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Influence of Pull Dynamics on Terrorism Involvement by the Youth in Wajir County, Kenya

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Abstract

Cases of youth involvement in terrorism in the East African region have been on the rise. This development has been influenced by a number of socio-economic factors that have contributed to the growth of domestic radical groups. This study therefore assessed the pull dynamics that influence terrorism involvement by the youth in Wajir County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population for the study was the youths aged between 15-30 years from Wajir County, Kenya. A questionnaire was used in data collection. The research findings reveal that the level of recruitment into jihadism and radicalization in Wajir County is high. The pull factors that attract the youth into terrorism as revealed in the study are money, social status and prestige, indoctrination, respect, attractive reputation and access to power. Overall, it is evident that pull dynamics highly influence youth radicalization. The study suggests that policy makers should come up with multiple approaches to address the positive incentives that lead to youth recruitment into terrorism. Further studies should focus on other youth radicalization dynamics that promote recruitment into terrorism groups focusing in other regions of the country for comparative purposes.

Key words: Kenya, Wajir County, Pull Dynamics, terrorism, jihadism, youth

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Introduction

According to Botha (2014), as radicalization and terrorism continues to rise for years, most of them have targeted the youth due to their vulnerability as a result of both external and personal factors. The reasons for radicalization and joining extremist groups vary depending on social groups, religion, countries and regions. Globally, different groups ranging from political organizations and religious groupings have recruited the youth, particularly during uprisings, elections among others to intimidate the opposing groups, create disturbances, fear and instability and even train them to mount attacks on their opponents and supporters (Gurr, 2013). However, the reasons why the youth have been a target have remained a contention with scholars struggling to arrive at an agreement. Since the 9/11 attacks in 2001 numerous publications have been published regarding youth radicalization and recruitment into terrorism but only a small number has been subjected to scholarly reviews due to their poor standards for methodological transparency and scholarly replicability.

The pull factors as discussed in Alkan (2019) represent the positive incentives, attracting the youth to join terrorism groups and include reputation, propaganda and indoctrination, revenge and indirect identification with victims of violence and material inducements. Cases of most Somali youth as studied by Chome (2019) revealed an attractive reputation earned by joining Al Shabaab. According to Akbar (2017), the youth are delivered from irrelevance to prominence where the youth who are Al Shabaab members gain immediate respect and access to power, thereby strengthening their sense of self-worth. Secondly, it creates an identity as the recruits are branded as "defender of country and religion." The study is therefore an assessment of the influence of the positive factors on youth involvement in terrorism in Wajir County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Cases of youth involvement in terrorism in the East African region have been on the rise. In Kenya, for instance, involvement in terrorism by the youth has manifested itself through the spread of extreme ideologies which have led to emergence of extremist and terrorist groups with jihadist ideologies (Nalugala, 2018). This development has been influenced by a number of socio-economic factors that have contributed to the growth of domestic radical groups. According to Speckhard and Shajkovci (2019), the current wave of extreme terrorism by the youths in Kenya has also led to the emergence of "home grown" terrorists unique to individuals and groups inspired by religion and socio-economic factors. The rampant immorality cases in Kenya have also been a critical factor in facilitating youth involvement into jihadist terrorism (Mwangi, 2017).

Youth involvement in jihadist terrorism poses grave economic, political and social impacts. As outlined in Rink and Sharma (2018), past attacks have witnessed Kenyans and foreigners lose life and acquire injuries; for instance, the Westgate Mall attack in 2013 and the Dusit attack in 2019. Economically, foreign countries such as the USA and UK have issued travel advisories that have paralyzed the tourism sector leading to loss of foreign revenue. Homegrown terrorism on the other hand has complicated the fight against terrorism as the effective measures of counterterrorism and counter-radicalization have been complicated by the fact that recruitment factors are multifaceted (Sikolia & Mberia, 2019). The North Eastern Region of Kenya, where Wajir County lies has had its fair share of terrorism activities with a series of terrorist attacks such as bombings,

