

Effectiveness of Non-Custodial Reintegration Programmes on Welfare of Returnee Terrorist Fighters in Mombasa, Kenya

Michael Osew Ngachra¹
Susan Kimokoti²

¹mikeosew@gmail.com

²skimokoti@mmust.ac.ke

¹<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9734-1236>

^{1,2}Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kakamega, Kenya

ABSTRACT

A strong and effective non-custodial reintegration process, working in close collaboration with civil society organizations and communities, will facilitate transition back into society for former violent extremist offenders, demonstrate ongoing goodwill, and provide an essential support structure for the returnee terrorist fighters. This study aimed to assess the influence that non-custodial reintegration programs have on the well-being of returned terrorist fighters in Mombasa County, while also taking into consideration the risk that these programs may present if they are not employed appropriately. This understanding contributes to the growing necessity for both governmental and non-governmental actors to contribute to the development and implementation of non-custodial reintegration programs. The study utilized a descriptive research design using quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the efficacy of non-custodial reintegration programs on the well-being of returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa County, Kenya. From a sample size of 400 respondents needed for investigation from the target population of Mombasa County, the study drew data from focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews with key informants, and questionnaires that were physically delivered and electronically disseminated using the Google Forms application. The county was shown to have the highest rates of violent extremism and recidivism in Kenya. From the findings it is evident that for non-custodial reintegration programmes for returnee terrorist fighters to be effective, it is necessary to ensure that community stakeholders and other non-governmental actors have the required legal and policy space and capacity to engage; acknowledge the relative advantages of government and non-governmental stakeholders; and clearly identify the appropriate division of responsibilities between them in supporting non-custodial reintegration programmes and to make this strategy a reality. In conclusion, a strong and effective non-custodial reintegration process, working in close collaboration with civil society organizations and communities facilitates the transition back into society for former violent extremist offenders and thereby providing required support system to the former violent extremist offenders.

Keywords: Al-Shabaab, Foreign Terrorist Fighters, Non-Custodial Reintegration, Recidivism, Welfare, Violent Extremism

I. INTRODUCTION

Terror attacks have been associated with the loss of lives, property, and displacement of communities (Dzoro et al., 2019). The County of Mombasa has a long history of serving as a hub for terrorist activity and radicalization. The county is home to several mosques with radical religious influences and branches of organizations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir that advocate for forming a caliphate (Mombasa County Countering Violent Extremism [MCCVE], 2018). Because of its location at the coast and proximity to the Somali border, the city of Mombasa is a prime target for recruiting by Al-Shabaab, a terrorist organization with roots in Somalia that maintains a substantial presence in the region. It is well known that the organization utilizes the port of Mombasa as a point of transit for shipments of armaments and other supplies (Benmelech & Esteban, 2016).

To address the threat posed by returnee terrorist fighters, communities and governments have developed mechanisms that include non-custodial reintegration of returnees from the Al-Shabaab terror group. Effective non-custodial reintegration programs are an absolute necessity if we are to prevent and fight the violent extremism and radicalization that are the root causes of terrorism (Silke, 2011). The effectiveness of non-custodial reintegration programs on the welfare of returnee terrorist fighters is examined with a variety of initiatives, including the evaluation of the impact of mainstream media reporting on non-custodial reintegration, the role of government security organs, civic education for citizens, the development of income-generating activities, and the use of a multi-agency approach to improve the non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters.

Problematizing this argument is the fact that even if there are various reintegration programs already in existence, there is still an increase in the number of incidences of returnee terrorist fighters rejoining terror groups to fight in foreign nations. The question that arises as a result of this, therefore, is whether or not these reintegration programs are effective.

II. METHODOLOGY

Assessment of the effectiveness of non-custodial reintegration programs on the welfare of returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa County, Kenya, used both qualitative and quantitative methods (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003), including post-program assessments. Primary data was collected from a sample of returnee terrorist fighters, community members, government officials, and program facilitators using questionnaires. Interviews and focus group discussions with key informants, such as returnees, community members, public servants, and non-governmental organizations, provided insight into the viewpoints and experiences of various participants in the reintegration process (Yeasmin, 2012). A desk review of the literature was used to gather secondary data for the investigation. Mombasa County, as the target area, was shown to have the highest numbers of returnees and the highest rates of violent extremism and recidivism in Kenya. According to the latest population census in Kenya conducted in 2019, Mombasa County had a population of 1,100,173 inhabitants (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019).

