

## **Youth Radicalisation in Kenya University Perspective**

**Dr. Milcah Njoki Nyaga**

*Milcahnyaga1@gmail.com*

*Department of Educational Foundations and Psychology, University of Embu, Kenya*

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Milcah Njoki Nyaga*

---

**Abstract:** The aim of this research is to investigate the youth radicalisation in Kenya. The study sought to investigate recruitment of youth to the unlawful groups, sponsors of unlawful groups, gender prone to unlawful groups, level of education and preventive measures against radicalisation among youth in Kenya. The study observed that radicalisation was going on in Central, Nairobi, Eastern, Nyanza, North Eastern, Coast, Western and Rift Valley regions in Kenya. The study revealed that the politicians were the leading sponsors towards radicalisation of the youth. Further, the study observed that politicians heavily sponsored the youth during the last year before election. The study revealed that males were more prone to radicalisation than females. In addition, the study reported that university students were the most prone learners towards radicalisation. Therefore, it was evident that the higher the level of education the more students were prone to radicalisation while the employed youths were least prone to radicalisation. The study revealed that the potential determinants to radicalisation were unemployment and poverty. The study observed that tobacco, bang and alcohol were the most abused drugs among the members of the unlawful groups. In absence of traditional reference groups the youth may be magnetically be attracted to a cult, gang, or subversive group. This may be as result of looking for a sense of love and belonging, sense of self-acceptance or sense of approval. . It is the obligation of the government and society to build Ego and Psychic strength for the youth. This can be done through effective mentorship programmes, guidance and counselling, as well as involving the youth in decision making.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Youths, Radicalisation, Unlawful group, Terrorism

---

Date of Submission: 03-11-2017

Date of acceptance: 30-11-2017

---

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Radicalisation and terrorism is a global concern. It has been linked with lawlessness, destruction of property, as well as instilling fear among the citizens of developed and undeveloped countries. According to Precht (2007) most people who were radicalised were well educated, employed as well as active in the local communities. The major factors for radicalisation were influence of perception of marginalisation, discrimination, political oppression, poverty, influence of spiritual leaders and sense of alienation. A study conducted in United Kingdom revealed that the most potential factor to radicalisation was political grievances (Christmann, 2012). Roy (2015) observed that terrorists attack in Europe were perpetuated by second generation Muslims who were either born in Europe or came as students or political refugees, while others were converted and became religious minded Muslims in Europe. According to Allen (2015) the causes of radicalisation in United Kingdom were; extreme doctrines which excited the youths, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) members were considered as celebrities. On the other hand, King and Taylor (2011) reported that the western Jihadists were motivated by psychological factors such as identity conflicts, personality characteristic and group relative deprivation. Therefore, the youths wanted to attain identity and sense of belonging through radicalisation. It was evident that Muslims' Islami educated people hence universities have been a breeding place for radicalisation. In Pakistan the determinant factors of youth radicalisation were Islamic identity which comprised political militant and missionary organisations. In addition, Lynch (2013) observed that terrorism and radicalisation has been associated with Muslims youth and specifically Muslim youths who aim at causing violence. According to Zenn & Peterson (2014) Nigerian citizens joined Boko Haram in order to oppose the secular westernisation in Nigeria specifically the co-educational learning and democratic elections, and the creation of Islamic state. The study also observed that the kidnapping of the women to join Boko Haram was on the increase. The study revealed that the group wanted to reduce pressure from the male members and also women were viewed to be very instrumental in the operations.

