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The Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of Prevailing Counterterrorism Strategies in Prevention of Terrorism in Uganda

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Abstract

As a form of response to terrorism, Uganda adopted and developed international, national and local interventions. Despite these interventions, acts of terrorism, particularly terrorism related deaths continue to happen. According to the Global Terrorism Index Report (2024), deaths caused by terrorism increased by 22% to 8,352, the highest level since 2017. Therefore, this research aimed to explore the perceived strengths and weaknesses entailed in the prevailing counterterrorism strategies in Uganda. This study adopted a qualitative methodology and employed an ethnography research design to discover embedded and developing perceptions which are supporting or curtailing interventions. The study targeted returnees, security forces, policy makers, religious leaders, cultural leaders and academia who have a huge stake in anti-terrorism in Uganda. The survey utilized multistage sampling technique to select the study participants. Data was collected using life history interview, scheduled interviews, and focus group discussions. The study explored that targeting individuals showing early signs of radicalization, discouraging individuals susceptibility to extremist ideologies/tackling ideological causes of terrorism, offering psychosocial support and mentoring, offering rehabilitation and reintegration possibilities and integration of prevention, pursuance, protecting and preparing (mitigation) strategies reflect the perceived strengths of intervention. However, disruption of social relation and community trust, how they lead to marginalization and stigmatization, the prevalence of perceived injustices, inequality and lack of opportunity, their failure to enable community involvement and allies, possible inadequacies in meeting global demands and promotion of PPPs with CSOs and local communities form the perceived weaknesses. It was concluded that anti-terrorism measures need to be designed in a manner that strengthens social relations and community trust; avoid marginalization and stigmatization of suspect communities; observe and promote justice, equality and equal opportunity, community involvement and allies while adequately meeting global demands and promoting PPPs with CSOs and local communities. This implied that there is a need to build on the existing strengths in building a cross-cutting and sustainable anti-terrorism intervention framework for Uganda.

Keywords: Strengths, Weaknesses, Terrorism, Anti-terror interventions, Returnees

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Uganda has endured terrorism and violent extremism since early 20th century to date. These attacks have had profound impacts on its population, shaping the current security posture (Asiimwe et al., 2024); (Apuuli, 2020). Terrorism thus, has emerged as one of the most serious crosscutting challenges to Uganda's political, territorial, ideological, religious, social, economic and cultural dimensions (G. Bwire et al., 2020; G. M. Bwire et al., 2020).

Notably, in the late 1990s, Uganda witnessed the killing of worshippers (Suicide pacts) by Kibwetere under the disguise of religion (Sentongo & Muluubya, 2020); (G. Bwire et al., 2020). In 2020, more terrific attacks from individual suicide bombing happened in Kampala, at Kyadondo Rugby Club and Ethiopia Villages in Kabalagala where terrorists bombed revellers watching a World Cup Soccer Final (Olojo, Sigsworth, & Kaduyu, 2020).

Additionally, more than 15 Muslim clerics were fatally shot by unidentified assailants since 2012 (Kasule et al., 2024). This incident has been attributed to allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (Nsobya & Brigaglia, 2020). Furthermore, over 100 people lost lives in the ethnic clashes which occurred between King Mumbere's guards and the Uganda security forces in Kasese district in 2016 (Mazrui, 2019). In 2021, bomb explosions in the city centre in front of Central Police Station and Parliament of Uganda resulted in over five fatalities and multiple injuries ((Kasule et al., 2024); (Onyango & Ondiek, 2021). These were being planted and thrown by violent extremists associated with Al-Shabaab (Fergus et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the cases of shooting at government officials by unknown violent extremists have been registered taking lives of about 9 officials and the last incident took a daughter of Minister of Works and Transport, who also escape with severe injuries (Obete, 2023). In 2021, over 70 deaths and 255 people escaped injuries where the violent and radical political groups burnt and strike around Uganda after the arrest of a Presidential Candidate Robert Kyagulanyi (Kagoro, Friesinger, & Schlichte, 2024). This was associated with stoning at armed forces which transpired the armed forces to respond with fire bullets ((Buja, 2023); (Motaze et al., 2020).

In response, Uganda has been adopting several interventions to prevent terrorism and all forms of violent extremism. Some of these interventions were developed by the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and locally. Internationally, Uganda works within the global counter-terrorism strategy, ratified international conventions on legal and financial framework, capacity building, military and security measures, preventative measures and anti-money laundering/countering financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) strategy ((Juma & Sabala, 2024), (Kamwesiga et al., 2016).

Nationally, Uganda has adopted institutional interventions (including military, law enforcement, intelligence and diplomatic relation institutions), people focused/centered interventions (including reintegration, demobilization, and truth telling), infrastructural interventions (i.e. installation of CCTV cameras) and legal interventions including anti-money laundering Act, anti-Terrorism Act and many others (Langeland & Olff, 2024).

At the local level, community policing and awareness, Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVET) programs, strengthening local governance and civil society, capacity building and institutional frameworks and improved emergency response and surveillance have been adopted ((Kateete, 2025), (Namuggala, Namuggala, & Vernikova, 2018).

Although in countries like Sri Lanka, intervention strategies managed to bring terrorism, VE threats and attempts to zero. However, this remains not the case in Uganda. For instance, according to the Global Terrorism Index Report (2024), deaths caused by terrorism increased by 22% to 8,352, the highest level since 2017. In addition, recruitment and radicalization are believed to remain happening in Uganda in presence of interventions (Mackie & Smith, 2016).

This study thus aimed at examining the perceived strengths and weaknesses in prevailing interventions as far as ending the recruitment and radicalization of individuals into terrorism acts is concerned.

2.0 Materials and Methods

This study adopted a qualitative methodology and employs an ethnographic research design which emphasizes in-depth, long-term fieldwork within a specific cultural setting. The study targeted policy makers, Security Agencies' personnel, National Focal Point officials, Financial Intelligence Authority Officers, Civil Society Organisation (CSOs)/Non-Government Organisation (NGO) officials, Community members (i.e. religious leaders, Local Council Officials), Academia and Returnees within Kampala, Kasese and Mayuge Districts in Uganda.

2.1 Study Area

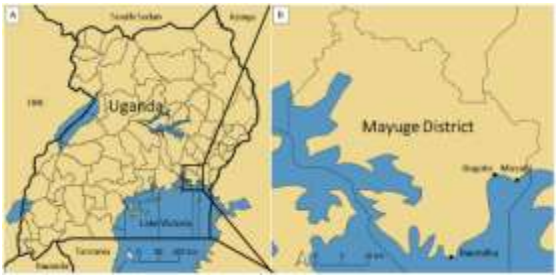
The global terrorism rating considers Kampala, the capital city of Uganda a medium-threat location for terrorist activity (Albert et al., 2022; Alfaro, 2022). A relapse to the LRA and countering the Allied Democratic Force (ADF) escalation of the conflict gives more justification to the selection of Uganda. It is instructive also to note that while terrorism generally has been associated with Islamists groups, Uganda's experience with LRA and ADF extremists has been non-Islamic but religious nevertheless. It was therefore important to focus on Uganda to draw knowledge and learning from such experience considering commonalities of extremism driven by religious ideologies, persuasions, poverty and political power struggles. The research was conducted in three strategically and purposively selected districts of Kampala, Mayuge, and Kasese. Kampala is the epicentre where national policies and strategies against terrorism are formulated and coordinated (Nkomo & Buchanan-Clarke, 2020).This urban setting provides a crucial context for understanding how counter-extremism strategies are designed at the policy level and perceived within an urban environment, making it an essential area for study.