The study aimed to collect information from a total of 400 respondents, taken from each of the several clusters of respondents. Yamane's formula was used for this study with an infinite population to determine sample sizes (Yamane, 1967; Cochran, 1977).

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

In the equation a 95% confidence level is considered.

Where:

n = the desired sample size

e = Margin of error (5%)

N = Population of study

Using the formula, a sample of 400 was obtained. The study analyzed the returnees' conduct after participation in the reintegration programs and evaluated the changes in their attitudes, beliefs, and behavior related to violent extremism. This was done through individual interviews with the returnees and during focus group discussions. Social and economic indicators were evaluated to assess the effectiveness of the non-custodial reintegration programs. The degree to which returnees can successfully reintegrate into their communities and become productive members of society is one way in which reintegration programs were evaluated for their level of success. This was determined by seeing how actively they participated in various social and economic activities such as education, employment, and others.

To test the dependability of the research tools, the Cronbach Alpha method was used to assess the survey's dependability, yielding a reliability rating of 0.8. The discovered value is within the acceptable range of 0.6 to 0.9 (George & Mallery, 2003). The questionnaires received a return of 337 responses from the sampled returnee terrorist fighters, community members, government officials, and program facilitators. The researcher was able to conduct 21 interviews with key informants such as returnees, community members, public servants, and non-governmental organizations. The researcher conducted five focus group discussions. Each of the five focus groups had the following participants: FGD 1 included community elders and area chiefs; FGD 2 included security officers from the police, prison, and National Intelligence officers; FGD 3 included people who had previously lived in the area; FGD 4 included religious leaders, including both Christian and Muslim figures; and FGD 5 included officials from NGOs and community-based organizations. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means. The data was analyzed using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences Version 20 (SPSS). Quantitative results are presented as graphs, tables, figures, and charts, whereas qualitative results are given as prose or descriptive narratives.

III. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

To determine the most effective approach, a comparative analysis was done to weigh the effectiveness of various non-custodial reintegration programs compared to the outcomes of other interventions, such as custodial

sentences. The success of non-custodial reintegration programs was evaluated by monitoring the long-term outcomes for the returnees, such as a reduction in recidivism rates and their continued disengagement from violent extremism.

3.1 Media Intervention

The effectiveness of media involvement through unbiased reporting and messaging in Kenya's war against terrorism was evaluated as an enabler for the successful non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa County. Media interventions are complemented with in-person community outreach efforts as frequently and intensely as feasible to provide the community with a chance to put ideas and possibilities that have been brought to their attention into practice (Hornqvist & Flyghed, 2012).

