- To identify the forms of community policing strategies associated with counter-radicalization efforts in Kamukunji Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya

### **Significance**

The study contributes significantly to different areas of national policy and institutional operations. It is important to note that the investigation offers useful insight that can be used by the government to devise strategies that will be successful in countering radicalization. Furthermore, report shared from this study

informs on methods to identify groups that are vulnerable hence making it easy for the government to combat radicalization. It is also crucial to highlight the significance of this study to the policy makers in the sense that the research findings will guide in the development of appropriate strategies to counter radicalization.

The residents of Kamukunji area also benefit from this study by learning the value of improving their security. Scholars in different fields also gain important insight from this inquiry which will serve as a source of information for reference regarding strategies to counter radicalization. Academically, this study adds to the expanding body of research on the part played by non-state and community-based actors in CVE, an area that is still poorly understood, especially in the Kenyan context. The majority of current research focuses on state-led tactics, which leaves a knowledge vacuum about the workings of grassroots groups, the difficulties they encounter, and how their methods relate to or diverge from national counterterrorism programs.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Schemas Theory**

The Schema theory proposed by Jeffrey Young in 1982 is considered an integrative approach such that it connects together different psychological viewpoints (Starr & Zurbriggen, 2017). Therapy based on the Schema model adopts both traditional cognitive techniques while placing greater emphasis on experiential-emotional techniques when adjusting damaged personality. When applied to the counter-radicalization study, the schema model is viewed as an organizing framework representing patterns of internal experience. Such patterns include emotions, beliefs, memories, and thoughts (Hunzaker & Valentino, 2019). Therefore, failure to meet an individual's core needs tend to result in maladaptive schemas (El Difraoui & Uhlmann, 2015). When countering radicalization and violent extremism, it is important to pay attention to the schemas that contribute to an individual being radicalized because countering radicalization hugely rely on how problematic relationship patterns emerge and then continue to occur in one's life (Githiagaro, 2018). Schemas can also be utilized to explain why interpersonal issues that radicalized individual experiences are theme, rigid, and persistent. In this sense, the schema theory is essential for elucidating counter-radicalization strategies and procedures, particularly with relation to dialogue use (Gunaratna & Hussin, 2018). Overall, Schema Theory offers a more comprehensive understanding of radicalization and counter-radicalization by integrating the viewpoints from the other theories and demonstrating how cognitive structures affect the assimilation of new information, interpretation of experiences, and formation of attitudes.

#### **Empirical Review**

Government policies are crucial in determining the extent, course, and long-term viability of counter-radicalization initiatives nationwide. To combat the rising issue of youth radicalization, Kenya has implemented a number of national security and development frameworks. However, the success of these programs frequently hinges on how well local governments execute these policies, especially in high-risk regions like Kamukunji Sub-County. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effects of current government policies on the efficacy of counter-radicalization initiatives in this particular setting. Assessing the overall effectiveness of state and community-based initiatives requires an understanding of how policy and practice align, or diverge. Research findings from related studies provide important evidence on how policy implementation influences the success or failure of counter-radicalization programs at the local level.

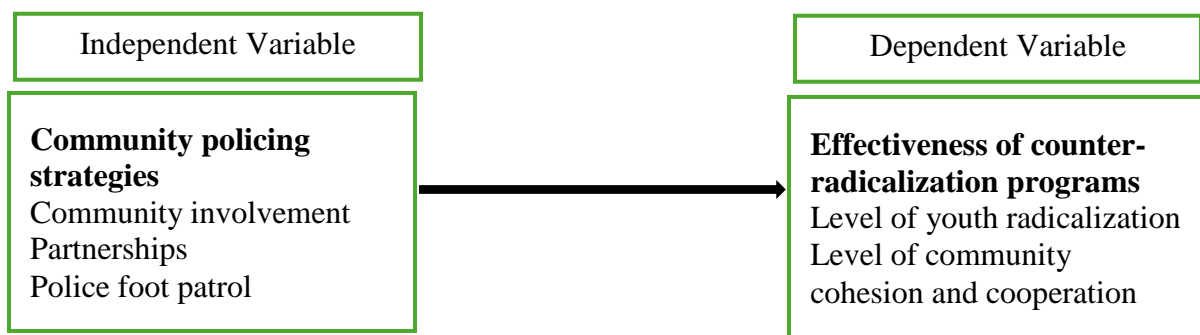
A study conducted by Kaplan in 2017 focused on counterterrorism puzzle for making decisions. The research indicated that communication and advocacy were critical in dealing with extremism and radicalization. For instance, there was need to concentrate efforts and policy on promoting and disseminating actual information given increased access to social media and misinformation. Such a strategy was considered critical groups encouraging division, exclusion, and demonization of others and justifying violence as a response. The challenge in today's communication is lack of objectivity such as increase in sources of fake news, half-truth news, and other factors which promote radicalization. However, the study does not cover counter-radicalization programs by non-state actors. Furthermore, it fails to cover the performance of counter-radicalization programs hence the need for current investigation.