Few years ago, Kenya become a terrified nation due to constant attacks from unidentified enemy for instance the West Gate Mall, Garissa University and the massive killing in North Eastern region. It was evident

that some of these enemies were Kenyan youths born and educated in Kenya. Getachewis (2016) observed that between 2011 and 2014 there were over 70 grenade and gun attacks in Nairobi, Mombasa and Garissa counties. The most brutal attack occurred in Garissa University killing 148 people and injuring more than 79 while attack in West Gate mall left 70 people killed and 200 people injured. A study conducted in Mombasa by Both (2013) revealed that Muslim youths joined the unlawful group to counter-react the perception by the government that all Muslims including those who were Kenyan citizens were potential terrorists. Institute of Security Studies in Africa (2013) observed that poverty, unemployment and political marginalisation were contributing to Islamic radicalisation of Kenyan youth. The report further observed that Kenyan Muslims were mostly influence by radical preaching with the perception that the war fought in Afghanistan and Iraq was part of global campaign against Islam. The first terrorist attack in Kenya was in 1998 where USA Embassy was attacked and it was revealed that the perpetrators were foreigners as well as Kenyans. On the other hand, Both (2013) reported that Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) has been associated with terrorist attacks in Mombasa. Institute of security studies in Africa (2016) reported that Al-shabaab were exploiting socio- economically disadvantaged and reiterating against the government for failing to provide the basic needs to the citizens. The potential danger faced by all youths and adolescents in any society is youthful energy of experiment which may lead to psychological discourse. This makes the youth to enter into “Pathetic Psychic Pattern” of negative conviction that the society is harsh, as well as being indifference of their needs. Consequently these youth becomes susceptible to being indoctrinated by rogue ideologies, brainwashed as well as questionable teachings. In absence of traditional reference groups the youth may be magnetically be attracted to a cult, gang, or subversive group. It is the obligation of the government and society to build Ego and Psychic strength for the youth. This can be done through effective guidance and counselling, mentorship programmes as well as involving the youth in decision making.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Radicalisation is a major challenge among youth in Kenya. It has been associated with drug abuse, murder, disturbance, destruction of property, lawlessness as well as instilling fear among the citizens. Few years ago, Kenya become a terrified nation due to constant attacks from unidentified enemy for instance the West Gate Mall, Garissa University and the massive killing in North Eastern region. It was evident that these enemies were Kenyan youths born and educated in Kenya as well as foreigners. There are negative sentiments which may be building among Kenyan youth and especially in gangsters, cultism, radicalisation and terrorism. The potential danger faced by all youths and adolescents in any society is youthful energy of experiment which may lead to psychological discourse. These adolescents consequently have a strong feeling of marginality, lack of belonging, feeling of inferiority as well as personal unworthiness. This makes the youth to enter into “Pathetic Psychic Pattern” of negative conviction. The negative perception is the breeding ground for all maladaptive behaviours and poor self-efficacy. Consequently, these youth becomes susceptible to being indoctrinated by rogue ideologies, brainwashed as well as questionable teachings, which may lead to radicalisation. This study therefore investigated the factors contributing to radicalisation of youths and adolescents in Kenya. The study specifically focused on recruitment to unlawful groups, sponsors of the unlawful groups, gender prone to radicalisation and level of education which are crucial determinants of radicalisation. Youths and adolescents who were radicalised were likely to be involved or linked to drug abuse, murder, disturbance, destruction of property, lawlessness as well as instilling fear among the citizens. It is therefore, the obligation of the government and society to Build Ego and Psychic strength for the youth. This can be done through effective guidance and counselling, mentorship programmes as well as involving the youth in decision making.