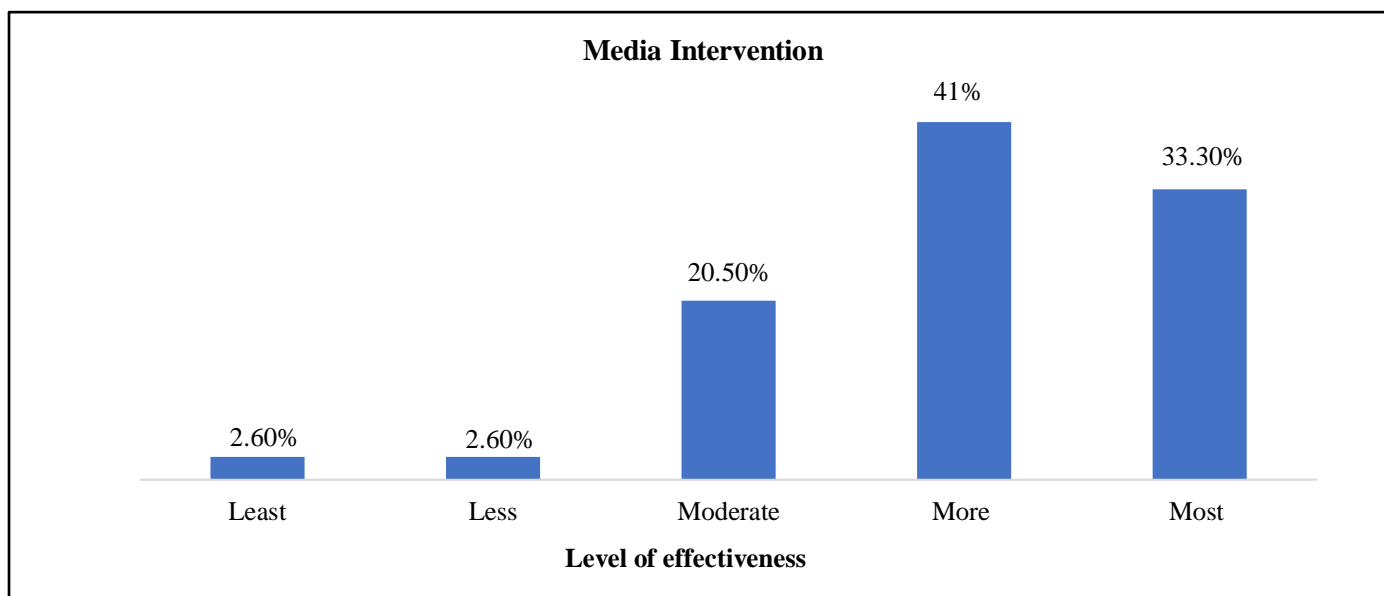


Figure 1
Media Intervention

Figure 1 shows that 41% (138) of respondents thought that media intervention through objective reporting was a better way to make the non-custodial reintegration programs for returned terrorist fighters work better in the war against terrorism recruitment in Mombasa County. In comparison, 33.3% (112) of them rated it as being the most effective. Another 20.5% (69) of them rated it as moderately effective, 2.6% (9) rated it as being the least effective strategy, and another 2.6% (9) also rated it as not effective.

The finding revealed that journalists in mainstream media used their own informers even though there were other relevant and accredited sources, such as security and administration personnel, who could have provided verifiable and accurate information. This practice, therefore, places accuracy and objectivity on the line of bias (Karanja, 2000). The study revealed that media houses disseminated information through short documentaries and radio programs. While the media focused on the impact of terrorism on communities and their livelihoods, the realities of the front lines were described by disengaged members. The findings of the study also demonstrated that the media played a key role in the educational process that took place in institutions of higher learning, religious communities, and public gatherings. It was discovered that the media is a major disruptor in the process of undermining extreme narratives that are spread by violent extremists.

According to the findings of a study on the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Al-Shabaab Returnees in Kenya's Mombasa and Kwale Counties, 2015–2020, the media plays an essential role in the process of non-custodial reintegration (Juma, 2020). These findings are consistent with those of Carroll (2013), who claimed that one of the most effective methods for addressing the violent rhetoric of terrorists was the creation of a strong media campaign to highlight the success of anti-terrorist initiatives, denounce the crimes committed by extremists, and disseminate sermons to enlighten the public (Carroll, 2013).

Mainstream media has the ability to educate and advocate for youth to avoid or disengage from forces that encourage youth to join extremist groups, as well as the ability to raise public awareness of the plight of these returnees and the role that the media plays in the process (Tumber & Palmer, 2004). This is because high levels of

participation and involvement by the various actors allow for a holistic reintegration enhanced by the social awareness of the plight of these returnees and the role that the media plays in the process.

3.2 Public Civic Education

The respondents assessed the effectiveness of educating the general public about the fight against terrorism and the need for non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters into society in Mombasa County.