Fig.1: Map Showing Kampala District



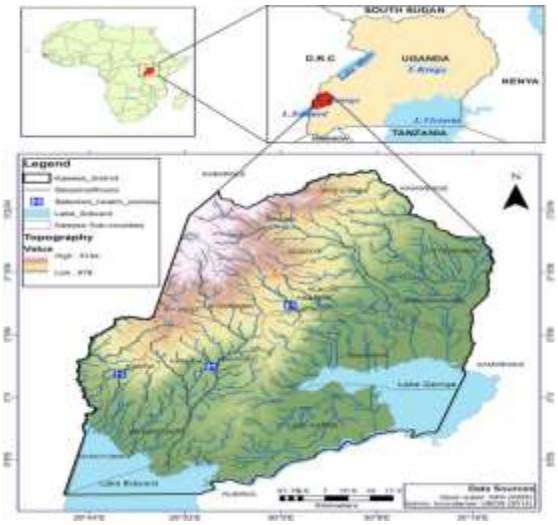
Mayuge was selected for its historical, and border district with ongoing experiences with terrorism. This district contrasts sharply with Kampala's urban backdrop, representing regions directly impacted by extremism and highlighting the diversity of contexts in which terrorism occurs.

Fig.2: Map Showing Mayuge District



Kasese was selected for its current insurgencies and experiences with terrorism, given that ADF has been operating in the region for about 15 years. Both Kasese and Mayuge offered a window into the rural and community-level challenges and responses to such threats (Kawooya et al., 2023)

Fig.3: Map Showing Kasese District.



2.2 Sample Size and Techniques

The survey utilized multistage sampling technique to select 42 study participants. This technique was applied in selection of a study area; choice of village/organisation being studied; choosing prospective categories and selection of a respondent. In this case, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select participants with knowledge of terrorism countering and formerly recruited persons who have been reintegrated. The study selected 10 informants/respondents from each study area (district) under the primary respondent's category, 24 informants from secondary categories (12 in-depth interviews and 12 key informants). The researcher applied data saturation points for each category to ensure that sufficient data has been collected to fully understand the phenomenon being studied, ensuring that the findings are comprehensive, reliable, and represent the diversity of perspectives within the sample, thereby enhancing the credibility and validity of the research results (Gaur & Kumar, 2018).

2.3 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Specifically, data collection methods included interviewing and documents review. Interviews included in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and life histories with primary and secondary respondents. The researcher reviewed previous literature to find inter-related concepts and misconceptions, established patterns of terrorism and identified statements that explain them.

In-depth interviews were used to obtain detailed exploration of participants' personal experiences, attitudes, and perceptions (Lokot, 2021). In CVE, interviews with former extremists can provide insights into the radicalization process and effective de-radicalization strategies. These interviews delved deeply into the experiences, perspectives, and insights of the respondents regarding terrorism and counter-extremism efforts. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were held with individuals who possess specialized knowledge or firsthand experience relevant to the research topic and these included security forces, policy makers, religious leaders, cultural leaders and academia (Muellmann et al., 2021a, 2021b). KII guides were meticulously translated into local dialects such as Luganda, Swahili, and Luo to ensure effective communication with potential respondents from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

FGDs were held with participants from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss specific topics. This method will be useful in CVE research to explore community perceptions of radicalization threats and the effectiveness of local CVE programs. Four FGDs were conducted consisting of 6 to 8 members who had ever been engaged in VE in relation to their engagement in radicalization and effectiveness of CVE. Life History Interview was conducted with selected returnees.

2.4 Data analysis

Data from interviews and group discussions were transcribed verbatim and along with document review findings were coded and categorized using thematic analysis. Atlas ti, was utilized to assist in organizing, coding, and identifying themes across the data. This process involved an inductive approach, where codes and themes emerged from the data itself, ensuring that findings are grounded in the respondents' experiences and perspectives.

