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# Economic Marginalization Aspects Influencing Radicalization of Youth in Mombasa County

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## **Economic Marginalization Aspects Influencing Radicalization of Youth in Mombasa County, Kenya**

By

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### **Abstract**

Various factors driving youth radicalisation have been advanced, spanning political convictions, socioeconomic and religious ideologies, social anomie, and relational aspects. However, there has been a great tendency to downplay the significance of economic marginalisation as a driver of youth radicalisation with due consideration of the diversity of geopolitical and socioeconomic settings. Since Kenya intervened in Somalia, there has been a notable increase in youth radicalisation into groups such as Al Shabaab. Therefore, this study examined how economic marginalisation accounts for youth radicalisation in Kisauni, Mombasa County, Kenya. To contextualise the submissions, literature was reviewed to understand existing debates on the issue of youth radicalisation and identify the gaps. The study's arguments were anchored on human needs and frustration-aggression theories that examine the hindrances of attaining basic human needs as drivers for violent and criminal tendencies. The study used a descriptive survey research design. Data was collected from a sample of 399 respondents and forty key informants. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS and presented using statistical charts and tables, while qualitative data were analysed thematically using the excerpt method. The study found that compared to the other radicalisation motivators, most youths were economically marginalised and vulnerable to radicalisation. The study also found that the economic marginality of youth is a key driver for the radicalisation of youth in Kisauni Mombasa County. Moreover, the study established that CVE policy measures in Mombasa County were effective but needed to be tailored to address economic marginalisation attending youth radicalisation. The study concluded that Kisauni, Mombasa County's economic marginalisation significantly motivated radicalising youth and their propensity to join VEOs such as Al Shabaab, MRC, and local criminal gangs. The study recommended the enhancement of youth economic empowerment and the development of innovative skills for self-employment. Furthermore, the study recommended that relevant agencies review CVE approaches and policies to address economic marginalisation that motivates youth radicalisation. The role of the County Government in peace, security, and CVE needs to be enhanced in a multiagency framework for broader and comprehensive CVE.

**Key terms:** Counter Radicalization, Economic Marginalization, Extremist organisations, Extremist Violence, Financial Support, Land Grievances, Poverty, Radicalization, Secular reputation, Underdevelopment, Youth

## **Economic Marginalization Aspects Influencing Radicalization of Youth in Mombasa County, Kenya**

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### **1.0 Background to The Study**

Economic marginalisation leads to social groups or communities' exclusion from economic opportunities such as employment, economic development, financial support, and land tenure. These factors contribute to poverty and disillusionment among the youth, making them amenable to extremist violence options offering financial incentives. Scholars have had varied understandings of the motivations for extremist violence depending on geopolitical and socio-cultural inclinations (Rink & Sharma, 2018). Diverse cases ranging from the global and regional to the local context create a link between the contribution of economic marginalisation and youth radicalisation.

In France, the lack of gainful employment has been identified as a reason for youth joining Salafi Jihadist groups (Laqueur & Wall, 2018). Such is in the form of socioeconomic alienation among immigrant youth that prompts radicalisation within impoverished neighbourhoods. In Pakistan, the education system created a pool of youth who could not secure employment and faced discrimination (Menara, 2017). Moreover, it is noted that Pakistan has a significant potential for youth radicalisation resulting from the education system that is stratified along socioeconomic lines, with most youth needing help to secure meaningful economic engagement (Yususf, 2018). Indeed, the quality of education prejudices success in the job market to the disadvantage of youth.

Africa experiences the youth bulge phenomenon, where a larger population competes for ever-shrinking economic opportunities. According to the 2018 World Youth Report, by 2018, about 60% of the population was under 25 years (Obonyo, 2019). The youthful population is teeming with optimism and expectation of a better socioeconomic future, but structural hindrances inhibit their expectations leading to frustration. Moreover, the 2017 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) survey indicated that about 70% of voluntary recruits, who joined extremist groups, such as Al Shabaab and Boko Haram, were driven by the feeling of exclusion, marginalisation, lack of opportunities, and grievances towards the state (UNDP, 2017). Some youth cannot endure economic hardships and stare at a bleak future, thus predisposed to radicalisation agents on the promise of financial and employment opportunities.

In Kenya, some coastal areas are characterised by economic marginalisation that entails the lack of employment among a more significant number of youths, land grievances, poor development, poverty, and shortage of financial support to communities and households (Rink & Sharma, 2018). Notably, a micro-level study by Chitembwe, Okoth and Matanga (2021) revealed that poverty and unemployment affected 70% and 80% of Kwale and Mombasa Counties youth. Such variations in policy and academic perspectives on economic marginalisation leave the matter in limbo and thereby unaddressed. Nonetheless, youths face economic hardships and thus have reasonable grievances that extremist groups exploit.

Therefore, the study focused on determining how economic marginalisation motivates youth radicalisation in Mombasa County, Kenya.

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

Scholars have widely discredited the link between economic marginalisation and youth radicalisation. Despite this repudiation, the study contends that radical extremist organisations have exploited, and continue to exploit, economic marginalisation to radicalise youth. Studies by IISS and CSCR (2017) indicate that economic marginalisation ranked highest (at 29%) of the drivers of extremism. Approximately 20% of young persons between 14 and 30 years, hailing from the Kisauni area of Mombasa, have been recruited into Al-Shabaab, MRC, and other extremist groups (Speckhard & Shajkovci, 2019, pp. 15,17). For instance, 15% of youth from Kilifi, 20% from Malindi, and 5% from Lamu were reported to have joined Al Shabaab (Mombasa County Government, 2018, pp. 21-22). Available studies on radicalisation have not adequately examined the nexus between economic marginalisation and the radicalisation of youth. Furthermore, CVE policy approaches have not adequately factored economic marginalisation as an area of focus for mitigation. Therefore, there was a need to examine how economic marginalisation motivates the radicalisation of youth in Mombasa County, Kenya.

