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**INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON TERRORISM IN MOMBASA COUNTY KENYA**

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## INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON TERRORISM IN MOMBASA COUNTY KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, Mombasa County has experienced a disturbing pattern of terrorist activities, many of which have been linked to religious extremism. The coastal region of Kenya, including Mombasa, has been particularly vulnerable due to its religious diversity therefore the study sought to assess the influence of religion on terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya. The study was anchored on the concept of human needs theory. The study used a descriptive research design. The target population was 116 Sub-chief and Chief and 232 Community representatives, (Wazee wa Nyumba Kumi & Religious Leaders). Therefore, the total target population was 348. The data that was gathered in this study was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics such as percentages with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. Tables and pie charts were used present the study findings from quantitative data. While qualitative data was analyzed through content and thematic analysis and presented in prose form. The study findings revealed that recruitment into extremist groups was aided by the high percentage of students dropping out of elementary and secondary education. The study concluded that there is a strong positive correlation existed between religion on terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya, ( $r = 0.541$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The study recommended that religious institutions should facilitate interfaith dialogues to promote tolerance, understanding, and unity among different religious communities.

**Key Words:** Religion and Terrorism, Religious Extremism, Religious Ideology, Conflict for Religious Territory

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## INTRODUCTIONS

Terrorism is defined as a form of violence targeted against unarmed civilians with the aim of achieving a political and/or religious goal, (Schmid, 2019). The ultimate end-goal that terrorists seek to accomplish is to create an atmosphere of fear and anxiety among the populations where they carry out terror attacks (Neria, 2018). Once the people's way of life has been disrupted, terrorists' organizations ensure that they create a climate where people have lingering concerns about their security (Gary, 2016). Terrorist actions are often aimed at achieving maximum publicity, as noted by Aroche and Coello (2016). While political and economic gain are indeed common motives for terrorism, it is essential to acknowledge that some individuals engage in terrorist activities with the belief that it will lead to rewards in the afterlife, such as going to heaven, (Hoffman, 2020). Therefore, terrorism may also be driven by religious or ideological motivations, rather than solely for political or economic reasons. The perpetrators are mostly members of an organized group, and, unlike other criminals, they often claim credit for their acts. Finally, terrorist acts are intended to produce effects beyond the immediate physical damage they cause by having long-term psychological repercussions on a particular target audience (Riley, 2018).

There have been various cases of terrorism across the globe. Afghanistan has been plagued by ongoing insurgency, primarily led by the Taliban, which has posed significant challenges to the stability and security of the country. The Taliban insurgency has its roots in socio-economic disparities, poverty, and lack of infrastructure, especially in rural areas, (Sedra, 2020). Economic hardship and inequality have provided fertile ground for the recruitment of fighters and support for the insurgency. Moreover, the absence of effective governance and widespread corruption have exacerbated socio-economic grievances and fueled resentment among marginalized communities, providing a conducive environment for terrorist groups to thrive, (Ghafoori, 2017). Addressing the root causes of

poverty, unemployment, and inequality is crucial for promoting stability and countering extremism in Afghanistan.

The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has been a significant challenge, particularly in the northeastern region of the country. This terrorist group has perpetrated numerous attacks, targeting civilians, government institutions, and security forces. The insurgency has its roots in socio-economic conditions prevalent in the region, including poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education, (Iyanda & Falola, 2018). Studies have shown that socio-economic disparities and marginalization have contributed to the recruitment of fighters and support for Boko Haram among vulnerable populations. Additionally, the group's ideology, which opposes Western education and seeks to establish an Islamic state, has resonated with individuals disillusioned by socio-economic challenges, (Omole, 2019). Efforts to address the Boko Haram insurgency must address not only security concerns but also the underlying socio-economic grievances driving recruitment and radicalization.