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kidnappings and cross-border invasions posing a threat to security and economic activities in the county (Menkhaus, 2015). According to the most current arrests and reports from government and non-government organizations, the youth are the key players. Therefore, to effectively counter terrorism and radicalization it is significant to unearth the pull dynamics of radicalization of members, especially the youth, to terror groups. This is necessary as it will aid in understanding, through historical examination of the youth in Kenya, the drivers of youth radicalization under extreme ideologies opening avenues for dealing with the menace that has become a threat to national and international security.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to assess the influence of pull dynamics on terrorism involvement by the youth in Wajir County, Kenya.

Review of Related Literature

The drivers of youth radicalization as discussed in Nalugala (2018) have been multifaceted with the nature of the recruits varying from the young, educated and privileged to the elderly, illiterate and non-privileged recruits. However, the country has had difficulties in unearthing the factors that lead the young and educated to radicalization and jihadist terrorism. In addition, the recent terrorist attacks have broken the stereotypic view and the long-standing association of ethnic Somalis to terrorism by Kenyans (Bailey, 2019). With little chance of getting any education or jobs, Mazrui, Njogu and Paul (2018) state that young slum dwellers in Kenya are easy prey for terrorist recruiters from al-Shabaab and ISIS. Equally important, Rink and Sharma (2018) noted that rampant corruption has driven a rise in youth radicalization.

Propaganda and indoctrination as discussed in Hassan (2012) have been extensively used to draw the youth into terrorism and violent extremist groups by crafting messages that associate social status and prestige with membership into terrorist groups. The motives of honor and prestige in the recruitment of suicide bombers through the promise of obtaining paradise are some of the reasons for joining Al Shabaab. The ideology driven in this case is that paradise is a reward for those who die as martyrs (Sikolia & Mberia, 2019).

Although most extremist groups targeting the youth in such as Boko Haram, ISIS, Al-Shabab, Al-Qaeda etc. use religion to manipulate their convincing arguments based on religious claims, religion is not the foundation of its recruitment. Instead, these groups target youth groups who feel that they are socially aggrieved with a promise of providing in areas where the government has not been able to deliver or improve its strategic approach. In addition, the groups seem to thrive in recruiting the youth who have a feeling of historical, social, political and economic marginalization (David, Asuelime & Onapajo, 2015). Masten (2014) state that youth who feel marginalized and have limited social success opportunities in addition to those still in search of identity are a soft target for recruitment into jihadism and terrorist groups.

The lure of the youth into terrorism as discussed by Alkan (2019) has been triggered by the anger and desire to avenge the enemy. For example, the Al-Shabaab sympathizers still think that the AMISOM forces are anti-Muslim-a testament to the power of al-Shabab's determination to fight them out of Somalia. In addition, they are viewed as part of the suffering experienced by civilians and this affects the psychological well-being of individuals who are easily lured to fight for these aggrieved civilians. Lastly, King and Mohamed (2011) discuss that some youth are enticed by money, especially those who are more impoverished than others in society. Others are

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attracted to the power and influence that Al-Shabaab affords to its members, as recruiters offered them guns for joining.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on rational choice theory. Rational choice theory as discussed in Cornish and Clarke (2014) stems from economics and argues that people act in a way to maximize benefits and minimize costs. In relation to criminal behavior, Cornish and Clarke (2014) state that offenders seek to benefit themselves and weigh the "choice-structuring properties" of alternative actions. When applying rational choice theory to terrorism, it is important to consider the goals of the perpetrators because these goals guide strategic decisions. The theory entails rational choice in decision making; when youths are radicalized and recruited, they make decisions that may be rational or irrational. Rational choice theory states that terrorists' actions derives from a conscious, rational, calculated decision to take this particular type of action as the optimum strategy to accomplish a sociopolitical goal (Lambert, 2017). While applying economic theory on benefits maximization and cost minimization, rational Choice Theory relates to criminal behavior and proposes that offenders seek to benefit themselves and weigh the choices that they make in comparison with the available alternative courses of actions (Cornish & Clarke, 2014). When applying rational choice theory to terrorism, it is important to consider the goals of the perpetrators because these goals guide strategic decisions. The theory entails rational choice in decision making; when youths are radicalized and recruited, they make decisions that may be rational or irrational. The theory is relevant in this study as it tries to explain the perceived benefits that the youths achieve by joining jihadist terrorism such as material gain and social status in the society. Basically, the theory tries to explain the pull factors of youth radicalization and jihadist terrorism.