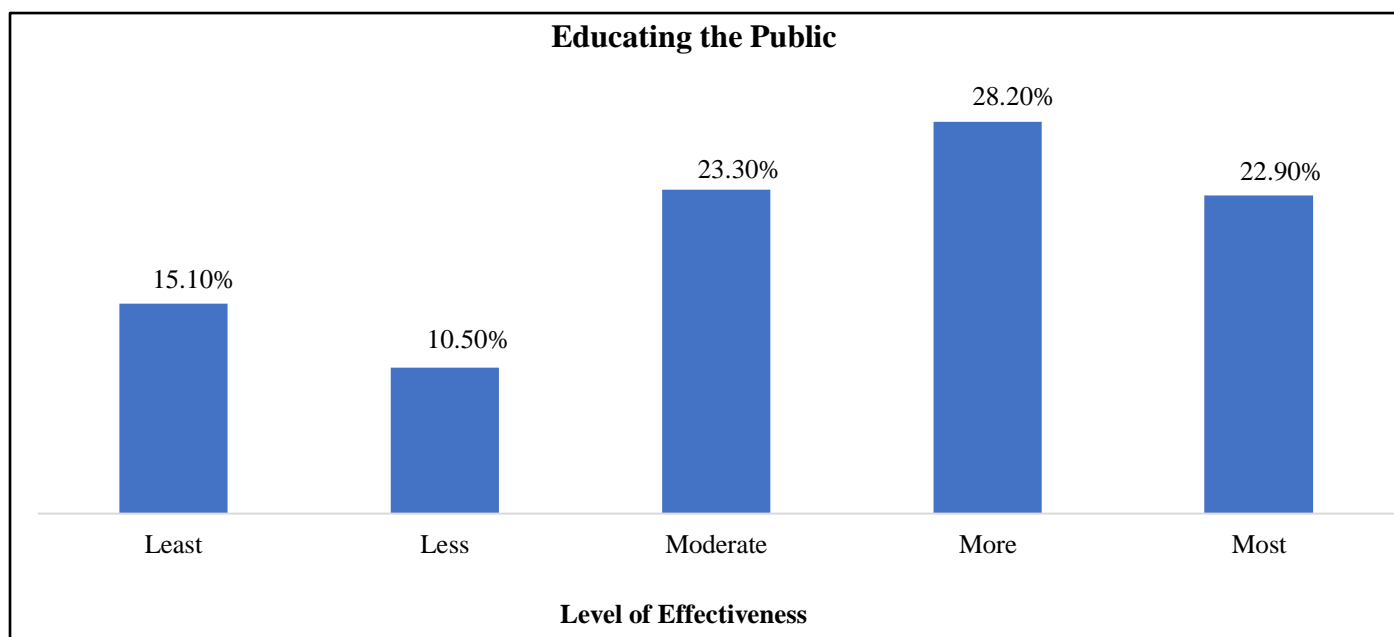


Figure 2
Educating the Public

According to Figure 2, 28.2% (95) of respondents believed that raising awareness of the necessity of reintegrating terrorist fighters who have returned to society has been more successful in preventing terrorism and other radicalization-related crimes. Among the respondents, 23.3% (79) assessed it as being moderately successful, 22.9% (77) as most effective, 15.1% (51) as least effective, and 10.5% (35) as less effective. While the Muslim populace in Mombasa County is becoming more radicalized due to security forces' offensive counterterrorism operations (Thuranira, 2007), the emphasis on influencing the hearts and minds of the target populations and the predominance of strict military and security measures to combat violent extremism have conflicted, creating a dilemma. Community-focused strategies, such as training and intercultural discussion, are viewed by community actors as a successful way to promote social inclusion and active citizenship while reducing discrimination and social exclusion.

A sense of inclusion is created by local actors through community-focused training programs as a preventive measure. Such an initiative has been lauded for being effective in the dwellings in Bamburi and Mikindani areas in Mombasa. In these locations, the programs have been fully owned and driven by community members, with little support from NGOs and the county government for funding. The communities in Mombasa County have formed village groups to help monitor the returnees and include them in youth group projects to help them earn a decent livelihood. Some of the projects in which the returnees have been involved include a tricycle transport business locally called "TUK TUK". The youth groups also own car-wash businesses where the local youth, including the returnees, work and save money for their personal development other than for daily earnings.

Local CBOs and NGOs have taken the lead in conducting public civic education to sensitize the locals on the dangers of terrorism and, to a large extent, on the effectiveness of rehabilitating those who have returned to the community after surrendering to participating in the terror groups. The involvement of religious institutions was also appreciated as key in countering extremist narratives that lure youths to join terror groups. Values such as honesty, integrity, respect for others, and loyalty form the foundation for a returnee's character development and encourage citizenship (Schmid, 2013). Strong character traits include compassion, honesty, and fairness. These moral and ethical principles are taught and reinforced throughout the non-custodial reintegration process. The respondents to the study

believed that public awareness and dialogue significantly promoted non-custodial reintegration programmes. One of the Al-Shabaab returnees affirmed this finding, saying that:

NGOs and community-based organizations in Mombasa County have helped to raise awareness about the significance of non-custodial reintegration. The growing killing of returnees had previously disturbed the community. For fear of a returnee family member being killed, the community also concealed the existence of returnees within them (Interview with a returnee, 30th August 2022).