In Somalia, the Al-Shabaab terrorist group has been a persistent threat, carrying out attacks and undermining efforts to establish peace and stability in the country. Al-Shabaab has exploited socio-economic grievances, including poverty, unemployment, and lack of governance, to recruit fighters and gain support among marginalized communities, (Menkhaus, 2017). The group's narrative of resistance against perceived injustice and corruption has resonated with disenfranchised youth, who see joining Al-Shabaab as a means of seeking justice and empowerment. Moreover, the absence of effective state institutions and the breakdown of law and order have created a vacuum that terrorist groups like Al-Shabaab have exploited to advance their agenda, (Menkhaus, 2018). Addressing the socio-economic root causes of extremism is essential for building resilience against terrorism and promoting long-term stability in Somalia.

Kenya has faced numerous challenges related to terrorism, particularly from groups like Al-Shabaab operating in neighboring Somalia. The country has experienced several terrorist attacks, including the Westgate Mall attack in 2013 and the Garissa University attack in 2015, which resulted in significant loss of life and heightened security concerns, (Agutu, 2016). While Kenya's counterterrorism efforts have focused on security measures, such as military operations and enhanced border security, underlying socio-economic factors have also contributed to the spread of extremism. Marginalized communities, particularly in the northeastern region of Kenya, face high levels of poverty, unemployment, and marginalization, creating fertile ground for recruitment by terrorist groups, (Wachira, 2016). Moreover, grievances related to land disputes, historical injustices, and perceived discrimination exacerbate social tensions and contribute to radicalization, (Wafula, 2017). Addressing socio-economic disparities and promoting inclusive development in marginalized areas are crucial for countering extremism and building resilience against terrorism in Kenya.

Religion has long been a powerful force in shaping individual and collective identities, but in some contexts, it has also been manipulated to justify violence and extremism. In Mombasa County, where Islam is the dominant religion, there have been increasing concerns about the role of radical religious ideologies in promoting terrorism, (Gary, 2016). Extremist groups such as Al-Shabaab have exploited religious rhetoric to recruit followers, especially among disillusioned youth, by framing terrorism as a form of religious duty. Some radical clerics have used mosques and madrassas as platforms to propagate extremist interpretations of Islam, undermining moderate religious teachings that advocate peace and tolerance (Ndzovu, 2017). While religion itself does not cause terrorism, its distortion can significantly influence individuals' motivations and justifications for engaging in violent acts. This underscores the importance of critically

examining the influence of religion on terrorism in Mombasa County to inform faith-based approaches to counter-radicalization and promote peaceful religious discourse, (Botha, 2019).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over the past decade, Mombasa County has experienced a disturbing pattern of terrorist activities, many of which have been linked to religious extremism. The coastal region of Kenya, including Mombasa, has been particularly vulnerable due to its historical, cultural, and religious diversity, which, while largely peaceful, has in some instances provided fertile ground for radical ideologies to take root. Reports of youth radicalization in mosques, the recruitment of locals into extremist groups such as Al-Shabaab, and attacks targeting both security forces and civilians have been widely documented (Ndzovu, 2017). Incidents such as the 2014 Likoni church attack, the targeting of clerics suspected of opposing radical teachings, and the frequent police raids on suspected terror cells illustrate the persistent threat posed by ideologically motivated violence in the region.

Despite counterterrorism efforts, including community policing, deradicalization programs, and surveillance of religious institutions, the appeal of extremist narratives continues to resonate, especially among marginalized and unemployed youth. This suggests that the interplay between religion and terrorism in Mombasa is complex and underexplored. While religion itself is not inherently violent, the manipulation of religious doctrines by extremist groups for political and militant purposes has raised serious concerns. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the influence of religion particularly in the context of radical teachings, clerical influence, and religious institutions on the prevalence and persistence of terrorism in Mombasa County over the last ten years. Understanding this relationship is vital for formulating holistic and sustainable counterterrorism strategies rooted in both security and community-based approaches.

## Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of religion on terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya. The study was guided by the following research questions;

- What is the influence of religion on terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on human needs theory. The human needs theory was developed by John Burton (1943). Burton perceived human needs as development essentials, hence leading to conflict and in this case terrorism. The theory further posits that human essential needs are personal fulfilment, safety, identity, self-esteem, cultural security, participation, freedom and distributive justice which are generally fairness in resource distribution, (Sandler, 2014).

Moreover, the theory provides a basis for linking conflict analysis with conflict resolution. Conflict resolution (as opposed to temporary "dispute settlement") requires a process that helps conflicting parties identify salient unsatisfied needs and consider methods of accommodating social arrangements to the ineluctable demands of "necessitous" individuals and groups. In some cases, at least, this may mean assisting the parties to conceptualize and implement significant "structural" changes (Rubenstein, 2012).

Human needs theory looks at unmet needs of an individual, group or community level leading to conflict; that is the unmet needs of security and identity of those living in Eastleigh; being denied legitimate identity as Kenyans or opportunities personally or nationally, the fact that they are targets of profiling and stereotyping, also not being recognized as refugees and at times being threatened or forced to return to war torn Somalia deeply and increasingly contribute to this area being an area where terrorists sprout from and also where they are harbored. The human needs theory

is an important aspect of conflict studies and conflict resolution, (Jenkins, 2016). The human needs-based approach to social conflict undermines conventional notions of conflict causation, in particular the idea that destructive social conflicts are produced instrumentally by a few manipulative leaders or expressively by the sheer existence of cultural or ideological differences, (Rubenstein & Crocker, 2011).

The theory was relevant to the current study in that individuals may resort to terrorism as a means of addressing perceived socio-economic grievances. In Mombasa County, where there are significant disparities in wealth, education, and employment opportunities, marginalized individuals may feel excluded from mainstream society and deprived of their basic needs. This sense of deprivation could fuel feelings of frustration, resentment, and alienation, leading some individuals to turn to terrorism as a way to assert their grievances and demand recognition. By applying the Human Needs Theory, the study delved deeper into the underlying socio-economic factors driving terrorism in Mombasa County. It can examine how economic inequalities, unemployment, lack of access to education and social services contribute to feelings of insecurity and discontent among certain segments of the population.

### Religion and Terrorism

Religion is a complex and multifaceted aspect of human society that has the potential to influence individuals and shape their beliefs, values, and behaviors. In the context of terrorism, religious influences identified as significant drivers that contribute to the emergence, motivation, and perpetuation of terrorist activities, (Piazza, 2019). Religious extremism serves an essential role in the operation of radicalization, leading individuals to adopt extremist ideologies and engage in acts of terrorism. Extremist interpretations of religious texts and doctrines can distort religious teachings and provide justifications for violence (Borum, 2018). Individuals susceptible to radicalization may be influenced by charismatic religious leaders or

propaganda that promotes a distorted version of their faith. This can lead to the adoption of violent beliefs, a willingness to engage in acts of terrorism, and a sense of religious duty to further their cause (Silke, 2017).

Religious identity and the perception of religious grievances can contribute to the occurrence of terrorism. When individuals strongly identify with a particular religious group, real or perceived threats to that identity can create a sense of victimhood and fuel hostility towards other religious communities (Juergensmeyer, 2016). This can lead to intergroup tensions, conflicts, and acts of terrorism driven by a desire to protect or promote one's religious identity. Religious conflicts often involve struggles for power, territorial disputes, or perceived violations of religious norms, all of which can be catalysts for acts of terrorism (Wiktorowicz, 2017).

Religious ideology and symbolism are often used by terrorist groups to legitimize their actions and mobilize support. Terrorist organizations may justify their violence by framing it as a holy war or a righteous struggle against perceived enemies of their faith (Horgan, 2018). Religious symbols, rituals, and rhetoric can serve as powerful tools for recruitment, creating a sense of belonging, identity, and purpose among individuals susceptible to radicalization (Moghadam, 2017). The utilization of religious ideology and symbolism helps to strengthen the group's cohesion, commitment, and motivation to carry out acts of terrorism.