A study by Wittendorp et al. (2017) focused on the measures taken to counter jihadist foreign fighters in countries such as Germany, Denmark, Belgium, France, Netherlands, and the United States. The research revealed that elements of the Patriotic Act had been enforced in the various countries which according to the reported suspended passports of the would-be jihadists. The governments also censored some websites that sympathized with the terrorists. The report revealed that these countries used social media to advertise online counter-jihad efforts while at the same time appealing to the public for help reporting suspicious website activities. the limitation with this study was failure to cover non-state actors' counter-radicalization programs and the performance of the programs adopted to counter extremism and radicalization.

While early detection of radicalization was possible, according to a study done in Kenya by Badurdeen and Goldsmith (2018), the nation lacked adequate institutions outside of law enforcement that could extend the criminal law. As a result, there may be a problem with resentment in the community since people may feel singled out, which can lead to radicalization or even embolden those who are already radicalized. As a result, there is a higher chance that these restrictions on laws and counter-radicalization strategies will make the communities affected more vulnerable. The gap from this study is that it failed to report on counter-radicalization programs by non-state actor. Furthermore, it fails to address the issue of performance of counter-radicalization strategies which will therefore be central to the current study

### Conceptual Framework

The following model presents a conceptual framework that demonstrates how the key variables related to each other within the context of this study.



**Fig 1: Conceptual framework**

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that explores the influence of non-state actor strategies, particularly those employed by the Kamukunji Community Peace Network (KACPEN), on the effectiveness of counter-radicalization programs in Kamukunji Sub-County. The independent variable is community policing strategies (community involvement, partnerships, and police foot patrols). Ultimately, the effectiveness of counter-radicalization efforts as the dependent variable is measured through reduced vulnerability to radical ideologies, and enhanced community collaboration.

### Methodology

#### Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional quantitative research design. The design is used when the research intends to collect quantitative data at a one point in time (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In this case, quantitative data was collected from the participants then used to report on the research question using conventional statistical analysis techniques.

#### Target Population

For this study, the researcher targeted specific individuals such as religious leaders like Imams and community leaders like community policing leaders, faith-based organizations, youth groups, and peace builders in Kamukunji sub-County who have registered or working under KACPEN. Currently, KACPEN has a total of 4242 registered members who served as the target population for this study. The researcher chose these groups

of individuals as the target of interest since they possess first-hand information regarding the issues under investigation especially regarding counter-radicalization programs.

### Sample Size

Given that the population is large, then the recommended sample size was calculated using the conventional sample size calculation formula for a given population with desired margin of error and level of significance as follows:

$$n = \frac{N * p(1 - p)}{(N - 1)e^2 + p(1 - p)}$$

Where:

N is the population, n the sample size, p the estimated population proportion, and e the margin of error.

The resulting sample size will be as follows:

$$n = \frac{4242 * 0.5(1 - 0.5)}{(4242 - 1)0.05^2 + 0.5(1 - 0.5)}$$

$$n = 97.7$$

Therefore, for population proportion of 0.5 and desired margin of error precision of 0.05, the resulting sample size was approximately 98.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The study employed primary data collected from the participants using questionnaire. Closed-ended questionnaires were used in this study requiring the participants to respond to each of the questions based on criteria of answering provided as either Likert scale or normal selection from a list of categories. Questionnaires were administered to a sample of residents in Kamukunji sub-county to collect quantitative data on their opinion regarding the various questions on community policing strategies employed by KACPEN in countering youth radicalization. The data collected from the participants was analyzed using Statistical packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 24. Quantitative data was analyzed for descriptive statistics.

### Ethical Considerations

Key requirements of ethical considerations were addressed to ensure the research aligns with all necessary regulations and research ethics. The first step entailed seeking an introduction letter from the university followed by research permit NACOSTI. The researcher also ensured that anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed during the entire process of research, analysis, and reporting of findings. Informed consent was also considered before collecting the data from the participants.

### Findings And Discussion

This study's goal was to evaluate the current community policing strategies and their effect on the efficacy of counter radicalization initiatives in Kamukunji sub-County. Despite earlier indications of a lack of knowledge about constitutional provisions pertaining to combating young radicalization, it was crucial to note that the participants acknowledged the Kenyan Constitution as the primary document outlining the rules and regulations that must be adhered to when addressing matters pertaining to preventing radicalization.

### Awareness of Media Laws

Another important question under this section was determining the presence of media laws on reporting of radicalization and extremism in the area. The results are as shown below:

**Table 1: Presence of media laws on reporting radicalization**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not sure	28	63.6	63.6	63.6
	Yes	16	36.4	36.4	100.0
	Total	44	100.0	100.0	



The results above reveal that a large number of the participants were not aware of or sure about any media laws regarding reporting of radicalization and extremist activities in the area accounting for 63.6% (n = 28). However, it is also important to highlight that 36.4% (n = 16) of the participants reported understanding some media laws regarding reporting of radicalization and extremist activities. Based on these findings, the respondents who reported presence of such policies emphasized on the issue of freedom of expression as the central policy allowing them to report any extremist behavior.