3.0 Study Results

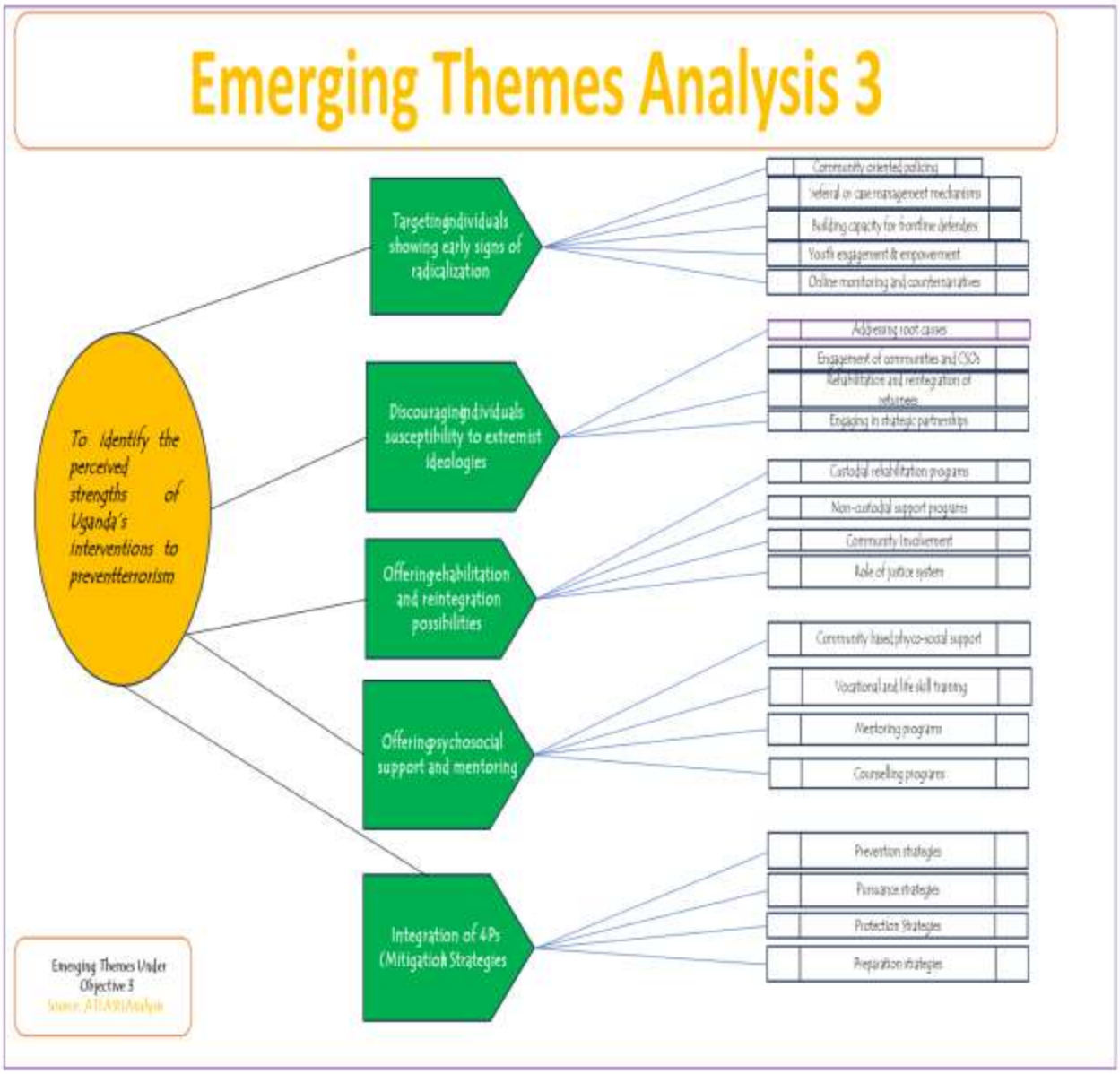
3.1 Biodata

The study was largely informed by males constituting 59.7(43) whereas females were represented by 40.3(29). In relation to age, the study was largely informed by individuals within age range of 30-50years, commanding a representation of close to 75%. Furthermore, majority of the results were obtained from people who were educated with a degree level 29.2% (21). It should be noted that close to 80% of the respondents had the capacity to read and write which implied that they possessed the cognitive capacity to answer questions as asked. The section of respondents who had stopped at primary level and below were those respondents subjected to Focus Group Discussions at LC levels, religious leaders and a few returnees who were subjected to Life History Interview. The study was also informed by respondents who had spent in service for over 15years and these took a portion of 54.2%. These were followed by 30.6% who had been in terrorism issues for the last 11-15years. The last segment of marital status showed that majority of the interviewees were married constituting 44.4% (32). This thus means that the results obtained can be relied on since majority had families. The sociological image of the study participants therefore was believable to share the story behind roots of terrorism in Uganda.

3.2 Perceived Strengths of Uganda's Interventions to Prevent Terrorism

Five emergent themes arose in relation to perceived strengths of Uganda's interventions to prevent terrorism and these included; targeting individuals showing early signs of radicalization, discouraging individuals susceptibility to extremist ideologies/tackling ideological causes of terrorism, offering psychosocial support and mentoring, offering rehabilitation and reintegration possibilities and integration of prevention, pursuance, protecting and preparing (mitigation) strategies. This is reflected in Figure 3 below;

Figure 3: Thematic Analysis



3.2.1 Targeting individuals showing early signs of radicalization

It emerged from interviewees that interventions have demonstrated strength in targeting individuals showing early signs of radicalization through community-oriented policing, mechanisms of referral or case management at individual level, building capacity for frontline defenders, youth engagement and empowerment, online monitoring and counternarratives, community-based prevention and early warning as well as role of civil society and international partners. It was quoted from several key informants,

"The primary strength of Uganda's intervention effort is related with targeting individuals showing early signs of radicalization through a multi-agency, community-policing approach that emphasizes early intervention, support, and engagement before criminal activity occurs..." Key Informant, 10, from Policy Makers

3.2.2 Discouraging individuals' susceptibility to extremist ideologies/Tackling Ideological Causes of terrorism

Interviewees expressed that discouragement has been demonstrated while addressing root causes of terrorism, engagement of community and civil society organisations, rehabilitating and reintegrating returnees and engaging in strategic partnerships. The key informants noted,

"...the overall aim of adopting a multi-faceted approach was to discourage susceptibility to extremist ideologies by addressing root causes and building community resilience...this is because our interventions combine security measures with a strong emphasis on community-based programs, education, and social development..." Key Informant, 8, from National Focal Point

3.2.3 Offering Psychosocial Support and Mentoring

It was noted from many of them indicating that this has been realized through community-based psychological support, vocational and life skills training and mentoring and counselling. The following verbatim confirm this position,

"...may be for your information, our CT efforts integrate psychosocial support (PSS) and mentoring through "off-ramping" programs, using life skills, vocational training, counselling, and community networks to divert at-risk youth from radicalization, focusing on reintegration, addressing trauma, and building resilience via multi-sectoral approaches involving health, education, and social welfare. While specific terrorism-focused PSS details are limited in snippets, general CT strategies involve rehabilitation, addressing root causes (like poverty, trauma), and offering alternatives to violence through community engagement and positive role models, often leveraging existing structures like schools and social services for holistic support..." Key Informant, 10, from Policy Makers

3.2.4 Offering Rehabilitation and Reintegration Possibilities

It emerged that the above has been realized through a number of custodial rehabilitation programs, non-custodial support and community involvement and role of the justice system. It was quoted,

"Uganda's anti-terrorism interventions support rehabilitation and reintegration through a multi-faceted approach involving state agencies like CEWERU and civil society partners like UNODC, IOM, EU, UNICEF and many others...though challenges in community acceptance and post-release monitoring remain..." Key Informant, 6 from CSO/NGO

3.2.5 Integration of Prevention, Pursuance, Protecting and Preparing (Mitigation) Strategies

3.2.5.1 Prevention

It arose from interviewees that several prevention strategies have been integrated including community policing, community engagement and legal framework. It was noted,

"The pillar of 'prevention' in PPPP model focuses on stopping people to become terrorists or engage in supporting terrorism and this has been achieved using a series of arrangements including facilitating community policing, addressing socio-economic grievances, dialoguing and creating awareness in communities, and enactment of the Anti-terrorism act and other legal measures like anti-money laundering..." Key Informant, 13, from Policy Makers

3.2.5.2 Pursuance

It also emerged from interviewees that several pursuance strategies have been integrated including by detecting and stopping terrorists, financial sanctions and undertaking investigations and prosecuting terrorism. It was highlighted that,

"Pursuance element has been essential in detection, investigation and stopping terrorist attacks...this is where Uganda employs a combination of law enforcement, intelligence, military, and diplomatic approaches to detect and disrupt threats..." Key Informant, 10, from Policy Makers

"The Ministry of Internal Affairs, in liaison with the Financial Intelligence Authority (FIA), implements targeted financial sanctions and robust anti-money laundering (AML) and countering the financing of terrorism (CFT) measures to cut off funding for terrorist activities...and I am sure you have had several cases of NGOs prosecuted under this arrangement including Action Aid Uganda..." Key Informant, 3, from CTD

3.2.5.3 Protecting

It further emerged from interviewees that protection strategies have been integrated through undertaking infrastructure security, border controls and PPPs. It was noted,

"The element of 'Protecting' aims at reducing vulnerability while providing for infrastructure security, boarder controls and PPPs..." Key Informant, 2, from CTD

"...measures involve enhancing the security of potential targets, including the use of innovative materials in protective coatings for vehicles and buildings and advanced technologies to counter improvised explosive devices (IEDs)...and these have been used a lot in most of our operations..." Key Informant, 7, from Academia

3.2.5.4 Preparation (Mitigation) Measures

Lastly, interviewees expressed that mitigation measures like inter-agency coordination, exercising and training and response plans have been integrated to deal with terrorism. It was quoted,