Returnees in Mombasa County have already begun developing a regional communication strategy to combat extremist propaganda. Additionally, they participate in anti-radicalization campaigns that have been created in educational settings, places of worship, and businesses. The survey found that the national government conducts public awareness campaigns aimed at members of extremist organizations and those considering joining them. In addition, an initiative supporting non-custodial reintegration brings together former inmates, community members, women, and police to help build trust.

3.3 Creation of Income-Generating Activities

As part of a non-custodial reintegration approach to combating terrorism in Kenya, respondents were asked to judge the efficacy of newly formed income-generating activities to support the welfare of the returnee terrorist fighters.

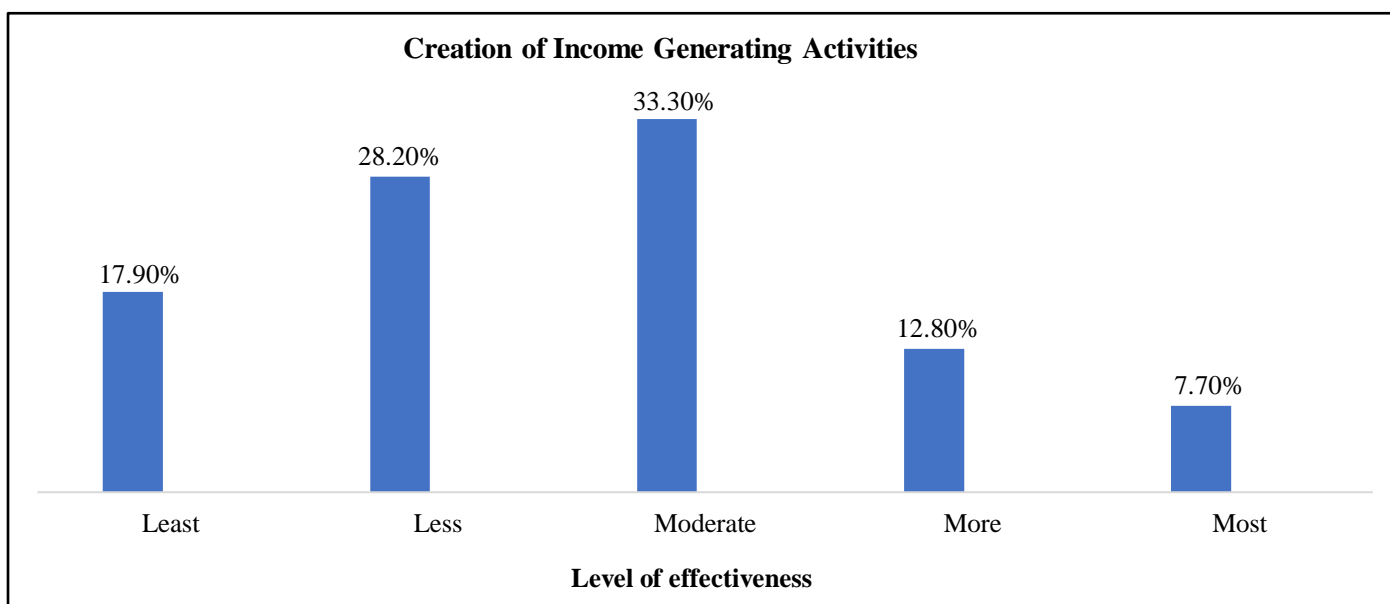


Figure 3
Creation of Income-Generating Activities

According to the results shown in Figure 3, 33.3% (112) of respondents believe that the intervention had a moderate impact on helping returnee terrorist fighters reintegrate. In comparison, 28.2% (95) believe it had the least impact, 17.9% (60) believe it had no impact, 12.8% (43) believe it had a greater impact, and 7.7% (26) believe the strategy had the greatest impact. Most of the returnees left Al-Shabaab with nothing since they were on the run (Farrall, 2002). When they complete the rehabilitation phase, they must be assisted to reach their communities. To cater for their immediate basic needs, the returnee terrorist fighters are given some assistance, whether cash or virtual assistance. During this period, they are joined by their family members. Organizing sporting activities, skill-transfer vocational training, and educational opportunities are all part of the activities in the non-custodial reintegration process (Cullen & Applegate, 1997).

