"Radicalization in Kenya's Correctional Facilities: An impediment torehabilitation and reintegration of offenders"

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ABSTRACT
Radicalization in prisons is a major challenge in Kenya; and is on the rise. Despite enhanced government measures to rehabilitate and disengageoffenders, radicalization within the Kenyan prison system still persists. Why is this thecase? This study sought to investigate the nature and extent of radicalization in prisons in Kenya. It also explored the process of radicalization in prison as well as maps-out the challenges to successful rehabilitation and re-integration of offenders. The study employed qualitative research methodswith data sourced from books, peer reviewed journal articles as well as conducting of in-depth interviews. Most of therespondents were drawn from Shimo La Tewa and Kamiti Prison and who were sampled using purposive sampling techniques. Guided by the relative deprivation theory, the study finds that radicalization in prisons impedes the rehabilitation and reintegration efforts since it results to rising cases of recruitment of inmates and prison officers. There is need to fast-track prison reforms and impart specialized training to prison officers on how to handle violent extremist prisoners.
KEY WORDS: Radicalization, Prison, rehabilitation and reintegration

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I. INTRODUCTION

Radicalization is a global threat whichaffects the developed and developing countries in equal measure. Virtually all planned or actual terrorist attacks whichoccur globally, are carried out by radicalized youth with extremist ideas. The 9/11USA terrorist bombings,Madridtrain bombings in 2004 andJuly 2005 London bombings,were carried out mostly by young individuals who had been radicalized into terrorism (Global Youth Summit against Violent Extremism, 2015).In Africa and other developing regions, radicalized youth who have joined terror outfits like Boko Haram in West Africa and Al-Shabaab in East Africa are alsoengaged in terrorist acts which posethreats to national and regional security (Schneider, 2015).

Although scholars and practitioners define radicalization differently, (Neumann, 2010 and; Kundnani, 2009) agree that it is a process by which an individual or group adopts extreme political, social, or religious ideals while rejecting contemporary ideas and expressions. It is a process which leads to violence which, in the final analysis is what distinguishes a terrorist from other extremists.

Schmidt (2011) aptly defines radicalization as the process by which individuals who are usually young are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages a movement from moderate and mainstream beliefs towards extreme ones. While being radical or even radical thinking is by no means problematic in itself, it becomes a threat to peace and security when one espouses or engages in violence or direct action as a means of promoting political, ideological or religious extremism.

Various factors determine what drives people especially young people down the road of radicalization towards terrorism. According to (Homeland Security Institute, 2006) poverty,perceived marginalization andthe role being played by enablers of radicalization are among the discernible factors explaining radicalization. These factors that are inherent in most societies and usually categorized as 'push' or 'pull' factors contribute significantly to recruitment especially of vulnerable groups most of which is done inorphanages, learning institutions, online platforms, prisons and other recruitment hubs where terrorists tend to target (Neumann, 2010).

World-over, correctional facilitiesespeciallyprisons, have been breeding grounds for radicalization. Angell (2012) observes that prisons are the most ideal breeding grounds for radicalization and terrorism. It not only gives extremists the opportunity to develop violent ideology but they tend to provide a favorable setting in which proselytization efforts can be rolled out. Ideally, prisons are meant to punish and rehabilitate offenders of

various crimes. It is a place where retributive justice can be administered. However, many of these institutions are churning out radicalized individuals who engage in terrorist acts (Horgan, 2010).

Through- out history there are notable examples that illustrate that prisons have not only been recruitment centers but also the headquarters for religious and ideological extremists. Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin are among the historical figures that exploited their time in prison to develop and refine their extremist views. Modern jihadists like Sayyid Qutb, Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi, and the current Al-Qaeda supreme leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri are among the few individuals who were incarcerated and thereafter became leaders of notorious terrorist organizations (Bandon, 2009).

Whilst prisons often act as recruitment hubs or even breeding grounds for terrorists, these same establishments can act as potential solutions to addressing terrorism and radicalization (Drummond, 2012). Prisons may provide state officials with an ideal location where they can implement national de-radicalization and rehabilitation programs. Terror convicts who ostensibly hold extremist ideologies can become rehabilitated when prison reform programs are effectively implemented. However, this is not the case as most prisons establishments tend to be inadequately equipped to deal with the challenges that are common in prison. This ends up making opportunities ofde-radicalizing theterrorists in prisons difficult to attain.

According to a report by the Hans Seidel Foundation, radicalization in prisons is a major challenge in Kenya and is on the rise. Al-Shabaab is exploiting Kenya's ill-run prison and turning them into recruitment grounds (Angira, 2016). The Kenya National Assembly in its Hansard reports also pointed out of the rising cases of radicalization within the prison establishments in the country (KNA, 2019).Why is this the case? There is need to conduct a scholarly investigation on the causes, processes and impact of radicalization in prisons.

By conducting such a study, the stakeholders in the field of criminal justice and security will benefit from the policy recommendations of the study. The study could also generate empirical findings that can support the theories on terrorism.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study employed the qualitative research methods to understand the causes, processes and impact of radicalization in the Prison facilities in Kenya. Various research instruments were used to collect data. The secondary sources of data include, books, peer reviewed journal articles, archived data and relevant internet materials. The Primary sources of data included conducting in-depth interviews with respondents drawn from Shimo La Tewa and Kamiti Maximum prison which were sampled using the purposive sampling technique. The selection of the two facilities is because the official and non-official reports have singled out them out as the main prisons where such vices take place. The disadvantage of employing the purposive method is that it tends to generate findings which are not generalizable.

The informants in this study comprised of prison officers from the two institutions, security experts from the Joint Counter-Terrorism Center (JCTAC) and academicians. The findings were also a collection of views from nineteen (19) senior officers in charge of prisons where terror related inmates are incarcerated. The views were obtained during a consultative workshop held on 29th June 2018 at Lamada Hotel in Nairobi.

Theoretical approaches

There are numerous theories in the literature that touch on terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization. Al-Lami (2009), for instance, opines that the psychological theory can explain why people get involved in extremist activities and terrorism. It is in the people's personalities and mental functioning that the explanations on radicalization can be found (McCauley, 2002).

However in this study, the relative deprivation theory is appropriate in explaining the causes and impact of radicalization. Relative deprivation theorists believe that individual motives stem from comparing themselves with others and believing that in some way they are deprived be it politically, socially or economically. Gurr (1977) who is the key proponent of the theory opines that poor socio-economic performance (poverty, unemployment and low educational attainment) leads to frustration which makes them susceptible to radicalization. Pargeter(2006) also posits that political violence occurs whenever a group or individual perceives that he or she is being treated less well than other groups.

In this study, relative deprivation theory was considered important since it explains that it is the feelings of economic marginalization that lures offenders to adopt extremist ideas. Offenders in this case agree to become radicalized due to the monetary benefits which may improve their economic social standing in prison and also upon their release. The weaknesses of this theory is that it fails to explain other variables like identity and environmental surroundings that also 'push' individuals and groups to being radicalized and joining terrorist organizations like Al-Shabaab.

Results and discussion

The results of this study were guided by the study objectives which were categorized into three thematic key sections: extent of radicalization in prison, enablers of radicalization in prisons and the impact of radicalization in prisons.

i) **Extent of radicalization in study area**

Radicalization in Shimo La Tewa and Kamiti Maximum prisons, the two study areas, remains a major challenge. Nearly all the respondents observed that despite the implementation of rehabilitation and de-radicalization programmes in both prisons, radicalizers continue to expose the offenders to extremist ideologies. An informant indeed observed that, in Shimo La Tewa prison, the radicalizers are classified into two categories; High risk or medium risk. These radicalizers are then housed in different wings at the prison facility. Despite their isolation, these radicalizers are able to propagate violent ideologies to offenders who are not radicalized. This aspect was also confirmed by another informant based in Kamiti maximum prison who opined that, 'currently we have fourty three terror held in the Isolation blocks…Some of them have devised avenues to radicalize the offenders.'

It was indeed pointed out that, although isolation of terror suspects has been practiced in most prisons holding terror inmates, its effectiveness has been watered down to a large extent as the inmates continue to have access to phones, and therefore to their associates within and out of prison. The inmates use the phones to access radical material and participate in the planning of terrorist activities while incarcerated. They use the same to introduce others to extremism and recruit operatives. In addition, remandees interact with terror convicts when being taken to court or hospitals in large numbers.

The perceptions on the process of radicalization in prison varies from one respondent to the other. What is clear is that prisons as aptly captured (UNDOC, 2018), avulnerability which produce identity seekers, protection seekers, and rebels in greater numbers than other environments. They provide near-perfect conditions in which radical, religiously framed ideologies can flourish.

(ii) Enablers of radicalization

Using the relative deprivation theory, this study found out that offenders who become radicalized do so because of the economic frustrations and the desires for a better life. According to a key informant, *while in prison, most inmates have needs. They require money to survive. Their pecuniary frustrations make them easy targets who are lured into extremist activities by radicalized offenders who seem to have money*.

This was further confirmed by a prison warden who is stationed in Kamiti prison who stated that, *even we wardens are not immune to the well-resourced radicalizers in prison. Because of the vagaries of life and the desperation to do better, some of the prison wardens become radicalized to benefit from monetary rewards that they are promised*. Therefore economic deprivation provides an impulse for radicalization for both offenders and prison wardens in the correctional facilities.