Methodology and Design

This study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population of the study comprised of 185, 959 youths aged between 15-30 years old in Wajir County. Stratified random sampling technique was applied in selecting 400 respondents, computed using Yamane (1967) formula for sample size determination. Questionnaires were used as the main data collection instruments. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analysis and the results obtained presented in form of tables.

Findings and Discussion

Level of recruitment into jihadist terrorism

The respondents were required to indicate by ticking the level of recruitment into jihadist terrorism for the youths in the area and their responses are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Level of Recruitment into Terrorism

Level of recruitment	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	0	0.0
Very low	2	0.5
Low	38	9.8
High	291	75.2
Very high	21	5.4
Extremely high	35	9.0
Total	387	100.0

Source: Field Data (2019)

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As the table reveals, majority of the respondents reveal that 75.2% (291) of the respondents reveal that the level of recruitment into jihadism and radicalization is high, 9.8% (38) indicate that it is low, 9.0% (35) indicate that it is extremely high, 5.4% (21) indicate that it is very high while 0.5% (2) indicate that it is very low. Therefore, according to the respondents it is evident that the respondents agree that there is some form of recruitment into jihadist terrorism in the area.

The pull factors that attract the youth into radicalization or recruitment into jihadist terrorism

The respondents were required to tick (more than once) some of the positive incentives that attract the youth into terrorism and the responses are as disclosed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Positive Incentives Attracting the Youth into Jihadist Terrorism

Incentive	Frequency	Percent	
Revenge for death of a loved one	26	6.7	
Attractive reputation	117	30.2	
Respect	151	39.0	
Access to power	106	27.4	
Social status and prestige	311	80.4	
Money	358	92.5	
Indoctrination	167	43.1	

Source: Field data (2019)

The findings in Table 2 show that 92.5% (358) of the respondent's state that one of the positive incentives that attract the youth into terrorism is money; 80.4% (311) state that social status and prestige also attract the youth into terrorism. It is also evident that 43.1% (167), 39.0% (151) and 30.2% (117) of the respondents also indicated that indoctrination, respect and attractive reputation also attract the youth into terrorism. According to the table 27.4% (106) of the respondents indicate that access to power also attract the youth into terrorism while 6.7% (26) indicate revenge for death of a loved one as a positive incentive for the youth towards terrorism. Sikolia and Mberia (2019) stated that social status and prestige, money, propaganda and indoctrination have been used by terrorists to draw the youth into terrorism and violent extremist groups. In this case, terrorists craft messages with the impression that social status and prestige are affiliated to terrorist groups. According to Alkan (2019), some of the reasons for joining Al Shabaab (the largest terrorist group in the Horn of Africa) are honor and prestige through the promise of obtaining paradise. Chome (2019) outlined that most youths are driven into terrorism by the monetary and material rewards associated with terrorism, with the situation worsening due to the rising cases of unemployment affecting the youth.

The influence of pull factors on recruitment into jihadist terrorism and radicalization

The respondents also indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on several statements regarding the influence of pull factors on recruitment into terrorism and the responses were as shown in Table 3 below.