Many young people have deserted and made dangerous journeys away from their home countries, lured by economic incentives by Al-Shabaab to recruit them to their terrorist organizations. This means that more effort and funding allocated to combating terrorism and violent extremism might go into avoiding support for violence up front and reducing recruitment to terrorist organizations down the road (Dzoro et al., 2019). The government of Kenya has made a deliberate effort to address youth unemployment by establishing the Youth Enterprise Development Fund

(YEDF), a state corporation with the mandate to provide financial and business development support services to youth-owned business enterprises.

The purpose of the fund is to inspire young people to become job creators rather than job seekers by encouraging them to start their own businesses and offering employment possibilities for other young people. Other programs, such as the "Uwezo Fund" and the Women Enterprise Fund, also offer financial assistance to young people for the purpose of furthering their education. The latest development is the creation of a hustle fund by the present government to provide seed capital for youths to start small enterprises. Young entrepreneurs, particularly those working to produce agricultural goods and services, can borrow money from the Youth Fund easily and affordably.

3.4 Multi-agency Approach

Respondents were asked to judge the success of employing a multi-agency approach for the non-custodial reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters in order to combat terrorism in Mombasa. This was done in order to prevent terrorist attacks in the city.

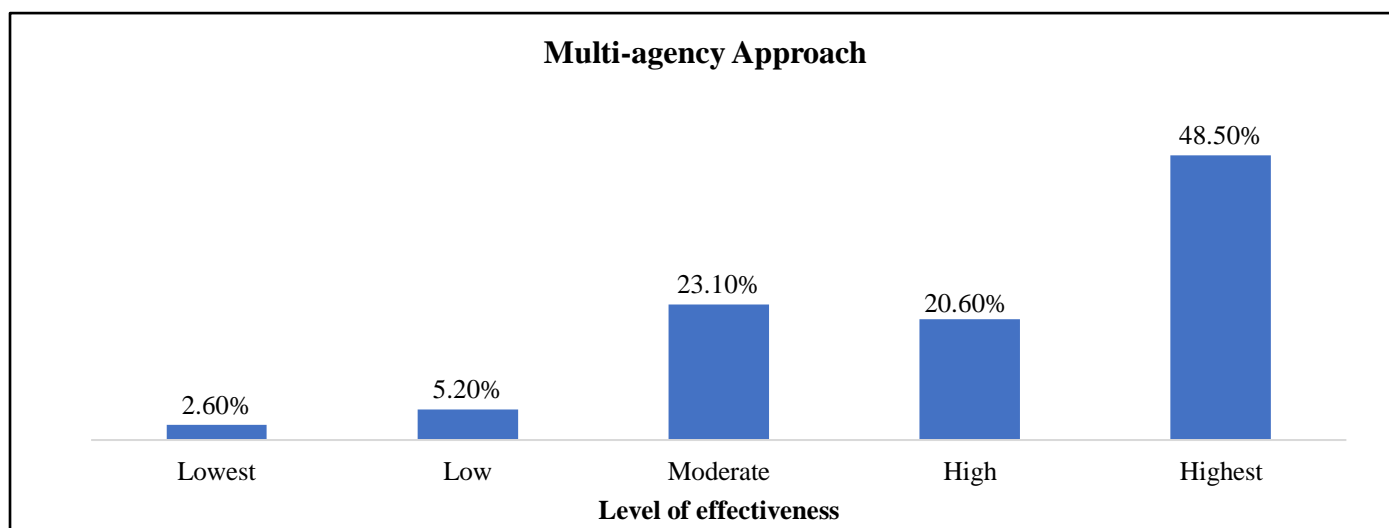


Figure 4
Multi-agency approach

According to the results shown in Figure 4, 48.5% (163) of respondents said using a multi-agency approach to reintegrate the returnee terrorist fighters was the most successful way to fight terrorism in Mombasa County. Another 20.6% (69) of them gave it a high rating, followed by ratings of moderate effectiveness from 23.1% of 78 respondents, low effectiveness from 5.2% (18), and lowest effectiveness from the remaining 9 respondents, constituting 2.6%. According to the findings, all interested parties must be involved in the successful development and facilitation of non-custodial programs for the reintegration of returnee terrorist fighters, thereby promoting an understanding of the strategies that work best to prevent extremist recruitment and radicalization (Gatimu, 2014).