### **Research Objectives**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The general objective of this study was to analyse perceptions of Economic Marginalization as a motivation for youth radicalisation in Mombasa County, Kenya.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

- i. To examine drivers of youth radicalisation in Mombasa County.
- ii. To analyse economic marginalisation influence on youth radicalisation in Mombasa County.
- iii. To evaluate policy measures that influence countering youth radicalisation in Mombasa County.

### **2.0 Review of Related Literature**

The causal and motivational factors for radicalising youth into violent extremism have been advanced to revolve around needs, networks and narratives (Kruglanski, Bélanger & Gunaratna, 2019). It presents varied views on the causes and motivations, including religion, politics, social, environmental and economic factors. Hénin (2021) categorises the motivation factors in their importance to focus mitigation measures bringing on board economic aspects. This study posits that economic marginalisation is a central motivator of youth radicalisation in the Kenyan coastal region. Political, religious and social causes can be viewed as opportunistic on the vulnerability already created by economic marginalisation.

In Canada, the common generalisation is that radicalisation directly leads to terrorism. It is associated with young Muslim immigrants with the social isolation of young people by a society perceived as keen on wealth creation rather than building healthy relationships (Jones & Dawson, 2021). For instance, disenchanted youth Muslims who seek identity and purpose also hail from economically marginalised countries, which indicates that some youth recruited by Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO) experienced social anomie characterised

by family dysfunctions, family breakups, cruel or absentee parents, exploitation by, religious factors and political ideologies.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has experienced conflicts and instabilities occasioned by local Armed Groups such as Allied Democratic Front (ADF), Islamic State in Central African Province (ISCAP), *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), among others. A 2017 UNDP report cites the case of FDLR, which recruits young persons to join the outfit based on false promises of employment in mining companies or breweries in Eastern DRC (UNDP, 2017). These young persons from countries neighbouring Eastern DRC find themselves in training camps where they cannot escape without risking death—the economic hardships and poverty in the places of origin occasion this vulnerability. In the view of this study, the situation could have been different if the young people had sufficient means of sustenance and, therefore, could resist advances by recruiters.

A Study by Mueller (2018) on Al Shabaab and Political Violence in Kenya examines the role of external influences on the system of violence concerning its effects on Kenya's peace and stability. Referring to the postulation by World Bank (2011), the authors observe that the risk of conflict and violence arises from various "external stressors" such as cross-border conflict spill overs, international terrorism and criminal networks. Such "external stressors" interact with "internal stressors" like low-income levels, youth unemployment, corruption, land tenure grievances and human rights abuses, which conflate security concerns.

This study views the internal stressors as the push factors for youth to be radicalised to engage in Extremist causes readily presented by unstable neighbours such as Al Shabaab in Somalia. From the argument, Mueller (2018) opines that economic imperative, such as low-income levels, youth unemployment and corruption, form a more significant chunk of the perceived internal stressors/push factors. It lends to the notion of this study that economic marginalisation is at the core of youth radicalisation. However, the studies by Mueller looked at radicalisation in general and needed to adequately articulate the link between economic marginalisation factors and youth radicalisation. A study by Wekube, Nyagah, and Attree (2017) looked into Kenya's war on terror, especially around insecurity in Garissa. The scholars posited that the continuous marginalisation of ethnic Somali people has contributed to radicalisation and terror activities. Moreover, they point to the fact that due to affiliation to the Somalis in Somalia and the history of violence such as the *Shifita* war, it is much more difficult for ethnic Somalis to obtain identification documents required for unrestricted movement, securing employment and conducting commerce. This study notes that such segregation tendencies can create economic hardships and frustrations, thus increasing vulnerability to radical manipulations by Al Shabaab. It is due to the inability to secure meaningful economic ventures owing to a lack of proper documentation and identification.

Therefore, it is worth noting that violent extremist groups are adept exploiters of the prevailing economic gaps, inequalities and perceptions of injustice that arise from the existing political and socioeconomic system (Pavlović & Franc, 2021). Furthermore, agents of extremist groups offer alternative ideologies to concepts of free markets, democracy and multicultural diversity, thereby a promise of employment, security, and order. However, violence is broached to attain the new order and impose their ideologies onto society. Given the vulnerable position youth are placed in through entrenched economic marginalisation, this study views this as a reasonable possibility they could adopt.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

The research used the human needs theory and the Frustration-Aggression to provide a theoretical context for the study. The Human Needs Theory is associated with John Burton (1990) in the book '*Conflict: Human Needs Theory*'. It posits that all humans have particular basic universal needs; a conflict will likely occur when unmet. Burton identified that the needs central to destructive social conflicts include identity, recognition, security, and personal development (Burton, 1990). Human needs theory anchored the study as it advances the deprivation of human needs as a driver towards radicalising youth. As such, economic marginalisation affects attaining human needs, including survival and personal development. Therefore, people are placed in a vulnerable position that those offering alternatives, including extremist ideologues, can prey upon. Whereas this theory provides an explanatory context for the push factors of radicalisation, it does not adequately explain why some persons opt for violence or non-violence in redressing their needs-related grievances. Thus, the need to use the Frustration-Aggression theory filled the gap.