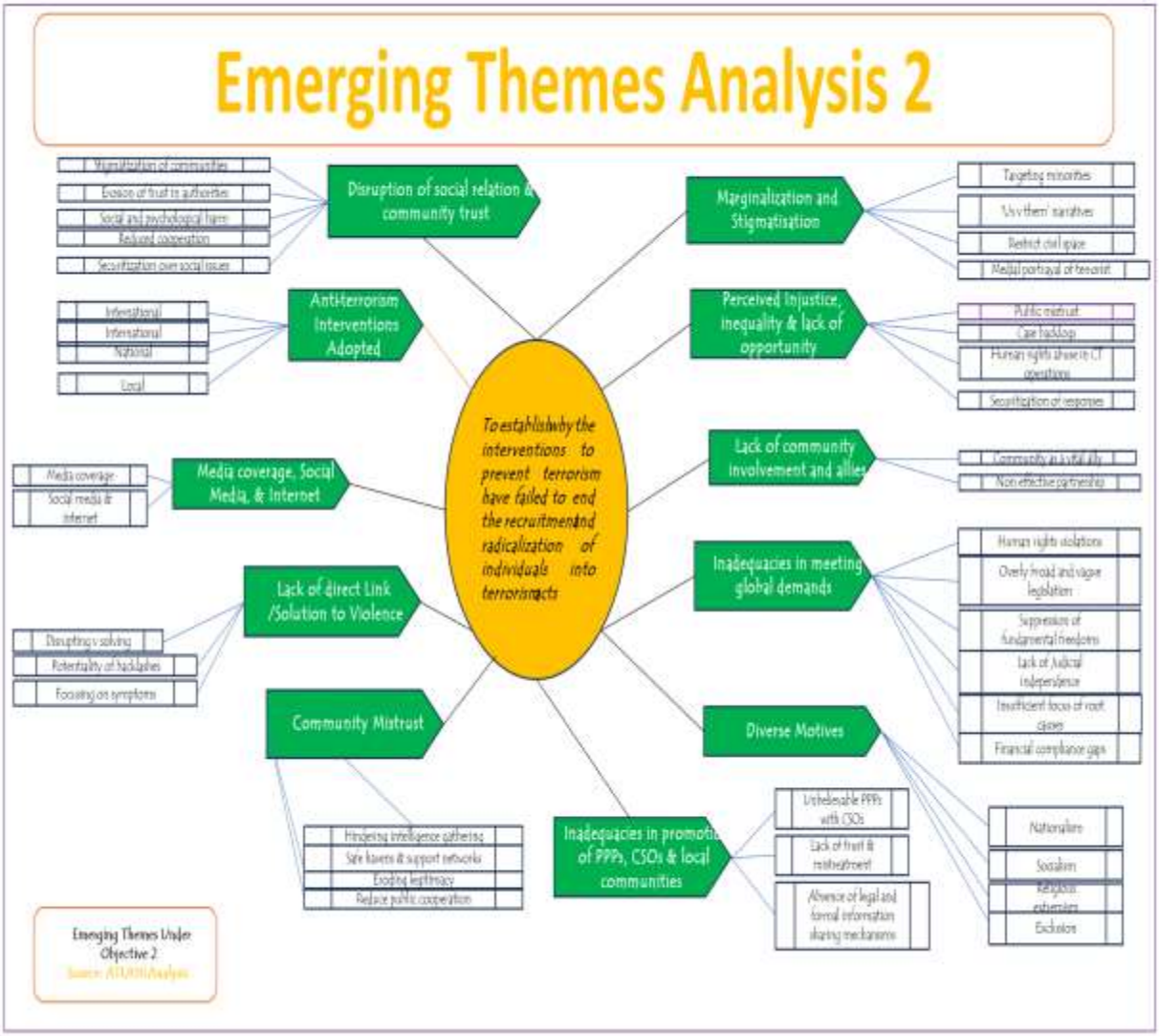
"In 'preparing' element, the focus is on mitigating the impact of a terrorist attack if one occurs and ensuring a rapid recovery and this is where we apply inter-agency coordination, training and response plans..." Key Informant, 8, from National Focal Point

"This is where we focus on cooperation and information-sharing between health services, security services, and the police for effective response...and if you have been observant, you must have seen that whenever a terror attack occurs, our forensic department arrives and protects the whole place and that is part of evidence collection and securing victims..." Key Informant, 10, from Academia

3.3 Why the interventions to prevent terrorism have failed to end the recruitment and radicalization of individuals into terrorism acts

It was reported that failure has been exhibited in form of disruption of social relation and community trust, marginalization and stigmatization, perceived injustices, inequality and lack of opportunity, their failure to enable community involvement and allies, possible inadequacies in meeting global demands and promotion of PPPs with CSOs and local communities. This is reflected in Figure 2 below;

Figure 2: Thematic Analysis



3.3.1 Disruption of social relation and community trust

It emerged from interviewees that to a high extent anti-terrorism interventions have increased on stigmatization of communities, erosion of trust in authorities, social and psychological harm, reduced cooperation and focusing on securitization over social issues. It was noted,

"...the rhetoric and practice of CT often have the unintended consequence of linking entire communities, such as Muslim population with extremism and terrorism. This stigmatization fosters suspicion and resentment that disrupt social relations and community trust...if I can give you an example, we had over 20 Muslims arrested during the killing of ACP Kaweesi in 2017 but up to now, many of them were left scot-free when they discovered that they had no offence to answer...so, the community starts taking CT as witch-hunting Muslims hence foiling the good security programmes...." FGD 2, Participant 6, Mayuge District

"I have operated in several levels when it comes to CT but I can tell that surveillance, increased policing in specific areas, and certain legal powers (like airport stops or control orders) are experienced as discriminatory and contribute to a sense of being a "suspect community". This significantly undermines

trust and confidence in the police and security services, making community cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts more challenging..." Key Informant, 11, from CSO/NGO

3.3.2 Marginalization and Stigmatization

It arose from several interviewees that to a high extent the prevailing ant-terrorism interventions are targeting minorities, focus on 'us vs. them' narratives, limited on profiling and surveillance, affected by media portrayals of suspects of terror, erosion of trust, restrict civil space, aid social and economic exclusion and deny safe spaces. It has been quoted,

"Counter-terrorism (CT) measures often disproportionately focus on specific minority communities (such as Muslim groups post terror attacks in Kampala) in non-Muslim majority communities, leading to the perception and experience of being targeted solely due to their identity. For instance, the population of Muslims is 6 million as per the 2024 population census which is almost five times less than Christians. However, when it comes to suspects, it is only Muslims..." FGD 1, Participant 6, Mayuge District

"...much of the CT efforts have been put on minorities for instance the Muslims and this has made the good efforts to be perceived as being targeted because of their identity...yet they can make such interventions to look general and focus on everyone. I have a lot of examples on this, when the government starts arresting people who killed ACP Kaweesi...close to 98% were Muslim who have not been up today convicted any. This makes the good efforts to solely be termed as witch-hunting and about identity..." Life History Interview, Participant 10, Mayuge District

"Political leaders and security-focused rhetoric often invoke a polarized "us vs. Them" dynamic, portraying minority groups as scapegoats or threats to national security. This public hostility contributes to a pervasive fear of a backlash after any terrorist event, regardless of who the perpetrators are..." Key Informant, 4, from Academia

"...after the twin bombings at CPS and Parliament in 2021, I travelled in a Taxi moving to Jinja...I sat close to a Muslim who innocently and informally said that '...Muslims have suffered, wait and see, they are going to pick Muslims like chickens because of those bombs', to which everyone in Taxi responded in agreement. The story went on and went on but it signalled to me as a practitioner in this that Muslims think they are targeted and that is the true narrative that we need to address." Key Informant, 9, from National Focal Point

3.3.4 Perceived injustices, inequality and lack of opportunity

The study participants indicated that prevailing ant-terrorism interventions are catalysts to public mistrust, case backlogs, abuse of human rights in CT operations, securitization of response, exploitation of grievances and limit opportunities. It was noted,

"There is a history of poor and strained relations between local communities and the police/security forces, often stemming from perceived mistreatment or human rights violations which has led to deep mistrust and this is making the communities less likely to report suspicious activities or individuals..." FGD 1, Participant 1, Mayuge District

"...our relationship with the police is affected by lack of honesty which has made us not to trust police anymore...we have had a lot of incidences when a person volunteers and offer to give police information or certain intelligence but they use it against him and such people end up being arrested..." FGD 3, Participant 3, Kasese District.