These results reveal a significant knowledge gap, as 63.6% of participants were unclear or unaware of media laws relating to reporting radicalization and extremist behavior. This ignorance could hinder effective communication and appropriate reporting, which could affect counterextremism efforts. However, the 36.4% of respondents who claimed to have some understanding point out that awareness efforts may already exist but may require additional assistance. Improving media law education and training could encourage responsible reporting, lessen misinformation, and aid in the battle against extremism in the area by increasing understanding, particularly among journalists, community leaders, and the general public.

The results from this study revealed a major gap in understanding the government policies and constitutional provisions focused on countering youth radicalization. A similar pattern can be understood from the European context where there is limited knowledge regarding counter-radicalization policies in education. For instance, a study conducted by Adebayo (2020) highlights the gaps in research on counter radicalization policies except for the United Kingdom. Furthermore, Adebayo (2020) establishes basis for arguing limitation in education on counter-radicalization policies related to human security. Furthermore, previous research by Adebayo (2020) revealed that the existing education policies tailored towards addressing youth radicalization were extremely deficient in principles and language of human security which negatively impacts people's conceptualization of counter-radicalization procedure in Europe.

### Participation in Security Decision-Making

Finally, there was also a need to determine public involvement in making decisions concerning security and the perception towards prosecution and jailing of radicalized individuals. The results are as shown in the table below:

**Table 2: Public involvement in making security-related decisions**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	community based programs	17	38.6	38.6	38.6
	community policing	12	27.3	27.3	65.9
	Youth engagement	15	34.1	34.1	100.0
	Total	44	100.0	100.0	

The results in the table above indicate that the public was involved in decision-making process in different ways. For instance, community-based programs were the most common avenues that the public used to participate in decision-making concerning matters related to security accounting for 38.6% (n = 17) followed by youth engagement with 34.1% (n = 15), and finally community policing accounting for 27.3% (n = 12).

These results highlight the variety of ways the public participated in security-related decision-making, with community-based programs being the most popular (38.6%). This implies that organized activities provide a useful forum for group conversations and problem-solving, enabling community members to express their worries and offer suggestions for security measures. Involving young people in decision-making processes is crucial to addressing the underlying causes of radicalization and promoting proactive solutions, as seen by the important influence that youth participation (34.1%) played. Furthermore, community policing (27.3%) illustrates how the public and law enforcement work together to guarantee targeted security measures. When combined, these strategies show how crucial inclusive involvement is to strengthening community-led security efforts.

## Community Policing Strategies

Regarding community policing, the participants reported different approaches that were being used as shown in the table below:

**Table 3: Community policing strategies**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	community involvement	25	56.8	56.8	56.8
	Partnerships	8	18.2	18.2	75.0
	police foot patrol	11	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	44	100.0	100.0	

The results from the table above reveal that community involvement was a major approach to community policing accounting for 56.8% (n = 25) followed by police foot patrol with 25% (n = 11) and finally partnerships accounting for 18.2% (n = 8).

These findings highlight the critical role that community involvement plays in bolstering community policing projects, as 56.8% of participants named it as the primary strategy. This highlights how important it is to establish strong relationships between the public and law enforcement to ensure that security measures are community-driven and considerate of local needs. By promoting visibility, deterrence, and trust-building, twenty-five percent of police foot patrols help to further establish law enforcement's presence in communities. Finally, partnerships, at 18.2%, emphasize how important it is for many stakeholders, especially local organizations and authorities, to work together to maintain security. When combined, these methods show a thorough and all-encompassing approach that improves public safety and resistance against radicalization and crime.

The limitations highlighted in the current study are also reflected in other reports such as the 2014 report by Guittet and Ragazzi (2014) on preventing and countering youth radicalization in European Union. For instance, the study by Guittet & Ragazzi (2014) highlighted shortcomings of the existing policies such as difficulties in reporting individuals on grounds of uncertain assessments and the problem of attributing political grievances to religious or ethnic specificities. Furthermore, the study revealed an ambiguous nature of the proactive administrative practices and exceptional counter-radicalization strategies and their damaging effects in relation to fundamental rights. Therefore, these two cases highlight the limitations existing in existing government policies established to counter youth radicalization and the need for more education focused on enlightening the public on policies and legislations related to radicalization.

## Conclusion And Recommendations

The goal of this study was to investigate the mitigation tactics used by non-state actors, specifically the Kamukunji Community Peace Network (KACPEN), to prevent youth radicalization in Nairobi County's Kamukunji sub-County. The results demonstrate how well KACPEN's diverse community policing strategies work to combat radicalization. Notwithstanding these achievements, the study found that most of participants were unaware of the rules pertaining to media that support extremist activity, indicating a substantial lack of public knowledge of government policies against radicalization. This ignorance points to the need for improved educational programs that not only confront radical narratives but also give communities the legal knowledge they need to effectively combat extremism. Additionally, the public's lack of knowledge about media laws and constitutional provisions highlights the significance of educating the public so that they can actively oppose efforts to radicalize. Ultimately, this study advocates for a sustained commitment to collaborative, inclusive, and knowledge-driven approaches in the fight against youth radicalization, fostering a safer and more resilient society for future generations. It is also essential to keep funding community policing initiatives. Establishing a collaborative partnership between law enforcement and community members can foster trust and aid in the timely detection of signs of radicalization.

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