Smith and Lee (2018) aimed to investigate the relationship between religion and terrorism across different French. The researchers collected data from various reliable sources, including national security agencies, academic databases, and reports from international organizations. The study employed quantitative analysis techniques, examining statistical associations between religious affiliations, extremist ideologies, and terrorist activities. According to the results of the research, religion alone does not directly cause terrorism, certain religious contexts and interpretations can

provide fertile ground for radicalization and recruitment into terrorist groups in Europe.

Müller and Schmidt (2018) aimed to investigate the potential link between religious education and youth radicalization in the United Kingdom. The researchers conducted a mixed-methods study, combining surveys, interviews, and content analysis of religious education curricula in the UK. The study included both quantitative data, such as surveys assessing attitudes towards violence among religiously educated youth, and qualitative analysis of teacher interviews, student interviews, and parent interviews. The findings suggested that while religious education itself does not directly promote terrorism, certain elements within the curriculum and pedagogy can contribute to radicalization processes by reinforcing a binary worldview and fostering a sense of religious exceptionalism among UK youth.

Da Silva and Fernandes (2021) examined the impact of religion on terrorism in Brazil using a mixed-methods research design. They selected a sample of 2,100 participants through cluster sampling. Data were collected using surveys and focus group discussions, analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings revealed that radical religious beliefs were significantly associated with support for terrorism. The study concluded that religious leaders could play a crucial role in countering extremist ideologies.

Khan and Hussain (2022) explored the relationship between religion and terrorism in Pakistan using a longitudinal design. A sample of 1,900 participants was selected using systematic random sampling. Data were collected through longitudinal surveys and in-depth interviews, and analyzed using mixed-effects models. The findings indicated that exposure to radical religious narratives increased the likelihood of terrorism. The study concluded that promoting interfaith harmony and moderate religious teachings could reduce terrorism.

Abubakar and Ibrahim (2018), researched the influence of religion on terrorism in Nigeria using a

descriptive research design. They selected a sample of 1,800 participants through stratified sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using regression analysis. The findings showed a strong positive relationship between extremist religious ideologies and terrorism. The study concluded that religious education promoting tolerance and peace could help in reducing the influence of extremist ideologies.

Ahmed and Ali (2019) conducted a study on how religion influences terrorism in Egypt using a cross-sectional design. A sample of 1,600 participants was selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected via surveys and analyzed using factor analysis. The findings showed that individuals exposed to radical religious teachings were more likely to support terrorism. The study concluded that promoting moderate religious teachings could mitigate the influence of extremist ideologies.

Nyuon and Deng (2019) aimed to investigate the connection of religious conflict and intimidation in the context of South Sudan. The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of historical data on religious conflicts and terrorist incidents, along with qualitative analysis of interviews with community members, religious leaders, and former combatants. The study explored the religious dimensions of conflict and terrorism in South Sudan, examining the influence of religious narratives, identity, and resource competition. The findings highlighted the role of religious divisions in exacerbating violence and the importance of

addressing religious grievances in peacebuilding and counterterrorism efforts in South Sudan.

Makori and Wandot (2018) aimed to investigate the potential link between religious education and youth radicalization in Kenya. The researchers conducted a mixed-methods study, combining surveys, interviews, and content analysis of religious education curricula in Kenya. The study included both quantitative data, such as surveys assessing attitudes towards violence among religiously educated youth, and qualitative analysis of interviews with teachers, students, and parents in the Kenyan context. The findings suggested that while religious education itself does not directly promote terrorism, certain elements within the curriculum and pedagogy can contribute to radicalization processes by reinforcing a binary worldview and fostering a sense of religious exceptionalism among Kenyan youth.