### **1.2 Study Objectives**

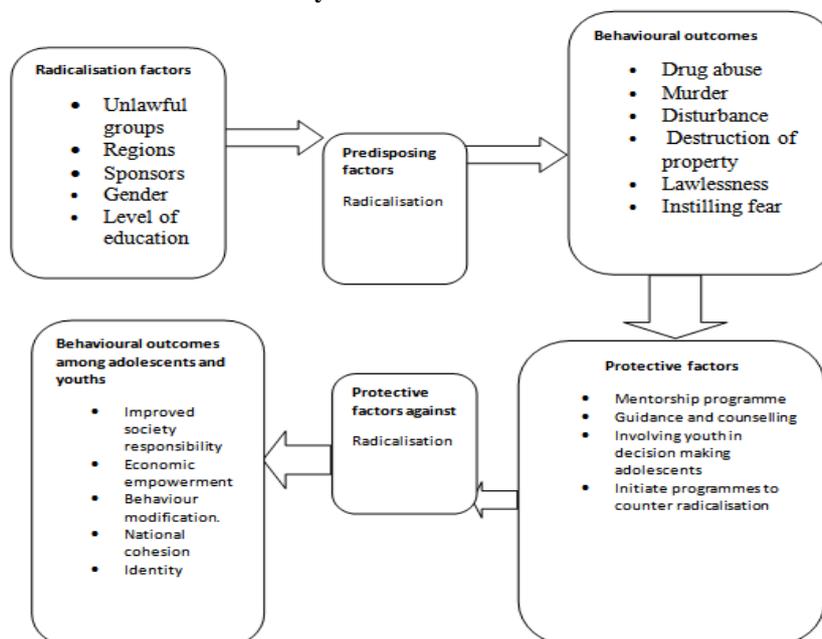
The study investigated radicalisation among youth in Kenya. The study specifically investigating youths’ recruitment to the unlawful groups, sponsors of unlawful groups, gender prone to recruitment to unlawful groups, level of education and preventive measures against radicalisation among youth Kenya.

### **1.3 Theoretical Frame Work**

The study was supported by the fifth stage of Erik Erickson’s theory (1968). He argued that adolescence was a stormy and crucial period. He also observed that adolescence was a stage of identity versus role confusion. Erikson asserted that identity of an individual was attained at fifth stage. In role confusion, most adolescent got confused, naive, and helpless hence they finally crush their dreams. The importance of the theory was that adolescent may experience identity crisis. At this state the youth’s heroism was reduced to cowardice which drill them into tolerating all abominations and therefore accept any plunder and submit to any oppression. This makes the youth to enter into “Pathetic Psychic Pattern” of negative conviction that the society is harsh, indifference of their needs, as well as having no model to rely on for moral and social support. The society seems to be bound on societal forces which may be creating feeling of resentment and disillusionment among our youth. This may further results to maladaptive behaviour such as social pathology, crime or expressions of

prejudice. In addition, these may lead to drug abuse, murder, disturbance, destruction of property, lawlessness as well as instilling fear among the citizens. The adolescents who experience antisocial behaviours are likely to be radicalised.

### 1.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework: Interaction of youths, adolescents and radicalisation

The conceptual framework of the study was based on the factors that promote radicalisation among the youth. These included recruitment to unlawful groups, sponsors of the unlawful groups, gender prone to radicalisation and level of education which were crucial determinants of radicalisation. The youths and adolescents who received mentorship programmes were likely to be productive in the society while those who received guidance and counselling were likely to modify their behaviours and shun radicalisation. Further, youths and adolescents who were involved in the decision making were likely to be economically empowered. In addition, youths and adolescents who were trained on programmes to counter radicalisation were likely to attain identity. It was the proposition of this study that the government and society assure youths and adolescents of protective conditions such as mentorship programme, guidance and counselling, involving youth in decision making adolescents as well as initiating programmes to counter radicalisation. These will help to minimise the radicalisations among youths and adolescents hence focus on productivity, empowerment, national cohesion and identity.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the youth radicalisation. The survey design used questionnaire and interview schedule to collect the data. The research was conducted at University of Embu, Kenya. The research involved students between 18 and 25 years. The data was collected from 78 females and 75 males in the university. The sample was randomly selected from Central, Nairobi, Eastern, Nyanza, North Eastern, Coast, Western and Rift Valley regions. The study was motivated by the fact that radicalisation was on the increase among youth. A structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher to collect qualitative and quantitative data.

## III. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section presents the findings of the contributions of recruitment to unlawful groups, sponsors of unlawful group, gender prone to recruitment of unlawful groups and level of education among the youth in Kenya.