"...there is a need to address the process of prosecuting offenders of terror because the community perceives it as full of unfairness working towards achieving government narrative...because up to now, we still hear cases of people who were accused of terrorism for over 5years. Secondly, we are not all equal

before the law...we understand that terrorism is given much attention because it threatens general national security and interests, however, even suspects of terror needs to enjoy the same liberties like other suspects...” Life History Interview, Participant 9, Mayuge District

3.3.5 Lack of Community Involvement and allies

The participants indicated that to a lower extent, anti-terrorism interventions do not observe community involvement and alliances despite the fact that they know the importance of community involvement and how communities can be best allies in counter terrorism efforts.

“The community forms the primary constituency in CT initiatives especially by acting as earlier detectors and intervenors in incidents, building of resilience and social cohesion, countering narratives framed, and facilitating integration of suspects and convicts of terror, however, when it comes to interventions in place, the community remains at periphery…” Key Informant, 10, from Academia

3.3.6 Inadequacies in Meeting Global Demands

The study participants showed that to a large extent, these interventions do not meet the global demands because of prevailing human rights violations, overly broad and vague legislation, suppression of fundamental freedoms, lack of independent judicial oversight, insufficient focus on root causes and financial compliance gaps envisaged. It was quoted specifically,

“International human rights bodies report the use of torture, arbitrary arrests, and extrajudicial killings by security forces, particularly the Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force (JATT), during counter-terrorism operations. These actions violate the fundamental human rights and anti-torture conventions that global anti-terrorism efforts are expected to uphold...” Key Informant, 7, from Academia

“...however much international counterterrorism efforts aim at ending terrorism but they do not resonate with how CT efforts are done...you cannot fight terrorism in a manner that promote it...because on several occasions when you are on your TV or social media handle, you watch security agencies crashing suspects or demonstrations more harshly...recently I watched dogs which are meant to be used in terrorism investigations being commanded to bite and injure politicians in processions of 2026 presidential campaigns, I feel this is not what international CT allows...” Key Informant, 9, from National Focal Point.

“The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2022 as amendment, use broad and vaguely worded definitions of ‘terrorism’ and related offenses. This vagueness allows the government to apply the law subjectively, often to target political opponents, journalists, and civil society, rather than just curbing genuine terrorist threats...these issues look minor but strongly spoils the good cause.” Key Informant, 3, from CSO/NGO

“...I think there is a mismatch on what international CT measures and legislation refer too as a terrorist and what we refer too as terrorists...because I have seen a good number political opponents addressed as terrorists by security forces and the president and to me this is where the whole good intention is lost and negates the whole process...” FGD 3, Participant 6, Kasese District

“The government adopted anti-money laundering legislation to stifle financing of politicians and NGOs aligned with opposition yet the main goal was to deal with financing terrorist organisations in Uganda…” KI, 8, Financial Intelligence Authority.

3.3.7 Inadequacies in Promotion of PPPs with CSOs and Local Communities

It was established from several interviewees that they have failed to promote believable PPPs with CSOs and local communities because of prevalence of broad and vague laws, lack of trust and mistreatment, restrictive operating environment, securitization of the response and absence of legal and formal information-sharing mechanisms. It was noted,

"Uganda's Anti-Terrorism Act uses a broad definition of terrorism, which has been interpreted to include 'violations of national objectives and interests. This ambiguity creates a climate of fear and uncertainty, as CSOs worry their legitimate activities, especially those related to advocacy and human rights which are arbitrarily labelled as supporting terrorism. For instance, the Uganda National NGO Forum and Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) was in December 2020 ordered by the Financial Intelligence Authority (FIA) to freeze its bank accounts belonging to these two prominent organizations on allegations of financing terrorism..." Key Informant, 7, from Academia

"In Uganda, the counter-terrorism strategy is highly securitized, focusing primarily on intelligence and law enforcement (police, military, and intelligence agencies). This 'hard power' approach leaves little room for the 'soft power' or community-centred methods that CSOs typically employ to address the root causes of violent extremism, such as poverty, human rights violations, and poor governance..." Key Informant, 9, from National Focal Point.

3.3.8 Diverse Motives

The study thus explored different diverse motives which explain why interventions have failed to end the recruitment and radicalization of individuals into terrorism acts. It emerged from interviewees that prevailing nationalism, socialism tendencies, religious extremism and exclusionism failed the prevailing anti-terrorism interventions in recruitment and radicalization of individuals into terror attacks. It was quoted,

"...although nationalism has positive connotations, however, many people hide into nationalism to recruit people into terrorist organisations...for instance, Kasese region presents a very good example where locals were mobilized into acts of terrorisms, offering good grounds for recruitment into terrorism and consequently radicalizing many members under auspices of fighting for their independence from Uganda...and such erodes state legitimacy, promotes exploitation and weakens state capacity to deal with terrorism..." Key Informant, 10, from Academia

"...despite all CT efforts, the issue of legitimacy remains in question and this is what is foiling most if the interventions to end radicalization...I want to trace the problem from colonial times because colonial-era borders split ethnic groups and forced disparate communities together, resulting in weak national identities. This has posed serious consequences because many citizens in those areas do not view the central government as a legitimate representative of their interests. This lack of trust means communities are less likely to provide intelligence to security forces, which are often perceived as extensions of a distant or specific ethnic elite rather than national protectors..." Key Informant, 7, from Academia

"...the issue of Yiira Republic has been pronounced since old days and remains alive in the minds of the people of Kasese that one time they can be independent from Uganda. Such people instead of promoting integration rather promote disintegration...hence foiling CT efforts and rather leave room for recruitment and radicalization of their people into terrorism..." FGD 4, Participant 6, Kasese District.

3.3.9 Media Coverage, Social Media and Internet

It was explored from several participants that media coverage and internet have essentially explains why prevailing interventions have failed to end the recruitment and radicalization of individuals into terrorism acts. It was stated,

"...there is a problem with media coverage in Uganda because it has always failed anti-terrorism efforts by promoting unbalanced government narratives, lacking critical analysis, and sometimes inadvertently aiding terrorist goals through sensationalism, while restrictive laws and fear of reprisal stifle independent reporting, preventing crucial public understanding and accountability for both state actions and terrorist

motives, ultimately hindering effective, rights-based counter-terrorism..." Key Informant, 3, from CSO/NGO

"Terrorist acts are often carried out for their media impact...extensive news coverage provides terrorists with the global attention they seek, transforming a local act of violence into a widespread psychological impact and supplying them with the 'oxygen of publicity' necessary to gain relevance and legitimacy…" Key Informant, 13, from Policy Makers

"The internet, especially social media, offers a cheap, fast, and potentially anonymous platform for terrorists to spread propaganda, recruit new members, and radicalize vulnerable individuals globally. The sheer scale of these platforms makes it difficult for authorities to monitor and remove all harmful content effectively." FGD 4, Participant 4, Kasese District.