Kamau and Wanjiru (2020), studied the influence of religion on terrorism in Kenya. The study used an ethnographic research design with a selected a sample of 1,300 participants from different religious backgrounds through purposive sampling. Data were collected through participant observations and in-depth interviews, analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicated that extremist religious ideologies significantly influenced individuals to participate in terrorism. The study concluded that interfaith dialogues and religious education could reduce the influence of extremist ideologies.

### Conceptual Framework

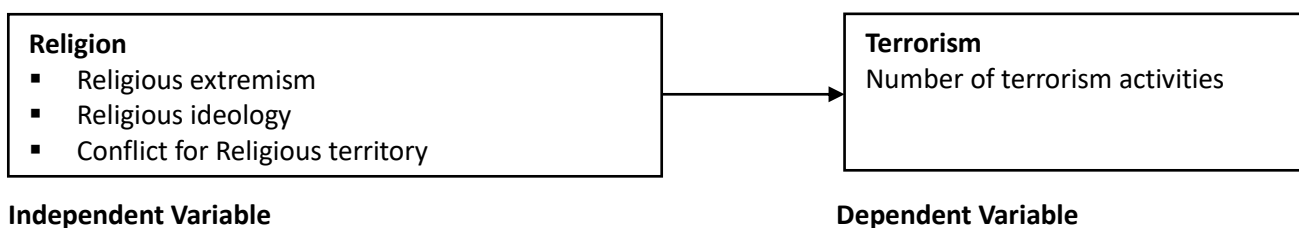


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey research design. The target population was Chiefs and Sub-chiefs,

Religious Leaders and Nyumba Kumi Officials. Table 1 shows the breakdown of your prospective sample.

**Table 1: Target Population**

Sub-County	No. of Sub County (Chiefs and Sub-chiefs)	Nyumba Kumi Officials	Religious Leaders	Total
Changamwe	20	21	19	60
Jomvu	12	15	9	36
Kisauni	28	35	21	84
Nyali	20	23	17	60
Likoni	20	25	15	60
Mvita	16	23	9	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>348</b>

The study adopted Slovin's formula as sampling design to determine the sample size of Sub-chiefs and Chiefs, Wazee wa Nyumba Kumi and Religious Leaders. The design was appropriate since the target population was <1000. The calculations are as shown below

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$$

Where: n = sample size

N = population size

e = margin of error

1 = is a constant value

$$n = \frac{348}{1+348(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{348}{1.87}$$

$$n = 186.09$$

= 186 representatives

In addition, the study used stratified random sampling to get a sample of each of the target category

**Table 2: Sample Size**

Target Category	Target Population	Sample Size
Sub County (Chiefs and Sub-chiefs)	116	62
Nyumba Kumi Officials	142	76
Religious Leaders	90	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>186</b>

The questionnaire and interview schedules were used to collect the primary data desirable for the study. Questionnaires collected data from Sub-chief and Chief. Interview schedules collected data from the community representatives (Wazee wa Nyumba Kumi & Religious Leaders). The content validity of this study was enhanced in search of views of experts in the field of study especially the supervisor. Reliability in this study was enhanced by pre-testing the questionnaire with a selected

sample in Kilifi County where 19 questionnaires were distributed

The data that was gathered in this study was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Quantitative data was analyzed by utilization of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. While qualitative data was analyzed through content and thematic analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in the study. Descriptive statistics involved the use of percentages and frequencies. Quantitative data was presented in

form tables, pie charts and bar graphs for easy interpretation while qualitative data was presented in pros form.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Response Rate

Response rate equals the number of people with whom semi-structured questionnaires were properly completed divided by the total number of people in the entire sample (Fowler, 2014). The study administered 62 questionnaires to the Chiefs

and Sub-chiefs out of which 50 questionnaires were successfully filled and returned giving a study. This represented 80% overall successful response rates. The researcher also issued out interview schedules to 124 religious leaders and Nyumba Kumi Officials for data collection. However, 110 interview schedules were properly filled and returned, which represented 89% response rate. Respondents were also assured of confidentiality of the information provided.

**Table 3: Response Rate**

	Question/ interview Issued	Question/ interview Collected and Filled	Response Rate (%)
Questionnaires	62	50	80
Interview schedules	124	110	89

### Influence of Religion on Terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to interrogate the influence of

religion on terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya. The findings are presented in Table 4

**Table 4: Religion on Terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya**

Religion	S	A	U	D	SD
	%	%	%	%	%
Religious extremism is associated to terrorism in Mombasa	47	34	13	6	0
Conflict over religious territory has been associated to terrorism in Mombasa	39	44	11	6	0
The notion and perception that killing for religion is an achievement is associated to terrorism in Mombasa	44	53	3	0	0
Martyrdom which is associated to killing for the sake of religion legitimize and glorify is associated to terrorism in Mombasa	39	44	11	6	0
The high rates of primary and secondary school dropouts facilitated the recruitment of extremists.	50	31	15	5	0

According to the findings majority of the respondents strongly agreed (47%) that religious extremism is associated to terrorism in Mombasa, 34% agreed that religious extremism is associated to terrorism in Mombasa, 13% of the respondents were undecided while 6% disagreed that religious extremism is associated to terrorism in Mombasa. The study findings are in tandem with those of Ahmed and Ali (2019) findings which support the notion that religious extremism contributes significantly to terrorist activities. This aligns with

the sentiment expressed by respondents in Mombasa County, where a majority agreed that religious extremism is associated with terrorism.

From the findings 39% of the respondents strongly agreed that conflict over religious territory has been associated to terrorism in Mombasa, 44% agreed that conflict over religious territory has been associated to terrorism in Mombasa 11% were undecided while 6% disagreed that conflict over religious territory has been associated to

terrorism in Mombasa. This implies that conflict over religious territory has been associated to terrorism in Mombasa. The study findings are in tandem with those of Smith and Lee (2018) that conflicts arise due to disputes over areas that hold religious significance. These disputes often involve competing claims or historical disagreements related to religious sites, landmarks, or regions considered sacred by different religious or ethnic groups. The study findings agrees with those of Da Silva and Fernandes (2021) who revealed a strong association between conflicts over religious territory and terrorism. This aligns with the perceptions of respondents in Mombasa County, where a significant portion agreed that such conflicts are associated with terrorism.

From the findings 50% of the respondents strongly agreed that the notion and perception that killing for religion is an achievement is associated to terrorism in Mombasa, 31% of the respondents agreed that the notion and perception that killing for religion is an achievement is associated to terrorism in Mombasa, 15% of the respondents were undecided while 5% of the respondents disagreed that the notion and perception that killing for religion is an achievement is associated to terrorism in Mombasa. This implies that the notion and perception that killing for religion is an achievement is associated to terrorism in Mombasa. The study findings are in tandem with those of Khan and Hussain (2022) findings which suggested that such perceptions contribute to the legitimization of terrorism. This perspective resonates with the views expressed by respondents in Mombasa County, where a majority agreed that the notion of killing for religion as an achievement is associated with terrorism.

In addition 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that martyrdom which is associated to killing for the sake of religion legitimize and glorify is associated to terrorism in Mombasa, 53% of the respondents agreed that martyrdom which is associated to killing for the sake of religion legitimize and glorify is associated to terrorism in

Mombasa, 3% of the respondents agreed that martyrdom which is associated to killing for the sake of religion legitimize and glorify is associated to terrorism in Mombasa. The study findings are in line with those of Abubakar and Ibrahim (2018) which indicated that the glorification of martyrdom contributes to the perpetuation of terrorism. This aligns with the perceptions of respondents in Mombasa County, where a majority agreed that martyrdom associated with killing for religion legitimize and glorifies terrorism.