### 3.1 Recruitment to unlawful groups

The study investigated the recruitment of youth to unlawful groups in Central, Nairobi, Eastern, Nyanza, North Eastern, Coast, Western and Rift Valley regions in Kenya. The study observed that radicalisation was going on in the eight regions. The study revealed that the unlawful groups had the following names; Mungiki, Jeshi la Mzee, Msumbiji, Chinkororo, Kamjeshi, Kilunda, Mikuki, Wakali Kwanza. It was interesting

to note that the meaning of some names of unlawful groups indicated that the group was a fighting group. In addition, the study showed that the unlawful groups were involved in drug abuse such as miraa, tobacco, bang, and other hard drugs. The study revealed that tobacco, bang and alcohol were the most abused drugs among the members of the unlawful groups. Further, the study revealed that 55% of the respondents reported that youth left home to join the unlawful groups while 41% of the respondent indicated that they did not leave home. In addition, the study revealed that 29% of the respondents observed that youth joined the unlawful groups due to unemployment while 13% of the respondents indicated that youth joined the unlawful group due to poverty. Further, the study observed that the youth joined the unlawful group due to idleness, religious faith, rebellion, cultural demands, lack of philosophy of life, experimentation, greed and wanting to get rich fast. It was evident that the potential determinant to radicalisation was unemployment. These findings deviated from Christmann (2012) who reported that in United Kingdom the most potential factor to radicalisation was political grievances. The study observed that the unlawful groups' meeting places are usually very secretive and even the closest members of the family may not have the least clue of their where about.

### **3.2 Sponsors of Unlawful Groups**

The study investigated the people or group responsible in sponsoring the unlawful groups. The study revealed that 50% of the respondents reported that politicians sponsored the unlawful groups while 32% of the respondents reported that peers were responsible in sponsoring the unlawful groups. On the other hand, 16% of the respondents indicated that religious groups sponsored the unlawful groups while 2% of the respondent reported that peers and politicians sponsored the unlawful groups. The study observed that politicians heavily sponsored the youth during the last year before election. Further, the study revealed that youth were mostly used in campaigns and to cause chaos against the opponents. The respondents reported that youth join the unlawful groups due to poverty, idleness, religious faith and cultural demands

### **3.3 Gender and Radicalisation**

The study investigated the gender which was prone to radicalisation. The study revealed that 77% of the respondents reported that males were prone to radicalisation while 13% of the respondents reported that females were prone to radicalisation. The study observed that poverty and unemployment were the major causes of joining the unlawful groups while experimentation and lack of philosophy of life were the least causes of joining of unlawful groups. On the other hand, respondents cited idleness, religious faith, rebellion, cultural demand and wanting to get rich faster as other causes of joining the unlawful groups. In addition, the study observed that radicalisation of females was on the increase. These findings supported Zenn & Peterson (2014) who reported that the kidnapping of the women to join Boko Haram was on the increase. The study revealed that the group wanted to reduce pressure from the male members and also women were viewed to be very instrumental in the operations.

### **3.4 Level of Education and Radicalisation**

The study investigated whether the level of education contributed to radicalisation. The study revealed that 71% of the respondents reported that university students were prone to radicalisation while 12% of the respondents reported that college students were prone to radicalisation. On the other hand, 10% of the respondents indicated that secondary school students were prone to radicalisation while 5% of the respondents indicated that employed youths were prone to radicalisation. Therefore, it was evident that the higher the level of education the more students were prone to radicalisation while the employed youths were least prone to radicalisation. These findings supported the claim made by Precht (2007) who reported that most people who were radicalised were well educated and active in the local communities. Further, the study observed that 4% of the respondents reported that they were members of the unlawful groups namely; Mungiki, Jeshi la Mzee, Msumbiji, Chinkororo, or Kamjeshi. They reported that they joined the unlawful groups due to poverty, unemployment, rebellion and wanting to get rich fast. In addition, this was confirmed by 5% of the respondents who revealed that they knew some students in the university who were members of the unlawful groups. These findings supported the study by Allen (2015) who reported that Muslims' youth were leaving higher education to join the extremists groups such as ISIS.