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Table 3: The Influence of Pull Factors on Recruitment into Terrorism

Statement	Strongly	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly
	agree				disagree
Youths engage in terrorism in order to revenge	22	64	39	128	134
against the ruling authority oppressing its	(5.7)	(16.5)	(10.1)	(33.1)	(34.6)
people.					
The attractive monetary reward leads to the	208	137	13 (3.3)	14 (3.6)	15 (3.9)
youths agreeing to recruitment into jihadist	(53.7)	(35.4)			
terrorism.					
Youths engaging in jihadist terrorism have an	61	61	58 (15.0)	130	77 (19.9)
attractive reputation as defenders of the	(15.8)	(15.8)		(33.6)	
oppressed					
Death of a loved one (being killed by the	51	64	35 (9.0)	87 (22.5)	150
government) may lead to recruitment into	(13.2)	(16.5)			(38.7)
jihadist terrorism for avenging in the future.					
Crafting messages that associate social status	154	131	22 (5.8)	41 (10.7)	38 (9.9)
and prestige with membership into terrorist	(39.7)	(33.9)			
groups is a leading distributor into recruitment					
into jihadist terrorism.					
The promise of better life in paradise	141	83	41 (10.6)	61 (15.8)	61 (15.8)
significantly contributes to recruitment of the	(36.4)	(21.4)			
youth into terrorism					

Source: Field Data (2019)

According to Table 3 above, 34.6% (134), 33.1% (128), 16.5% (64), 10.1% (39) and 5.7% (22) of the respondents strongly disagree, disagree, agree, are neutral and strongly agree respectively that youths engage in terrorism in order to revenge against the ruling authority oppressing its people. According to the table, a total of 89.1% (345) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that the attractive monetary reward leads to the youths agreeing to recruitment into jihadist terrorism. Also, 33.6% (130), 19.9% (77), 15.8% (61), another 15.8% (61) and 15.0% (58) of the respondents disagree, strongly disagree, strongly agree, agree and are neutral respectively that youths engaging in jihadist terrorism have an attractive reputation as defenders of the oppressed. The table also shows that 38.7% 9150), 22.5% (87), 16.5% (64), 13.2% (51) and 9.0% (35) of the respondents strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree and are neutral respectively that death of a loved one (being killed by the government) may lead to recruitment into jihadist terrorism for avenging in the future. Another 73.6% (285) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that crafting messages that associate social status and prestige with membership into terrorist groups is a leading distributor into recruitment into jihadist terrorism while 20.6% (79) strongly disagree and disagree. Lastly, Table 3 shows that 36.4% (141), 21.4% (83), 15.8% (61), another 15.8% (61) and 10.6% (41) of the respondents strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and are neutral respectively that the promise of better life in paradise significantly contributes to recruitment of the youth into terrorism.

Overall influence of pull dynamics on youth radicalization

The overall influence of pull dynamics was assessed, where deductions were made on whether pull dynamics influence youth radicalization and the results are as tabulated in Table 4 below.

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Table 4: Overall Influence of Pull Factors on Radicalization of the Youth

Overall influence	Frequency	Percent
Pull Dynamics highly influence radicalization	219	56.6
Pull Dynamics moderately influence radicalization	91	23.5
Pull Dynamics do not influence radicalization	77	20.0
Total	387	100.0

Source: Field Data (2019)

Overall, it is evident that pull dynamics highly influence youth radicalization as shown by 56.6% (219) of the respondents. However, 23.5% (91) of the respondents stated that pull dynamics moderately influence youth radicalization while 20.0% (77) stated that pull dynamics do not influence youth radicalization. The findings agree with Alkan (2019) who demonstrated that youths are lured into terrorism by positive factors such as anger and desire to avenge the enemy. Lastly, Christmann (2012) discusses the monetary factor and asserts that some youth are enticed by the financial gain, especially those in poverty stricken areas while others get enticed by the power and influence that these terrorist groups afford to its members, through the offer of ammunitions and an area of jurisdiction in case they gain experience by defeating the enemy.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The key aim of regression analysis was to compute the regression coefficient estimates of the regression connecting the predictors and youth radicalization as the response variable. All the multivariate regression assumptions were tested, that is, linearity assumption, normality assumption, homogeneity of variance assumption and multi-collinearity assumption. All the assumptions were fulfilled and therefore multivariate regression analysis was conducted with youth radicalization as the response variable and the indicators of pull dynamics (that is, reputation, propaganda and indoctrination, material inducement and revenge) as the predictors.

The model summary results in Table 5 below, demonstrating the model fitness show that the R square is 0.681, meaning that the four indicators of pull dynamics in the model account for 68.1% of the variance in youth radicalization. The 31.9% is accounted for by pull dynamics factors that were not part of the study. The adjusted R square of .676 is closer to R square value, and the closer the two values are, the better the fit is the model.

Table 5: Multivariate Regression Model Summary

	-		U	
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the
			_	Estimate
1	.825a	.681	.676	.36176

a. Predictors: (Constant), REPUTATION, PROP&INDOCT, MATERIAL INDUCEMENT,

REVENGE

Source: Field Data (2019)

The ANOVA results were provided in Table 6 below to test the null hypothesis that the regression slope is not different from zero. The F statistics in the table indicate that the regression slope of the model is significantly different from zero (F $_{(3,383)}$ =182.500, p<.001). Therefore, the claim that the regression is not different from zero is rejected implying that regression is different from zero.

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Table 6: ANOVA Test Results for Multivariate Regression Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	29.200	3	7.300	182.500	.000 ^b
1	Residual	15.181	383	.040		
	Total	44.380	386			

a. Dependent Variable: NPLs

b. Predictors: (Constant), REPUTATION, PROP&INDOCT, MATERIAL INDUCEMENT,

REVENGE

Source: Field Data (2019)

Through the use of OLS, the regression coefficients were determined and the results are as shown in Table 7 below. REPUTATION, PROP&INDOCT, MATERIAL INDUCEMENT, REVENGE

Table 7: Multivariate Regression Analysis Coefficients

Model		Unsta	ndardized	Standardized		t	Sig.
		Coe	fficients	Coefficients			
		В	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.700	.315			1.791	.041
	REPUTATION	.134	.071		.194	2.451	.012
	PROP&INDOC	.201	.075		.181	3.323	.002
	MATERIAL	.211	.063		.290	3.985	.000
	REVENGE	.321	.051		.475	7.848	.000

Source: Field Data (2019)

The regression constant is 0.700 (p<.001); indicate that all other factors in the model at zero level; the performance of youth radicalization is positive. Meaning that at zero levels of pull factors, youth radicalization will still occur. These results indicate that if pull dynamics are addressed, the problem of youth radicalization will be tamed. The standardized regression coefficients for the REPUTATION, PROPAGANDA & INDOCTRINATION, MATERIAL INDUCEMENT and REVENGE are 0.194, 0.181, 0.290 and 0.475, all of which are significant at 5%, meaning that pull dynamics indicators have a positive effect on youth radicalization.

Conclusion and Recommendations

These results have shown the significance of pull dynamics on youth radicalization and therefore call for authorities to put in place policies to combat the pull dynamics factors that lead to youth radicalization. Some of the pull dynamics factors that encourage youth radicalization include, indoctrination and propaganda, material inducement, revenge and reputation. The study suggests that policy makers should come up with multiple approaches to address the positive incentives that lead to youth recruitment into terrorism. Religious leaders such as sheikhs and imams, communication channels such as the media should all come together to promote alternative narratives as compared to that driven by recruiters. Different stakeholders such government and non-governmental organizations should invest in educational opportunities to enlighten the communities on the extreme ideologies driven by the recruiters. Further studies should focus on other youth radicalization dynamics that promote recruitment into terrorism groups focusing in other regions of the country for comparative purposes.

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