From the findings 39% of the respondents strongly agreed that the high rates of primary and secondary school dropouts facilitated the recruitment of extremists, 44% agreed that the high rates of primary and secondary school dropouts facilitated the recruitment of extremists, 11% were undecided while 6% disagreed that the high rates of primary and secondary school dropouts facilitated the recruitment of extremists. This implies that the high rates of primary and secondary school dropouts facilitated the recruitment of extremists. The study findings revealed that Khan, (2017) which found that individuals who have dropped out of primary and secondary school are more susceptible to recruitment by extremist groups. This vulnerability could arise from a combination of factors, including limited educational opportunities, lack of exposure to diverse perspectives, and potential socio-economic challenges.

Religious Leaders from Kisauni, Likoni and Nyali Sub-Counties revealed that driven by extremist interpretations of religious principles, may resort to violence to advance their ideological agendas. Religious leaders play a pivotal role in either countering or inadvertently contributing to these extremist ideologies. Understanding and addressing this association involves engaging religious communities, promoting interfaith dialogue, and fostering a narrative of tolerance and coexistence.

Moreover, Mzee wa Nyumba Kumi from Mvita, Likoni and Nyali Sub-Counties revealed that conflict over religious territory significantly contributes to the prevalence of terrorism in Mombasa County.

Such conflicts create fertile ground for extremist ideologies to take root, as individuals may feel compelled to use violence to assert their perceived rights or defend their religious beliefs. The competition for religious territory can exacerbate existing tensions and serve as a catalyst for radicalization. Addressing this issue requires diplomatic efforts, community dialogue, and initiatives to promote peaceful coexistence and shared understanding of religious territories.

From the finding's chief, sub-chief, religious leader and Nyumba Kumi officials agreed that religion influence Terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya. Extremist groups often manipulate religious

ideologies to justify their actions and recruit members. In Mombasa County, radical groups may exploit Islamic teachings, distorting them to support violent extremism. They use religious rhetoric to frame their cause as a holy war (jihad) against perceived enemies, thereby legitimizing violence in the eyes of potential recruits. This manipulation of religion can be particularly effective in areas where people feel marginalized or oppressed, making them more receptive to radical messages.

### Terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on the terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya. The findings are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya**

<b>Terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Ethnic conflict has increased for the last five years	37	34	10	16	3
More youths have been recruited by violent extremist groups	55	34	8	3	0
The level of political instability has reduced for the last five years	44	46	7	3	0
The rate of terrorism has increased for the past five years	37	31	19	13	0

According to the findings majority of the respondents strongly agreed (37%) that ethnic conflict has increased for the last five years, 34% agreed that ethnic conflict has increased for the last five years, 10% were undecided, 16% of the respondents disagreed while 3% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This implies that ethnic conflict has increased for the last five years. The study findings are in line with those of Odhiambo and Nyamwaya (2020) study on ethnic conflict in Kenya which provided insights into the escalation of ethnic tensions over time. Their research highlights the factors contributing to the increase in ethnic conflicts, which may include political marginalization, resource competition, and historical grievances. These findings resonate with the perceptions of respondents in Mombasa County, where a significant portion agreed that ethnic conflict has risen in recent years.

In addition, 55% of the respondents agreed that more youths have been recruited by violent

extremist groups, 34% of the respondents agreed that more youths have been recruited by violent extremist groups, 8% were undecided while 3% disagreed this implies that more youths have been recruited by violent extremist groups. This implies that more youths have been recruited by violent extremist groups. The study findings are in tandem with those of Juma and Kimathi (2021) who focused on youth radicalization and recruitment by violent extremist groups in Kenya. Their findings underscore the concerning trend of increased youth involvement in extremist activities. This aligns with the perceptions of respondents in Mombasa County, where a majority agreed that more youths have been recruited by violent extremist groups.