### **3.5 Preventive Strategies against Radicalisation**

The study investigated the best methods to control radicalisation. The study observed that 35% of the respondents reported that the best method to control radicalisation was mentorship programme, 31% of the respondents observed that the best control methods against radicalisation was guidance and counselling. On the other hand, 22% of the respondents reported that the best control method was involving youths and adolescents in the decision making while 5% of the respondents reported that the best control method was provision of employment to the youth. In addition, 7% of the respondents reported that a combination of mentorship

programme, guidance and counselling and involving youths and adolescents in the decision making was the best preventive method against radicalisation.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

The study observed that radicalisation was going on in Central, Nairobi, Eastern, Nyanza, North Eastern, Coast, Western and Rift Valley regions in Kenya. The study revealed that the politicians were the leading sponsors towards radicalisation of the youth. Further, the study observed that politicians heavily sponsored the youth during the last year before election. The study revealed that males were more prone to radicalisation than females. In addition, the study reported that university students were the most prone learners towards radicalisation. Therefore, it was evident that the higher the level of education the more students were prone to radicalisation while the employed youths were least prone to radicalisation. The study revealed that the potential determinant to radicalisation was unemployment. The study observed that tobacco, bang and alcohol were the most abused drugs among the members of the unlawful groups. In absence of traditional reference groups the youth may be magnetically be attracted to a cult, gang, or subversive group. This may be as result of looking for a sense of love and belonging, sense of self-acceptance or a sense of approval. The study observed that, this can be done through effective guidance and counselling, mentorship programmes as well as involving the youth in decision making.

#### **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and the conclusion drawn, the study recommended that the government and society should be vigilant to create awareness on radicalisation among youth. The awareness of youth Ego and Psychic strengths which will shield them from being brainwashed, indoctrinated or radicalised. The mentorship programme should be put up in every county in order to help the youth to negotiate their developmental tasks. Further, the study recommended that professional counsellors be employed in all learning institutions. In addition, the parents, teachers and the government should involve youth in decision making. The adolescents should be helped to attain their identities. Further, the society should try to teach the youth Ego and Psychic strengths which will shield them from being brainwashed, indoctrinated or radicalised. Therefore, immediate intervention measures such as guidance and counselling, mentorship programmes and involving the youth in decision making should be put in place in the society to prevent radicalisation.

#### **REFERENCES**

- [1]. Allen, K. (2015). Breeding ground: Analysing higher education in the United Kingdom and the Allure of Islamic extremism. *Journal of education and human development* 4, 238-245.
- [2]. Both, A. (2013). Recruitment to al-shabaab in Mombasa Republican council. Institute for security studies ISS paper 265.
- [3]. Brown, K. Saeed, T. (2014). Radicalisation and counter-radicalisation at British Universities, muslims encounters and alternatives. *Journal of ethics and racial studies* 38 (1) 1952-1968
- [4]. Christmann, K. (2012). Preventing religious radicalisation and violent Extremism. A systematic review of research evidence. Research report. Youth justice board UK.
- [5]. Getachewis, A. (2016). Radicalisation of children and youths in Kenya .A new challenge to children protection. *Horn of Africa*.
- [6]. Haque, R. (2014). Youth radicalisation in Pakistan. United State Institute of peace
- [7]. Institute of security study in Africa (2016). Countering the radicalisation of Kenya's youth. Nairobi
- [8]. King, M., & Taylor, D. (2011). Radicalisation of homegrown Jihadists. A of theoretical models and psychological evidence. *A Journal of critical studies in terrorism* 23 (4) 602-622
- [9]. Lynch, O. (2013). British Muslim youth: Radicalisation, terrorism, and the construction of the "other". *Journal of critical studies in Terrorism* 6 (2) 241-261
- [10]. Precht, T. (2007). Home grown terrorism Islamist. An assessment of the factors influencing Islamist extremism and suggestions or counter radicalisation measures. Danish ministry of justice.
- [11]. Roy, O. (2015). Islamic terrorist radicalisation in Europe.
- [12]. Zenn, J., & Pearson, E. (2014). Women, gender, and the evolving tactics of Boko Harram. *Journal of terrorism research*. 5 (1) DOI <http://doi.org/10.15664/jtr.828>

Dr. Milcah Njoki Nyaga Youth Radicalisation in Kenya University Perspective." *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, vol. 22, no. 11, 2017, pp. 94-98.