3.3.10 Lack of Direct Link/Solution to Violence/Terrorism

It was explored from a number of participants indicating that the disruption verses solution, potential for backlash and focusing on symptoms not root causes as explaining direct link/solution to violence/terrorism. It was explained in the following quotations,

"...the truth is that reactive counter-terrorism measures such as arrests, intelligence gathering, and military operations have showed effectiveness in disrupting plots and dismantling organizations in the short term... however, these security-focused approaches are often insufficient as a long-term 'solution' because they do not resolve the root causes of the phenomenon..., government needs to rethink" FGD 2, Participant 3, Mayuge District

"Many counter-terrorism efforts in Uganda prioritize immediate security threats, such as dismantling organizations or thwarting attacks, rather than addressing the deep-seated grievances that make individuals susceptible to radicalization in the first place." FGD 1, Participant 4, Mayuge District

3.3.11 Community Mistrust

Lastly, it emerged from study participants that community espoused in form of hindered intelligence gathering, safe havens and support networks, erosion of legitimacy and reduced public cooperation have failed to deal with recruitment and radicalisation of people into terrorism. It was noted,

"...effective counter-terrorism relies heavily on human intelligence and community tip-offs...when communities distrust authorities, they are less likely to report suspicious activities or individuals. This creates significant intelligence gaps, allowing terrorist cells to operate undetected and plan attacks with greater impunity..." Key Informant, 1, from CTD

"Mistrust have been found to lead communities to offer tacit or explicit support to extremists, perceiving them as 'protectors' against an unjust or biased state...this provides terrorists with safe havens for recruitment, training, and logistical support, making it difficult for security forces to dismantle their networks." Key Informant, 3, from CSO/NGO

4.0Discussion of the Study Findings

4.1 Perceived Strengths of Uganda's Interventions to Prevent Terrorism

The study findings revealed that several strengths which are perceived to be associated with Uganda's anti-terrorism interventions including targeting individuals showing early signs of radicalization, discouraging individuals susceptibility to extremist ideologies/tackling ideological causes of terrorism, offering psychosocial support and mentoring, offering rehabilitation and reintegration possibilities and integration of prevention, pursuance, protecting and preparing (mitigation) strategies. Specifically, the study established that the prevailing anti-terrorism interventions target individuals showing early signs of

radicalization through community-oriented policing, mechanisms of referral or case management at individual level, building capacity for frontline defenders, youth engagement and empowerment, online monitoring and counternarratives, community-based prevention and early warning as well as emulating the role of civil society and international partners. In particular, it was revealed that one of the important areas exploited by counterterrorism is community policing which is done in partnership with IOM Uganda in identifying local drivers of conflict and potential radicalization in hotspot areas like Ghettos of Kampala, Bugiri, Mayuge, Kasese which are known for breeding terrorist recruitment and radicalization. This is further supported by (Shafieioun & Haq, 2023) who had also found out that community policing is significant in identifying early signs of radicalization. In Indonesia where the study was done, it was evident that community policing had been integrated in community circles and parishes which had helped to immediately spread information and come up with community tailored responses. Secondly, it was established that individual case management had improved with the prevailing interventions.

The study further revealed that prevailing interventions have been able to build capacity for frontline defenders. It was provided that CTD has been able to work with UPS, with support from partners like the UNODC, to train prison warders and officers to identify early warning signs of radicalization and manage violent extremist prisoners (VEPs) to prevent prisons from becoming breeding grounds for extremism in most prisons now we have mental health wards and services and other life changing projects geared towards dealing with root causes of radicalization. (Rink & Sharma, 2018) qualify the above narrative while showcasing that the strengths of CT measures lie in undertaking early identification of extremists and these must be subjected to trainings that can divert them to more responsible lives. They gave an example of custodial interventions which call for counselling and life changing projects in Iraq which have worked towards societal transformation. The study explored that engagement and empowerment of the youths has been put at the frontline by existing interventions. This is because it was discovered that radicalization tends to start at youthful stages due to peer influence and media exposures. This means that fostering social cohesion and stability while engaging young people and leveraging schools and community organizations becomes key. The CTD in conjunction with several CSOs have created forums for youth to express concerns and promoting their role in political decision-making. (Rink & Sharma, 2018) further concur with the above while explaining that absence of youth engagement and empowerment equal to failure of most of the interventions. They referred to youth life changing and empowerment projects in Malaysia which aimed at total transformation of suspected communities.

Another strength under targeting individuals who show early signs of radicalization reported with Uganda's interventions is undertaking online monitoring and counternarratives. It was acknowledged by the study that CTD has recently started anti-terrorism efforts include monitoring social media for extremist content and developing counter-narratives to challenge terrorist propaganda and hate speech online. This has tried to deal with radicalization on the basis of hate speech and propaganda. This commensurate well with the submission of (Ong'esa & Muoka, 2025) who indicated that dealing with radicalization calls for specific interventions which promote alternative, non-violent narratives to counter extremist propaganda and illegal hate speech online. Other key strengths envisaged are advancing community-based prevention and early warning programs as well as involving CSOs and international partners. It was noted that CT measures have CEWERU, a mechanism within the Ministry of Internal Affairs that involves both state and non-state actors. This unit collects open-source information and potential conflict indicators from communities through field monitors to provide timely warnings to decision-makers. It also conducts awareness campaigns and dialoguing through inter-faith and intra-faith dialogues, and cultural events in

schools and communities to raise awareness about violent extremism and build resilience. Furthermore, CT works with UMYDF, in collaboration with partners such as the Kofi Annan Foundation to implement "Bridges to Peace" and similar projects that strengthen community-led efforts and youth resilience to extremist narratives. (Rink & Sharma, 2018) thus support the findings while providing the importance of such CSOs in creation of awareness about extremisms in areas where it has become a challenge.

Furthermore, it was established that prevailing anti-terrorism interventions discourages individuals susceptible to extremist ideologies to disengage from radicalization pathways and choose alternative paths in Uganda. This has been demonstrated through addressing root causes, engagement of community and civil society organisation, rehabilitating and reintegrating returnees and engaging in strategic partnerships. It was evident that the prevailing interventions have worked hand in hand with government programmes like PDM, Operation Wealth Creation, Youth Development Fund, EMYOOGA and many others with an intent to directly address the root causes of terrorisms including poverty, unemployment, lack of opportunities and many others. This view point was also shared by (Shaw, 2025)who advanced that successful CT measures entail a segment of dealing with social issues and most especially the root causes before the securitization. They gave an example of Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CPPP) and Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program adopted by Federal government in US. Secondly, the study revealed that the strengths of the interventions in discouraging potential individuals into extremism lies in rehabilitating and reintegrating offenders. It was revealed that CTD while working with UPS designed specific programs aiming at rehabilitating and reintegrating former violent extremist offenders and managing radicalization within prisons. For instance, the PCVE has a National Action Plan for treating high-risk inmates, including VEOs. In addition, strategic partnerships have been developed where there is an extensive collaboration between government and international organizations (e.g., UN, EU, IOM) and local civil society organizations (CSOs) to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive national response. According to (Ankley et al., 2021), such kind of partnerships help in developing evidence-based strategies and implementing them effectively at the grassroots level.

The study also explored that prevailing anti-terrorism interventions have managed to offer psychosocial support and mentoring programs in Uganda. These are exhibited in form of community-based psychological support, vocational and life skills training and mentoring and counselling. For instance, there is a multiplicity of CT efforts in form of 'off-ramping' programs, using life skills, vocational training, counselling, and community networks to divert at-risk youth from radicalization, focusing on reintegration, addressing trauma, and building resilience via multi-sectoral approaches involving health, education, and social welfare. It was further noted that CT works closely with peer clubs in schools with the help of Straight Talk Foundation, UNICEF, TASO and PEERU to engage children and youths at risk. They study discovered several engagements with 'Children on the Edge', and 'Peer to Peer Project'. This is supported by (Walwa, 2021) who did a study about early warning systems and response mechanisms for countering violent extremism in Tanzania. He established that successful CT measures entail promotion of off-ramping and multi-sectoral approaches including addressing trauma and engaging at risk children and youths. (Walwa, 2021) mentioned different programs like Tanzania Economic Recovery Program, Clean Energy Business and Cryptocurrency off ramping services were all developed with a direct and indirect objective of discouraging potential terrorist groupings and radicalization.