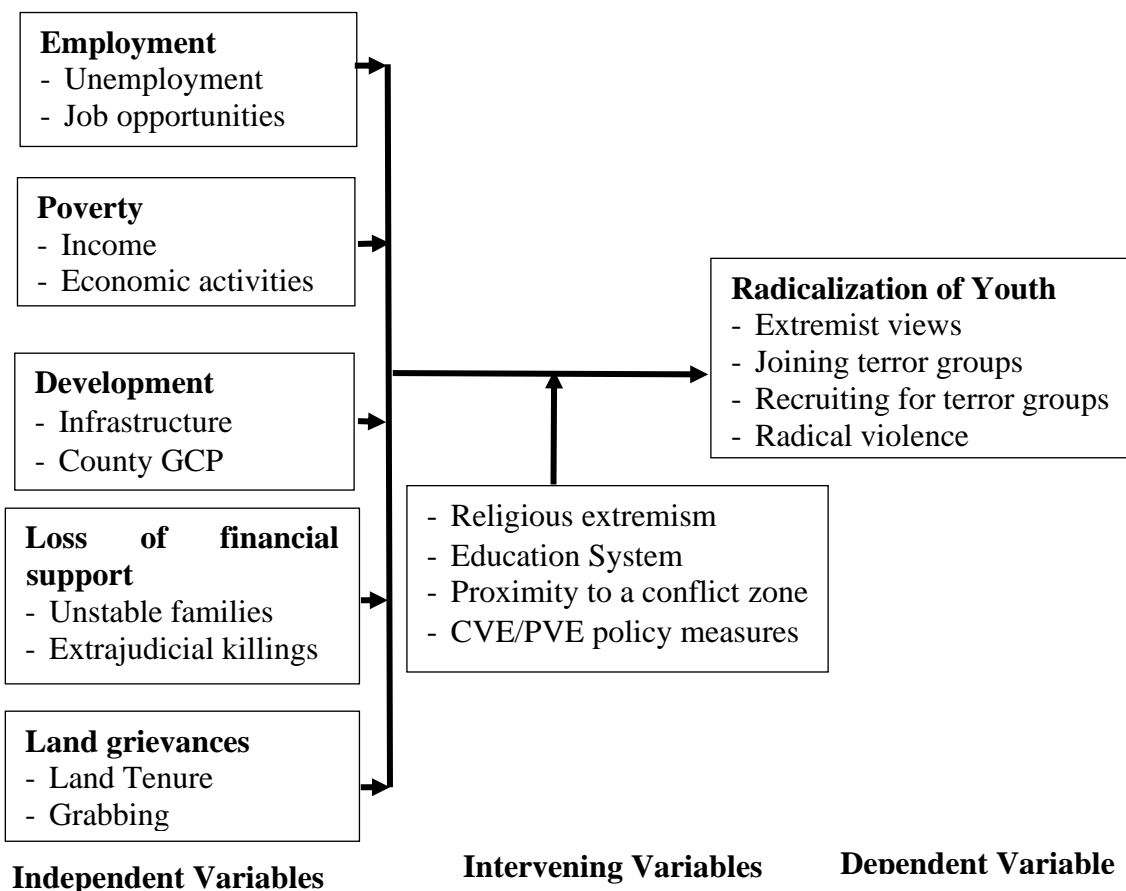
The Frustration - Aggression theory was advanced by Berkowitz (1989) following his work reformulating the frustration and aggression hypothesis. It posits that aggression is associated with blocking an individual's effort to attain a goal. A restructured argument posits that while frustration prompts both aggressive and non – aggressive behaviour, aggression is not necessarily an outcome of frustration (Miller, 1941). The fear of punishment can outweigh and even attenuate aggression until it disappears.

The frustration-aggression theory attempts to explain causes of violence more so when physical or structural circumstances hinder the attainment of aspirations. Economic marginalisation portends hindrance to an individual's basic needs and other aspirations. Therefore, it may prompt amenability to alternatives offered through radical causes that offer both some economic rewards and opportunities for vengeance against a society perceived to promote economic marginalisation. Furthermore, as opposed to the rigid need-based non-negotiable position of human needs theory, this theory acknowledges that frustration does not always lead to aggression, thus explaining why specific individuals opt for non-violent avenues.

## 2.6 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 below indicates the relationship between the Independent Variables (IV) and the Dependent Variables (DV). The IVs are economic marginalisation factors (Lack of employment, Poverty, County economic development, Loss of financial support, Land grievances). The DVs for the study are Youth Radicalization and the Intervening Variables are religious extremism, Education System and proximity to conflict areas. This is illustrated in Figure 2.1:

### Economic Marginalization Aspects



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

Source: Researcher, 2022.

As indicated in Figure 2.1, the study conceptualised Economic Marginalization factors as the Independent Variables influencing the Radicalisation of Youth as the Dependent Variable. The study viewed economic marginalisation as the primary motivating factor for youth radicalisation, thus having primacy over the other factors that motivate radicalisation. In this way, economic factors can be found to underlie all the other motivating factors for youth radicalisation. Intervening variables comprise religious extremism, education system, proximity to conflict zones, and CVE policy measures.