From the findings 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that the level of political instability has reduced for the last five years, 46% of the respondents agreed 7% of the respondents were undecided while 3% of the respondents disagreed that the level of political instability has reduced for

the last five years. This implies that the level of political instability has reduced for the last five years. The study findings are in tandem with those of Mwangi and Kamau (2019) who examined political stability trends in Kenya over the past decade. While their findings may vary, they provide insights into factors contributing to political stability or instability. This aligns with the mixed perceptions of respondents in Mombasa County, where some agreed and some disagreed on the reduction of political instability.

From the findings 37% of the respondents strongly agreed that the rate of terrorism has increased for the past five years, 31% of the respondents agreed that the rate of terrorism has increased for the past five years, 19% of the respondents were undecided

while 13% of the respondents disagreed that the rate of terrorism has increased for the past five years. This implies that the rate of terrorism has increased for the past five years. The findings are in line with those of Ouma and Gitari (2022) research on terrorism trends in Kenya which provided valuable insights into the rate of terrorist incidents over time. Their findings suggest an upward trend in terrorism activities, consistent with the perceptions of some respondents in Mombasa County who agreed that the rate of terrorism has increased in the past five years.

### Correlation Analysis

The study further examined the correlation between religion and terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya. The findings are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Religion on Terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya**

		Terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya
Religion	Pearson Correlation	.541*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023
	N	50

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The study established that there was a strong positive correlation existed between religion on terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya, ( $r = 0.541$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The study findings are in line with those of Ahmed (2016) which noted that lean-to light the complex interplay between religious factors and violence in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for nuanced counterterrorism approaches that address both socio-economic grievances and ideological

motivations. Moreover, the study also agreed with those of Nyuon and Deng (2019) which highlighted the role of religious divisions in exacerbating violence and the importance of addressing religious grievances in peacebuilding and counterterrorism efforts in South Sudan.

### Regression Analysis

The table shows the overall significant test results for the hypothesized research model

**Table 7: Regression Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.038	.145		.260	.796
	Religion	.323	.106	.360	3.052	.003

The interpretations of the findings indicated follow the following regression model.

$$Y = 0.038 + 0.323X_3 + e \dots \dots \dots 1$$

According to the intercept ( $\beta_0$ ), when the three independent variables are held constant, the value of terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya will be 0.038. In addition, holding all the other

independent variables constant, a unit increase religion would lead to a 0.323 increase in terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya.

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings revealed that religious extremism is associated to terrorism in Mombasa. Moreover, the findings revealed that conflict over religious territory has been associated to terrorism in Mombasa. The study also revealed that the notion and perception that killing for religion is an achievement is associated to terrorism in Mombasa. The study also revealed that martyrdom which is associated to killing for the sake of religion legitimize and glorify is associated to terrorism in Mombasa. The study findings also revealed that the high rates of primary and secondary school dropouts facilitated the recruitment of extremists.

The study provides insights into the association between religious extremism and terrorism in Mombasa County. The study concluded that conflict over religious territory, distorted perceptions of religious achievements through violence, and the glorification of martyrdom are identified as

contributing factors to terrorism. Strategies to counter terrorism should include initiatives to promote religious tolerance, address underlying grievances, and challenge distorted interpretations of religious principles. The study also concluded that there was a strong positive correlation existed between socio-religion and terrorism in Mombasa County Kenya, ( $r = 0.541$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

The study recommended that countering religious extremism requires a multifaceted approach. Initiatives should focus on promoting interfaith dialogue to foster understanding and tolerance among religious communities. Educational programs should be developed to counter extremist interpretations of religious principles. Engaging religious leaders in community efforts is essential, as they can play a pivotal role in promoting religious harmony and inclusivity. Furthermore, addressing school dropout rates is paramount, as the study indicates a correlation between high dropout rates and the recruitment of extremists. By integrating these recommendations, a comprehensive strategy can be developed to counteract the influence of religion on terrorism in Mombasa County.

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