The study explored that prevailing anti-terrorism interventions offer rehabilitation and reintegration possibilities into Uganda. This has been achieved through a number of custodial rehabilitation programs,

non-custodial support and community involvement and mobilizing the justice system. The study established that there are a number of custodial rehabilitation programs available for incarcerated terrorists and these run from vocation to non-vocation programs in fields like agriculture, carpentry, tailoring etc to equip them with employable skills that will enable them to be economically productive citizens upon release. These are further exposed to psychological counselling and support to help them address the underlying trauma or vulnerabilities that may have led to radicalization. In prison, there is still theological or doctrinal debates and civic awareness training to challenge extremist ideologies and foster national loyalty. On the side of non-custodial support, CT has created several arrangements related to non-custodial support and community involvement to prevent recidivism and foster social cohesion. For instance, the government works with civil society actors like CEWERU to provide aftercare, which include housing assistance, employment opportunities, and ongoing mentoring to support the transition back into the community. The other organisation used is UMYDF which works at the grassroots level to build community resilience, address the root causes of conflict, and facilitate the reintegration of former violent extremists. (Ogunnubi & Aja, 2024) in support, argues that the de-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration project in Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy showed several successes while soothing families, equipping appropriate skills in returnees and psychologically restructuring them into good members in communities where they come from.

It has been ascertained that prevailing anti-terrorism interventions strengthen community resilience by integrating prevention, pursuance, protection and preparation (4Ps) strategy before, during and after occurrence of terrorism. It emerged that several prevention strategies have been integrated including community policing, community engagement and legal framework. For instance, the pillar of 'Prevention' focuses on stopping people to become terrorists or engage in supporting terrorism and this has been achieved using a series of arrangements including facilitating community policing, addressing socio-economic grievances, dialoguing and creating awareness in communities, and enactment of the Anti-terrorism act and other legal measures like anti-money laundering. The second pillar of 'Pursuance' is integrated through detecting and stopping terrorists, financial sanctions and undertaking investigations and prosecuting terrorism. The third pillar of 'Protecting' is integrated by undertaking infrastructure security, border controls and PPPs. The last pillar of 'Preparation' is handled through promotion of inter-agency coordination, exercising and training and response plans.(Burns & Wulu, 2025) synonymously hails the 4Ps model as a strong hold in CT because it offers both proactive and reactive intelligence services which are essential in assessing risks and preventing terrorism prior.

4.2 Why the interventions to prevent terrorism have failed to end the recruitment and radicalization of individuals into terrorism acts?

The study revealed that disruption of social relation and community trust, marginalization and stigmatization of population, perceived injustices, inequality and lack of opportunity, limited community involvement and allies, inadequacies in meeting global demands and promotion of PPPs with CSOs and local communities explain why interventions to prevent terrorism have failed to end the recruitment and radicalization of individual into terrorism acts in Uganda. Specifically, the study revealed that to a high extent anti-terrorism interventions had disrupted social relations and community trust through increasing stigmatization of communities, erosion of trust in authorities, social and psychological harm, reduced cooperation and focusing on securitization over social issues. It was evident from the study findings that the rhetoric and practice of CT often have the unintended consequence of linking entire communities, such as Muslim population with extremism and terrorism. This stigmatization fosters suspicion and resentment

that disrupt social relations and community trust. This coincides with (Kitonga & Ichani, 2025) in their evaluation study of counter-terrorism and peacebuilding in Mandera County, Kenya. They also found out that CT activities had instead fostered more suspicion of Somalia refugees as associated to terrorism in Kenya more than addressing the exact roots of grievances. In addition, CT interventions were found to erode trust in authorities while creating 'suspect communities. (Kioko et al., 2025) elaborates on this finding while indicating that increased surveillance, policing in specific areas, and certain legal powers (like airport stops or control orders) are experienced as discriminatory and contribute to a sense of being a "suspect community". This significantly undermines trust and confidence in the police and security services, making community cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts more challenging.

Furthermore, social relations are further disrupted by interventions by increasing social and psychological harm. For instance, control orders, which impose restrictions on movement and association, have been shown to damage family relationships, adversely affect mental health, and lead to social isolation and prolonged unemployment for the individuals and their families. (Kitonga & Ichani, 2025)concurs when they also found out that returnees from terrorism allegations and convictions are naturally dissociated from their families, friends and loved ones because the CT agencies tend to treat and display them as already convicted and worse characters that are not tolerable and non-reformable. The issue of reduced cooperation also emerged from the study. This emerged because it was discovered that when communities feel targeted or believe that "community engagement" initiatives are primarily intelligence-gathering operations, they become less likely to report warning signs or cooperate with authorities. This creates a counter-productive cycle where the intended security benefits are undermined by a lack of community support. This is further intensified by (O'Reilly et al., 2026) who indicated the torture unleashed on terror suspects automatically stifles cooperation with authorities because when the public watches such people who are tortured to simply confess terror, it automatically makes them mute and fear to report suspects to avoid them from going through the same. The community has a lot of information but the act of bringing terror suspects with fresh and rotten wounds etc, scares everyone because in the end, not everyone torture is convicted.

The study findings explored that to a high extent, the existing interventions increase marginalization and stigmatization which has made them a failure to address constant recruitment and radicalization of people into terrorism acts. This was found to be exhibited through continued targeting minorities, focusing on 'us vs. them' narratives, limited on profiling and surveillance, media portrayals of suspects, erosion of trust, restriction of civil space, aiding social and economic exclusion and denying safe spaces. It was revealed that interventions in Uganda have largely and disproportionately focused on specific minority communities (such as Muslim groups) in non-Muslim majority communities, leading to the perception and experience of being targeted solely due to their identity. This is congruent with (Shaw, Holland-Szyp, & Boham Okiror, 2025) who ascertained that much of the CT efforts have been put on minorities for instance the Muslims and this has made the good efforts to be perceived as being targeted because of their identity. Secondly, political leaders and security-focused rhetoric often invoke a polarized "us vs. Them" dynamic, portraying minority groups as scapegoats or threats to national security. This public hostility contributes to a pervasive fear of a backlash after any terrorist event, regardless of who the perpetrators are. For instance, after every terrorist attack in Uganda, it is followed by subsequent arrests of Muslims who are rarely convicted but rather subjected to rigorous torture and inhumane treatment (Kateete et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the focus of interventions on profiling and surveillance have been found to continually disrupt social relations and community trust. It has been noted from findings that measures used by CT like enhanced surveillance, police raids, and information campaigns lead to a general sense of anxiety and vulnerability within targeted communities. The focus thus is on identifying potential radicalization within these groups which compromise their rights and lead to social and ethnic profiling. In an African epistemology about marginalization, (Radoli et al., 2025) established that surveillance and profiling initiatives aiming at dealing with root causes of radicalization infringes on children rights, freedom from torture and ill treatment and freedoms related to association. In addition, marginalization and radicalisation were explored to be reflected in how the media portrays terror suspects in face of CT initiatives. It was established that the media often exacerbates the problem by focusing on terrorism in the context of specific groups, which helps cement prejudiced public attitudes. This is because the moment arrests are done by CTD, the suspects are paraded in front of media which portrays to a layman as convicts. Media portrayal was also explored by (Radoli et al., 2025) as explaining why disruption of social order, relation and trust of suspects and their families. He established that after portray or parading on news, suspect, his friends and family face stigmatisation which in the end affects the overall effectiveness of the CT strategies.