The main goal of using a multi-agency strategy for non-jail reintegration of returned terrorist fighters is to make it less likely for extremist offenders to commit crimes again through re-socialization and aftercare (Sim & Ismail, 2016). The non-custodial reintegration programs that assist returning inmates with job search, education, housing, debt reduction, and dealing with their psychological issues, including post-traumatic stress disorders or family reconciliation, are crucial parts of the multi-agency strategy. Through the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), the institution tasked with coordinating the execution of a non-custodial reintegration plan, the government is currently working with various partners to put some components of the strategy into action.

The NCTC collaborated with the European Union and the Government of Denmark to develop and implement training programs for various law enforcement officials, as well as officers working in prisons and probation services. The goal of these programs was to equip these professionals with the appropriate intervention tools and techniques for identifying and managing radicalization cases. To provide a holistic approach with an emphasis on deterrence and rehabilitation, both the means and messages in non-custodial reintegration programs need to be designed and addressed (Maruna & Lebel, 2003). This is necessary to provide an effective and holistic reintegration strategy.

3.5 Availability of Gender-Responsive Programs

The objective of the study was to investigate how existing non-custodial reintegration programs have promoted not only the improvement of returnees' welfare but also equally developed programs that are gender-responsive and that address particular unique issues, which may impede the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of both male and female terrorist offenders back into society (Koehler, 2015). The non-custodial reintegration programs concentrate on issues that are unique to women, men, boys, and girls, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, dysfunction in the lives of returnees, parental anguish, and low self-esteem, all of which frequently lead to incarceration for returnees (Ondeng, Sirera, & Kathungu, 2021). This is because these issues are frequently the root cause of returnees reoffending and being sent back to prison. Advocates for gender-responsive programming also warn administrators of prisons and jails about developing "gender-neutral" programs, which are based on male conventions and hence primarily mirror the criminal trajectories of male offenders. Programs that are gender-responsive recognize the varied paths that male and female offenders take to become criminals. In assessing the gender-responsive therapies provided within each of their respective non-custodial reintegration programs, the study looked at how many returnees participated in the programs that were gender-responsive.

Table 1

Participation Levels in Programs that are Gender Responsive

Reintegration Programmes	% participating
Training on life skills	18.8%
Economic empowerment training and Mentorship	15.9%
Training about how to interact with your spouse and family	59.7%
Parenting skills education	8.6%

In the survey, out of the 30 returnee terrorist fighters studied, it was discovered that 18.8% (6) of the returnees took part in life skills training, and 15.9% (54) actively participated in the program for economic empowerment training and mentorship. The returnees are trained on interpersonal connections with spouses or family members in 59.7% (201) of the program events. These results indicate that the non-custodial reintegration programs and activities offered to returnee terrorist offenders in Kenya have not yet considered their psychological requirements. The perceived objectives of the interpersonal relationship skills training are an encouraging step towards addressing issues of dysfunctional and strained relationships, reconciling with one another, and strengthening ties between returnees and their spouses and other family members to increase the participation of the host community in the reintegration process.

Given that young women who joined foreign terrorist groups eventually return home to resume their parental roles and responsibilities, it is possible that programs that emphasize parenting and parenting skills training could give them practical skills in childcare and other areas, thereby reducing their chances of recidivism. The study emphasizes the need to equip mothers participating in correctional programs with parenting knowledge and skills to lower their level of parental distress and, in turn, lower crimes associated with it, such as drug and alcohol abuse, forgery, child neglect, and parent-child murder (Ferraro & Moe, 2003).

Non-custodial reintegration programs that fall short of activities that directly assist mothers in developing coping mechanisms for their parental roles and responsibilities run the risk of leaving mothers who return home less equipped to handle the same problems that may have radicalized them and drawn them into terrorist organizations. The results indicate the failure of non-custodial reintegration programs to satisfy the demands of Kenyan women terrorist offenders for adequate parenting education.

Although it is generally accepted that the harrowing experiences of the battlefield are significant factors and may be strongly associated with criminality in returnee offenders (Onditi & Odera, 2021), these studies show that the majority of returnee offenders lack the fundamental life skills to deal with life's challenges, which explains why they have a tendency to engage in criminal behaviour. Some of these challenges include having difficulty finding a job, having anger problems that are difficult to manage, having difficulty building healthy human connections, and being unable to create goals that are attainable.

The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (also known as the Bangkok Rules) encourage authorities to use as many options as possible, such as home-based open prisons and community-based programs and services for women returnees. This is to ease their transition from prison to liberty, reduce stigma, and re-establish contact with their families at the

earliest opportunity. The Bangkok Rules call for the establishment of comprehensive programs that offer pre- and post-release reintegration therapies and services, with particular attention paid to the requirements of female inmates.

In order to aid in the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated women back into society, administrators of correctional services implement non-custodial reintegration programs in collaboration with neighbourhood community organizations, non-governmental organizations, probation and social welfare services. These programs provide additional support for released female inmates who require psychiatric, physical, legal, and practical assistance when they are granted their freedom.

In order to ensure the successful social reintegration of released female convicts, additional support should be provided to them after their release. This support should be psychological, medical, legal, and practical assistance. This assistance should be provided in collaboration with community services (Bangkok Rule 47).

Methods of risk and need assessment for non-custodial reintegration programs should be gender-sensitive. It is important for the professionals who are engaged in producing and using them to have gender-sensitive skills and training to notice and reduce the amount of unconscious bias that is present in assessments. It is important that assessments consider the possible threat posed by certain women, both in terms of safety and in terms of the possibility that other women will become radicalized and violent.

IV. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

Numerous efforts have been made to establish and carry out non-custodial reintegration programs for terrorist combatants who have returned home after participating in an overseas conflict. The study showed that the best ways to promote the non-custodial reintegration of the returnee terrorist fighters in Mombasa County were to use a multi-agency strategy, public education, and the development of income-generating activities. To help reduce the number of people who join the militia groups, besides increasing the number of returnees, the host community and the County Government of Mombasa should support and encourage community participation and involvement in designing the non-custodial reintegration programs for the returnee terrorist fighters. This will ensure that community members are involved in reintegrating the returnees. Consequently, the returnees will be embraced as part of society. Creating awareness in society is very important. The host community must understand that returnees in society need encouragement. This will help members of the family and the host community accept them. The government and other non-state actors should provide a support system for the returnees to improve the efficacy of the non-custodial reintegration process. The effectiveness of these programs depends on various factors, including the specific program's design and implementation, the individual returnee's level of engagement and commitment to the program, and the level of community support and acceptance for the individual returnee's reintegration. Overall, non-custodial reintegration programs can effectively prevent recidivism and promote successful reintegration, but they require careful planning, implementation, and monitoring to be successful.

4.2 Recommendations

Programming for non-custodial reintegration should consider the ways in which women and girls experience violent extremism and conflict, given that their experiences are likely to be very different from those of men and boys. The programming that is intended for women and girls should have unique components that are directed toward them. Some examples of these components include those that deal with parenting and concerns associated with parenting, socioeconomic empowerment, and networking. The reintegration programs ought to be directed by professionals who are aware of the effects of trauma, who are gender sensitive, and who are also sensitive to the issues that women face in their daily lives. In addition to this, they ought to deal with the "push factors" of prejudice, unfairness, and a general lack of respect for women that are present in their own communities. If the problem is not addressed, there is still a chance that women will be attracted back to the ideology of terrorist organizations that use violence.

Interventions aimed at women and girls, as well as P/CVE initiatives in general, ought to incorporate the participation of women both in the planning and carrying out of those interventions. This encompasses female law enforcement officials and practitioners, psychosocial care providers, religious and other types of therapists, as well as women who hold leadership positions in CSOs. In addition, governments should provide training on gender sensitivity to organizations, practitioners, and professionals that engage with female returnees or other women and girls who may be the target of non-custodial reintegration programs. These women and girls may include returnees from non-custodial reintegration programs.

Cognitive skills training programs as well as anger and emotional management programs, if incorporated into the non-custodial reintegration programs, may be able to assist the returnee terrorist fighters in changing their behaviors and learning to survive in a way that is socially acceptable. According to the Red Cross (2013), having good life skills is one of the most important factors in being able to deal with the challenges and changes that life brings. The improvement of a person's psychological and social well-being can be accomplished through the cultivation of life skills such as efficient communication, optimistic thinking, analytical ability, goal planning, cooperation, and coping. Improving people's and communities' life skills enables them to face and overcome difficulties and risks, grab opportunities, and work together to find peaceful and cooperative solutions to problems.

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