



## Evaluation of Counter Terrorism Strategies in Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures in Kenya. The study adopted experimental, correlational, meta-analytic, review and semi-experimental research design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 192 participants from Kenya Defense Forces (KDF), National Counter- Terrorism Center (NCTC), Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DCI), (NSIS), (ATPU), Ministry of Interior and Internal Coordination and Ministry of Defense (MoD). Questionnaires were used together with interview guides and group chats for collection of primary data. Questionnaires were used to gather primary data. A desktop technique was used in collection of secondary data. Findings revealed international responses to terrorism in Kenya and successful strategies adopted by Kenya and other Horn of Africa nations. The study highlighted challenges such as insufficient training and funding within security agencies. Recommendations emerged for Kenya and East Africa to implement anti-terrorism measures for reducing attacks, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts with partner nations to effectively combat terrorism.*

**Key Words:** Counterterrorism Strategies, Effectiveness, Terrorism

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### INTRODUCTION

Terrorism has left an indelible mark on Kenya, shaping its security landscape and prompting multifaceted responses to mitigate its impact. The most deadly terrorist attacks so far are; The West Gate Mall attack on 21st September 2013 in which 67 people were killed and 175 wounded. The other one is; The Garissa University College of 2nd April 2015. Where 147 people majorly students were killed and 79 wounded. However, the devastating August 2001 bombings catalyzed Kenya to address the menace through collaborative initiatives with like-minded nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom. These partnerships have aimed to strengthen intelligence sharing, capacity building, and the implementation of comprehensive counter-terrorism measures (Mogire & Agade, 2011).

Kenya's geographical proximity to conflict-ridden regions has made it susceptible to spillover effects from neighboring Somalia's instability, making counter-terrorism efforts even more crucial (Miles, 2012). The rise of extremist groups like Al-Shabaab has heightened security concerns, resulting in a range of attacks that have targeted public spaces, government institutions, and international interests within Kenya. The government's response has included military operations, border security enhancements, and efforts to curb radicalization through community engagement and educational programs.

Efforts to combat terrorism in Kenya have also extended to legal reforms aimed at equipping law enforcement agencies with the necessary tools to prevent and respond to threats. The 2008 Anti-Terrorism Act is one such example, designed to empower authorities in their fight against terrorist activities. However, challenges persist in ensuring the proper implementation of these measures, given the evolving tactics of terrorist groups and the complexity of their networks (Mutave, 2005).

Despite these concerted efforts, the resilience of terrorist organizations continues to present challenges. The sporadic occurrence of attacks highlights the need for ongoing vigilance and adaptive strategies to counter the dynamic nature of terrorism (Mogire & Agade, 2011). Kenya's experience underscores the broader global reality that eradicating terrorism requires a multifaceted approach that combines law enforcement, intelligence sharing, socio-economic development, and international collaboration to effectively address the root causes and manifestations of this complex threat.

As part of a comprehensive review, this assessment critically examines the strategies deployed in Kenya's fight against terrorism, with the aim of proposing holistic and inclusive strategies for effective Counter-Terrorism (CT) not only within Kenya but also across the broader East African region.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon of terrorism has cast a shadow of insecurity and instability on the global stage, with its impact becoming particularly pronounced after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. This pivotal event shifted the focus of international security discussions and underscored the urgent need to develop effective strategies to counteract the threat of terrorism. Scholars have sought to understand the multifaceted nature of terrorism, its origins, and the complexities of its manifestations. For instance, the categorization of terrorism into distinct typologies, such as religious, single-issue, social revolutionary, separatist, nationalist, right-wing, and racist terrorism, as proposed by Schmidt, provides a framework to comprehend the diverse motives and objectives driving terrorist acts (Gupta, 2005).

The evolution of modern terrorism has brought forth new challenges, characterized by the ruthless and extensive violence employed by terrorist organizations on a global scale. This shift has been attributed to advancements in technology, weaponry, communication systems, and transportation methods. The emergence of networked organizations has further blurred the lines between traditional hierarchical structures and decentralized operations, necessitating a deeper understanding of these novel modes of operation (Mohammad, 2005). The legal and ethical implications of counter-terrorism measures have sparked debates, particularly when it comes to the balance between safeguarding national security and upholding human rights. Challenging the lawfulness of detention has become a crucial litmus test for evaluating the extent to which counter-terrorism measures respect individuals' rights within the larger framework of global security (Saul, 2014).

In the specific context of East Africa, the trajectory of counter-terrorism efforts has been shaped by both internal and external factors. The Horn of Africa experienced heightened insecurity following the failed attack on the US embassy in Kampala and the bombings of US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998. These incidents marked a turning point, thrusting the region into the global spotlight of counter-terrorism endeavors. Scholars have examined how these developments have led to strategic realignments, proxy wars, and shifts in security priorities (Kagwanja, 2006). Terrorism in the Horn of Africa has manifested through diverse actors, ranging from vigilantes and bandits to Islamist groups such as Al-Shabaab. The spread of Muslim radicalism in the 1990s influenced the perception of terrorism, often portraying it as emanating from religious motivations (De Waal, 1996).

Counter-terrorism strategies in the Horn of Africa have had mixed effects on the region's security landscape. Efforts to stabilize Somalia have involved both bottom-up and top-down approaches, with the United States initially supporting warlords against the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). This approach shifted with time, leading to interventions by regional and international actors, including the establishment of AMISOM and support for the transitional federal government (TFG). However, such strategies have faced challenges due to a complex interplay of local dynamics and the unintended consequences of external interventions (Kagwanja, 2006).

The implications of terrorism on Kenya's security environment have been profound, leading the country to navigate a multifaceted approach to counter-terrorism. The geographical proximity of Kenya to conflict-ridden regions, coupled with the rise of extremist groups like Al-Shabaab, has underscored the urgency of effective counter-terrorism measures. Scholars have examined Kenya's collaborations with international partners, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, in addressing terrorism's transnational nature. The country's efforts to enhance intelligence sharing, capacity building, and legal frameworks in response to terrorism have been explored as critical components of its strategy (Gupta, 2005; Miles, 2012).

The challenge of balancing security imperatives with human rights concerns has been a central theme in Kenya's counter-terrorism discourse. The tension between detaining terrorism suspects and upholding due process rights has prompted legal and ethical discussions. Scholars have underscored the importance of ensuring that counter-terrorism measures adhere to international human rights standards, emphasizing the necessity of legal oversight and procedural safeguards (Gross & Ní Aoláin, 2006). The review of Kenya's counter-terrorism efforts also reveals the broader implications of such strategies on the country's political stability, economic development, and societal cohesion.

The military serves as a fundamental instrument of power for states to protect their territories and secure their nations from external threats. Notably, military action has emerged as a potent tool in the counter-terrorism arsenal. Noteworthy examples of this approach include Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, where Al Qaeda structures were dismantled, leading to the capture and elimination of numerous terrorists. Similarly, in Kenya, Operation Linda Nchi was initiated in 2011 to address terrorism-related destabilization in the region. The Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF) invaded Somalia to work in tandem with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), aiming to counter terrorism and restore stability in the war-torn Horn of Africa (Kagwanja, 2006).

Police forces and intelligence gathering play a pivotal role in countering terrorism, both domestically and internationally. These elements form the bedrock of homeland security, with intelligence acting as the foundation upon which preemptive action against potential threats can be taken. Kenya has harnessed police efficiency in enforcing law and order and improving intelligence-gathering capabilities. Noteworthy successes include the disruption of terrorist cells and the foiling of planned attacks. The ability to apprehend terrorist suspects and seize weapons showcases the effectiveness of police and intelligence efforts in thwarting potential acts of terror (Gross & Ní Aoláin, 2006).

Effective legislative frameworks are essential to address vulnerabilities in the financial system that terrorists exploit. Kenya faced exploitation due to weak financial systems, which allowed terrorist groups to facilitate money transfers for funding undetected. The government responded by introducing legislation to combat money laundering and to empower law enforcement officials to trace and freeze proceeds from crimes. The closure of financial conduits like hawalas and freezing suspicious bank accounts further illustrates Kenya's resolve to curtail the flow of funds to terrorist activities (Gupta, 2005).

Regional organizations play a crucial role in the fight against terrorism. The African Union (AU) has been instrumental in fostering collective efforts among member states to address the terrorism threat. The AU's initiatives focus on sharing information and resources to develop strategies for countering terrorism effectively. These efforts extend beyond regional boundaries, as the AU cooperates with international organizations to devise strategies that safeguard human rights and ensure the stability of nations in the face of terrorist threats (Makinda, 2004).

### III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted experimental, correlational, meta-analytic, review and semi-experimental research design as demonstrated by Creswell (2012). Purposive sampling technique was used to select 192 participants from Kenya Defense Forces (KDF), National Counter- Terrorism Center (NCTC), Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DCI), (NSIS), (ATPU), Ministry of Interior and Internal Coordination and Ministry of Defense (MoD). Questionnaires were used together with interview guides and group chats for collection of primary data. Questionnaires were used to collect primary data. A desktop technique was used in collection of secondary data.

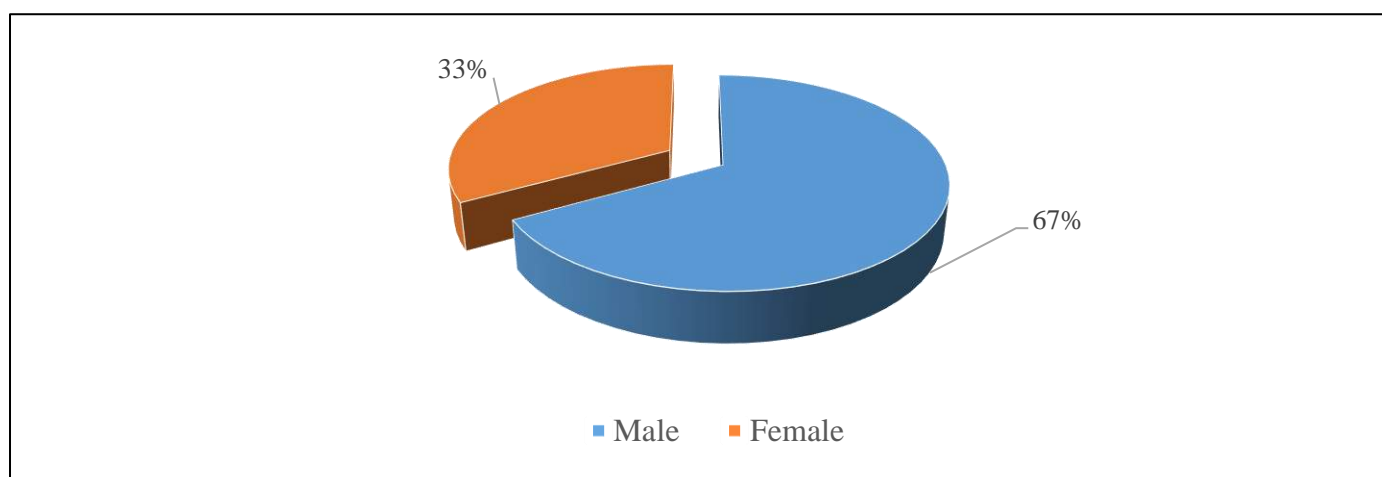
### IV. FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Demographic Information

This section presents the research findings on the targeted population data of the respondents. The findings are as shown in the subsequent sections.

##### 4.1.1 Gender of the Respondents

The research inquired respondents to indicate their gender. The result findings are as shown in the figure below

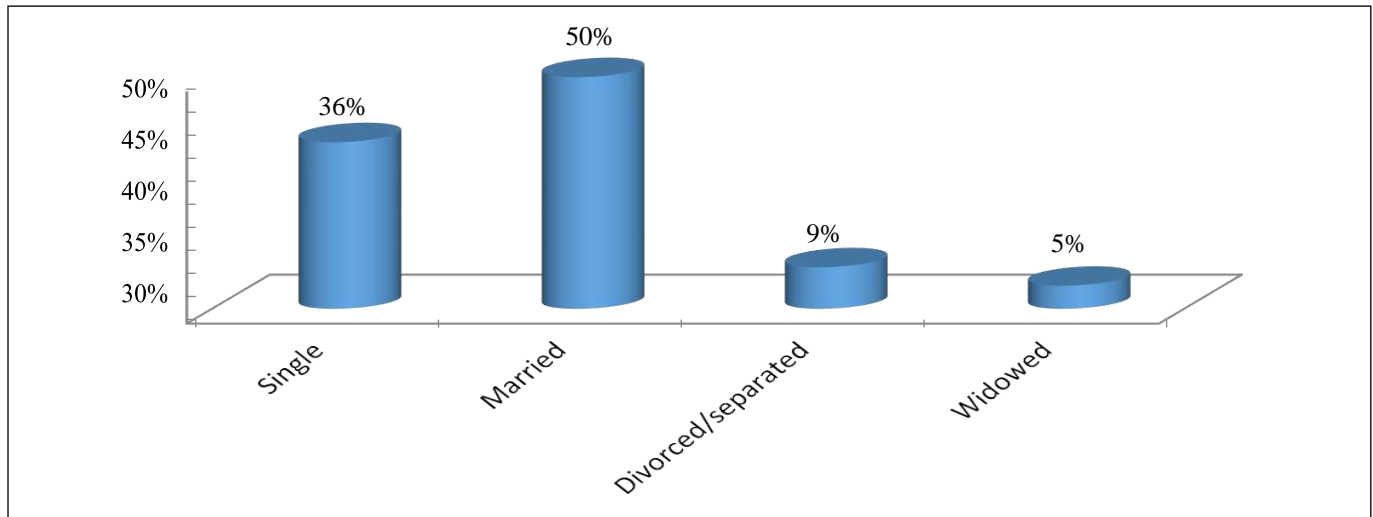


**Figure 1**  
*Gender of the Respondents*

From the research findings most (67%) of the responses pointed out they were men, while 33% were females. This depicts that majority of the responses were males and thus most of the responses emanated from the male gender. This shows that most males were involved in curbing terrorism in Kenya and thus were well aware of the challenges involved in the process.

#### 4.1.2 Respondent Marital Status

The researcher inquired respondents to point out their marital status. The result findings are as shown in the figure below.



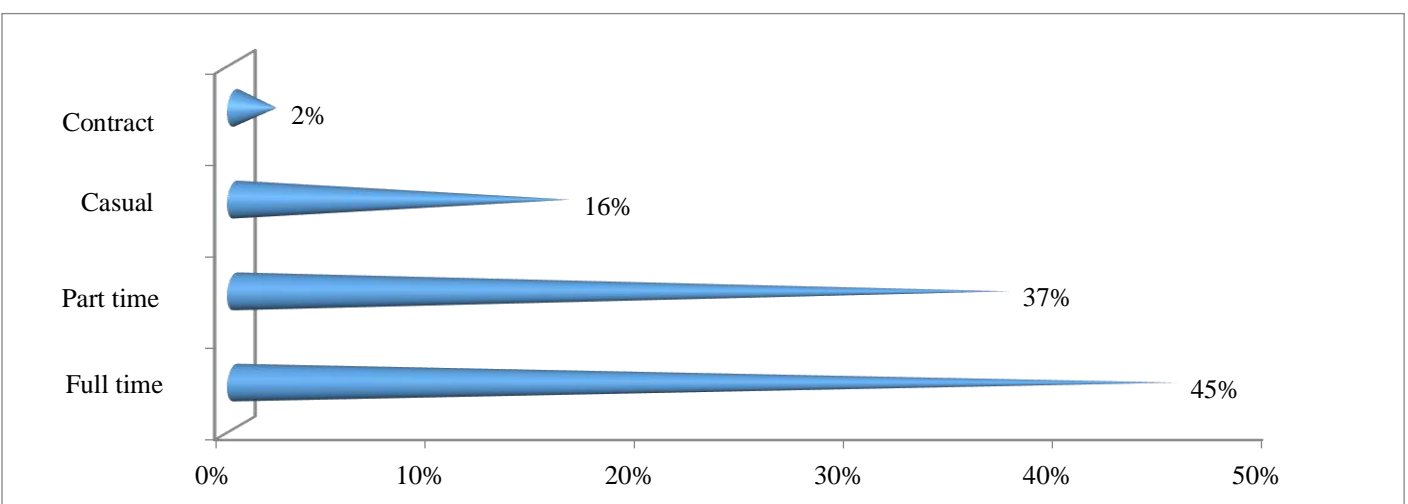
**Figure 2**

*Respondent Matrimonial Status*

From the research finding most (50%) of the respondents pointed out that they are married, 36% indicated they were single, 9% indicated they were divorced/separated, while 5% indicated they were widowed. This depicts that majority of the respondents were married. This is important to the study in that married people were well aware of the challenges involved in curbing terrorism specifically on issues of radicalization of their youths.