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### 3.0 Methodology

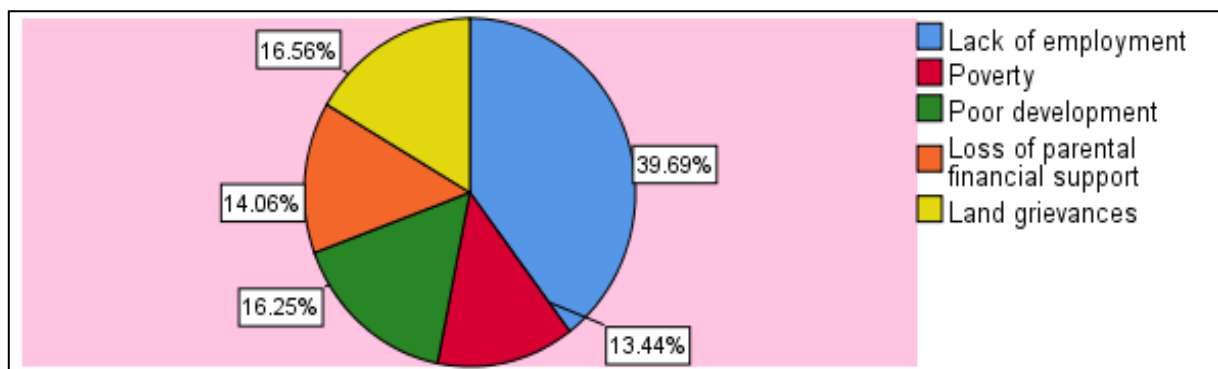
The study employed a descriptive survey research design, which enabled the in-depth engagement of participants and respondents while describing the situation as it manifested to the researcher in line with the research objective (Kothari, 2009). The study was conducted in Mombasa County, Kenya, focusing on Kisauni Sub-County due to the increased number of youths joining radical Extremist groups such as Al Shabaab and MRC, especially since the end of 2011. This study targeted youth aged 18-35 with diverse education and employment statuses. The study used a sample size of 399 respondents with a 95% confidence level, thus a 0.05% error margin. Key informants drawn from administrators, security agencies, NGOs, CBOs and youth groups were interviewed for expert input. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 25.0 and presented using descriptive statistics such as charts, graphs, frequency distribution and inferences statistics. Qualitative data from Key Informants' Interviews were analysed thematically using the excerpts method.

### 4.0 Findings of Study

The findings relating to the economic marginality perspective influencing youth radicalisation are presented in this section.

#### 4.1 Economic Marginalization Aspects

The study contended that economic marginalisation is a significant factor in youth radicalisation in Kisauni Mombasa County, Kenya. As such, the study sought to examine the economic marginalisation factors that led to the radicalisation of youth in Kisauni. The results were as presented in Figure 4.1;



**Figure 4.1: Economic Marginalization Aspects Motivating Radicalization of Youth in Kisauni, Mombasa County**

Source: Field data, 2022.

The majority (39.69%) of respondents reported that lack of employment was an aspect of marginalisation and a motivator of the radicalisation of youth in Kisauni. Moreover, respondents indicated that land grievances (16.56%), poor development (16.25%), loss of parental finance support (14.06%) and poverty (13.44%) as the main aspects of economic marginalisation of youth in Kisauni. The findings are congruent with the submission by Van (2019), who argued that economic hardships are a critical factor in radicalisation. Besides, these findings were observations by Chitembwe, Okoth and Matanga (2021), who established



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that in Kwale and Mombasa Counties, poverty and unemployment (80% and 70%, respectively) were the primary motivators of youth criminality and ascription to radical activities. The findings can thus be generalised to the coastal counties, which have experienced higher levels of youth involvement with Al Shabaab, MRC and other local criminal groups.

#### **4.2 Level of Economic Marginalization of Youth in Kisauni, Mombasa County**

The study sought to determine the level of youth economic marginalisation, and the results were as demonstrated in Table 4.1;

**Table 4.1: Level of Economic Marginalization of Youth in Kisauni, Mombasa County**

<b>Level of Marginalization</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Extremely Economically marginalised	78	24.4%
Highly Economically marginalised	139	43.4%
Moderately Economically marginalised	40	12.5%
Less Economically marginalised	44	13.8%
Not Economically marginalised	19	5.9%
Total	320	100.0%

Source: Field data, 2022.

Table 4.1 shows the rating of economic marginalisation as reported by respondents. The majority (43.4%) noted that youth in Kisauni are highly marginalised economically, 24.4% are extremely economically marginalised, 13.8% are less economically marginalised, and 5.9% indicated that they are not economically marginalised. The findings underscore the contention of this study on the significance of economic marginalisation as a significant factor in motivating youth into violent radicalism, the motivation of revenge or economic gain. It further supports studies in North Eastern Kenya by IISS and CSCR (2017), indicating that economic marginalisation ranked highest (at 29%). Generally, the majority of youth's perception of high economic marginality can be averred as a push factor for radicalisation as youth seek to fulfil their socioeconomic aspirations.

#### **4.3 Economical Marginalisation Based on Gender and Education Level in Kisauni, Mombasa County**

The study sought to analyse the economic marginalisation of youth based on Gender and Education level. The findings are indicated in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Economic Marginalization Based on Education Level and Gender**

		Rating (Percentage)					Total
		Not Likely	Less likely	Likely	Highly likely	Extremely likely	
<b>Education Level</b>	No Primary education	0	1.88	12.81	1.56	9.06	38.13
	Primary	8.12	1.56	23.75	0	0	33.44
	Madrassa	0	0	2.19	0	0	2.19
	Secondary	0.31	0	0.94	16.56	4.69	22.5
	Tertiary	10.31	0	0	0	0	10.31
	University	0	0	0	0	6.25	6.25
<b>Total</b>		<b>18.43</b>	<b>6.88</b>	<b>39.69</b>	<b>18.13</b>	<b>30.31</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	17.5	14.38	28.75	10.63	0	71.25
	Female	0	0	0	7.5	21.25	28.75
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>1.38</b>	<b>28.75</b>	<b>18.13</b>	<b>21.25</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data, 2022.