The study findings revealed that perceived injustices, inequality, and lack of opportunity espoused in CT interventions contribute to public mistrust, case backlogs, abuse of human rights in CT operations, securitization of response, exploitation of grievances and limit opportunities which consistently open gates for recruitment and radicalization. It was established that there is a history of poor and strained relations between local communities and the police/security forces, often stemming from perceived mistreatment or human rights violations which has led to deep mistrust and this is making the communities less likely to report suspicious activities or individuals. This fall exactly in scholarly works of (Charkawi, Dunn, & Bliuc, 2021) in their study about the influences of social identity and perceptions of injustice on support to violent extremism. They found out that the relationship between communities and the security agencies is affected by lack of honesty which has made community members not to trust police anymore. For instance, a person volunteers to give police information but the police instead use it against him. The perceived injustice also was found to extend to the process of prosecuting offenders of terror. The community instead perceives it as full of unfairness working towards achieving government narrative. This emerges from the fact that there are people who have been in custody for over 5years without being convicted of terrorism allegations. (Maglić, Pavlović, & Franc, 2024) ascertained that the level of inequality before the law has threatened national security because it steers anger and lays grounds for people to find illegitimate ways harnessing justice. They added that high-handedness by officials, characterized by human rights abuses and a disregard for the rule of law during counterterrorism operations, raises concerns and validates sentiments of unfairness. This has made those with genuine concerns hesitant to express themselves on matters relating to terrorism for fear of being labelled as sympathizers or participants.

The study also established that interventions done by government of Uganda are currently perceived solely through a security lens, rather than addressing underlying social issues. They are also perceived by some as a ploy for security agencies to justify larger budgets or target political opposition, which further erodes trust. This is supported by (Giani & Merlino, 2021) who showed that monetization of anti-Terror campaigns is seen as a danger to continually increase terrorism because even when there is a genuine cause, the public may perceive this as a ploy to justify huge budgets and vice versa. These social, economic, and political grievances, such as a sense of injustice, social exclusion, corruption, and sustained

mistreatment of certain groups are exploited by justifying recruitment and radicalization. The study additionally established that the level of unemployment in Uganda especially among educated youth, create a fertile ground for recruitment. Extremist groups have been found to offer financial incentives or a sense of purpose and identity that is otherwise unavailable through legitimate avenues, making them an attractive alternative for disenfranchised individuals. This fits exactly in what was presented by Kivumbi and Lameck (2022) when they asserted that unemployment, injustice, corruption and others have informed most of justification of most of the new recruits and radicalization of domestic terrorists as a way of rescue not choice.

The study revealed that to a lower extent anti-terrorism interventions do not observe community involvements and alliances despite the fact that they know the importance of community involvement and how communities can be best allies in counter terrorism efforts. In the first place, it specifically emerged that community involvement is important and can be a vital ally in counter terrorism efforts especially when it comes to early detection and intervention, building resilience and cohesion, countering framed narratives and facilitating reintegration. In relation to early detection and intervention, it was found out that community members, such as family, friends, religious leaders, and social workers, are often the first to notice the behavioural changes, attitudes, or risk factors that may signal an individual is on a path to radicalization. This kind of proximity can allow for earlier, non-law enforcement interventions that can interrupt the process before criminal activity occurs. This is supported by (Omenma & Hendricks, 2018) established that when community involvement is promoted, it helps to yield all hidden criminality because they are readily available to cooperate with law enforcement agencies, however, this must be oiled because community members fear to be interpreted as part of the racket when they report. In addition, it has been revealed that strong, socially cohesive communities can act as a protective factor against violent extremism. By promoting civic engagement, social inclusion, and intercultural dialogue, communities can address the grievances, sense of injustice, and alienation that extremist groups often exploit for recruitment. This connects well with (Morema & Bonga-Bonga, 2020) who also found out that grievances are not easily addressed when intercultural dialogues are not observed in CT activities. The study also explored that when communities are involved and allied with, it brings out credible local voices, including youth, women, and former violent extremists. They have the capacity to effectively challenge and deconstruct terrorist propaganda and misinformation using locally persuasive counter-narratives. These authentic messages often resonate more deeply within the community than external government-led campaigns (Bacon et al., 2020). (Bacon et al., 2020) established that community support can be crucial for the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals who have disengaged from violent extremism, providing essential mentoring, psychological, and vocational support needed for them to become productive members of society.

The study explored that to a large extent these interventions do not meet the global demands because of prevailing human rights violations, overly broad and vague legislation, suppress fundamental freedoms, lack of independent judicial oversight, insufficiently focus on root causes and financial compliance gaps which are central in global anti-terrorism strategies. It was evident from the study that International human rights bodies report the use of torture, arbitrary arrests, and extrajudicial killings by security forces, particularly the Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force (JATT), during counter-terrorism operations. These actions violate the fundamental human rights and anti-torture conventions that global anti-terrorism efforts are expected to uphold. (Mutungi & Mulu, 2021) in support argue that however much international counterterrorism efforts aim at ending terrorism but they do not resonate with how CT efforts are done

because they try to counter terrorism in a manner that promotes it while using punitive measures yet these are usually suspects. In addition, the researcher established that the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2022 as amendment, use broad and vaguely worded definitions of 'terrorism' and related offenses. This vagueness allows the government to apply the law subjectively, often to target political opponents, journalists, and civil society, rather than just curbing genuine terrorist threats. (Hellén et al., 2020) synonymously qualifies the above while indicating that there is huge mismatch on what international CT measures and legislation refer to as a 'terrorist' and what we refer to as 'terrorist' in Uganda. This is inconsistence explains why a good number political opponents or activists are addressed as terrorists by security forces and governments.

Lastly, the study explored that to a high extent CT interventions have failed to promote believable PPPs with CSOs and local communities because of prevalence of broad and vague laws, lack of trust and mistreatment, restrictive operating environment, securitization of the response and absence of legal and formal information-sharing mechanisms. It was specifically established that Uganda's Anti-Terrorism Act uses a broad definition of terrorism, which has been interpreted to include 'violations of national objectives and interests. This ambiguity creates a climate of fear and uncertainty, as CSOs worry their legitimate activities, especially those related to advocacy and human rights which are arbitrarily labelled as supporting terrorism. This is further expounded by (Ryder, 2024)who had highlighted that the Uganda National NGO Forum and Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) in 2024 ordered by the Financial Intelligence Authority (FIA) to freeze its bank accounts belonging to these two prominent organizations on allegations of financing terrorism.

The study additionally found out that the general operating environment for CSOs is constrained by burdensome regulations, such as stringent NGO registration requirements and new financial reporting rules. These administrative burdens and excessive government scrutiny of funds disincentivize CSOs from operating in sensitive areas and make partnerships with the government less attractive. (Zagaris, 2021) in support showed that the relationship between CSOs and the government when it comes to CT engagement is simply a relationship of convenience. This is not formalized. He added that financial institutions are under pressure to comply with anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing (AML/CTF) laws, or else they risk placing blanket restrictions on non-profit organizations. This thus limits access to banking services and financial resources by CSOs which would be essential for their operations and potential joint projects. The study finding further revealed that in Uganda, the counter-terrorism strategy is highly securitized, focusing primarily on intelligence and law enforcement (police, military, and intelligence agencies). This 'hard power' approach leaves little room for the 'soft power' or community-centred methods that CSOs typically employ to address the root causes of violent extremism, such as poverty, human rights violations, and poor governance (Zagaris, 2021). