“A Helping Hand?”

Recruitment of Kenyan Youth to al-Shabaab

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Master’s thesis in Peace and Conflict Studies
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Fall 2017

Word count: 24,449
Date: 27 September, 2017
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“Together, in coordinated fashion, we must as a people drain the swamp of violent extremism and deny it room to radicalize Kenyans” (President Uhuru Kenyatta, 2012)
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http://www.duo.uio.no
Print: Reprosentralen, University of Oslo
Abstract

Despite recent increase in terrorism research, both the academic community and general news media have, to a large degree, failed to include the situation in Kenya, a country suffering from continued terrorist attacks by the Somali terrorist organization al-Shabaab (Botha, 2014a, p. 1). In 2016, al-Shabaab carried out 48 attacks in Kenya, while being suspected of 9 additional attacks (Global Terrorism Database, n.d.). Many of the attacks were carried out by local perpetrators due to the group’s growing support among Kenyan youth (Adow, 2015). Al-Shabaab’s presence constitutes a major security issue, which also compromises Kenya’s development (Cachalia, Salifu, and Ndung’u, 2016, p. 1).

Specifically targeting youth, al-Shabaab exploits the socio-economic, political, and cultural grievances experienced by many Kenyan youth, whom due to different macro- and micro-level factors are vulnerable for recruitment to violent extremist groups (Villa-Vicencio, Bunchanan-Clarke, and Humphrey, 2016, p. 18).

With a focus on Kenya, this thesis aims to highlight contributing factors of youth radicalization. Additionally, this thesis investigates at how unemployment and marginalization can contribute to increase youths’ vulnerability to al-Shabaab recruitment. Whereas most previous research dismisses any possible links between poverty and radicalization (Krueger and Malečova, 2003; Meotti, 2016), this thesis finds that complete dismissal of such relationship is unfortunate. The findings suggest that certain socio-economic factors, unemployment, and marginalization can increase youths’ susceptibility to al-Shabaab. However, the factors must be considered in relation to individual and social micro-level factors, arguing that the radicalization process is mostly individual and highly complex. Contrary to previous research, this thesis finds little evidence supporting strong relationship between religious ideology and recruitment to al-Shabaab.

Despite the Kenyan government’s efforts to prevent terrorism through different P/CVE implementations, the government has failed to properly address the underlying causes of youth
radicalization. Instead, the punitive approach with mass-arrests and extrajudicial killings have increased tension and fuelled support for al-Shabaab.
Acknowledgements

Admitting that writing this thesis has been a lengthy process, it has also been a process in which I have learned, challenged, and conquered. Though it has been challenging, I am proud of what I have accomplished. Writing this thesis has been an eye opener on both a professional and personal level, and it has introduced me to a whole new continent that I wish to explore further.

There are numerous people deserving recognition, but I would like to extend special gratitude to my Kenyan friends for their invaluable expertise and contributions. Additionally, I would like to thank them for their hospitality and for showing me the true beauty of Kenya.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for continued support and encouragement. Thank you Silje and Julie for making the long days at the PECOS reading room a little better with long coffee breaks and fruitful discussions.

To my parents, thank you for your endless support!

Lastly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Mohamed Husein Gaas, for always believing in me and encouraging me to follow my own path.

I take full responsibility for the contents of this thesis. Any mistakes or errors are completely my own.

Asante Sana.

Thea Emilie Jerejian,
Oslo, 27.09.2017
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

Since September 11, 2001, there has been increasing attention on terrorism and radicalization, yet most research has focused on terrorism affecting Western interests (Dzhekova, Stoynova, Kojouharov, Mancheva, Anagnostou, and Tsenkov, 2016). However, there is hardly any research on situation in East Africa, especially Kenya. This is despite the region’s longstanding history of violent extremism (Botha, 2014a, p. 1) that dates back to the bombing of the United States embassy in Nairobi in 1998. Since then, the frequency and intensity of attacks has increased due to the rise of al-Shabaab in Somalia in 2006 and Kenya’s military intervention in the country in 2011 (Mwangi, 2017, p. 1). Al-Shabaab has gained strong foothold in Kenyan towns, and carried out a number of attacks throughout Kenya including the attacks on the Westgate Shopping Mall in 2013 and Garissa University in 2015 (Nzes, 2012, p. 13, 15). Between 2000 and 2016, over 1000 people were killed and 2,000 injured in terror-related incidents in Kenya, and over the past nine years the country has experienced approximately 600 terrorist attacks, with al-Shabaab claiming responsibility for the majority (Global Terrorism Database, 2016; Ombati, 2016). The presence of al-Shabaab is not only a major security issue, but also a threat to overall peace and stability, and the country’s development (Cachalia, Salifu, and Ndung’u, 2016, p. 1).

The terrorist threat in Kenya is further increased by radicalized Kenyans contributing to the spread of al-Shabaab’s ideology. Radicalization in the country has been on the rise with an intensification of youth indoctrination to join violent extremist groups (Mwangi, 2017, p. 1). Radicalization, in the context of violent extremism, is a process whereby individuals’ beliefs and world view is transformed to the more extreme (Hannah, Clutterbuck, and Rubin, 2008, p. 2). Additionally, violent radicalization includes the willingness to support or carry out acts of violence (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2009, p. 798).
The dynamics of youth radicalization is a complex phenomenon, and has yet to be fully understood. One of the issues contributing to the complexity is that variation in the radicalization processes is subject to local context. Furthermore, radicalization is not a linear process, which challenges the task of identifying triggering factors (Mwangi, 2017, p. 2). So far, scholars have identified certain prevailing factors that could help explain drivers for radicalization. Some researchers have also suggested that different age groups experience radicalization differently and that youth radicalization and recruitment is of great concern (Botha, 2014a, p. 10; Ranstorp, 2016, p. 3; Villa-Vicencio, Buchanan-Clarke, and Humphrey, 2016, p. 16). Extremist groups, including al-Shabaab, specifically target youth, making them more exposed as compared to other groups (Botha, 2014a, p. 18; Botha and Abdile, 2014, p. 2). Kenya’s youth bulge, in addition to various micro- and macro-level factors, such as socio-economic challenges and marginalization, can contribute to increase youths’ vulnerability to extremist groups (Cachalia, et al., 2016, p. 1-2). Despite the implementation of several counterterrorism policies addressing the issue of youth radicalization, the Kenyan government’s efforts have been undermined by the actions of the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU). Extrajudicial killings and mass arrests have contributed to heightened frustration, especially among the Muslim population who are frequent victims of ATPU’s harassment (HRW, 2015). The frustration felt by many young Kenyans stems from perceived government neglect and marginalization of religious and ethnic groups, which adds to the vulnerability of respective youth and may push them towards extremist groups offering both income and support (Villa-Vicencio, et al., 2016, p. 16).

Youth radicalization is a growing concern and there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of the process and the factors associated with radicalization and youths’ involvement in violent extremist organizations. Therefore, with a specific focus on Kenya, this thesis sheds light on influential factors contributing to youth radicalization in a country suffering from frequent terrorist attacks. This thesis contributes to the academic literature by focusing on a country that has previously been overlooked. The findings of this research will be useful for academia and for future policy making relating to preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE).
1.2 Previous research

There is limited research focusing exclusively on radicalization among Kenyan youth and recruitment to al-Shabaab. Despite the region’s longstanding history of violent extremism, the current focus on terrorism affecting Western interests has led to non-Western countries facing the threat of terrorism being less researched. It is important to remember these “forgotten” conflicts that may well contribute to interesting findings about the radicalization process. However, because it is beyond the scope and capacity of this thesis to review all available literature on the topic, which is spread across multiple disciplines, only the most relevant literature will be reviewed. As such, I attempt to systematize and identify current gaps in the literature.

In 2013, Anneli Botha, a senior researcher at Institute for Security Studies (ISS), published the research paper *Assessing the Vulnerability of Kenyan Youths to Radicalisation and Extremism*. The article highlighted the Kenyan government’s failure to provide basic needs, creating opportunities for Islamist groups to exploit the socio-economic conditions (Botha, 2013, p. 25). The following year, Botha published *Radicalization in Kenya: Recruitment to al-Shabaab and the Mombasa Republican Council* containing interviews with 95 individuals associated with al-Shabaab and 46 relatives. Her findings suggested Kenyan Muslims were joining extremist groups as “a counter-reaction to what they see as government-imposed ‘collective punishment’” (Botha, 2014a, p. 1). Furthermore, 87 percent cited religion as their reason for joining al-Shabaab and 97 percent believed Islam was under threat (Ibid, p. 9).

In 2016, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation published a comprehensive report on community perceptions of violent extremism in Kenya. The report, based on a three-month long pilot study in the country, noted that the inexistence of local definitions of violent extremism

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1 Kenyan youth and youth in Kenya will be used interchangeably, referring to all youth irrespective of ethnic background. In instances deemed necessary, the term Kenyan-Somalis will be used referring to Kenyans of Somali decent.
led to a meager understanding of what the concept entailed. Additionally, the report found poverty, unemployment, and economic marginalization to be factors the locals believed were drivers of violent extremism. Monetary incentives and economic security were also mentioned as drivers for involvement (Villa-Vicencio, et al., 2016, p. x-xi).

In 2016, Cachalia, Salifu, and Ndung’u published *The dynamics of youth radicalization in Africa. Reviewing the current*. The article focused specifically on factors assumed to contribute to radicalization and involvement in terrorist organizations. However, the article, based on Botha’s research from 2014, offered only a snapshot of the situation in Kenya. Nevertheless, it noted unemployment and stressed that unemployed youth were more susceptible to joining al-Shabaab compared to those who were employed (Cachalia, et al., 2016, p. 12). Hassan also used this particular argument in his article on al-Shabaab and Somali youth (Hassan, 2012).

None of the abovementioned studies focused explicitly on youth and their vulnerability to al-Shabaab recruitment. Youth radicalization is of major concern, not only in Kenya, but also on a global scale (Mwangi, 2017, p. 2). In order to develop effective strategies to prevent and counter violent extremism, it is of utmost importance to gain insight into the factors contributing to making youth susceptible to violent extremist groups.

1.3 Research questions

The purpose of this research is to enhance understanding of why and how Kenyan youth join al-Shabaab. I hope that this thesis will shed light on factors previously deemed unrelated to radicalization, and show that these factors actually play an important role in the Kenyan context. The current bias in the relevant literature, focusing primarily on terrorism and radicalization directly affecting Western interests has resulted in a research gap whereby certain areas, including Kenya has been overlooked. Therefore, this research aims to feed the knowledge gap by focusing on the following questions:
1. Which factors play a role in youth radicalization in Kenya?

2. Which of these are major factors?

3. How does unemployment and marginalization contribute to Kenyan youths’ vulnerability to al-Shabaab recruitment?

Hypothesizing that unemployment is important, despite previous research asserting no link between the two, this research will demonstrate how both youth unemployment and marginalization of religious and ethnic groups can contribute to youths’ vulnerability to al-Shabaab recruitment.

1.4 Why study recruitment of Kenyan youth to al-Shabaab?

Kenya has suffered far more terrorist attacks compared to the other countries in the region. Widespread corruption and porous borders have contributed to ease al-Shabaab’s expansion into Kenya, providing a permissive environment for terrorists. Additionally, Kenya’s military intervention in Somalia in 2011 increased al-Shabaab’s motivation for further expansion (Elbagir, 2015; Torbjörnsson, 2017, p. 1). Having gained substantial support among local Kenyans, al-Shabaab has established sleeper cells throughout country and rely on local support when carrying out attacks (Botha, 2013, p. 6). There are no official numbers of how many Kenyans have joined al-Shabaab, but there is an estimate of 700 individuals (Tuko Kenya, 2015; Torbjörnsson, 2017). In order to develop effective counterterrorism policies to prevent youth radicalization, it is of essential value to increase research on why Kenyan youth join al-Shabaab.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 outlines the problem statement of the thesis, the state of youth radicalization in Kenya, as well as identifying the knowledge gap in previous research on the topic. Furthermore, the chapter presents the research questions and explains the importance of studying youth radicalization in a country currently overlooked by the academic literature. Chapter 2 provides necessary background information needed to understand al-Shabaab’s involvement in Kenya.
The chapter also includes the status of youth unemployment and marginalization, and governmental efforts aimed to increase livelihood and reduce youth radicalization. The research methodology is presented in Chapter 3, and includes limitations, ethical and security concerns relating to fieldwork in Kenya. Chapter 4 includes the most relevant concepts related to terrorism research, as well as issues relating to their definitions or lack thereof. Chapter 5 discusses the theoretical framework of relative deprivation theory (RD) and “push and pull” factors. The findings and analysis are presented in Chapter 6. The chapter is divided into macro- and micro-level factors with respective sub-categories influencing youths’ decision to join al-Shabaab. Chapter 7 is a discussion of said findings and previous research in light of the theoretical framework from chapter four. Chapter 8 contains final remarks and recommendations. The concluding remarks encompass the thesis as a whole, not only the findings of the field research. The thesis ends with said chapter.
Chapter 2: Background information and context

2.1 Introduction

Kenya is often considered the economic and transport hub of East Africa, with a GDP growth rate of approximately five percent over the past seven years. Since gaining independence from British colonial rule on December 12, 1963, Kenya has made significant improvements in terms of economic growth, technology and innovation, and development (Provost, 2013). Even though Kenya’s history since independence is not one of war, military rule, or state collapse, it has not been one of improved living standards or industrialization either. Tribe and clan culture has shaped the political system and institutions, which has resulted in ethnic-focused violence on several occasions (Hornsby, 2012, p. 1-2). Despite ranking as a lower middle-income country, weak governance and corruption continues to threaten further economic development (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). Additionally, the unstable situation in Somalia has resulted in an influx of Somali refugees to Kenya, as well as elevated the threat of al-Shabaab members entering Kenya claiming to need protection (Goldman, 2014).

Kenya hosts the world’s largest refugee camp, Dadaab, which according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) accommodates over 245,000 registered refugees (UNHCR, 2017). The number of Dadaab residents has drastically decreased as a result of the Kenyan government’s decision to close the camp in 2017. The Kenyan High Court overturned the decision, yet tension remain high among the remaining refugees. Humanitarian aid workers have also been withdrawn from the camp due to the heightened security risk. The ability of al-Shabaab to infiltrate and operate within the camp mirrors the failed efforts to secure the refugee camp, and alleged terrorist activity is one reason why the government has demanded its closure (Mc Sweeney, 2012).

This chapter provides relevant background information and context needed to understand why Kenyan youth are vulnerable to al-Shabaab recruitment. The chapter taps into the history of violent extremism in Kenya and the emergence of al-Shabaab, proceeding with a focus on youth
unemployment and marginalization. Lastly, the chapter includes a section on governmental efforts aimed at increasing livelihood opportunities for youth.

2.2 Violent extremism in Kenya

Kenya has a long history of violent extremism and the country has been a frequent target of terrorist attacks by both local and international terrorist organizations. On August 7, 1998, several bombs blew up outside the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attacks that took 224 lives and left 4,500 people wounded (History.com, 2010). In November 2002, terrorists fired missiles at an Israeli commercial plane taking off from Moi International Airport in Mombasa. Minutes later, three suicide bombers blew up the Israeli-owned Paradise Hotel in Mombasa, killing 15 people including themselves (Bennet, 2002). Between 2002 and 2012, Kenyan police arrested a number of individuals suspected of planning terrorist attacks. From 2012 onward the violence increased, and 2014-2015 were particularly violent years in terms of attacks, with al-Shabaab claiming responsibility for most of them (Counter Extremism Project, n.d.). On September 21, 2013, four al-Shabaab militants killed 67 people at Westgate Mall in Nairobi. In June 2014, members of the same group executed 50 people in Mpeketoni on the Kenyan coast. On April 2, 2015, al-Shabaab militants killed 147 people at Garissa University College (Levs and Yan, 2015). On January 27, 2017, al-Shabaab attacked a Kenyan military base in Southern Somalia killing an unknown number of Kenyan troops (Burke, 2017). On May 2017, three Kenyan police officers died after hitting a landmine (Al-Jazeera, 2017), and on July 8, al-Shabaab beheaded nine civilians in Jima village (The Associated Press, 2017). According to the Global Terrorism Database (n.d.), there were 473 reported terror incidents in Kenya between January 2008 and December 23, 2016. Out of the 473 attacks, al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for 183 and were suspected of another 147 attacks.

Many Kenyans have joined al-Shabaab and contributed to the spread of the organization’s extremist ideology. According to Chome (2016, p. 5), al-Shabaab has “been able to exploit a combination of political realities, socioeconomic factors, and individual characteristics that render many people – and youth in particular – vulnerable for recruitment.” Having established
sleeper cells through radicalization of primarily Kenyan youth, al-Shabaab has relied on local assistance and support when carrying out attacks in Kenya (Botha, 2013, p. 6). The increase in terrorist attacks in Kenya by local al-Shabaab members is a manifestation of the growing threat of violent extremism in the country (Getachew, 2016).

2.3 Emergence of al-Shabaab

There is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the emergence of al-Shabaab as a violent extremist group. However, there seems to be some consensus that the group grew out from a network of veterans from the Afghan war and small militias supporting the establishment of Shari’a courts in Somalia (Hansen, 2013, p. 6). Since the overthrow of Dictator Mohammed Siad Barre, which resulted in governmental collapse in 1991, the political situation in Somalia has been unstable and chaotic. Competing warlords and clan conflicts increased tension and intensified the already unstable situation in the country. The pre-al-Shabaab network, including Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiya (AIAI), the Sharia courts, and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), filled a political vacuum and managed to establish a certain amount of law and order. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG), formed in 2004, governed Somalia from Kenya until the parliament convened in Somalia in 2006. The TFG was forced to compete with the ICU, and in 2006 Ethiopian forces invaded Somalia as an attempt to overturn ICU’s power and support. In plain sight, the attempt was unsuccessful as it failed to eliminate ICU’s ideology. Instead of reducing ICU’s support, the invasion increased the radical opposition to the TFG (Abukar, 2015, p. 30). Counterterrorism expert Rob Wise (2011, p. 4) argues that the Ethiopian occupation of Somalia from 2006 to 2009 contributed to the development of al-Shabaab’s ideology of an Islamic state in Somalia, while also transforming the group from a relatively small Islamic movement into the most powerful and radical group in the country. The organization, which started out as a network of only a handful of people, became a powerful actor in the Islamic Courts Union and evolved into an organization conducting local governance after being considered both an insurgency group and a terrorist organization (Hansen and Gaas, in Bøås and Dunn, 2009).

Over the last few years, al-Shabaab’s power and reach has weakened. Since 2010, al-Shabaab has experienced a steep decline and ceded important territory, including the port of Kismayo, a
The key economic hub (MHD, 2012). The loss of power and support relates to the combined efforts of the African Union troops, Kenyan and Ethiopian armed forces, and other international actors, including the United States, who engaged in intelligence-led air strikes and Special Forces commando operations (Bryden, 2014, p. 1, Chonka, 2016). Despite the current turmoil, al-Shabaab remains active and a potent threat in both Somalia and surrounding countries (Williams, 2014).

2.4 Al-Shabaab in Kenya

As previously mentioned, al-Shabaab’s expansion into Kenya was partially a response to Kenya’s military intervention in Somalia in 2011. Additionally, a reorganization of the organization’s military division involved further ideological expansion beyond Somalia’s borders. The former Commander of the Lower and Middle Juba regions expanded into Garissa County and Wajir County, while Adan Garar, connected to the bombing of Westgate, expanded into Mandera County (Klimas, 2015; Chome, 2016, p. 5). Since the expansion, al-Shabaab has gained strong foothold throughout Kenya, especially in the northeastern and coastal regions, but also in certain Nairobi neighborhoods. Despite the organization currently being weakened, their Kenyan sleeper cells remain active (Adow, 2015; Megged, 2015). Widespread corruption and bribery culture has eased the way for al-Shabaab members to roam freely in the streets of Kenya camouflaged as ordinary citizens (Githongo, 2015; Megged; 2015).

The Muslim Youth Centre (MYC), also known as Pumwani Muslim Youth or al-Hijra, serves as al-Shabaab’s public relations wing in Kenya. Based in the slums of Majengo in Nairobi County, MYC oversee the large network of members and sympathizers throughout the country and appeals to young Muslims’ affections (Botha, 2016, p. 53). MYC is suspected of recruiting and training new members, as well as facilitating travel arrangements to Somalia (Nzes, 2014, p. 24).

There have been many attempts to understand why some people and not others become radicalized and join terrorist organizations. While the topic is becoming well researched, the
question of why and how remains unknown. Terrorist organizations, including al-Shabaab, rely upon different strategies for recruiting new members. Al-Shabaab’s tactics are divided along the lines of religious ideology, and taking advantage of socio-economic grievances. On the one hand, they appeal to Kenyan youth through their religious ideology, the quest for jihad, and membership in a larger Muslim community without discrimination. On the other hand, al-Shabaab exploits the perceived historical, social, political, and economic grievances felt by many youths (Villa-Vicencio, 2017). Discontent with their own situation, some youths are drawn to al-Shabaab by the promise of monetary rewards and a better future.

Despite the lack of conclusive numbers on how many youths have joined al-Shabaab, the number is presumably high and increasing. Al-Shabaab’s recruitment tactics in Kenya are relatively simple; they appeal to youth through religious propaganda or by offering financial rewards (Agutu, 2016; Anzalone, 2016). Recruitment can occur in mosques where clerics and religious authorities use religious preaching and indoctrination to convince young individuals to join. According to the Counter Extremism Project (n.d. p. 5), Kenyan converts to Islam are particularly sensitive to ideological propaganda and psychological manipulation. As noted above, MYC has assisted al-Shabaab in recruiting new members by encouraging Kenyans to travel to Somalia and fight alongside their “Muslim Brothers.” In 2011, MYC leader Ahmed Iman Ali called for jihad against Kenya, arguing that the Kenyan government oppressed Somalis, stating that “their recent invasion of Somalia is clear evidence of their enmity towards Islam and Muslims” (Meleagrou-Hitchens, 2012).

Al-Shabaab frequently uses propaganda to attract new members and sympathizers. Beginning in 2010, recruitment films were subtitled in both Swahili and English, and since 2013 an increasing number of recruitment films have featured Swahili-speaking East Africans² (Anzalone, 2016). Propaganda in different languages allows al-Shabaab to reach a larger audience. The movies directed towards Kenyans highlight the Kenyan government’s discrimination toward Muslims and they often depict extrajudicial killings by the ATPU. By focusing on grievances al-Shabaab fuels the discontent. This can contribute to increased anger and resentment towards the government and al-Shabaab offers an arena where the youth can

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² Swahili is one of the official languages in Kenya and Tanzania. It is not native to Somalia.
express their anger. Likewise, al-Shabaab plays on the idea of community, preaching about identity, religion, and the importance Muslim unity. According to the self-categorization theory, “people are more inclined to behave in terms of their group membership because their common identity as a group is more salient” in times of being under threat. Consequently, any threat to the in-group will be interpreted as a threat to the individual” (Botha, 2014b, p. 902).

Additionally, al-Shabaab attract many youths by offering financial rewards and employment. Kenya’s high unemployment rates and lack of formal education increases the socio-economic differences, which in turn can contribute to youth becoming more vulnerable to recruitment (Anzalone, 2016, p. 14; Finn, Momani, Opatowski, and Opondo, 2016, p. 178). “Unemployment disproportionately affects youth, leaving them in a state of desperation that makes them vulnerable to promises of significant cash rewards by al-Shabaab recruiters” (Villa-Vicencio, et al., 2016, p. 18). A Kenyan convert to Islam was convinced to join after being offered $500 to join and an additional $100 per week. He added, “mostly what inspired me to go there was the money” (Agutu, 2016). Al-Shabaab offers the prospect of $500 to $1,000 as a monthly salary, which is a lot of money in Kenya (Yusuf, 2016). Although the actual salary may not even be close to those numbers, the deceitful promise of money may be of interest and draw young people to accept al-Shabaab’s offer.

2.5 Youth in Kenya

The National Constitution of Kenya (2010) defines youth as those between 18 and 34. Kenya National Youth Policy, however, defines youth as individuals between 15 and 30 years of age. While the Constitution trumps policy documents, the term youth is often used to refer to individuals between 15 and 34. Nevertheless, Kenya is a youthful country. The median age is 19 years and approximately 80 percent of Kenya’s population is below 35 years old, accounting for 60 percent of the total labor force (Kenya National Youth Policy, 2006, p. 1; Awiti, Scott, and Bhanjee, 2016, p. 1). While official statistics are outdated, an increasing number of youth experience economic challenges affecting their prospects of achieving a sustainable livelihood.
2.5.1 Unemployment

Kenya suffers from high unemployment and underemployment, especially among the younger generation. Official numbers are scarce, but youth unemployment is estimated to be approximately 35 percent, compared to the national unemployment rate of 17.5 percent. Furthermore, 80 percent of unemployed Kenyans are below 35 (Villa-Vicencio, et al., 2016, p. 18). About 30 percent of the young unemployed are between the age of 20 to 24, and 21 percent are 25 to 29. While these numbers are high, the unemployment rate does not consider the economically inactive population or those who have informal jobs (Munga and Onsomu, 2014; The World Bank Group, 2015, p. 1). As shown in Figure 1, the majority of youth have informal jobs and a substantial number are unemployed.

While taking into account that youth under the age of 18 are supposed to be in school, Figure 1 also illustrates another concerning issue, namely the low number of school-aged individuals attending school. The high dropout rates from both primary and secondary school is an issue the Kenyan government has failed to address in a successful way. Despite introducing free primary education (FPE) in 2003 and subsidized secondary education in 2008, the quality of education remains low and the dropout rates high (Adan and Orodho, 2014, p. 53-54). Lack of formal education severely affects the possibility of securing future employment and the majority of employed youths, both male and female, are working informal, vulnerable jobs (Hope Sr., 2012, p. 222; Munga and Onsomu, 2014).

Youth unemployment is a pressing issue in Kenya and failure to invest in youth inhibits both development and sustainability. Additionally, youth unemployment can threaten social
cohesion, political stability, and economic growth. Failing to invest in youth prevents them from acquiring the skills needed to advance the country’s development in the future (Obonyo, 2013). While there is currently no direct link between unemployment and radicalization, lack of stable economic income can result in relative deprivation, which could potentially lead to support for radical and violent extremist groups (Bhatia and Ghanem, 2017, p. 9). Lack of employment opportunities, both formal and informal, can leave youth vulnerable to extremist groups, especially when framed as economic marginalization by the state. It may also fuel desperation for economic stability, making youth more inclined to accept false promises of financial rewards by al-Shabaab and other extremist groups (Villa-Vicencio, et al., 2016, p. 18). Unemployment and lack of economic stability contributes to insecurity and “can potentially contribute to opening pathways to violent extremism among individuals in vulnerable communities” (Shetret, Schwartz, and Cotter, 2013, p. 11). Working with deradicalization of former al-Shabaab members, Sheikh Hassan Mohammed Yusuf at the Muguga Muslim Centre in Kiambaa notes poverty as one of the main reasons for why youth in Kenya join al-Shabaab. According to his observations, many Kenyan Muslims are attracted by the promise of money. After joining, the youth are indoctrinated, and eventually they might start following the ideology (Amble and Meleagrou-Hitchens, 2014, p. 531).

2.5.2 Marginalization

Marginalization refers to the exclusion of certain individuals or groups and could be social, economic, or political. “Marginalization occurs when people are systematically excluded from meaningful participation in economic, social, political, cultural and other forms of human activity in their communities and thus are denied to opportunity to fulfil themselves as human beings” (Rao, 2007, p. 223). Members of ethnic and religious minorities may perceive their group as marginalized, which is the case with Kenyan Muslims (Williams, 2015). Islam came to Kenya several centuries ago and approximately 11 percent of the Kenyan population identify as Muslims. Although they share the same religious beliefs, Muslims in Kenya are divided into different ethnic and geographical groups, including Somalis, Asians, Arabs, Bantu, and indigenous Kenyans (Møller, 2006, p. 11).
While Kenya claims to be a secular state, Christian politicians and high-ranking officials continue to dominate the political sphere (Møller, 2006, p. 5). Furthermore, the churches have been dominant influencers in matters relating to education, health, welfare, and development projects (Oded, 2000, p. 73). The majority of Muslims are concentrated in specific areas, such as along the coastal strip and in the northeastern provinces. Although Muslims enjoy considerable political influence in areas with a Muslim majority, Muslim leaders continue to express grievances and social exclusion (Oded, 2000, p. 11; Møller, 2006, p. 14). Representation of minorities on national, state, and local levels is crucial, because systematically excluding minorities and withholding their access to power and participation could result in many negative outcomes, including resentment and alienation from the state. Failure to represent and preserve the interests of minorities could lead to the minority groups trying to wield influence in other ways, such as through protests or violence (Lijphart, 1999, p. 31-32). As such, marginalization of minorities not only negatively affects the marginalized, it can also influence the overall stability in the country (Brink, 2015, p. 5). Furthermore, Kenyan youth are victims of traditional power structures without proper outlets for young people to express their needs. Despite making up the majority of the population, youth lack proper representation and are not participating in decision-making processes relating to them. Instead of properly investing in youth, Kenya has neglected them and failed to provide the future generation with the means they need to succeed (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2012, p. 13).

Estimates predict that approximately 50 percent of the country’s Muslims live in the coastal region. There are also large Somali communities in the northeastern region and in certain Nairobi neighborhoods (Oded, 2000, p. 11-12). When compared to other urban areas in Kenya, the coastal region is underdeveloped and impoverished. Access to education is poor, resulting in an overall low education level and high illiteracy rates. There is also a lack of accessible and affordable health services. The situation in the northeastern region is even more severe, despite the government’s efforts to boost development. However, comparing Mombasa on the coast to the capital city Nairobi shows that the two cities are similar in terms of life expectancy, literacy, and income. Therefore, it may not be that Muslims are marginalized and discriminated against because they are Muslims, but rather because they live in less developed regions (Møller, 2006, p. 15). On the other hand, an investigation by the independent Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) in 2013 revealed that minority groups in Kenya suffer from systematic
discrimination in relation to political participation and access to national identity cards, as well as experiencing collective punishment (TJRC, 2013, p. 9). The report (p. 48) also confirmed ongoing economic marginalization on the coast.

Regardless of whether the underdevelopment of predominantly Muslim areas is a result of active discrimination by the government or circumstantial, the matter remains that many Muslims in Kenya experience real or perceived grievances, which leads to Muslims being considered a marginalized group. Research from Western countries shows that relative deprivation (RD) and feelings of injustice can contribute to violent behavior. Collective RD, or fraternalistic RD as proposed by Runciman (1966), can motivate involvement in extremist groups (Yusoufzai and Emmerling, 2017). Similar reasoning can be applied to Kenyan Muslims, though with a certain amount of caution. While this may represent the situation for some youth, the fact remains that some individuals join al-Shabaab without being fully aware of what they were recruited for.

As noted above, marginalization of minority groups can result in anger and resentment towards the government. Michael Taarnby (2005, p. 35) theorized that marginalization can contribute to radicalization and recruitment to radical groups. Similarly, the Summary Report from the Regional Expert Consultation held in Nairobi in 2015 (p. 9) cited marginalization as one of the driving forces behind radicalization in the country. In her research on women and radicalization Badran (2006, p. 7) found that uneducated and poor Muslim women in Africa who are socially marginalized or displaced were more vulnerable to radicalization. Additionally, women with strong political grievances or deep feelings about injustice to their group may also be more susceptible to radical groups.

2.5.3 Government efforts in creating employment opportunities

The Kenyan government has implemented several measures attempting to improve the situation for youth. In 2005, the government established the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs (MOYA) to address their concerns. The following year, they developed Kenya National Youth Policy (KNYP), specifically targeting vulnerable groups, including unemployed youth, school
dropouts, women, and youth living in slums. The aim of KNYP was to promote equal opportunities and encourage youth participation in politics (Hope Sr., 2012, p. 222). Specifically, KNYP states, “the unemployed youth should be provided with access to services and support programmes and opportunities for further training” (KNYP, 2006, p. 14).

Established in 2007 to tackle youth unemployment, the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) provided youth with funding and loans for business development. By June 2010, YEDF had distributed $36 million to 87,281 enterprises (Hope Sr., 2012, p. 222). Since its establishment, the fund has facilitated over 20,000 youth access jobs in the international labor market (YEDF, 2017, p. 3). Kazi Kwa Vijana (KKV) was established in 2009 and aimed at providing employment for youth in urban and rural areas. The program focused on vocational training such as water sanitation and harvesting, which contributes to food security, and elderly and child care to increase life skills training (Hope Sr., 2012, p. 224).

In relation to the abovementioned policies, Wamuyu (2013, p. 52) notes that the “policies and structures provide an environment conducive for youth to develop appropriate skills, to enable them transform their lives, and confidently integrate in the society without feelings of alienation and deficiency or as ‘apprentice-citizens.’” However, the high unemployment rates and expressed grievances show that the projects and programs are not sufficiently reaching the targeted population. The youth may be unaware of the projects directed towards them and the threshold for participating might be too high. Presumed difficulties in relation to enrollment can also discourage youth from participating.

2.6 Conclusion

Kenya is a youthful country with approximately 80 percent of the population below 35 years of age. Their situation is dire concerning excessively high unemployment rates. The situation is further exaggerated due to profound ethnic and religious tension (Oded, 2000, p. 11; Møller, 2006, p. 14). Additionally, the presence of al-Shabaab remains a security issue yet to be resolved. The group specifically targets youth, many of whom are lured into joining with monetary incentives (Botha and Abdile, 2014, p. 5-19). A number of governmental policies
have been implemented, though most of them have failed to properly address the issue of youth recruitment to al-Shabaab.
Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the different approaches used in the process of writing this thesis. In addition to discussing the qualitative research approach, this chapter also details the selection criteria and how respondents were chosen based on snowball sampling. Additionally, the chapter discloses limitations related to the research design, as well as ethical and security concerns.

3.2 Qualitative research approach

Qualitative research focuses on meaning in context, with an emphasis on words instead of numbers. In that sense, the goal of qualitative research is to understand how people perceive the world they live in. Additionally, one of the main characteristics of qualitative research is the inductive process by which the researcher collects data to build concepts and theories (Bryman, 2008, p. 366; Marriam, 2009, p. 14-16). Utilizing qualitative methods makes it possible to study how people understand concepts, their surroundings, and why they make certain choices. “Qualitative methods can allow us to access these ‘embedded’ processes by focusing on the context of people’s everyday lives, where such decisions are made and enacted” (Rosaline, 2008). A basic assumption of qualitative research is that the researcher relies mostly on interviews. However, a significant amount of qualitative research focuses on preexisting data (Rosaline, 2008; Flick, 2009, p. 75). Official documents and reports can provide important information (Bryman, 2008, p. 521-522; Flick, 2009, p. 255). As Uwe Flick (2009, p. 255) points out, documents and their analysis can be used as a “complementary strategy to other methods, like interviews or ethnography.” Thus, many researchers combine primary and secondary data to get a broader understanding of the phenomenon in question.

There is an urgent need for new and updated research on radicalization in Kenya and how to prevent youth from joining extremist groups like al-Shabaab. The exploratory nature of this
thesis granted the possibility of further exploring the topic and developing new questions throughout the research process (Jimris-Rekve, 2016, p. 9).

Marriam (2009, p. 15) notes that although the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis which adds value to the study, the human instrument also has shortcomings and biases that may affect the research. Hence, it is important to identify these shortcomings and biases and be aware of how they shape the collection and interpretation of data. Limitations of the data collection are further discussed in section 3.6.

### 3.3 Data collection methods

Within qualitative research, there are several sources of data, which include primary sources, secondary sources, or both (Bryman, 2008, p. 370). Primary sources refer to the data collected by the researcher and can include in-depth interviews, observations, or surveys. Secondary sources include official documents, policy reports, archives, books, peer-reviewed articles, and online sources (Bryman, 2008, p. 369, 515). Both primary and secondary sources were used in this thesis. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, which are commonly used by qualitative researchers due to the possibility of obtaining a wider understanding of the topic in question (Johnson, in Gubrium and Holstein, 2001, p. 104). In addition to traditional interviews, I also included observation, a technique used by social scientists to observe behavior and non-verbal communication. As noted by Marshall and Rossman (1989, p. 79), observation is the “systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study.” Combining in-depth interviews with observation proved useful as it allowed me to get a broader perception of how the organizations worked on a day-to-day basis.

In addition to primary data, I analyzed existing research on the topic. When combining primary and secondary data it is important to triangulate and see if the data collected yields similar findings. As such, triangulation is a way to cross-check the results with previous research and increase internal validity (Bryman, 2004, p. 275; Marriam, 2009, p. 215). While triangulation may show similarities, it can also point out differences, which became apparent after I analyzed my findings. However, this was expected, considering that radicalization is an individual
process and the reasons for why people become attracted to radical groups are complex and dependent on individual circumstances.

The sampling method used for this research was snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a type of purposeful sampling often used when time and resources are scarce. The method entails identifying and selecting participants based on their knowledge and expertise (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, and Hoagwood, 2015). Snowball sampling implies a chain referral system which “yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest” (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981, p. 141). The advantage of snowball sampling includes the possibility of obtaining access to groups that would otherwise be difficult to get access to. However, there are also disadvantages with snowball sampling, which includes the issue of representativeness and validity. Because the sample is not randomly drawn, most snowball samples are biased, which can problematize claims of generalizability. Additionally, due to the nature of the referral chain, the sample is rather homogenous (Atkinson and Flint, 2001).

Semi-structured interviews continue to be one of the most common forms of interviews within qualitative research. The purpose is to “gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale, 1983, p. 174). Kvale’s definition demonstrates how the researcher can use interviews as an instrument to gather information using human subjects. The data will be dependent on the interviewees’ own knowledge and experience. Semi-structured interviews with a conversational nature further allow the researcher to ask follow-up question as the conversation evolves. Additionally, semi-structured interviews invite the respondents to elaborate on their answers and point out what they consider relevant (Kvale, 1983, p. 179). Among the advantages of face-to-face interviews is the possibility of the researcher to pay attention to social cues such as tone of voice and body language, which can be added to the verbal response (Opdenakker, 2006).
3.4 Selection of respondents

The respondents were selected using the snowball sampling method. Before my fieldwork, I initiated contact with several organizations working with and for local youth. The organizations were located in Nairobi and Mombasa county, and differed in religious affiliation. I visited five organizations, in addition to one interview with a representative from the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). I conducted 26 interviews, but the representative from NCTC later withdrew due to the risks associated with participation. Those risks included loss of employment and prosecution. The informant’s response is excluded from the analysis.

The following section describes the organizations visited. The order of presentation does not reflect the order of the interviews. Youth Alive! Kenya (YAK) is an organization working in 12 different cities. YAK serves as an umbrella organization for their regional partners, providing guidance for program development. The organization strives to reach out to and include youth regardless of gender and ethnicity. Their programs are divided into four main topics: health, justice and human rights, democracy and governance, and livelihood. Yaden East Africa describes themselves as a “youth focused development and entrepreneurship initiative on a mission to mobilise young people and assist them identify their potential” (Yaden, 2017). Yaden works with over 200 art and development youth organizations in East Africa. They focus on preventing radicalization through arts and music, in addition to lecturing youth on radicalization and terrorism. The American Refugee Committee (ARC) is a private humanitarian organization primarily operating in Somalia. In cooperation with the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), ARC has established a returnee center in Kismayo, which is where most of the refugees from Dabaab return to, now that the refugee camp is set to close. ARC offers different programs, including a livelihood program aimed at creating jobs and opportunities for youths. Manyatta Youth Entertainment, a youth-led community organization located in Likoni sub-county in Mombasa. Manyatta aims to contribute to a positive change in attitude among vulnerable youth, women, and children through advocacy and theater arts. They further work to increase access to opportunities for self-sufficiency and prosperity (Manyatta Youth Entertainment, n.d.). Lastly, the Mombasa Working Group is an umbrella organization for five community organizations representing the
five sub-counties in Mombasa County. They focus on prevention of radicalization among youth, in addition to education and guidance for both children and parents.

### 3.5 Data collection

The primary data collection was conducted between March 3 and March 17, 2017. The interviews took place at various locations in Nairobi County and Mombasa County. I encountered some difficulties getting in touch with a few of the organizations and several interviews were rescheduled. I also attended an event organized by the youth at Yaden. The event included music and dance performances with messages relating to the danger of radicalization, counterterrorism measures, and hope. There was also a showroom with drawings and paintings made by the youths. The event was hosted by Kenyan and Kenyan-Somali youth and highlighted the importance of community building between the two cultures.

#### 3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

The data for this thesis was mainly gathered through semi-structured interviews, a common method within qualitative research. While in-depth interviews open up for more comprehensive answers as trust builds up between the researcher and the participant, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to tailor the interviews depending on the interviewee’s knowledge and expertise (Johnson, in Gubrium and Holstein, 2001, p. 104). The first interviews were set in Nairobi County and the organizations were all located in different parts of the city. In Mombasa County, both organizations were located in Likoni sub-county. My assessment was that all of the organizations were strategically located in areas where they considered the need for such organizations to be high. Most members of the organizations lived in the same area, including the organization coordinators. This can help lower the threshold for becoming a member, while also establishing trust between the adults and the youth. The adults associated with the organizations function as role models, showing youth that they have numerous opportunities despite being disadvantaged.
There were 25 respondents in total, all of whom were members of the respective organizations, yet held different positions and different expertise. They all possessed extensive knowledge and perspectives contributing to a wider understanding of my research topic. As the interviews were semi-structured, I was able to tailor the interviews in ways suitable for the specific interviewees.

The interview guide\(^3\) included questions that covered a broad spectrum, ranging from root causes of terrorism to free primary education. Some of the questions were quite sensitive, but this did not seem to affect the responses. The questions were mostly open-ended, which allowed the respondents to elaborate on their answers. The semi-structured interviews proved to be the right choice for this thesis and the flexibility allowed me to come up with additional questions as new themes emerged.

The interview with YAK resembled an informal conversation with a constant flow of information. Their location is on the outskirts of Nairobi, relatively close to the Kibera slum. The interview was not recorded so I relied on written notes. There were several interruptions by the other members of the organization and some of them came and joined in on the conversation. It seemed I had come at a rather busy time, but this did not rush or shorten the interview in any way. The overall ambiance at YAK was vibrant and informal, and most of the employees were young.

I visited Yaden on two different occasions. Yaden’s location is in close proximity to Eastleigh, a predominantly Muslim neighborhood. During my first visit I attended a meeting with Yaden and their local and international partners. The agenda was to discuss regional and national challenges relating to Yaden’s work of preventing radicalization among youth. A youth event was scheduled on the same day and I stayed to watch the music and dance performances. The performances, created by Kenyan and Kenyan-Somali youth, focused on the importance of community building and bridging cultural differences.

\(^3\) The interview guide and informed consent form are attached in the appendix.
My second interview with Yaden was one-on-one. With the participant’s consent, the interview was audio-recorded. Among the benefits of recording interviews is the possibility of paying more attention to the respondent instead of concentrating on notes. Furthermore, audio recordings permit a more thorough examination of what people say and how they say it. The downside is that they are rather time-consuming to transcribe and analyze (Bryman, 2008, p. 451). However, listening to the recorded interviews repeatedly brought me closer to the data and allowed me to thoroughly reflect on the responses.

While in Nairobi, I also met with the American Refugee Committee (ARC). They focus mainly on Somalia, but have representatives in Dadaab. With the expected closure of the world’s largest refugee camp (Bloom, Clarke, and Sevenzo, 2017), ARC works closely with UNHCR to support Somali returnees through their established returnee center in Kismayo, Somalia (personal communication). This interview was more formal than the other interviews, which could be due to the fact that it is an international NGO and not a community based organization.

In Mombasa I met with Manyatta Youth Entertainment, a local community based organization in Likoni sub-county. This interview was with eight members of the organization, which provided a very fruitful conversation. The setting was informal and everyone contributed with his or her knowledge. The interview was recorded, which was helpful as I could focus my attention on listening to their answers and participating in the conversation. While in Mombasa, I also met with the Mombasa Working group. This interview was one of the shorter ones I conducted and lasted for approximately one hour. The responses were short and the two respondents seemed reluctant to elaborate. Their body language also suggested an overall apathy and unwillingness to share information. Verbal communication is powerful, but as Giri (in Littlejohn and Foss, 2009, p. 690) points out, “verbal communication would be ineffective if our nonverbal messages did not accompany them.” Their reluctance to elaborate may point to lack of trust between researcher and participants.
Reliability and validity are two methods of evaluating the quality of research. Despite the extensive focus on reliability and validity within quantitative research, there are discussions regarding their relevance in qualitative research. Broadly speaking, reliability refers to the extent to which the study can be replicated and yield consistent results (Bryman, 2008, p. 376). Validity refers to the relationship between the observed and the theoretical framework. In other words, “are you measuring what you think you are measuring?” (Bryman, 2008, p. 376; Flick, 2009, p. 387). Reliability and validity are both important in terms of measuring the quality of the research, but within qualitative research they are difficult to achieve and some would even argue they are of less importance (Bryman, 2008, p. 376). Flick (2009, p. 387) argues that reliability in qualitative research is dependent on explanation. First, explanation of the data must be done in a manner that makes it possible to differentiate between the participant’s response and the researcher’s own analysis. Second, the data-gathering methods must be explicit and the process must be documented. Validity, divided into internal and external, deals with the interpretation of findings (Kirk and Miller, 1986). External validity indicates the degree of generalization, which can be rather challenging for qualitative research projects with small samples. Internal validity, however, can strengthen qualitative research if the researcher interacts with the participants over a longer period of time, which can contribute to a high level of “congruence between concepts and observations” (Bryman, 2008, p. 376).

The ongoing discussion about whether or not reliability and validity are appropriate or relevant tools of measurement in qualitative research has resulted in development of alternative methods. For instance, Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (in Shenton, 2003, p. 63) proposed the concept of trustworthiness, under which there are four different criteria for ensuring quality in qualitative research. The four criteria are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility, which compares to internal validity, refers to the researcher’s methods and interpretation of findings. In establishing credibility, the researcher should consult with the research participants to ensure a correct interpretation. Triangulation of sources is also highly recommended for establishing credibility (Shenton, 2003, p. 63; Bryman, 2008, p. 377; Flick, 2009, p. 392). Transferability parallels with external validity in which the researcher seeks to transfer the findings to another setting or area. Dependability is similar to reliability
and is difficult to achieve within qualitative research. However, the researcher should always strive to make the research replicable to others. To achieve confirmability, the researcher must demonstrate that the researcher’s subjective opinions or personal values did not influence the analysis (Shenton, 2003, p. 63; Bryman, 2008, p. 397).

After establishing that reliability and validity can be difficult to achieve in qualitative research, this thesis still aims for trustworthiness. While the semi-structured interviews provided the grounds for analysis, I recognize the potential bias resulting from snowball sampling. Additionally, the sensitive topic may have influenced the respondents’ answers in regards to inclusion and exclusion of opinions, knowledge, and experience. Therefore, I found it necessary to complement my fieldwork with official documents and reports as an attempt to achieve a greater understanding and sufficient information contributing to the general analysis. The use of triangulation further strengthened my analysis and the internal validity. To the best of my knowledge, the methods employed to conduct this study conform to the framework of trustworthiness. However, due to the small and homogenous sample, transferability may be ambitious. Yet, this research provides further information on how marginalization and unemployment among Kenyan youth can make them vulnerable to recruitment to al-Shabaab, and as such, this thesis adds to the existing literature on the topic.

### 3.7 Limitations of the data collection

Case studies have been critiqued for their lack of generalizability, and I recognize that my research may not be generalizable to other regions or countries. Therefore, the findings of this thesis may not fully concur with research on radicalization in another area. Additionally, some researchers will argue that with such small samples as case studies tend to use, it is impossible to determine if the collected data is representative for a larger population (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2001, p. 10).

Another limitation to the data is the homogeneity of the sample. I conducted 26 interviews (although one was excluded due to withdrawal from the study). The sample consisted of one international NGO and four community based organizations working on similar topics with the
same target group. I had hoped to get an interview with a government official to get their view on the matter, but it proved difficult to get in touch with them. Only a few people responded to my inquiry and those who did were not interested in participating. I believe the negative response may be associated with the fear of being exposed and considered an informant. Regardless, the sample was bound to be somewhat homogenous. However, I do not consider it a big limitation.

Time constraints were also an issue, though not a major one. Due to limited funds, I could only stay in Kenya for three weeks. I was able to carry out my interviews, but it was difficult to schedule interviews in advance because all the organizations continued to reschedule. Had I been able to stay for a longer period, I would have carried out more interviews and maybe obtained an interview with government officials working to prevent radicalization, such as with the NCTC. Staying longer would also have given me the possibility to do follow-up interviews with the respondents.

3.8 Ethical concerns

When doing research on or with human subjects it is especially important to consider potential ethical concerns that may arise during the research process, regardless of the methodology used. One of the most important tasks for the researcher when gathering data is to protect the privacy, well-being, and dignity of the participants. Additionally, a fundamental goal for all researchers must be to ensure that participation entails minimal risk for the respondents (Brooks in Mosley, 2013, p. 46). Diener and Crandall (1978, in Bryman, 2004, p. 509) divided ethical principles into four main areas, all equally important to acknowledge when dealing with human subjects. First, the research must not harm the participants. If there are any risks related to participation, the participants must be informed prior to involvement. Second, voluntary informed consent must be obtained from all individuals participating in the research project. This also includes those being observed (Halai, 2006, p. 5). In this case, informed consent was given either verbally or in writing prior to the interview. The informed consent highlighted the participants’ rights and the possibility to withdraw from the study at any point in time. It was also noted that all answers given prior to withdrawal would be destroyed. Third, the researcher must respect the privacy of the participants and guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. Field notes and
transcripts were anonymized in accordance with the Norwegian Centre for Data Research’s guidelines. Fourth, participants should not be deceived. This means that the participants ought to be informed about the purpose of the research. There is an ongoing debate about whether or not some deception is acceptable. The participants should be informed about the research topic and purpose, but presenting a detailed description of the research, including hypotheses and assumptions prior or at the beginning of the interview, may alter the power relationship between the researcher and the participants and lead to respondent bias (Flick, 2007). However, the consensus is that deception should be avoided.

Another ethical dilemma that may arise concerns compensation. Before my fieldwork, I had already decided that I was not going to compensate participants with money, and there was never any request for compensation either.

3.9 Security concerns relating to field work in Kenya

When doing research on a sensitive subject there are always security concerns to keep in mind both before, during, and after fieldwork. Due to the current unstable situation in Somalia, I deemed it unsafe to carry out fieldwork in Somalia. I decided to focus my thesis on youth in Kenya as they are currently experiencing extremely high unemployment rates and Muslim youth across the country have expressed feelings of marginalization and discrimination. Additionally, there is a network of al-Shabaab members and sympathizers in Kenya and an unknown number of Kenyan citizens have been recruited to the violent extremist group (Yusuf, 2016). I conducted fieldwork in Kenya’s two largest cities, Nairobi and Mombasa. The crime rate in Kenya is high, and muggings, carjackings, and kidnappings are frequent. Furthermore, the presence of al-Shabaab makes Kenya a “high-risk” country when it comes to terrorist attacks (Bogorad, 2016; OSAC, 2016)
3.10 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the research method used in producing this thesis. While I considered the qualitative method most suitable, certain limitations to the study were inevitable, including possible bias relating to selection of respondents. However, no research can claim to be without limitations, and acknowledging that is important. To the best of my knowledge, the most appropriate method was applied in the process of gathering and analyzing the data. Important measures were taken to ensure the anonymity of the research participants. Ethical and security concerns were managed in a professional manner, reducing the risks related to participation and completion.
Chapter 4: Literature review

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss concepts relevant to the study of terrorism and radicalization. It also includes a conceptualization of marginalization, which negatively affects Kenya’s Muslim population. Scholars have directed their attention to the field of terrorism and radicalization, advancing awareness and expertise. However, it is a difficult process as there is no standard for what constitutes an act of terrorism, nor the factors behind the radicalization process. This chapter will discuss the existing academic literature and identify research gaps.

4.2 Terrorism

Defining terrorism has proved to be a challenging task, and despite decades of research, no clear definition exists under international law. In general, terrorism refers to a wide range of violent acts, and states have adopted their own definitions varying from nation to nation (Golder and Williams, 2004, p. 271). The United States defines terrorism as “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (Judicial Administration Subpart P, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010).

The Convention on Combating International Terrorism (1999, in Pawlak, 2015) defines terrorism as:

Any act of violence or threat thereof notwithstanding its motives or intentions perpetrated to carry out an individual or collective criminal plan with the aim of terrorising people or threatening to harm them or imperilling their lives, honour, freedoms, security or rights or exposing the environment or any facility or public or private property to hazards or occupying or seizing them, or endangering a
national resource, or international facilities, or threatening the stability, territorial integrity, political unity or sovereignty of independent States.

The failure to develop a universal definition under international law is generally due to terrorism being a complex concept involving political, ideological, and economic motivations. Nonetheless, terrorism has a negative connotation and is frequently applied to one’s enemies and opponents. It is also a term with moral judgment depending on whether one sympathizes with the perpetrator(s) or the victims. If identifying with the victims, then it is generally considered an act of terrorism. On the other hand, if one identifies with the perpetrator(s), the violent act is not considered terrorism (Hoffmann, 2006, p. 45). Most definitions used in academic literature include the use or threat of violence, such as “unlawful violence against non-combatants in order to intimidate” (Loza, 2007, p. 142), or “the deliberate use or threat to use violence against civilians in order to attain political, ideological and religious aims” (Ganor, 2002, p. 288). Terrorism is also used to create psychological effects among the public such as fear, chaos, and anger (Nasser-Eddine, Garnham, Agostino, Caluya, 2011, p. 9).

To complicate matters further, there is also a distinction between “terrorism” and “violent extremism,” although violent extremism can sometimes be an act of terrorism. Violent extremism is “violence in the absence of reason,” or the belief that the benefits of violent acts outweigh the cost of human life. Contrary to terrorism, violent extremism cannot be countered as most attacks are carried out by “lone wolves”⁴ (Nasser-Edine, et al., 2011. p. 9). However, terrorism and violent extremism are often used interchangeably in the academic literature, which will also be the case for this thesis.

4.3 Radicalization

Radicalization is a term used in a circular fashion attempting to explain person(s) with radical beliefs, either political or religious (Al-Lami, 2009, p. 2). Similar to terrorism, the term radicalization or radicalized has a negative connotation, often used in relation to acts of

⁴ “Lone wolves” refers to terrorists operating individually, without affiliation to specific terrorist organizations, and whose modus operandi are directed by the individual (Spaaïj, 2010, p. 856).
terrorism or violent extremism. The majority of existing definitions are broad and include focus on societal norms and behavior. Hannah, et al. (2008, p. 2) define radicalization as “the process whereby individuals transform their worldview over time from a range that society tends to consider to be normal into a range that society tends to consider to be extreme.” The problem with this definition, and many others, is the focus on normal and extreme, as such standards are determined by the society. Additionally, a person can have radical thoughts and opinions compared to the societal norm without acting upon those radical beliefs, hence the differentiation between radicalization and violent radicalization. Whereas radicalization involves extreme beliefs compared to the societal norm, violent radicalization is when those extremist beliefs are accompanied by the willingness to support or carry out violent acts (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2009, p. 798). Rahimullah, Larmar, and Abdalla (2013, p. 19) describe radicalization as “the process of gradually subscribing to a violent ideology espousing terrorism.” Despite disagreement on what radicalization entails, most researchers and professionals agree that radicalization is a process in which a person undergoes a transformation, whether in radical beliefs or behavior (Al-Lami, 2009, p. 2).

There are many reasons for why individuals join extremist groups. Patterns identified include, but are not limited to discrimination, socioeconomic disadvantages, unemployment, the search for one’s identity, and marginalization. However, the reasons for joining are based on individual circumstances, making it difficult to say exactly why some people radicalize and others do not (Helmus in Davis and Cragin, 2009, p. 75; Botha and Abdile, 2014, p. 4). It is also known that highly educated individuals from wealthy backgrounds have participated in terrorist activities, which points to members and sympathizers of terrorist organizations coming from all levels of society (Krueger and Malečková, 2003, p. 141). Relative deprivation theory (RD), outlined in the next chapter, accounts for this, arguing that deprivation is relative and not absolute. In such, highly educated people “may feel greater discontent from unemployment than those who did not expect such grand employment opportunities” (Richardson, 2011, p. 7).

Because motivating factors for involvement in terrorist groups are diverse, it is difficult to predict the most pressing factors making individuals vulnerable to recruitment. Whereas poverty was previously considered a root cause of terrorism, the current consensus disputes any direct relationship between terrorism involvement and poverty (Krueger and Malečková, 2003).
However, complete dismissal of poverty as a factor is premature, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 7. The problem with understanding radicalization lies in the obsession to explain the process from a theoretical perspective. Most of the existing theories fall short in explaining the whole process due to theories’ rigidity and lack of full comprehension. The search for answers within theory have researchers from different fields competing over which theory fits best, failing to recognize that the theories should complement each other to suffice (Kuhn, 2016, p. 107).

The motivating factors or driving forces behind radicalization and involvement in terrorist movements include, but are not limited to, ideology, religious rewards, social status, financial reward, friendship, and excitement (Helmus, Davis and Cragin, 2009, p. 91). In the case of recruitment to al-Shabaab, several reported being lured into joining the organization with monetary incentives (Botha and Abdile, 2014, p. 5-9). It is important to note that there is a difference in motivating factors depending on country of origin. There is a big difference between radicalized Europeans and individuals from less stable and less democratic countries. As such, research on the topic of terrorism and radicalization must be re-contextualized and linked to local context (Schmid, 2016).

Despite the increase in research on both terrorism and radicalization, the question of why some people and not others become radicalized remains. The current agreement among researchers is that radicalization depends on a number of internal and external factors, which may be different depending on individual circumstances (Helmus, in Davis and Cragin, 2009, p. 73).

4.4 Counter violent extremism (CVE) programming

Rarely conceptualized within the academic literature, CVE refers to a set of strategies and recommendations on how to respond to and prevent acts of violent extremism. In general, CVE aims to address the root causes of violent extremism and prevent recruitment to extremist groups on a national and local level (Mastroe and Szmania, 2016, p. 2; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2017). Peter Neumann (2011, p. 18) notes that CVE attempts to capture an unlimited range of activities that governments and non-state actors pursue to prevent
radicalization. This includes speeches, leaflets, social media campaigns, roundtable discussions, community development, youth leadership initiatives, and education and training for community leaders and law enforcement. Due to the large array of fields CVE is set to encompass, it may be difficult to develop a productive and efficient CVE policy domain. Additionally, measuring and evaluating the success of CVE has proved challenging due to lack of clear data and difficulty in measuring negative outcomes, such as prevention of terrorism (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 4).

To counter violent extremism, one must understand the fundamentals of violent extremism. Counterterrorism strategies are based on the understanding of and experience with acts of violent extremism. As with terrorism, the dominant frame for understanding violent extremism is that of transnational Islamist networks posing a threat to the Western world (Nasser-Eddine, et al., 2011, p. 15-16). Focusing mostly on Islamic extremism, current CVE programs target Muslim communities in ways that can foster suspicion and exclusion (Kundani, 2009, p. 23), and as such, the programs are in danger of indirectly contributing to increased discrimination of Muslims. Such profiling only exacerbates preexisting perceptions of social exclusion (Chin, in Lombardi, Ragab, and Chin, 2014, p. 13).

4.5 Marginalization

Burton and Kagan (2003) define marginalization as “a slippery and multi-layered concept” that can occur on all levels. Societies can be marginalized at the global level, communities from the dominant social order, and ethnic groups and families can be marginalized from the local community. Interestingly enough, “marginalization is a shifting phenomenon, linked to social status,” which can change over time (Nelson and Prilleltensky, 2010). Madanipour, Cars, and Allen (2000, p. 22) define social exclusion as “a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined…when combined they create acute forms of exclusion that find a spatial manifestation in particular neighbourhoods.”

Marginalization, discrimination, and social exclusion are often cited as factors enabling radicalization (Oded, 2000; Taarnby, 2005; Lyons-Padilla, Gelfand, Mirahmadi, Farooq, van
Egmond, 2015). Lyons-Padilla et al. (2015, p. 4) argues that marginalization relates to feelings of significant loss, which can result in increased support for the ideologies of fundamentalist groups. Similarly, Taarnby (2005, p. 35) notes that marginalization and social exclusion are more important factors than religious ideology, and can increase the likelihood of European Muslims turning to Islamic extremist groups. Most studies on marginalization and radicalization focus on marginalization of Muslim immigrants in the Western world and the effects of social exclusion based on religious affiliation and ethnicity (ICCT, n.d.). These studies point to Muslim identity and alienation from the host country as factors for the perceived marginalization (Helmus in Davis and Cragin, 2009, p. 90; Dzhekova, et al., 2016, p. 42). On the consequences of marginalization and social exclusion, Burton and Kagan note (2003),

People who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives and the resources available to them; they may become stigmatised and are often at the receiving end of negative public attitudes…A vicious circle is set up whereby their lack of positive and supportive relationship means they are prevented from participating in local life, which in turn leads to further isolation.

4.6 Conclusion

The abovementioned concepts are highly disputed and criticized. What constitutes an act of terrorism? Why do some people and not others become radicalized? Though these questions may seem impossible to answer, they also demonstrate the importance of continued research on the topic. Current definitions of terrorism are either too broad, to the extent that everything can constitute an act of terrorism, or too narrow, for example excluding the threat of violence. Counterterrorism policies focus on preventative measure to deter future events, hence, it is also important to include the threat of violence in the attempt of defining what terrorism really is (Lum, Kennedy, and Sherley, 2006, p. 11).
Chapter 5: Theoretical framework

5.1 Introduction

The use of theory is common within social science research. Theories are abstract, yet conceptually developed. However, they are subject to scrutiny. Stephen Turner (n.d.) notes that “social science theories are better understood as models which work, either to predict or explain, in limited settings, rather than laws of science which hold and apply universally.” This chapter will draw on relative deprivation theory (RD) and other push and pull factors identified in previous research as important indicators of radicalization.

5.2 Relative deprivation theory (RD)

Researchers often include aspects of relative deprivation in radicalization studies (Richardson, 2011; Gurr, 2011; King and Taylor, 2011). The general concept of RD is simple: “persons may feel deprived of some desirable thing relative to their own past, another person, persons, group, ideal or some other social category” (Walker and Pettigrew, 1984, p. 302). Runciman (1966, in Webber, 2007, p. 111) further differentiates between egoistic and fraternalistic relative deprivation. Egoistic RD refers to individualistic perceptions of deprivation, i.e. an individual compared to another individual. On the other hand, fraternalistic RD refers group deprivation, in which and individual(s) on behalf of the group feel deprived compared to another group. Runciman (1966, in Olson, Herman, and Zanna, 2014, p. 167) tried to capture the distinction in a four-fold table. The four-fold table is presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SATISFIED</th>
<th>UNSATISFIED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Doubly Gratified</td>
<td>B. Egoistic Relative Deprivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Fraternal Relative Deprivation</td>
<td>D. Doubly Unsatisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: W.G Runciman, 1966, in Olson, Herman, and Zanna, 2014, p. 167
RD also taps into expectations, and feelings of discontent relating to desire. According to Webber (2007, p. 99), expectations are based on assessments of objective probabilities such as social status, qualifications, and ethnicity. The sense of deprivation, either egoistic or fraternalistic, can produce resentment towards others. However, RD does not only apply to the disadvantaged, because it is dependent on individual expectation and aspirations in comparison to the reference individual or group. “Choosing class as a reference group will lead to class-based distinctions, and hence to a class-based perspective on society” (Webber, 2007, p.111).

R.T. Gurr focuses on egoistic RD in his famous book *Why Men Rebel* (1970). However, he explains that rather than absolute deprivation, the disparity between expected and achieved welfare can create collective discontent. The collective discontent can then result in different types of political violence (Richardson, 2011, p. 5). Although the book was written in the late 1960s after a wave of political violence swept through postcolonial states with mass protest movements, Gurr’s arguments are still relevant in today’s context of terrorism and radicalization (Gurr, 2011). Richardson (2011, p. 6, 27) hypothesized that frustration caused by relative deprivation can be manifested in terrorism. Further, the levels of terrorism can be explained as an expression of a country’s conditions conducive to relative deprivation. As such, inequality due to perceived structural discrimination is a common source of grievances, which could potentially push people towards extremist groups opposing the government and local authorities.

Fraternalistic RD is said to be a strong predictor of collective action, whereas egoistic RD is not. In cases of egoistic RD, the individual is more likely to experience decreased self-esteem and depression linked to delinquency (King and Taylor, 2011, p. 609). Fraternalistic RD can be a result of egoistic RD, in which individuals transfer their personal discontent to the group level. In other words, individuals assume that most group members experience the same relative deprivation (Tougas and Beaton, 2002, p. 120-121).
5.3 Push and pull factors

“Individuals do not necessarily join extremist groups because they hold extremist views; they sometimes acquire extremist views because they have joined such a group for other reasons” (Horgan, in Bjørgo, 2009, p. 3).

Recruitment to violent extremist groups is dependent on a combination of factors that some researchers have categorized as “push” and “pull” factors. Push factors are those considered to be underlying or root causes of radicalization, and refers to “negative social, cultural, and political features of one’s societal environment that aid in ‘pushing’ vulnerable individuals into the path of violent extremism” (Hassan, 2012). Push factors include, but are not limited to, poverty, unemployment, discrimination, political and/or economic marginalization (Özerdem and Podder, 2011, p. 63; Hassan, 2012). On the other hand, pull factors “pull” individuals towards an organization or group. Pull factors relate to the positive characteristics or benefits of the organization and include group ideology, brotherhood and sense of belonging, reputation, and prospects of fame (Hassan, 2012). Ranstorp (2016, p. 4) also includes sense of excitement and adventure, personal redemption, belonging to a cause, and a romanticized view of ideology as possible pull factors.

Figure 2 presents the most important push and pull factors in Kenya identified by USAID in 2011.

Figure 2: Push and pull factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Push factors</th>
<th>Pull factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Social marginalization</td>
<td>• Belonging</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Poverty</td>
<td>• Social status and respect from peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High youth unemployment</td>
<td>• Radicalized religious teachings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government repression</td>
<td>• Concept of global Muslim community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Corruption</td>
<td>• Misinterpretation of religious teachings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Police harassment and profiling</td>
<td>• Adventure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Khalil and Zeuthen, 2014.
While the factors in Figure 2 are based on findings from Kenya, similar factors have been identified in other countries, including some in the Western world (Ranstorp, 2016; Özerdem and Podder, 2011, p. 63). While some factors may be more applicable than others depending on the individual, Ranstorp (2016) notes that “the radicalization mechanisms are a product of interplay between push- and pull-factors within the individuals.”

5.4 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to present the theoretical framework deemed appropriate for this particular study. Relative deprivation theory has been noted in relation to radicalization in numerous studies and was found applicable to the Kenyan context. Additionally, push and pull factors have proved useful in describing factors that may be important in the radicalization process. However, as pointed out by Magnus Ranstorp (2016, p. 4), radicalization is an interplay between different push and pull factors, and that there are “different degrees and speeds of radicalization.”

Researchers have yet to develop a theory that covers most aspects of the radicalization process, which might be a futile goal. Rather than focusing on social science theories as a critical necessity providing answers, one ought to use theories as a model with certain predictions, which can help guide the researcher. As such, theories are resources that can introduce certain ideas (Pryke, Rose, and Whatmore, 2003, p. 11) that allows the researcher to create links between the theoretical ideas and the observed. Furthermore, theories can help explain potential relationships between different variables (Sunday, n.d., p. 3).
Chapter 6: Findings and analysis

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to explore factors contributing to radicalization of Kenyan youth, with a special focus on marginalization and youth unemployment. Fieldwork in Nairobi and Mombasa County revealed themes that can be divided on two analytical levels: the macro-level and the micro-level. When dividing causal factors on different analytical levels it is important to also examine any possible relationship between them. According to Veldhuis and Staun’s (2009, p. 22) root cause model of radicalization “macro-level factors are preconditions for radicalization, but in order to explain why some people radicalize, and other people do not do so, a scrutiny of micro-level variables is essential.”

Figure 3: A root cause model of radicalization

![Root Cause Model of Radicalization Diagram]

Source: Veldhuis and Staun, 2009, p. 22.

The findings presented in this chapter mostly concur with previous research on the topic, highlighting that no single factor can explain why some people radicalize and others do not. Radicalization is a complex process built up by several factors that are dependent on individual circumstances, which will be discussed in this chapter. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that the youths’ situation remains somewhat constant despite the government’s efforts of improving opportunities and livelihood.
6.2 Macro-level factors

Macro-level factors, often referred to as “push” factors (Villa-Vicencio, et al., 2016, p. 18), are situational and relate to social structures, political, economic, and cultural changes, as well as participation in the labor market. Macro-level factors have previously been noted as preconditions for crime and deviant behavior, and more recently, a precondition contributing to a climate that can conduce radicalism and radicalization. While macro-level factors alone cannot explain radicalization, they can help clarify how frustration and discontent emerge among groups, such as young Muslims (Veldhuis and Staun, 2009, p. 24-25).

6.2.1 Educational attainment and knowledge

Educational attainment has been widely discussed in relation to radicalization. Whereas it was previously assumed that the majority of terrorists had little or no education, we now know that highly educated individuals have joined terrorist organizations, indicating that terrorists come from all levels of society (Krueger and Malečková, 2003, p. 141; Meotti, 2016). Because the radicalization process is profoundly complex and individually contextualized, it is problematic to point to educational attainment as a root cause or driving factor for radicalization and terrorism (Krueger and Malečková, 2003, p. 119). However, because most recent research on the topic has concerned citizens of Western countries, one cannot fail to acknowledge that the motivations for joining extremist groups may differ from country to country. Kenya suffers from high dropout rates, only a few graduate secondary school, and even fewer proceed to higher education. Therefore, low educational attainment, with all its consequences, plays a larger role in Kenya compared to a Western country (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2012, p. 11).

Education, or lack thereof, was mentioned on several occasions by my informants in Kenya, who pointed to lack of education being a major driver for al-Shabaab involvement (personal communication). Kenya introduced free primary education (FPE) in 2002, and it is mandatory for children and youth between six and thirteen years to attend school. In 2013, the enrollment
rate in primary school was as high as 90 percent (Uwezo, 2014), however, there is a difference between enrollment and attendance. The problem is not the number of children and youth enrolled in school, rather, it is the low number of student actually attending school and the high dropout rates. In 2008, the Kenyan government subsidized secondary school as an attempt to increase the percentage of students proceeding from primary to secondary education (Adan and Orodho, 2014, p. 53-54; Education is Power, n.d.). Additionally, the government is building new high schools at a rapid speed (Kariuki, 2015) and there are a number of non-governmental organizations working to improve access to quality education throughout the country (Adam Smith International, n.d.; USAID, 2016). Even though there have been improvements and the majority of Kenyans now have access to educational institutions, the issue of low attendance remains. As noted by one informant, “we don’t need new schools, we need people to go to school. We have a lot of high schools, but 90 percent of primary school students never reach high school” (personal communication). Being enrolled in school is not tantamount to receiving an education, which the dropout rates and number of graduates from the different levels demonstrate. In 2015, The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) reported that while 1.3 million children were enrolled in primary school, only 875,300 made it to Standard Eight (Kariuki, 2015). A report from 2014 (p. 11) published by the Kenyan Ministry of Education, Science and Technology confirms the issue of students dropping out before attaining a sustainable literacy level. Despite the implementation of FPE in 2003 and subsidized secondary education in 2008, there are still costs related to uniforms and books, and many drop out due to financial reasons (personal communication; Glennerster, Kremer, Mbiti, and Takavarasha, 2011, p. 11). Approximately half of Kenya’s population live in poverty and the costs of education is relatively high for those who have limited funds. Education is an investment but for some it is not attainable. In low-income families with several children, parents are likely to do a cost-benefit analysis of sending their children to school, and for some the costs will be higher than the benefits (Hatcher, 1998, p. 10). The decision of not investing in education may not have been an ignorant one, but a rational one (Tomasevski, 2003, p. 102).

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5 Updated statistics on education and enrollment are scarce and it is therefore difficult to retrieve proper and more updated estimates.
6 Primary education in Kenya is from class (standard) 1 to class (standard) 8. The majority starts class 1 at 6 years.
Several of my informants expressed concern relating to the the national curriculum, developed by the Kenyan Institute of Curriculum and Development (KIDC). Evidently, terrorism and radicalization is not included. The general lack of focus on these topics has resulted in knowledge gap of what both radicalization and terrorism entails.

I think that it is the biggest vulnerability that youth being recruited do not understand. They are unaware which makes it easy for anyone to influence you in whichever way… One of the ways people were recruited is that they were promised a job online and they tell you have qualified to go to Qatar or Dubai or whatever for a job. But then they start telling you because it is a very Islamic company they need to make sure that you are strong in your faith so they start feeding you literature and of course by the end of it you are radicalized (personal communication).

Similarly, another informant noted that youth had little knowledge about al-Shabaab and what it meant to be radical, reducing their chances of identifying al-Shabaab recruiters. Another concerning issue among the organizations working to prevent radicalization, was the radicalization process itself. Several informants argued that youth might not necessarily be radicalized or supporting al-Shabaab’s political or religious ideology upon joining. The argument was based on communication with and observation of those who joined, in which relatively few expressed support for al-Shabaab’s agenda (personal communication).

Considering the publicity al-Shabaab gained in Kenyan and international media in the aftermath of the attacks on the Westgate Mall and Garissa University, it is necessary to question how people can remain unaware of the terrorist organization and their actions. The increased attention directed towards the group, including media attention, mass arrests, and detentions cannot go entirely unnoticed. While it may have raised awareness of the group to some extent, the group targets youth, some of them early teenagers or younger, whom may be oblivious. Additionally, many find the promise of employment and money, though false, attractive.
Although, the schools are not to blame for youths’ lack of knowledge on terrorism or radicalization, the general knowledge gap is of concern. There is a huge difference between what the government believes youth know about radicalization and what they actually know. Hence, it is important to educate youth on radicalization and recruitment to terrorist organizations for them to be better equipped to resist (personal communication). The recommendation of increasing youths’ knowledge of radicalization is in line with what Holocaust survivor and 1986 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Eli Wiesel stated in the aftermath of 9/11; that education is the only way to eliminate terrorism (Brockhoff, Krieger, and Meierriecks, 2015, p. 1187).

It is necessary to point out that there are regional differences when it comes to familiarity with al-Shabaab. In areas with large Muslim or Kenyan-Somali communities such as the northern region bordering to Somalia, Garissa, the coastal region, and some neighborhoods in Nairobi, people are more familiar with the true nature of the organization (personal communication). However, that is not to say that youth in these areas are more capable of identifying an al-Shabaab recruiter if approached by one. Additionally, when approached by a recruiter, they may not fully understand what they are recruited to, only that it is a “job.” One organization created a campaign using short online memes7. The campaign, called “would you rather,” appealed to youths’ general needs and desires to raise awareness of al-Shabaab. Examples included “would you rather sleep on the ground in a hut or would you sleep in your own comfortable bed? Would you rather have no access to internet or would you want to talk to your friends on Facebook and WhatsApp?” The goal of the campaign was to highlight the differences between life with al-Shabaab and life at home. The organization considered the campaign a success and the feedback from youth was that it made them think about what they already had access to and what they would possibly give up if they joined al-Shabaab (personal communication).

Due to the ambiguous link between educational attainment and recruitment to radical groups, there is not enough evidence to support that low educational attainment makes Kenyan youth more vulnerable for recruitment to al-Shabaab. These findings concur with previous research,

7“A “meme” is a virally-transmitted cultural symbol or social idea” (Gil, 2017). A meme is made up by a picture with a short and relatable text.
which also suggests that lack of education in itself does not result in youth becoming more prone to recruitment by terrorist organizations (Krueger and Malečová, 2003, p. 119). Al-Shabaab members from Kenya come from different backgrounds, some with and others without long, formal education. However, a significant number of students drop out before reaching secondary school and in such fail to learn important knowledge and skills that could potentially help them in the future. Both in terms of securing a job and identify suspicious job offers. In the attempt of preventing radicalization, one must also identify other factors that may contribute to the likelihood of recruitment to extremist groups. While arguing that low educational attainment in itself is not a driving factor for radicalization among youth in Kenya, it is possibly making youth more exposed. However, more research is needed, as well as increased focus on the importance of education, which will advance youths’ livelihood skills.

6.2.2 Unemployment

Unemployment in Kenya is rampant and while official statistics remain scarce, it is estimated that youth unemployment range among the highest in East Africa with approximately 35 percent for male and female between the ages of 15-35 (Kenyan Institute of Economic Affairs, 2016; Otuki, 2016; Villa-Vicencio, et al., 2016, p. 18). Several of my informants noted lack of employment opportunities as a major concern related to al-Shabaab recruitment considering that al-Shabaab often offer monetary incentives (personal communication; Yahya, 2017). The Kenyan government has failed to create jobs accommodating 800,000 youth attempting to join the job market each year and the situation is even more critical for youth living in rural areas (Osinde and Chatterjee, 2016). Youth advisor at United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) Hassan Abdikadir (in Lagat, 2017) notes that some are lured into joining al-Shabaab with financial incentives. The promise of a monthly salary from a fictitious job offer made by covert al-Shabaab recruiters will be a tempting offer for those who lack stable income. High unemployment and underemployment rates creates a desperate situation and the need for income high. My findings suggest that search for employment can lead to youth joining the organization believing it was a sincere job opportunity. Alternatively, they know it is al-Shabaab, but decide to join anyway because of financial reasons (Agutu, 2016; Villa-Vicencio, et al., 2016, p. 16).
One informant highlighted the difference between employment and income stressing that while stable employment would be favorable, income through occasional odd jobs is often the only alternative for many – especially for those without formal education (personal communication). Informal employment is widespread and it is common practice to advertise job opportunities through word-of-mouth, making “street recruitment” prevalent (personal communication). Social psychology theories and previous research from the field suggests that people join groups because of perceived incentives and rewards. While the incentives to join are dynamic and vary depending on the individual, some join to cover their basic needs for survival such as food and shelter (Borum, 2011, p. 21). If that is the case, then the motivations for joining may be purely economic. While previous research disputes any link between poverty and terrorism, arguing that motivations for joining extremist groups are unrelated to the individual’s economic situation, one must question the generalizability of such claim. Those findings are often based on research on Western citizens, whose motivations for joining a terrorist organization may be quite different when compared to local citizens (Al-Lami, 2009, p. 3; Hegghammer, 2010, p. 64; Borum, 2011, p. 26). Research by Anneli Botha at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), who interviewed 95 Kenyan al-Shabaab members, refute the claim of economic reasons being a primary driving factor for why individuals joined al-Shabaab. According to her findings, only four percent joined al-Shabaab for economic reasons (Botha, 2014a, p. 10). While it may be accurate that economic reasons in itself is not a root cause for involvement in violent extremist organizations, there is a known fact that al-Shabaab recruiters use poverty and unemployment, as well as the increasing gap between rich and poor to their advantage (Botha and Abdile, 2014, p. 8; Botha, 2016, p. 15). In the context of Kenya, where approximately half of the population live in poverty, lack of employment opportunities, both formal and informal, increase the experienced grievances. Fathima Azmuya Badurdeen (n.d.) notes that al-Shabaab exploits poverty, economic deprivation, and regional marginalization through the “victim narrative.” Additionally, economic grievances, both real and perceived, are in some instances believed to be systematic discrimination of the Muslim minority by the government (personal communication).

As noted above, all the organizations I talked with stressed that unemployment negatively affect youth’s situation. Additionally, young teenagers are more inclined to seek employment instead of education. This is due to the economic hardship experienced by their families and their parents’ expectation to contribute economically. However, due to their young age, finding a job
is challenging and many end up wandering the streets or involved in petty crime (personal communication). Al-Shabaab intentionally target those youths, some even as young as 10 years old. Anneli Botha (2014a, p. 18) found that out of 95 al-Shabaab members, 57 percent joined the organization between the ages of 10 and 24. These people are young and the opportunities of getting a job at that age are low, “many join when they are between 8 and 18 years old, so you cannot say that unemployment is a direct factor to al-Shabaab recruitment because these kids are supposed to be in school” (personal communication).

Somali-born Mohamed Ali, lawyer and founder of the Iftin Foundation, introduced the term “waithood,” referring to a situation where youth wait for an opportunity, wait for the future to begin, and wait “for a way forward” (Ali, 2013). According to Ali, the state of waithood makes people inclined to seize the first opportunity they get, regardless of what the opportunity is. Further, the state of waithood can make people, and especially youth, increasingly vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups. The best way to reduce waithood is to increase employment opportunities and assist youth in starting their own enterprises, such as market stands and dry cleaning businesses (Jaafari, 2014). Similar observations have been made in Kenya and several local and international organizations now offer youth vocational training, including farming, fishing, carpentry, hair design, and sewing. Vocational training does not only advance skills, but it could also increase the likelihood of future employment, in addition to keeping youth occupied during the practice period. One informant stressed the importance of keeping “at-risk” youth occupied. High dropout rates from primary and secondary school certainly affects prospects of future employment. There is a common understanding that while unemployment rates among youth are high and graduate rates low, youth remain rather unoccupied. In addition to the general lack of knowledge of al-Shabaab, youth can be susceptible to recruiters, who offer them money and care (personal communication). On the other hand, some may have knowledge of al-Shabaab, but are too focused on the financial reward. When time passes, they may come to realize what they have agreed to but by then it is too late. “Getting in is very easy, but getting out becomes very hard” (personal communication).

Unemployment is included as possible a “push” factor, pushing youth to join extremist groups. Similar findings have been reported among Arab youth joining ISIS (Al-Badayneh, Al-Assasfeh, and Al-Bhri, 2016, p. 745). Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
(OSCE, 2015, p. 23) notes that “Youth unemployment is one of the key issues contributing to youth radicalization and extremism and young people who are in search of purpose in life are prone to radicalization.” As discussed in chapter 5, relative deprivation theory is not concerned with dire poverty, but the absence of opportunities relative to expectations (Taspinar, 2009, p. 78). Taspinar argues that there is a connection between unemployment and radicalization among educated individuals, which can be explained from viewpoint of relative deprivation. At the same time, “dismissing the economic and social roots of radicalization on the grounds that most terrorist have middle class backgrounds is simplistic and misleading” (Taspinar, 2015). Because relative deprivation concerns aspirations and expectations relative to opportunities, the sense of deprivation can occur regardless of social class. In instances where aspirations and expectations remain unfilled, it can contribute to individuals seeking alternative ways of realizing their potential and in such they become vulnerable for recruitment to extremist groups (Taspinar, 2015).

While recognizing previous research and the unlikely connection between low income and participation in terrorist organizations, the complete dismissal of any probable connection is redundant. Most previous research focusing specifically on radicalization in Kenya, with the exception of Botha (2013; 2014a; 2014b) have found unemployment to be a contributing driving force for joining and that the monetary incentives often is eminent (Amble and Meleagrou-Hitchens, 2014, p. 531). Yet, unemployment and lack of opportunities are often connected to a more general notion of perceived or real economic and social grievances and underdevelopment with a religious aspect to it (Møller, 2006, p. 14).

### 6.2.3 Marginalization and discrimination

Christianity and Islam are the two dominant religious traditions in Kenya, with Christianity accounting for the large majority of approximately 84 percent and Muslims approximately 11 percent of the total population (U.S. Department of State, 2015, p. 2). The Kenyan constitution protects religious freedom and Article 56 sets to guarantee the rights of minorities and marginalized groups, and ensure their participation and representation in governance and “other spheres of life.” The Article further states that minorities and marginalized groups should be given special opportunities for access to employment, and entitlement to preservation of
cultural values, practices, and languages (Kenyan Const. Ch. 4, § 56). However, Muslims, mainly Somalis and Kenyan-Somalis have complained of arbitrary detention, harassment, and profiling by government officials (TJRC, 2013, p. 8). In the aftermath of the 2012 Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), Muslim leaders and clerics have accused the Kenyan government of using the law as an excuse to harass and arrest Muslims, failing to differentiate between members of al-Shabaab and ordinary citizens (U.S. Department of State, 2013, p. 7).

The organizations I visited during fieldwork interpreted marginalization and discrimination differently. Whereas the organizations in Nairobi pointed to marginalization on the grounds of socio-economic background with little focus on religious affiliation, the organizations in Mombasa focused on marginalization as a result of systematic ethnic and religious discrimination. Nonetheless, the issue of radicalization and recruitment to extremist groups was, and still is, more pressing in areas with high Muslim populations (personal communication). This could be an indicator pointing to Muslims feeling more marginalized and discriminated against compared to other groups.

The northeastern and coastal region, where the majority of Kenyan Muslims reside, are less developed compared to other Kenyan towns. These areas suffer from poor infrastructure, limited access to educational facilities and health services, higher illiteracy rates, and slow technological and economic development (Møller, 2006, p. 15). Due to perceived structural discrimination, many Muslims feel neglected by the government, which has led to discontent and resentment towards the state (personal communication). Although entitled to the same rights, Muslims, particularly in the coastal region, do not see themselves having the same opportunities as non-Muslims. Additionally, they have expressed concern about harassment by government officials, arbitrary arrests, and extrajudicial killings (personal communication; HRW, 2015; Badurdeen, 2012, p. 55). Patterson (2015, p. 20) argues that there are three main factors that contribute to intensify a country’s vulnerability to radicalization and terrorism, and grievances is one of them. The grievances, either perceived or real, include lack of representation in politics, discrimination and lack of economic, educational, or other opportunities, and heavy-headedness and human rights abuses by the police and anti-terrorism legislation and tactics.
Relative Deprivation theory (RD) can contribute to increased understanding as to why people who experience real or perceived deprivation and grievances can be inclined to join radical groups or resort to violence. Relative deprivation “refers to a subjective perception of being unfairly disadvantaged in relation to reference groups” (Veldhuis and Staun, 2009, p. 34) and the “gap between an individual’s expected and achieved welfare results in collective discontent” (Richardson, 2011, p. 5). RD does not only connote to poverty, hence the “relative” deprivation. Ted Gurr (1970) suggested that relative deprivation and the frustration-aggression hypothesis could help explain social and psychological circumstances increasing the likelihood of violence. However, RD in itself is not sufficient enough and fails to explain why some people become radicalized and others do not (Veldhuis and Staun, 2009, p. 34).

Ever since independence from British colonial rule in 1963, Kenyan Muslims have been more or less excluded from political position at the national level. Although there are some Muslims in high-ranking positions and groups and councils representing the minorities, they exert no direct authority. Fatima Azmiya Badurdeen (2012, p. 54) notes the following on youth radicalization in the coastal region:

The root cause of youth radicalization in the Coast stems from the region’s desperate economic, social, and political conditions. Ineffective decentralization of development plans and governance issues since independence form the backbone of this situation, which is taken advantage of by an infrastructure of social networks of religious and political groups that provide communities with what the government does not and are in some instances extremists.

Therefore, my findings acknowledge previous research by Badurdeen (2012), Hassan (2012), Williams (2015), and others, arguing that it is not necessarily ideological reasons behind the decision to join al-Shabaab. Rather, it is a combination of experienced socio-economic injustice and grievances, which can lead to people seeking support and comfort with different types of groups, some of whom may be extremist. Because the majority of residents in the coastal region are Muslims, it is natural they seek support within their Muslim community who are familiar with the experienced situation.
A Mombasa representative pointed out a concerning issue regarding acquisition of national identity cards. According to the informant, Muslims experience great difficulty acquiring ID cards that are needed to get access to services such as banking, medical assistance, and voter registration. Having a national ID card is a citizen right, however, when the government makes it strenuous for a certain group to obtain the card, it discriminates the whole group (personal communication). A report on religious freedom in Kenya from 2013 confirmed the issue of obtaining identity cards, stating that several government offices deliberately scrutinized ID cards for individuals with Muslim names and required additional, yet unnecessary, documents to prove their nationality (U.S. Department of State, 2013, p. 3). UNDP, in their 2016 report on preventing violent extremism (p. 16), also mentioned Kenyan youth experiencing difficulties in obtaining ID cards, which ultimately shows that the situation has not improved and the government continues to discriminate Muslims. The report added that “extremist groups take advantage of such grievances to further the division between state and society.”

While this thesis has not specifically differentiated between different ethnic groups, it is now necessary to do so. More specifically between Kenyan Muslims and Somali/ Kenyan-Somali Muslims\(^8\). Several of my informants noted that Somalis and Kenyan-Somalis were especially stigmatized, suffering from discrimination from both the government and the civil society (personal communication). They are more likely to live in less developed neighborhoods and are not treated as equal members of society. Due to al-Shabaab being a Somali based organization, Somalis and Kenyan-Somalis are quickly blamed for incidents relating to al-Shabaab, as well as being suspected for involvement (U.S. Department of State, 2013, p. 7). “When the bombing started people automatically assumed that there was Muslims and Somalis doing it, so a lot of phobias started and a lot of discrimination of Muslims… You would get into a matatu\(^9\) and anytime a woman in hijab or a man in a khamiis\(^10\) would get in people would actually throw them out” (personal communication). Prejudice towards a specific ethnic group comes from lack of intergroup contact and prevents positive relations between the groups. Furthermore, the prejudiced individual or group will seek to avoid intergroup contact, to the extent to which it becomes a circle of avoidance (Amir, 1969, p. 337). As an attempt to bridge

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\(^8\) Kenyan-Somalis here referring to Kenyan nationals, born and raised in Kenya, though of Somali origin.
\(^9\) Matatus are private-owned minibuses or minivans used as public transportation.
\(^10\) Khamiis is traditional Somali clothing worn by men.
the gap between Kenyans and Somalis, one of the organizations invited youth to learn more about the Somali members in the organizations and the results were positive.

Somalis are very discriminated and stigmatized. People are scared of them. So we tried to learn more about Somali culture and show that Somali youth are similar to Kenyan youth. But Somalis are a very closed group so it was difficult at first. Most people assume a lot of things about Somalis, but once you get to know them, they are very similar (personal communication).

The government claim to address the issue of marginalization and discrimination by focusing on youth empowerment, especially among the less advantaged. Approximately 30 percent of the annual budget is allocated to youth projects and women’s empowerment. Unfortunately, the funds do not reach the targeted population, instead it is used on administrative costs. One informant noted that youth could apply for governmental funds and stipends for certain projects but that the process was too long for youth to even consider doing so (personal communication).

The National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) was established in 2014 to increase public awareness on terrorism prevention, and to develop new counter-radicalization strategies. One informants described NCTC as a “soft power” compared to the anti-terrorism police unit (ATPU). NCTC would establish dialogue with youth identified as vulnerable to radical groups and extremism and talk to them about radicalization and the risks associated with joining al-Shabaab. However, a few days later, ATPU would raid the same neighborhood making arrests and reversing the preventative work done by NCTC (personal communication; U.S. Department of State, 2013, p. 3).

NCTC tries but every time ATPU intervenes they radicalize people. Especially in Mombasa. Kids will see the big bad police taking kids away. They advance the narrative, the government doesn’t like us, they don’t like Muslims. You cannot keep killing people you believe are radicalized because then more people will become radicalized (personal communication).
Allegations of police brutality, harassment of the Muslim minority, and extrajudicial killings is undermining the country’s security efforts, and the police are only fueling Islamic extremism by inflicting collective punishment on Kenyan Muslims. It is possible to argue that such discrimination by law enforcement can contribute to retaliation and drive people towards radical groups such as al-Shabaab (Horowitz, 2013, p. 47; Langat and Kushner, 2015). Youth are easily shaped by their surroundings and experiences, and their opinions are based on what they hear and see. Therefore, youth who hear about, see, and experience social injustice based on what they believe to be religious affiliation and ethnicity are more inclined to group together with others who share similar experiences. In certain cases, youth can develop disbelief and resentment towards the government, and radical groups such as al-Shabaab are quick to reach out and offer them an arena where they can relieve their anger in various ways (personal communication). Moses Onyango, Director of the Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the United States International University, argues that marginalization is the root cause of radicalization in Kenya. He further notes that Somali-Kenyans in the northeastern region are continuously neglected, and that al-Shabaab has taken advantage of the discrimination “offering development where the state has failed” (Williams, 2015).

Both fieldwork in Kenya and analysis of secondary sources confirms that Muslims in Kenya are, to some extent, marginalized and discriminated against when compared to the majority population. However, I am not in a position to assert whether marginalization stems from structural discrimination by the state or if it is circumstantial. Therefore, I turn back to the Møller’s argument presented in chapter 2, that Muslims may not be marginalized due to their religious affiliation. Rather, that they experience marginalization because they live in a less developed region or area (Møller, 2006, p. 15). However, this begs the question of why areas with predominantly Muslim populations are underdeveloped and, to some extent, neglected?

Based on my findings, I argue that marginalization and discrimination of Muslims is a result of socio-economic disadvantages. Whether this is because of consequent government policies failing to include Muslims, or mere coincidence remains uncertain. Religious freedom is a right, and Muslims have been elected to high-ranking positions, however, there is no legitimate Muslim political party. The Muslim population feel marginalized and while this may be true and the grievances are real, it may not be a consequence of them being Muslim; rather that they
are living in underdeveloped areas or are members of a certain ethnic group (Møller, 2006, p. 13-15). Regardless of the reason for why young Muslims in Kenya feel marginalized and discriminated against, the repressive response from ATPU confirms their grievances and increases the likelihood of youth being easy targets for al-Shabaab recruiters (Institut De Relations Internationales Et Statégiques, 2015, p. 4).

6.3 Micro-Level Factors

Micro-level factors are often divided into social and individual factors. The social factors describe the individual’s position in relation to others and include social identification, social interaction, and relative deprivation. The individual factors also describe individual processes and circumstances and include psychological characteristics and personal experiences (Veldhuis and Staun, 2009, p. 22-23).

6.3.1 Attitudes

*The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently.*

- Friedrich Nietzsche (1881).

The 2015 Kenyan Youth Survey Report found that 77 percent of the participants believed Kenya would become materially richer materially if there was better access to quality education and health services, as well as increased number of jobs for youth in the future (Awiti, Scott, and Bhanjee, 2015). While this presents positive attitudes towards the future, it also depicts a lugubrious view on the present. Several informants mentioned attitudes among youth, both negative and positive, as possible drivers of al-Shabaab involvement. One informant claimed that youth characteristics, their attitudes, and mindset could contribute to making youth vulnerable to radical groups, even without the influence of traditional driving forces. When discussing push and pull factors and what made youth vulnerable to radicalization, they began questioning the old and traditional definitions of youth and found them unsuitable in the context
of Kenya. Therefore, they developed their own concept of youth containing three elements. The first element was age, in which they dismissed the traditional standard of 15-35 year olds and included teenagers as young as 12. The second component was characteristics of youth behavior, such as being energetic, curious, apathetic, and insecure. The last component referred to the individual’s own situation and circumstances relating to educational level, ethnic and/or religious background, motivations and aspirations. They put particular emphasis on curiosity and apathy, which could also be negative and potentially pull youth towards radical groups in the search for adventure and excitement (personal communication). Additionally, unawareness can fuel curiosity, while at the same time expose youths’ naïveté. Unable to “connect the dots” and identify al-Shabaab recruiters among the pool of honest recruiters, youth are more likely to respond to monetary incentives. Although unawareness was mentioned on several occasions, one must also consider those with some knowledge about al-Shabaab, who may be looking for excitement. In such scenarios, curiosity can further be fueled by peer pressure in instances where friends or acquaintances have joined and encourage others to do the same. Dzhekova, et al. (2016, p. 7) acknowledge that involvement in violent groups may not be “premised on or driven by adherence to radical beliefs and frames of thinking, but could be motivated by personal or group loyalty or peer pressure.”

Similarly, apathy, or even what some informants referred to as laziness, could result in some individuals taking “the easy way out” when searching for money in a tough job market (personal communication). Job offers may be tempting, even if it requires travelling to Somalia. Some would even find it exciting, especially if they have yet to travel abroad. Before the recently increased focus on radicalization and terrorism, parents would encourage their boys to go to Somalia for work because it was a source of income (personal communication). With nothing to do, it is only natural to experience a sense of boredom, which in some instances can result in a negative downwards spiral difficult to break out of. One informant noted that apathy and sense of boredom can make youth vulnerable to recruitment to al-Shabaab because they are tired of their hopeless situation and in need of “fast cash” (personal communication). Silber and Bhatt (2007, p. 22), and McGregor, Hayes, and Prentice (2015) all note boredom as a factor that can increase the likelihood of individuals joining extremist groups. As stated by Marc Sageman (2007, p. 2) “One cannot underestimate the importance of boredom in an idle population, which drives young people to seek the thrill of participating into a clandestine operation.”
Attitudes among family and friends often influence opinions and choices. In regards to Kenya, attitudes on education is manifested in the high dropout rates. Kenyan parents are less involved in their child’s education and there is little collaboration between the schools and parents to discuss educational progress. Further, no one takes responsibility for making sure that children actually attend school. Hence, many children enrolled in school fail to actually attend and learn for a variety of reasons. My informants noted that instead of going to school, children would help their parents, work odd jobs to increase the family’s income, become pregnant, or just hang out. An organization working in Eastleigh, a predominantly Muslim neighborhood in Nairobi, stressed the importance of linking school and community to make parents aware of the importance of education.

Many people who get an education are still unemployed. The younger people see university graduates as role models, but they also see that a university degree is not the same as getting employed. You still see those making it in life through corruption and not those went to university, so they do not see the importance of education (personal communication).

Despite the negative attitudes towards education, especially among the disadvantaged in less developed areas, informing both children and parents on how education can increase future prospects regarding job opportunities and income could potentially increase attendance (Glennerster, et al., 2011, p. 14).

### 6.3.2 Peer Pressure

Both peer encouragement and peer pressure can contribute to youth joining extremist groups (Victoroff, 2005, p. 10; Bartlett and Miller, 2011, p. 13; Maskaliūnaitė, 2015, p. 19; Villa-Vicencio, et al., 2016, p. 21). Although peer pressure was not elaborated on compared to the other factors during the interviews (personal communication), further investigation could present vital information of why and how some, and not others, join extremist groups. The power of peers is extensive and individuals, especially youth, will often compete with each other to gain status (Bartlett and Miller, 2011, p. 13, 16). Whereas some join extremist groups
like al-Shabaab because of beliefs or other motivational factors, others may be inclined to join because of peer encouragement. However, this raises the question of the rationality behind the decision to join. When considering the monetary incentive, the decision to join al-Shabaab may be rational even though the motivations for joining were different. Previous research on violent extremist groups shows that engagement can often be a group decision and this may help explain the different levels of motivation (Maskaliūnaitė, 2015, p. 21-23).

6.3.3 Lack of parental support

Three of my informants mentioned lack of parental support as a relevant factor, and their arguments for why deserves attention. Lack of parental support occurred on different levels, both economic, social, and emotional levels, but they seemed to be connected to one another. One of the informants in Nairobi noted that many Kenyan-Somalis come from single-parent households with no proper family structure (personal communication). Lack of parental support from an early age can result in the search for substitution, either an individual or a group who somehow fulfills the role of the parent (Victoroff, 2005, p. 23). Another informant argued that many parents are less involved in their children’s lives and encourage their children to work instead of attending school. Despite the introduction of FPE and subsidized secondary education, the remaining costs and expenses related to education are still too high for some families to afford (personal communication; Glennerster, et al., 2011, p. 11).

6.3.4 Religion

There is little research on Islamic extremism in Kenya, despite the country’s longstanding history of terrorist activity. The frequency of attacks has only increased since the rise of al-Shabaab in 2006 and Kenya’s military intervention in Somalia in 2011 (Botha, 2014, p. 1). Attacks have been carried out with the help of local support and violent extremism has become a serious threat to Kenya’s national security (Aling’o, 2014). The role of religion was not among the main factors I initially wanted to focus on; however, it is virtually impossible to research factors of radicalization without including the alleged religious aspect to it. Especially considering that al-Shabaab is a violent extremist group with an Islamic ideology. As already
established in section 6.1.3, Muslims in Kenya feel especially marginalized and discriminated against. Research within the field of social psychology suggest that people who feel marginalized and alienated from the majority are likely to join groups with a clear ideology or agenda. Religious groups are effective at offering a sense of certainty and self-identity (Lyons-Padilla, et al., 2015, p. 2).

Research by Anneli Botha (2014a, p. 10) found that out of 95 Kenyan individuals associated with al-Shabaab, 87 percent cited religion as the main reason for why they joined the organization. On the other hand, the results from the fieldwork carried out in relation to this thesis yields that ideology was not a significant factor for why Kenyan youth join al-Shabaab. However, it is important to differentiate between religion and violent religious ideology. In Somalia, Islam has functioned as an antidote to the different clan traditions which have structured the Somali society. Despite al-Shabaab’s fragmented ideology, their use of religion is appealing to those frustrated with status quo. By focusing on religious grievances, al-Shabaab claims Islam is under threat, which have also attracted Kenyan sympathizers (Mellgard, 2016). When asked about the role of religious ideology, most of my informants reported that ideology played a lesser role (personal communication). There is reason to assume that age differences may have contributed to the contrasting results, however, one must acknowledge the potential role of religion in radicalization to violent extremism.

One informant argued that if youth joined due to religious motivations there would be reason to believe that they were brainwashed and that “there was a misinterpretation of the holy books” (personal communication). Although there was more focus on socio-economic factors, three of the organizations had continuous dialogue with mosques, imams, and clerics where they discussed radicalization and how to prevent youth from joining radical groups (personal communication).

A lot of recent attention has been attributed to Western extremists joining terrorist organizations, and the focus has been on minority grievances, search for a Muslim identity, feelings of being unaccepted by the larger society, and so on (Veldhuis and Staun, 2009, p. 55;
Christmann, 2012, p. 24; Dzhekova, et al., 2016, p. 42). In opposition, Githens-Mazer (2010, p 14) strongly stresses that religion cannot be a root cause to terrorism:

…it should be remembered that religion cannot be understand as the cause of conflict, let alone the cause for terrorism and radicalization. To this extent, any research claims to establish such link lends itself to accusations of subjective ideological bias… At best, we can say that religion shape the symbolic content and meaning of a movement, and that religion may bring an individual to believe that a movement is not only just, but also morally and ethically obligatory (Githens-Mazer, 2010, p. 14, 16).

Therefore, as Githens-Mazer argues, religion in itself is not, and should not, be considered a root cause to terrorism. Neither should it be noted as a reason for why some people join terrorist movements. Instead, religion could be used to justify the decision to join, though the actual decision was influenced and triggered by other underlying factors. Additionally, the decision to stay with the organization could be justified on religious grounds. Whereas my findings suggest that religious ideology was not significant, the contrasting findings of previous research may suggest that Githens-Mazer’s argument is of importance, especially in the context of Kenya.

6.4 Conclusion

My findings suggest that no single factor can explain why some Kenyans join al-Shabaab and others do not. Socio-economic factors and continued marginalization can contribute to making youth vulnerable to recruitment, yet they are contingent on other macro- and micro-level factors. Negative attitudes towards to the government, current conditions, and individual circumstances affect youths’ possibility of actualizing positive change and realize their full potential. For many disadvantaged youth, their perceived destiny is to remain in the village or area where they grew up working odd jobs as their parents did before them (personal communication). The negative perception of ones’ own situation can contribute to Kenyan
youth being susceptible to al-Shabaab recruiters who promise substantial financial rewards that will ensure food and shelter.

Based on these findings, the belief in al-Shabaab’s religious ideology play only a minor role, hence, religion is not considered an important factor in the context of youth radicalization in Kenya. That does not mean that the role of religion is insignificant, however, the findings presented suggest factors including socio-economic grievances to be more influential and counter-terrorism measures amplify feelings of marginalization and harassment.
Chapter 7: Discussion

The previous chapter established that no single factor can explain why some Kenyan youth become attracted to al-Shabaab. The radicalization process is utterly complex and highly dependent on individual circumstances. However, the previous chapter also highlighted certain themes and factors present in several cases of radicalization, suggesting that these factors are important in the search for understanding radicalization. That is not to say that the abovementioned factors must be present, however, one or several are likely to be present in instances where young individuals join radical groups.

Before proceeding with the discussion of previous research and my findings, I take the opportunity to comment on the use of the term “root cause” when discussing radicalization and terrorism. Much previous research has focused on identifying root causes to radicalization and terrorism, arguing that certain elements and factors can increase the likelihood of individuals joining terrorist movements. Prominent terrorism researchers such as Tore Bjørgo (2009), John Horgan (2009), and Darcy M.E. Noricks (2009) all explore the root causes of terrorism. Noricks (in Davis and Cragin, 2009, p. 11) defines root causes not as the proximate causes of terrorism, “but rather factors that help establish an environment in which terrorism is more likely to occur.” The issue with the term “root cause” relates to its uncontested and widespread use. While it is possible to identify common contributing factors and claim that certain factors can increase the likelihood of individuals joining terrorist organizations, I argue that there are no root causes to radicalization and terrorism and that the use of the term is inadequate. The reason being that the term root cause refers to “the fundamental reason for the occurrence” (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.), insinuating essential preconditions that must be present. However, set preconditions have yet to be verified with empirical evidence. Hence, I find it inappropriate to use the term or refer to specific root causes to radicalization and terrorism because of the rigid definition and the limitations related to that type of categorization. The use of and narrow focus on root causes can further limit the perspectives of terrorist behavior, and as such prevent full understanding and the proper analysis needed to understand why some people join terrorist movements and others do not (Horgan, in Bjørgo, 2009, p. 47).
Arguing against the widespread use of the term root cause as it pertains to radicalization, I advocate for the use of driving force(s) and propose the alternative of more flexible categories analyzed on macro- and micro-level, and in some instances on meso-level. Introducing more fluid categories eliminates the rigidity of root causes and invites the possibility of including an increased number of factors and variables. However, a large number of possible factors and variables can increase the difficulty of constructing a theory. In the long run, however, it can contribute to a greater understanding for why some people join terrorist groups and others do not.

When looking at the seven main factors or categories in discussed in Chapter 6 it becomes evident that they all play different roles in the likelihood of Kenyan youths’ involvement in radical groups. Whereas most research looks at the variables in relation to radicalization, I highlight the necessity of relating the variables to each other. Some of the abovementioned factors were more influential, but that is not to say that the factors without evident link to radicalization are of less importance. On some level, most factors relate to each other. One example is education. Previous research, including the findings of this thesis, concludes that lack of education or low educational level does not increase the likelihood of youth becoming involved with terrorist organizations. However, as will be demonstrated in the subsequent section, this claim does not hold in the context of Kenya. Further, it is important to question the claimed generalizability of research dismissing the possible relationship between lack of or low education and terrorism. Due to the complex process that radicalization is, generalizability or external validity across countries may not be attainable.

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11 Meso-level refers to an alternate level between macro- and micro-level, such as smaller communities or identity groups. Meso-level can also include the social aspect of the micro level (Villa-Vicencio, et al., 2016, p. 16). Analysis on the meso-level is not included in this thesis due to the reasons and factors identified in Kenya and the categorization of those factors, by which the meso-level was deemed redundant when subdividing the micro level into individual and social.
In the context of Kenya, low educational attainment severely affects future prospects of securing employment. Approximately half the population live in poverty and the situation is desperate. If one posits that youth in Kenya become involved with al-Shabaab mainly due to financial reasons, there is actually an indirect link between education and involvement in terrorist groups. Al-Shabaab frequently employs a recruitment tactic in which they target young individuals with the promise of employment and monthly income (Agutu, 2016; Anzalone, 2016). Specific to Kenya, it is also possible to argue that limited knowledge of al-Shabaab and the world in general can contribute to youths’ vulnerability to recruitment. Not only does this relate to low educational level, but also a lack of awareness of social, political and cultural issues. While it is important and necessary to encourage youth to complete at least secondary school, the curriculum should also include the topic of terrorism, which has been and still is missing. Considering that Kenya is notably exposed to terrorist attacks due to their proximity to Somalia and al-Shabaab’s presence in the country, including terrorism on the curriculum could further increase the likelihood of youth being able to identify al-Shabaab recruiters or decline suspect job offers (personal communication).

Before moving further, I would like to point out a limitation to the study that relates to external validity and generalizability. The findings of this research is based on Kenya and more specifically youth, and as such I am not claiming generalizability without any further empirical evidence. What I do claim, however, is high internal validity and credibility as posed under the methodological concept of trustworthiness (Shenton, 2003, p. 63). Despite the findings not necessarily being generalizable to other areas, they are still of importance and highly relevant for the development of new and improved P/CVE (preventing and countering violent extremism) measures and policies; especially in Kenya. In the last decade, the Kenyan government has implemented several measures to improve the livelihood of youths, including the Kenya National Youth Policy (KNYP), the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), and Kazi Kwa Vijana (translated to ‘work for youth’). The success of these programs is mixed. Specifically related to P/CVE, the government has heightened security surveillance at ports of entry and increased security personnel in volatile counties and regions. Further, the government developed the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA, 2012), the Proceeds of Crime and Anti-Money Laundering Act (POCAMLA, 2009), and the Prevention of Organized Crime Act (POCA, 2010), in addition to the establishment of NCTC and ATPU. Yet, as noted in a report by the Kenyan government and UNDP, “the infrastructure needs more support and capacity
building to effectively deter and respond to threats, identify terrorists, foil terrorist plots and bring criminals to justice” (Government of Kenya and UNDP, 2015, p. 6). Furthermore, scarce cooperation between NCTC and ATPU has resulted in NCTC having to focus on damage control due to ATPU’s harsh and rather ineffective counterterrorism strategy, instead of preventing radicalization (HRW, 2015). The fact that ATPU, with a mandate from the government, continues to break the laws and harass people with no accountability, demonstrate the government’s failure to approach the issue of radicalization in a proper and effective manner. Rather than preventing radicalization and terrorism, the act of ATPU only adds to the resentment and injustice felt by many Kenyan Muslims (personal communication).

As previously stated, my findings mostly concur with previous research focusing on terrorism and al-Shabaab recruitment in Kenya. However, the findings also illustrate another important issue; namely, that despite increasing governmental efforts regarding P/CVE, the situation has not significantly changed, at least not for the better. The implemented policies, looking solid on paper, have not been as efficient as once hoped. Despite NCTC’s development and implementation of the National Counter Radicalization Strategy, which cooperates with several local NGOs (Government of Kenya and UNDP, 2005, p. 7-8), what could have been effective counterterrorism efforts are undermined by ATPU’s frequent mass-arrests and delinquent treatment of impoverished youths (personal communication).

Going back to the initial research questions of what contributes to radicalization among youth in Kenya, the findings revealed seven important factors. Additionally, both marginalization and unemployment play an influential role. Both unemployment and marginalization are categorized as macro-level factors, or as others would argue, “push factors” (Schmid, 2013, p. 26; Villa-Vicencio, et al., 2016, p 18). According to the root cause model, macro-level factors are preconditions for radicalization (Veldhaus and Staun, 2009, p. 19). Informants mentioned both unemployment and marginalization to be important factors that could potentially increase Kenyan youths’ vulnerability and exposure to terrorist recruitment. High unemployment rates and confirmed ongoing marginalization of the Muslim minority, though categorized as macro-level factors, are further exaggerated on both the individual and social micro-level due to individual and group sentiment, and social interactions (personal communication). Due to the interaction between macro- and micro-levels, it cannot suffice to analyze macro-level factors

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in an isolated manner (Veldhaus and Staun, 2009, p. 19, 22). While still arguing that unemployment and marginalization, in the Kenyan context, are driving forces for recruitment to al-Shabaab, al-Shabaab involvement relates to a wider individual and societal context. The relationship between macro- and micro-level factors could potentially help explain why some people join terrorist groups and others do not.

I also find it necessary to discuss the claim of Kenyan youth lacking knowledge about al-Shabaab. While it may seem odd from a Western perspective accustomed to a constant flow of information on terrorism, Kenya has not had, until recent years, the same focus on terrorism and radicalization. Additionally, al-Shabaab’s recruitment tactics differ depending on the audience the organization aims to reach. Al-Shabaab directs ideological propaganda towards Muslims in the Western world, whereas in Kenya, they exploit socio-economic and cultural grievances (personal communication; Villa-Vicencio, 2017). They appeal to youth with fictitious job offers and exploit the youths’ situation. Being approached by a job recruiter is common in a country where the majority of jobs are in the informal sector without explicit application processes. Not surprisingly, al-Shabaab utilizes this tactic in their recruitment process and as such lure youth into the organization (personal communication). Given the economic woes in Kenya and the tactics employed by al-Shabaab, it is not so surprising that youth end up in the organization without actually being fully aware until later on, at which point it may be too late to get out. Without neglecting the fact that some individuals join al-Shabaab due to ideological beliefs, Kenyan youth may not necessarily be radicalized when joining the organization. This differs from Western foreign fighters who often undergo the radicalization process in their home country. In Kenya, however, the radicalization is more likely to start after joining, if it ever starts at all. Although lacking empirical evidence, sources revealed that youth, in general, showed little signs of radicalization when they first entered the organization (personal communication). It is difficult to obtain interviews with individuals who have left al-Shabaab, however, the information they possess is vital and could contribute to our understanding of the radicalization process.

More research must be devoted to the relationship between religion and radicalization, especially considering the divergent findings in previous research (Schmid, 2016). The findings presented in the previous chapter grant little evidence supporting religious ideology as a driving
force for Kenyan youths’ involvement in al-Shabaab. Rather, the findings suggested economic motivation and grievances as one of the primary factors. While I am not questioning the findings of Anneli Botha’s research (2014a, p. 10; 2014b, p. 903) stating religion as the primary reason for why Kenyans join al-Shabaab, I hesitate to support claims of internal validity, which are not accounted for in the published material. That is primarily because long term observation by local organizations have found macro-level factors such as economic hardship and various grievances to be more significant (personal communication). That is not to say that religion never plays a role, rather that it plays a lesser role when concerning youths. Again, I point to Githens-Mazer (2010, p. 14) who argues that religion cannot be noted as a causal factor leading to terrorism and radicalization. Rather, religion functions as the moral justification of actions. Religion can bring people together and “Theology in this instance serves to give basic context to individual propensities to participate in violent radical action, where they are framed through religiously inspired interpretations and justifications for action” (Githens-Mazer, 2010, p. 17). This means people who join radical groups and terrorist organizations do not do so because of religion per se, but due to other underlying reasons, that attract them to turn to religious groups for support. Since radicalization is a process in which a person undergoes a transformation towards the more radical and extreme compared to the societal norm (Hannah, et al., 2008, p. 2; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2009, p. 798), they may come to believe that they joined for religious reasons after being indoctrinated and persistently exposed to the group’s ideological propaganda.

Hassan (2012), in his research on Somali youth, also concluded that religious beliefs were not the primary reason for why Somali youth joined al-Shabaab. Instead, he identified other factors relating to their sense of identity, perceptions of neglect, and lack of opportunities to improve their situation. Although the link between poverty and terrorism has been disputed, the effects of poverty cannot be ignored (Hassan, 2012). There was consensus among the Kenyan informants that lack of employment opportunities for youth, regardless of gender and age, was a concerning issue (personal communication). While it is somewhat easier for graduates to secure a job, many high school and university graduates also experience difficulties obtaining employment. Additionally, long-term unemployment and idleness can result in mental health issues (Nauert, 2015). When an employment opportunity appears, youth are likely to take advantage of that opportunity, even if the offer comes from al-Shabaab, which may not be known in the initial phase (Hassan, 2012; personal communication). Despite previous research
indicating poverty as an insignificant factor, one cannot completely dismiss the effects of poverty, which may cause individuals to turn to extremist groups. Hence, there may actually be an indirect link between poverty and involvement in terrorist organizations (Hassan, 2012). As such, al-Shabaab can be seen as a “helping hand,” both in terms of money and as an outlet for expressing grievances. Although this may seem controversial, al-Shabaab proclaim to offer alternative support in instances where the state and government has failed (Williams, 2015; Chome, 2016, p. 5). While al-Shabaab’s recruitment tactics may lure young Muslims to join the organization on false premises, the youths’ situation may lead them to believe in such propaganda.

The findings presented in chapter 6 suggest that push factors on the macro-level, including unemployment and marginalization, are the most significant driving forces as to why youth in Kenya join al-Shabaab. Many Kenyans suffer from relative deprivation due to their employment situation and continued marginalization. This is especially evident in the northeastern and coastal region (Khisa and Oesterdiekhoff, 2012, p. 1). The macro-level factors, or push factors, are related to each other, and in the long run, unemployment typically leads to social and economic deprivation. Many Kenyan Muslims consider themselves marginalized due to structural discrimination and neglect by the government, who they claim are not investing enough to improve the infrastructure in areas with large Muslim populations. There is insufficient evidence to establish whether it is due to deliberate government strategy or simply coincidental that these areas are indeed less developed. In any case, we have established that macro-level factors are of great importance and while they must be considered in light of micro-level factors as well, lack of employment opportunities, marginalization, and grievances, can make Kenyan youth vulnerable to recruitment by al-Shabaab, especially if monetary incentives are involved.
Chapter 8: Concluding remarks and recommendations

8.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the factors relating to youth radicalization in Kenya, and more specifically, to look into how unemployment and marginalization contribute to Kenyan youth’s vulnerability to al-Shabaab recruitment. The dynamics of youth radicalization are complex and have yet to be fully understood. Additionally, variations in radicalization are subject to local context, which complicates attempts to generalize. In fact, attempts to generalize may be unwise as it would obscure the myriad of factors at play. Rather, the aim should be to identify as many possible driving factors as possible in countries and regions particularly exposed to terrorist activities. This thesis focused specifically on Kenya, which because of the country’s close proximity to Somalia and al-Shabaab, can be considered a “high-risk” country both in regards to terrorist attacks and recruitment (Bogorad, 2016). Hence, the findings presented here claim only to represent Kenya, though similarities can be found in other countries and regions.

The findings presented in chapter 6 suggest that Kenyan youth can be susceptible to al-Shabaab recruitment and that certain factors can increase the vulnerability to being recruited, while also recognizing the role of individual and situational circumstances. Concurring with previous research that no single factor can explain why some individuals join terrorist organizations and other do not, factors operating at both macro- and micro-level contribute to Kenyan youths’ decision to join. The macro-level factors identified included educational attainment and knowledge, unemployment, and marginalization and discrimination. On the micro-level, attitudes, peer pressure and lack of parental support were noted as influential. Religion was not identified as an influential driving factor. While the role of religion is far from irrelevant, it is nonetheless not one of the main reasons why Kenyan youth join al-Shabaab. Whereas previous research by Anneli Botha (2013; 2014a; 2014b) suggests religion to be the main reason, this thesis’ specific emphasis on youth may explain the divergent results.
An important observation is the fact that many youths become involved with al-Shabaab without being fully aware of the true nature of the organization. This relates to the generally meager knowledge about the organization within this segment of the population, as well as the organization’s recruitment strategy of disguising its involvement in terrorist activities as legitimate job opportunities (personal communication). As such, Kenyan youth are not necessarily joining al-Shabaab because they believe in al-Shabaab’s ideology. Instead, their situation makes them easy targets and inclined to accept monetary incentives (Botha and Abdile, 2014, p. 12; Lagat, 2017).

Kenyan Muslims tend to be more disadvantaged compared to non-Muslims, and social, political, and cultural marginalization adds to the experienced grievances. Many Kenyans lack formal education and the government has failed to create enough jobs to accommodate the 800,000 youth attempting to join the labor market each year (Osinde and Chatterjee, 2016). While there is no direct link between poverty and involvement in extremist organizations, the effects of poverty cannot be ignored (Hassan, 2012). The distressing lack of employment opportunities, coupled with the perception of being discriminated against due to religious affiliation, can lead to young Kenyans being susceptible to al-Shabaab recruitment. When financial incentives are also present, the appeal is even greater (Lowen, 2014; Agutu, 2016).

The Muslim community in Kenya considers itself a marginalized group suffering from systematic discrimination by the state due to their religious affiliation (TJRC, 2013, p. 9, 48). Repressive counter-terrorism measures, specifically carried out by the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit, further exacerbates the grievances, increasing the likelihood of Muslim youth seeking support within their own community (Badurdeen, 2012, p. 54). Additionally, the high unemployment rates can increase the likelihood of individuals joining al-Shabaab for financial reasons in order to gain a somewhat stable income (Ranstorp and Hyllengren, 2013, p. 18; Lowen, 2014; Agutu, 2016). Taspinar (2015) argues that societies permeated by a deep sense of collective frustration and deprivation relative to expectations are easily exploited by terrorists. Similarly, al-Shabaab take advantage of the socio-economic hardship and collective grievances, “offering development where the state has failed” (Williams, 2015; Chome, 2016, p. 5).
While concluding that no single factor alone can explain why young Kenyans join al-Shabaab, I am confident that the identified factors presented in this thesis are of importance. I recognize that the list of factors is not conclusive, however, I argue that socio-economic factors, including marginalization and unemployment can increase Kenyan youth’s vulnerability to al-Shabaab recruitment. However, the decision to join is contingent on individual and social micro-level factors, which further complicates attempts to understand the complexity of radicalization and recruitment to terrorist organizations.

8.2 Further research and recommendations

The need for research on terrorism and radicalization has been underscored by frequent terrorist attacks around the world. However, most research concentrates on terrorism affecting Western interests, and as such neglects other parts of the world. This geopolitical bias overlooks important information needed to better understand the factors behind radicalization. The findings of this thesis emphasize some factors that have previously been deemed unrelated to radicalization. In a developing country such as Kenya, which is continuously threatened by internal and external extremist groups targeting young individuals for recruitment, it is imperative to understand why and how some join al-Shabaab in order to develop effective counterterrorism policies. Additionally, increased focus on terrorism and radicalization on a global scale may disclose regional distinctions.

Half of Kenya’s population live in poverty and unemployment rates disproportionately affect the youth population, to the extent that individuals report joining al-Shabaab for financial security (Lowen, 2014; Agutu, 2016). The Kenyan government must invest in youth, by encouraging participation on the political level, and most importantly, by valuing their input into policymaking matters that affect them. In addition to CVE, there should also be focus on developing PVE (preventing violent extremism) measures. As noted in UNDP’s report on preventing violent extremism (2017, p. 12), “While CVE should make it more difficult to translate grievances into violence, PVE should help channel the urge for change into constructive and productive activities.” Whereas CVE mostly address the symptoms of violent extremism, PVE focus on the driving forces behind violent extremism.
Furthermore, development of vocational training services could offer a viable alternative to the regular education system, considering the high dropout rates. Vocational training provides youth with employable skills that could advance future prospects of employment. Additionally, vocational training could encourage business entrepreneurship. This would include public and private sector investments; such investments would not only create jobs, but also contribute to the country’s economic growth (The Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2012, p. 19).

Especially important in the Kenyan context is to continue programs aimed at reducing the socio-economic grievances, and that the programs target the marginalized populations, which include Muslim youth, the unemployed, and the disadvantaged. The programs should encourage political participation ensure that the “voices of those who are marginalized/excluded are brought into the policy arena” (UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, 2015, p. 18-19).
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Appendix

Interview Guide

1. Radicalization

1.1 How would you describe the programs that your organization offers?
   a. How do the programs contribute to prevention of radicalization?
   b. How do you reach out to people considered ‘vulnerable’? Location, opening hours, entrance/participation fee, social media campaigns?
   c. What does a normal day activity in the program involve/consist of?
   d. Who is your target group? Age, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation

1.2 Is religious teaching included in the programs? If so, in what ways?

1.3 What makes people attracted to al-Shabaab?
   - Political or ideological reasons?
   - Psychological reasons
   - Socio-economic reasons (education, unemployment, marginalization)

1.4 What role does marginalization play in youth’s decision to join al-Shabaab?

1.5 What role does unemployment play in youth’s decision to join al-Shabaab?

1.6 Many people are tempted to join al-Shabaab due to a fake monetary incentive. What is your professional view on this allegation?

1.7 How can we effectively reduce the likelihood of radicalization among youths?
1.8 How would you describe al-Shabaab’s recruitment tactics?
- Forced / voluntary
- Monetary incentives
- Propaganda

1.9 Is al-Shabaab a threat to the work of your organization?

2. **Administration and funding**

2.1 How is your program funded?

2.2 Is the program independent or supervised by a third party?

2.2.1 Are there any ‘co-supervisors’ such as the U.N.?

2.3 What is the government’s view on the program?
- Positive and supportive
- Negative
- Co-funders?
- Is the government actively seeking updated information about the program?
Request for Participation in Research Project

“Recruitment to al-Shabaab”

Background and Purpose

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Thea Emilie Jerejian, a student at the Faculty of Political Science, at the University of Oslo. The purpose of this master’s thesis is to look into how marginalization and unemployment contributes to making youth vulnerable to recruitment to al-Shabaab. You have explicitly been invited to participate in this study due to your extensive knowledge about the topic.

What does participation in the project imply?

Data for the research will be gathered through in-depth interviews. Hence, your participation in this study will be an interview with the researcher that lasts approximately for one hour. Questions will concern youth’s situation in Kenya, knowledge of al-Shabaab and radicalization, recruitment, and recommendations. The researcher will take notes during the interview. The researcher will also record the interview if the interviewee approves.

What will happen to the information about you?

All personal data will be treated confidentially. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data collected through your participation. All identifiable data/recordings from the interview will be anonymized and stored separately from other data to ensure confidentiality. In such, the interviewee will not be identifiable in the researcher’s personal notes or the publication.

Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be demolished.

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact Thea Emilie Jerejian. E-mail: theaej@student.sv.uio.no. Phone: +47 99500737.

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data.
Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate

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(Signed by participant, date)

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(Signed by researcher, date)