Table 4.2 presents perceptions of economic marginalisation based on gender and education level. Most (12.81% and 23.75%) indicated that youth with no primary education and primary education levels were most likely economically marginalised. The findings also demonstrate that 16.56% of respondents noted that secondary school-level educated youth were highly likely economically marginalised. In comparison, 10.31% of respondents indicated that youth with tertiary education was not likely to be economically marginalised. The findings support the contention by Yusuf (2018) that economically marginalised youth provide a pool vulnerable to recruitment by Al Shabaab, MRC and other local criminal gangs. Therefore, the findings demonstrate a significant link between education level and propensity to engage in radicalism owing to limited access to economic opportunities. In essence, the attainment of higher levels of education reduced the propensity for the radicalisation of youth.

Regarding gender relation to marginalisation, 28.75% of respondents indicated that male youths are highly likely to be economically marginalised. In comparison, 21.25% indicated that female youth are extremely likely to be marginalised. The findings indicate Gender biases in employment and the cultural roles of women in coastal societies. This is in resonance with the submission by Idris (2020) that gender biases persist in understanding women's role in VEOs. Moreover, Esangul (2017) observed that women critical players in terrorist groups due to their gendered perceptions that tend to deflect suspicion away from them. Notwithstanding this, the propensity of radicalisation among males is higher; therefore, the likelihood of economic marginalisation of male youth provides a bigger at-risk pool for radicalisation.

In supporting the above findings, key informants were asked to elaborate on how gender differential economic marginalisation leads to youth radicalisation in Kisauni. The findings revealed that in Kisauni, Mombasa County, economic marginalisation has emerged

as an especially significant justification for radicalism, often assumed to be religion based. One of the key informants adduced that:

Significant opportunities exist in informal, small-scale enterprises where female youth may be advantaged. It is because they frequently need more significant limitations and fewer opportunities than male youth, especially regarding formal income-generating activities. However, informal economic activities are not attractive to women, requiring higher levels of tenacity that female youth may not possess compared to their male counterparts. This, further limits their ability to participate meaningfully, and thus, they remain marginalised. It forces some of them to join radical groups like MRC, Al – Shabaab and local gangs that promise a stipend (Source: Interview with Mombasa County Official on 19 August 2022).

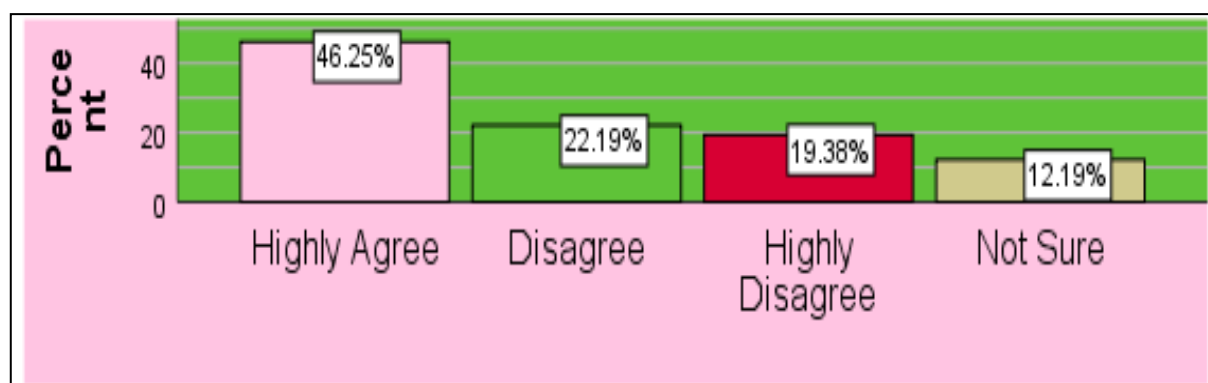
Despite these challenges, female youth are less likely to be radicalised than their male counterparts, meaning that there is a difference in economic marginalisation in terms of gender. In addition, males are more likely to support terrorism than females who, as observed by Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul (2017), may support these groups in conducting light duties such as logistics and intelligence gathering, *jihadi* brides, among other less prominent activities.

This study contended that youth marginalisation and socioeconomic exclusion lead them to participate in acts of violence and criminality. In this sense, men have a higher proclivity to violent extremism and criminality (Hunnicut & Broidy, 2019). It is important to note that the increase in radicalisation and violent extremism over the past years tends to correlate with the political and socioeconomic disillusionment of young men, as well as an increasing number of young women, who participate in extremist organisations such as Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, and ISIL (Ekpon, 2017). Similarly, the engagement of young people in organised violence, such as gangsters and criminal enterprise organisations, has been linked to high unemployment, a lack of opportunity, broken family systems, and social marginalisation (Messacar & Kocourek, 2019). Youth people are especially vulnerable to acts of violence and criminality; nevertheless, they also bear a substantial portion of the world's social and economic anxieties, and they are frequently the targets of forms of brutality, political turmoil, and terrorist attacks themselves.

#### **4.4 Vulnerability of Economically Marginalised Youth in Kisauni to be Radicalised**

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on the vulnerability of economically marginalised youth to be radicalised is depicted in Figure 4.2;

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**Figure 4.2: Vulnerability of Economically Marginalised Youth, in Kisauni, to Radicalisation**

Source: Field data, 2022.

Figure 4.2 presents respondents’ level of agreement whereby the majority (46.25%) stated that they highly agreed that economically Marginalised youth were vulnerable to radicalisation in Kisauni, Mombasa County, Kenya, and 22.19% disagreed, while 12.19% were not sure. The responses affirm that economically marginalised youth will seek to fulfil their financial aspirations even through nefarious means. Such opportunities are readily provided by extremist groups who offer ‘employment opportunities’ to desperate youth (Speckhard & Shajkovci, 2019). The view sums up the vulnerability of some economically marginalised youth to radicalisation, which may result from unmet needs.

### 5.5 Ratings of Economic Marginalization Factors Motivating Youth Radicalization

The respondents rated the likelihood of the different economic marginalisation factors motivating youth radicalisation in Kisauni, Mombasa County, Kenya. This rating was structured with Likert-type questions whereby 1 represented Extremely Likely, 2=Highly Likely, 3=Likely, 4=Less Likely, and 5=Not Likely. The results were as indicated in Table 4.3;

**Table 4.3: Likelihood of Economic Marginalization Aspects Motivating Youth Radicalization in Kisauni, Mombasa County, Kenya**

Economic Marginalization Factor	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lack of employment	320	1.00	5.00	4.4938	.91382
Poverty	320	1.00	5.00	4.3500	1.00781
Poor economic development	320	1.00	5.00	3.7156	1.00955
Loss of parental financial support	320	1.00	5.00	3.7094	1.07110
Land grievances	320	1.00	5.00	3.6406	1.09669
Valid N (listwise)	320				

Source: Field data, 2022.

From Table 4.3, lack of employment and poverty had high means of 4.4938 and 4.3500, respectively, indicating a high likelihood of them being reasons for youth

radicalisation, thereby agreeing with the findings by Chitembwe, Okoth and Matanga (2021). The findings also indicated means of 3.7156, 3.7094 and 3.6406 that poor economic development, loss of parental financial support and land grievances, respectively, as key determinants of youth's radicalisation. This likelihood rating is significant for CVE approaches tailored to address economic marginalisation factors driving the radicalisation of youth on the Kenyan coast. It points to the fact that economic development in the Counties needs to be enhanced in the context of devolution to arrest the radicalisation of youth.

The study findings affirm the submission by Otieno (2019) that unmet human needs subject individuals to frustrations that lead them to tamper with aggression, a ground for some youth to join radical, violent extremist groups. Furthermore, the findings repudiate the assertion by Rink and Sharma (2018) that macro factors such as politics and the economy did not motivate radicalisation in Kenya. Besides, Breidlid (2021) advocated for considering economic factors alongside religious motivations for radicalisation, an assertion supported by the findings of this study.

Religious and ethnic identities have often formed the basis for socioeconomic discrimination/ Despite being a crucial part of society, religion has, on occasion, been used as a tool for the promotion of bigotry and prejudice, as well as for the justification of terrorist attacks, particularly in recent times. The radicalisation of violent extremism has been rooted primarily in religious beliefs (Rink & Sharma, 2018). There is a possibility that economic marginalisation based on ethnic and religious identities had a role in making a large number of people, communities, and cultures more susceptible to radicalisation. A key informant noted:

There has been economic prejudice against Muslims, and ethnic Somalis in Kenya, a country that is split along ethnic lines. The prejudice has resulted in tensions, threatening the nation's safety. Discontentment has arisen due to discrimination since the communities cannot construct meaningful economic ventures. There has been legal sanction and corrupt practices, as well as inherent unfairness of both power and resources. Prejudice has created a hostile atmosphere, leading individuals, especially young people, to get involved in groups that radicalise them or establish terrorist groups (Interview with Mjambere *Nyumba Kumi*, chairperson, 21 August 2022).

These sentiments further support the argument that perceived and actual marginalisation and isolation from public funds, relative poverty, and unmet anticipations are socioeconomic factors that might lead to radicalism (Qureshi, 2020). Despite the direct connections often drawn between extreme poverty and radicalisation, a note should be taken that economic situations contain more than simply scarcity. When determining the extent to which economic conditions contribute to radicalism and terrorists, it is essential to consider references to unequal population expansion and the widening income disparity between people experiencing poverty and the affluent (Kitissou, 2020). There is a widely held belief that being poor contributes to terrorist acts. Communities characterised by poverty tend to overpopulate, thus compounding their inability to attain reasonable economic means to cater for their basic.