The psychological predisposition of the offenders is a strong predictor for radicalization. It was indeed pointed out that, most offenders suffer from an identity crisis which quite often has its roots on their upbringing. Some are either from single parent or a violent family set-up characterized mostly with gender-based violence which affects their mental status including engaging in extremist acts once they are of age. This premise is in line with the psychological theory on terrorism which underscores the fact that it is the personalities and mental functioning of individuals or groups that make them become radicalized (Brynjar&Katja, 2005). Therefore the psychological theories on terrorism can be an explanation of why people get involved in extremist acts but compared to the relative deprivation theory, this study finds the latter to contain more hubris in its explanation.

Other respondents believe that environmental factors contribute to radicalization. An informant painted a picture on the structural weaknesses in Shimo La Tewa prison where it was said that there is lack of space for housing offenders……the structures in existence were constructed before independence and have been weakened with time. The congestion that results is a major factor aiding the spread of extremist ideologies. Lack of space also leads to mixing terror operatives with young inmates who are vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization.

A warden in Kamiti prison, pointed out that the ability of radicalized offenders to compromise senior officers gives them an upper hand. The failure by a junior officer to comply with their demands in the prison cells can lead to redeployment of an officer. Additionally, some of the senior officers find it difficult to exercise authority over those who have compromised them.

The enablers of radicalization in prison are numerous and fits to the broader categorization of 'push' and 'pull' factors which have been used to describe what drives youth to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist group (Muhsin, 2012). In his view, the push factors are the negative social, cultural, and political features of one's societal environment that aid in "pushing" vulnerable individuals onto the path of violent extremism. Push factors are what are commonly known as "underlying/root causes" such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, discrimination, and political/economical marginalization. Pull factors, on the other hand, are the positive characteristics and benefits of an extremist organization that "pull" vulnerable individuals to join. These include the group's ideology. For example, emphasis on changing one's condition through violence rather than "apathetic" and "passive" means, strong bonds of brotherhood and sense of belonging, reputation building, prospect of fame or glory, and other socialization benefits.

iii. Impact of radicalization in prisons

Radicalization impact individuals and even prison facilities differently. Almost all the respondents indicated that the continuity of such vices in our prisons tend to weaken the rehabilitation programs within Prisons and makes it difficult to reintegrate prisoners back to society. This was disclosed by a prison warden in Shimo La Tewa prison who opined that, *since 2008 efforts to implement the recommendations of the Madoka prison reforms have been ongoing. However, our commitment to this is being undermined by vices such as radicalization which continues to take root in the prison.*

Increasing cases of radicalization is entrenching criminal activities in prisons including prison break-outs. Networks/cartels that involve inmates and prison wardens collude to sustain smuggling of contrabands such as narcotics and mobiles phones that are used to sustain the agenda of the radicalizers.

This aspect was disclosed in Kamiti Prison where an incident in July 2016 was brought to light. According to a key informant, a radicalized who was serving a life sentence on the charge of robbery with violence was found to have been consolidating materials to prepare an IimprovisedExplosive Device (IEDs). The materials were delivered to his prison cell disguised as detergents which would have been detonated using a mobile phone smuggled into the cells by an officer.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Although prisons have served as incubators for peaceful change and transformation they are also places of vulnerability in which radicalization is taking place. Both Shimo La Tewa and Kamiti prisons were indeed, found to be breeding grounds for radicalization. The process of radicalization in both prisons occur when radicalizers are able to propagate violent ideologies to offenders who are not radicalized. Offenders and even serving prison wardens who become radicalized do so because of the economic frustrations and the desires for a better life. The psychological and environmental factors explain also why radicalization in prison occurs. However, in this study, it was found that the economic explanations which underlie the relative deprivation theory best explains and describes why radicalization takes place in prisons. The impact of radicalization in prison impacts on Shimo La Tewa and Kamiti prison differently. Radicalization in both prisons were nonetheless found to weaken the rehabilitation programs which most prisons are from the Madoka prison reforms of 2008 been implementing. Criminal activities such as prison-breakouts occur due to sustained radicalization.

This study therefore recommends that;
i)   Implementation of prison reforms such as Madoka reforms 2008 need to be fast-tracked
ii)   Prison officers should undergo specialized training in handling violent extremist prisoners.

iii)   Organizations such as, Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE) should develop programmes to bring on board Moderate imams and preachers, counsellors and psychologists to disseminate counter-narratives in prisons.

iv)   Further research on the influence of Madoka prison reforms in addressing radicalization in prisons.

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