#### 4.1.3 Respondents Occupational Grade

The researcher requested respondent to indicate their occupational status. The results of findings are as shown in the figure below



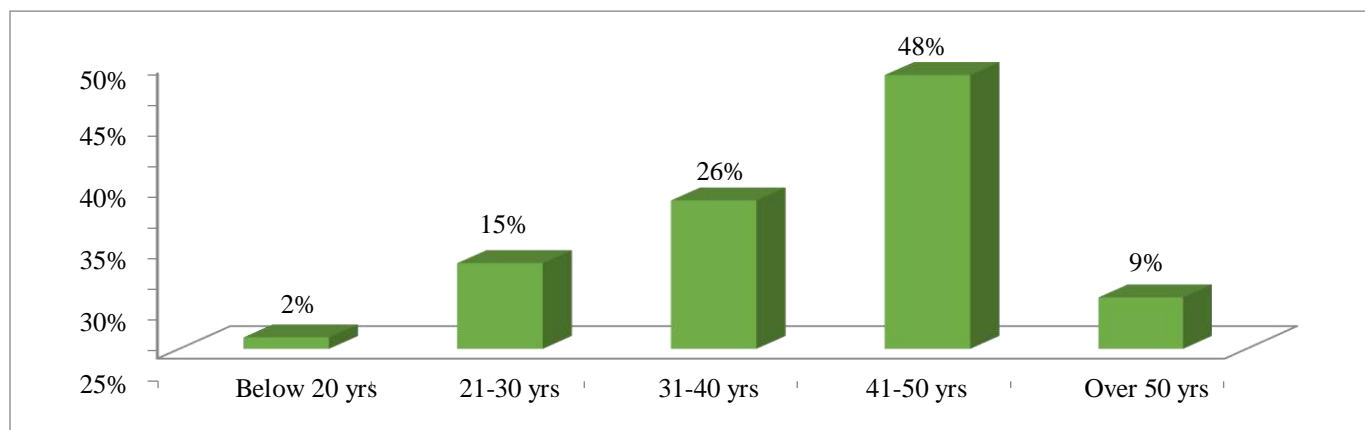
**Figure 3**

*Respondents Occupational Status*

From the research most (45%) of the respondents point out their full-time occupation, 37% indicated part time, 16% indicated casual, while 2% indicated contract. This depicts that most of the respondents were full time employee in the institution and thus had ample information in relation to counterterrorism measures. This was important in that it helped the researcher to identify whether the respondents were fully involved in the countering of terrorist activities in the country.

#### 4.1.4 Respondents Age Bracket

The surveyor inquired respondent to point out their age bracket. The result of the findings is as revealed in the figure below

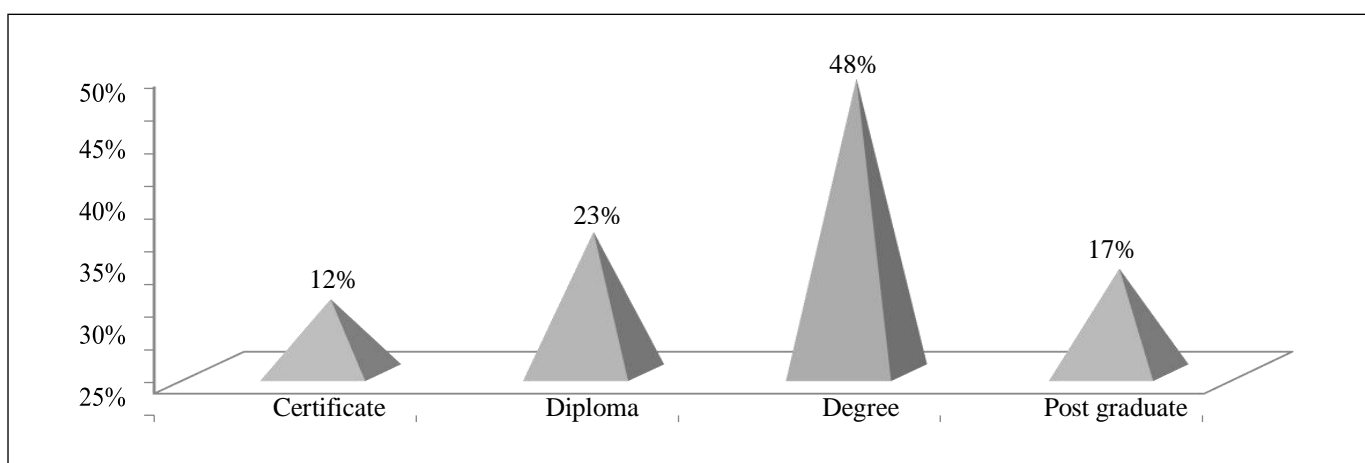


**Figure 4**  
*Respondents Age Bracket*

From the result of the research most (48%) were between 41-50 yrs, 26% indicated 31-40 yrs, 15% indicated 21-30 years, 9% indicated over 50 years, while 2% indicated less than 20 years. This depicts that most of the respondents were aged enough and thus could understand issues to do with counterterrorism measures. This was vital to the study as it informed the researcher whether the respondents had experienced terrorist activities for a long time and whether they had experience in the issues of terrorism.

#### 4.1.5 Respondents Educational Level

The researcher inquired the respondent to point out their educational rank. The research findings are as displayed in the figure below.



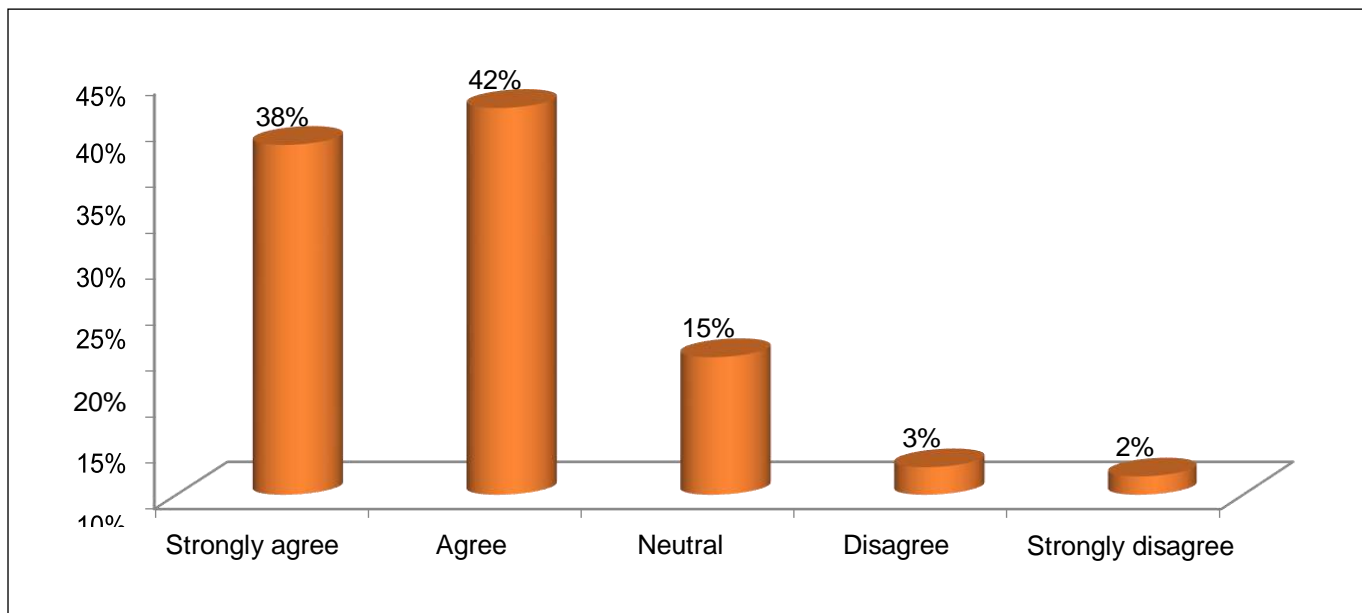
**Figure 5**  
*Respondent Educational Level*



From the finding most (48%) of the respondents indicated that they had degree level of education, 23% indicated diploma level, 17% indicated postgraduate, while 12% indicated certificate level. This depicts that most of the respondents were learned enough to understand issues to do with counterterrorism measures applied in combating terrorism in Kenya.

#### 4.2 Findings on Effectiveness of Counterterrorism Measures

The investigator requested respondent to point out the level of conformity on the effectiveness of the measures undertaken jointly by Kenya and the horn of Africa member states. The findings are as shown in the figure below.



**Figure 6**  
*Effectiveness of Counterterrorism Measures*

From the result of the investigation most (42%) of the correspondent agreed that the measures undertaken jointly by Kenya and the horn of Africa member states were effective, 38% strongly agreed, 15% were neutral, 3% opposed, while 2% strongly opposed. This depicts that the measures undertaken jointly by Kenya and the horn of Africa member states were effective. These findings agree with the findings by Kagwanja (2006) who argue that Kenya has pursued a multifaceted approach to counterterrorism, including Operation Linda Nchi, a collaborative effort with Somalia, IGAD, the AU, and the Ethiopian military, reinforced by US support. The operation weakened Al-Shabaab's capabilities and captured key leaders (Kagwanja, 2006). Kenya's role within the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has significantly curtailed Al-Shabaab's influence by conducting successful offensives (Nderitu, 2015). The nation's commitment to countering terrorism financing is reflected in its removal from the FATF scheme, despite limitations in resources (Gross & Ní Aoláin, 2006). Collaboration with the US has empowered Kenya's counterterrorism capabilities through training, equipment, and information exchange (Masese, 2007). Diplomatic initiatives have aimed at stabilizing neighboring countries, while Civil Society Organizations address root causes and enhance community resilience (Krause & Otenyo, 2005). Regional cooperation, multilateral agreements, and legislative measures reinforce Kenya's dedication to effective counterterrorism (Onyeozili, 2005). However, challenges in border security remain due to resource constraints (Opon et al., 2015). Overall, Kenya's multifaceted strategy emphasizes the importance of global partnerships and multidimensional approaches in combating terrorism and fostering regional stability.

#### 4.3 Extent of Agreement on effectiveness of Counterterrorism Measures in Kenya

The defendants were inquired to indicate the extent of conformity on statements relating to effectiveness of counterterrorism measures in Kenya. The research findings were assessed on a five likert scale 1-5 where 1=Very little extent, 2=little extent, 3=Moderate extent, 4=Great extent, and 5=Very large extent. The findings are as

shown in the table below.

**Table 1**

*Extent of Agreement on Counterterrorism Measures in Kenya*

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
(i) Police and intelligence gathering constitute an integral part of state machinery in the fight against terror	4.12	0.1347
(ii) Police and intelligence services in Kenya remain a central pillar in war against terror	4.09	0.1867
(iii) The enforcement of law effectively and the gathering of intelligence has led to the disruption of terrorists' cells in Kenya and foiling of planned terrorist attacks directed to the country	3.74	0.1285
(iv) Lack of appropriate legislation has made Kenya a subject to the illegal transferring of money by the terror groups to execute terror activities in the country	3.68	0.1675
(v) Military action has been an effective measure to counter- terrorism and finish the terrorist groups in the country	3.80	0.1862
(vi) Intelligence gathering and dissemination remain to be an invaluable asset in police operation as it forms the basis upon which police can detect an eminent crime and thwart it before it is actualized	3.99	0.1290

From the findings the defendant agreed to a huge extent that police and intelligence gathering constitute an integral part of state machinery in the fight against terror (mean=4.12), followed by police and intelligence services in Kenya remain a central pillar in war against terror (mean=4.09), intelligence gathering and dissemination remain to be an invaluable asset in police operation as it forms the basis upon which police can detect an eminent crime and thwart it before it is actualized (mean=3.99), military action has been an effective measure to counter-terrorism and finish the terrorist groups in the country (mean=3.80), the enforcement of law effectively and the gathering of intelligence has led to the disruption of terrorists cells in Kenya and foiling of planned terrorist attacks directed to the country (mean=3.74), and that lack of appropriate legislation has made Kenya a subject to the illegal transferring of money by the terror groups to execute terror activities in the country (mean=3.68).

This depicts that to a great extent that police and intelligence gathering constitute an integral part of state machinery in the fight against terror. According to the KIIs Police and intelligence services in Kenya remain a central pillar in war against terror. Efficient law enforcement and increased intellectual gathering have led to the distraction of terrorists' cells in Kenya and foiling of planned terrorist attacks directed to the country.

According to De Londras (2014), police and intelligence gathering are fundamental components of a nation's counterterrorism efforts Police forces hold the responsibility of maintaining law and order and homeland security. The effectiveness of police operations heavily relies on intelligence gathering and dissemination, allowing for the detection and prevention of potential terrorist activities (Jackson et al., 2005). In the context of Kenya, the police and intelligence services play a central role in the fight against terrorism (Kagwanja, 2006). Efficient law enforcement and enhanced intelligence collection have led to the disruption of terrorist cells and the thwarting of planned attacks in the country (Masese, 2007). Notable successes include the arrest of terrorist suspects in 2003, who were plotting attacks on diplomatic missions and tourist hubs (Nderitu, 2015). Another instance involved the seizure of a significant arms cache in Mombasa (Opon et al., 2015). These achievements underscore the vital contribution of the police in Kenya's counterterrorism efforts.

#### 4.4 Findings on the Function of International Community in Curbing against Terrorism

The defendant was inquired to point out the extent of conformity on statements relating to role of intercontinental community in helping Kenya curb regional terrorism. The research findings were assessed on a five likert scale 1-5 where 1=Very little extent, 2=little extent, 3=Moderate extent, 4=Great extent, and 5=Very great extent. The findings are as shown in the table below.

**Table 2**  
*Role of International Community in Fight against Regional Terrorism*

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
The AU has been active in countering terrorist mercenaries in the African continent	3.98	0.4387
AU has been instrumental in thwarting any terrorist attempt in the case where countries who are member of the AU have had less ability	4.11	0.4210
AU focus on fighting terrorism should be seen as an outside strategy from its new strategy in the African continent	3.58	0.4223
AU actions a catalyst has prompted members states to meet their mandate on fighting terrorism in the continent	3.80	0.4983
NGOs and several other government organizations have played an oversight position in the fight against terrorism in the African continent	3.77	0.4129
The marginalized and vulnerable groups have been offered a platform by the civil society organizations to address their grievances in relation to terrorism	3.68	0.4498
NGO s have had a role of ensuring that the counterterrorism measures do not violate human rights and ensure accountability among the forces implementing it	3.61	0.4230

From the findings the respondents agreed to a great extent that AU has been instrumental in thwarting any terrorist attempt in the case where countries who are member of the AU have had less ability (mean=4.11), followed by the AU has been active in countering terrorist mercenaries in the African continent(mean=3.98), AU actions a catalyst has prompted members states to meet their mandate on fighting terrorism in the continent (mean=3.80), NGOs and several other governmental organizations who take part in an oversight role in the fight against terrorism in the African continent (mean=3.77), the marginalized and vulnerable groups have been offered a platform by the civil society organizations to address their grievances in relation to terrorism(mean=3.68), NGO s have had a role of ensuring that the counterterrorism measures do not violate human rights and ensure accountability among the forces implementing it (mean=3.61), and that AU focus on fighting terrorism should be seen as an outside strategy from its new strategy in the African continent(mean=3.58). This depicts that to a great extent that AU has been instrumental in thwarting any terrorist attempt in the case where countries who are member of the AU have had less ability.

The KIIs indicated that in the context of the African continent, attempts at collective efforts of addressing the threat of terrorism in Africa already took part at the beginning of the 1990's. Despite the contentions surrounding the novelty of some of these changes, this narrative has gradually established itself and is serving as a basis not just for understanding the existing threats but also for the quest for the requisite remedies thereof. One of the enduring implications of these changes has been a re-examination of existing global peace and security structures and norms.

The evolving dynamics of crisis management have emphasized the increased involvement of the United Nations and regional organizations (Gross & Ní Aoláin, 2006). This collaborative approach has become pivotal in addressing security challenges, particularly given the presence of "ungoverned spaces" across the continent that facilitate the growth and activities of terrorist groups (Hafez, 2007). The limitations of state capacities within these areas have hindered counter-terrorism efforts (Krause & Otenyo, 2005). The existing crises in certain regions, such as the Sahel-Sahara belt and Somalia, compound security concerns, posing significant challenges not only within national borders but also to neighboring areas (De Londras, 2014). The interlinked nature of these complex crises necessitates a broader perspective in addressing security threats (Jackson, 2005). As such, the regional impact of these challenges has prompted a reevaluation of strategies and collaborations for enhanced crisis management (Masese, 2007).

## V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

These findings demonstrate that Kenya has implemented a multifaceted approach to counterterrorism, encompassing military operations, regional cooperation, legislative measures, diplomatic solutions, and civil society involvement. While significant progress has been made, challenges remain, including resource limitations and the complex nature of counterterrorism efforts. Kenya's determination to address these challenges underscores its commitment to ensuring national and regional security.





## 5.2 Recommendations

The findings underscore Kenya's comprehensive strategy against terrorism, embracing military operations, regional collaboration, legal adjustments, diplomacy, and civic engagement. Despite notable headway, challenges persist due to limited resources and the intricate nature of counterterrorism. Kenya's unwavering resolve to tackle these challenges exemplifies its dedication to ensuring security at the national and regional levels. To bolster its efforts, Kenya should prioritize resource allocation and skill development, fostering regional alliances, updating legal frameworks judiciously, diversifying diplomatic channels, empowering civil society to counter extremist ideologies, fostering continuous learning, maintaining transparency with the public, investing in research, supporting rehabilitation and reintegration, and enhancing international collaboration. By adhering to these recommendations, Kenya can build on its achievements and reinforce its commitment to safeguarding its people and surroundings from the threats of terrorism.

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