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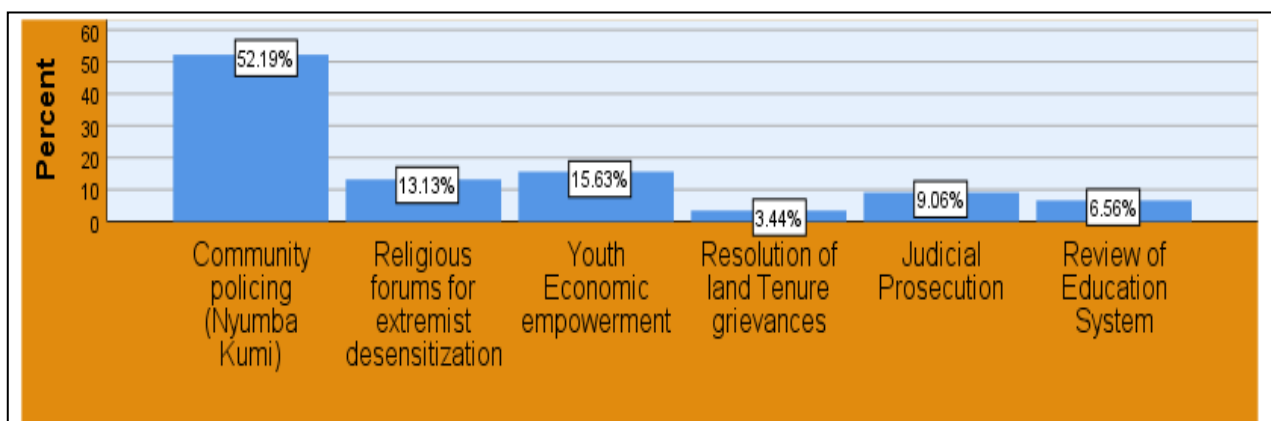
The marginalisation of young people in Kenya occurs within an unstable social position and rising unemployment rates (Mambili, 2020). To earn a livelihood in today's Mombasa, young people have to contend with a context of fierce rivalry. The pressures of everyday existence necessitate a constant recourse to unlawful behaviour and destroy the working of ordinary morals and ethics. For younger folks to have any optimism for the world, they require extraordinary character strength, innovative thinking, and perseverance (Chitembwe, Okoth, & Matanga, 2021). When it comes to efforts for political and economic growth, it is all too familiar for the requirements of young people to be addressed just as an afterthought. The reason why young people are protesting now is because of this unfairness, which includes things like high levels of unemployment and stigmatisation. A key informant opined that:

Politicians who know that the young's support is vital and the youngster's opposition is hazardous are aggressively mobilising the youth, even if the youngsters are denied possibilities for education and employment (Interview with youth action network of Kisauni CBO official 22 August 2022).

In Kenya, being young has become synonymous with being politically and economically underprivileged, fragile, and on the margins of society. The youngsters are disappointed at the stage where they should realise their potential. The reality is that the youngsters in so many parts of the continent share the obligations of supplying meals or revenue, taking good care of siblings, and (partly) trying to run the family (UNDP, 2017). In addition, regional disparities and imbalances are now a persistent cause of socio-political strife, disadvantaging youth.

#### 4.5.1 Counter-Radicalisation Measures

The study sought to identify CVE policy measures for countering youth radicalisation in Kisauni, Mombasa County. Respondents were asked to indicate counter-radicalisation measures being implemented to counter the radicalisation of youths in Kisauni, Mombasa County. The results were as presented in Figure 4.3;



**Figure 4.2: Counter-Radicalization Measures**

Source: Field data, 2022.

Most respondents (52.19%) indicated that the most adopted counterterrorism measure is community policing (*Nyumba Kumi*), 15.63% noted youth economic empowerment, 13.13% religious forums of extremist desensitisation while 3.44% resolution of land tenure grievances as presented in Figure 4.3. The finding implies that community policing is the most common method adopted to counter radicalisation in the region, in line with Mambili's (2020) findings. The preference for *Nyumba Kumi* (ten houses) community-based approach to CVE affords localised solutions to the problem of radicalisation of youth. Mambili (2020) found that community policing (*Nyumba Kumi*) moderately preferred a community-based CVE approach in Mombasa County. However, the higher preference for community policing does not address economic marginalisation but reflects the hardnosed attitude of CVE agents when combating radicalism. Economic empowerment of youth ought to take preponderance complimented by the other CVE measures. This will reduce feelings of economic exclusion and double-victimisation by youth, thus mitigating their vulnerability to VEO causes.

Additionally, the findings support avowals by scholars that before they resort to violence, those who engage in terrorist activity undergo a radicalisation process that exploits grievances (Cachalia, Salifu, & Ndung'u, 2016). CVE agencies and stakeholders ought to develop appropriate mitigation measures that address core issues relating to economic marginalisation. It is feasible to end radicalisation in its early stages and halt it from developing into terrorism (Chitembwe, Okoth, & Matanga, 2021). To this end, coordinated and collective CVE efforts are crucial. As such, the study sought to determine counter radicalisation organisations address terrorism in Kisauni. The lead organisations at the forefront of CVE include NCTC, ATPU, and NPS, as well as CBOs such as Youth for Peace and Leadership, Mijikenda Development Forum, and Safer Futures. A key informant noted that:

Most of these organisations provide us with an all-encompassing contribution to the collective efforts against terrorism under the coordination of NCTC, the County Government of Mombasa, and the Regional Commissioner of Mombasa County. I believe that it had contribution addresses the expressions of terrorist attacks as well as the different social, economic, political, and other variables that might engender circumstances in which terrorist institutions could interact with recruits and win support. I believe these organisations need to collaborate with relevant regional organisations, the corporate sector (business people, industry), and the media to encourage a team approach to combating terrorism at all levels (Interview with Kisauni Sub-County Police commander on 19 August 2022).

Militarised kinetic action is also among the CVE measures employed and is viewed as one of the most effective measures for physically eliminating terrorists. This was demonstrated in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, during which Al Qaeda frameworks were disassembled, and several terrorists were either killed or captured. High-profile radical leaders such as Sheikh Aboud Rogo were killed at the coast in extrajudicial circumstances. As Pyonting and Whyte (2012) observed, government counterterrorism measures adopt a brute-force trajectory that risks being miscounted as state terrorism. A key informant opened that:

Using military force is seldom effective and often has a negative effect. In addition to serving as repellents, special military operations have focused on promoting some of the particular organisational reasons advanced by terrorist leaders. Additionally, operations have served as deterrence for further terror attacks. However, the operations have been marred by accusations of extrajudicial killings and forced disappearance (Interview with Mtopanga Ward Administrator on 25 August 2022).

Besides, the views of the key informant resonate with the perception that younger people desired vengeance against Kenyan security agents (Wairuri, 2018). The overly aggressive CVE by security agencies often ignore economic imperatives attending youth radicalisation. Targeted youth feel double-victimised by structural factors hindering their socioeconomic aspirations and a brute-force approach to solving their plights.

## **5.0 Discussion**

The findings demonstrated that most (39.69%) sampled youths believed that lack of employment at the key marginalisation aspect, and (16.56%) land grievances. The findings show that the (43.4%) majority of respondents felt that the degree of economic marginalisation affecting youth in Kisauni is high and must be addressed to avert the current radicalisation rate. Based on gender, those individuals with no primary education (including drop-outs) were most likely economically marginalised. The findings imply that education level and gender are key determinants of economic marginalisation. The findings suggest that gender and educational qualifications are essential to determining socioeconomic exclusion.

These findings of the study lend to the conclusion by Ramasamy (2021) that there is a significant relationship between economic marginalisation and youth radicalisation. The study also noted the problem with many educated young people who are upset because they cannot find work and thus cannot sustain themselves due to economically disadvantaged situations. This problem may generate complaints along with sentiments of disenfranchisement. Henin (2021) submitted that young people not involved in gainful work are more likely to engage in behaviours that catch the eye of the ruling establishment to their plight. This argument appreciates Kitissou's (2020) assertions, who argued that when youngsters can no longer come to grips with their lack of necessities, they display a higher chance to respond by participating in violent extremist behaviour.

Ekpon (2017) noted that when economic opportunities are not easily accessible by more legal means, violent extremist institutions can be a fertile ground for recruits in areas with high unemployment. It is because they can promise a pathway out of poverty. VEOs are experts at exploiting growing economic disparities amongst the youth and the feeling of unfairness resulting from the existing socioeconomic systems. They give alternative ideological solutions to the story of free markets, representative government, and culturally diverse diversity, specifically ones that offer autonomy, order, and safety, with conflict as an instrument for trying to impose this view on broader society (Aziz, 2017). These ideologies offer alternatives to the narrative of unfettered capitalism, democratic republic, and culturally diverse diversity.

In Kenya, perceived economic marginalisation and isolation from state resources, relative poverty, and unmet anticipations are socioeconomic factors that might lead to radicalism. Although there is often a direct correlation between radicalisation and poverty, it



is essential to note that economic situations include more than only scarcity (Nyam & Idoko, 2019). It suggests many factors that enable or promote an environment for radicalisation and eventual recruitment into VEOs. When determining how economic conditions contribute to radicalisation and terrorism, it is vital to consider references to unequal development, population growth, and the widening wealth gap between people experiencing poverty and the affluent.

There is a widely held belief that being poor contributes to terrorist acts (Farhiya, 2020). However, upon examining the background information of a variety of terrorists, it has been shown that not just persons who are living in poverty are capable of committing acts of terrorism. The possibility of wealthy individuals being persuaded into extremism requires identifying the roles of the impoverished economic condition of affairs in radicalisation and extremism (Abbas, 2020). Thus, economically endowed youth tend to take more of an ideological orientation rather than being driven by economic marginality.

Young unemployed individuals are more likely to be radicalised and join violent groups or religious extremists. Unemployment also works as a fertile foundation for radicalisation. According to the research findings, 64.69% of youth in the study area indicated they were unemployed. As such, it makes Mombasa County a significant source of potentially radicalised young people. The county has been a focus for security agents due to the radicalisation efforts directed at Mombasa's younger population by VEOs such as MRC and Al Shabaab. Moreover, many young individuals from Mombasa County who are thought to have been recruited by Al Shabaab are from Mombasa County. This conclusion is consistent with the arguments made by Larsen (2019), who contends that young people without jobs are more likely to get radicalised and, as a result, to be drawn to forms of violent extremism.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

The study concluded that whereas youth radicalisation has been attributed to many factors, economic marginalisation was a significant factor driving youth radicalisation in Kisauni, Mombasa County. Marginality aspects such as lack of employment, land grievances, poor development and poverty contributed to structural hindrances of attaining meaningful socioeconomic needs, thus causing frustration and amenability to radical persuasions offering economic incentives. Moreover, the study surmised that the CVE approaches needed to be revised in addressing youths' economic marginality, thus requiring review.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

Given the findings, the study recommended addressing economic marginalisation in Mombasa County as part of a comprehensive economic empowerment of youth and CVE. Gender-specific considerations should be factored in to address the differential effect of economic marginalisation on male and female youth for appropriate solutions.

Furthermore, the study recommended that the education system be continuously improved to enable skill development for self-employment and adapt to socioeconomic dynamics. Finally, the study recommended that the national CVE agencies employ less aggressive approaches and formulate policy guidelines to mainstream economic empowerment to fight radicalisation in collaboration with County Government.

**Citation:** Kamais, C. E; Mulu, F & Macharia, H. M. (2023). Economic Marginalization Aspects Influencing Radicalization of Youth in Mombasa County, Kenya. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 7(3), 80 – 97.

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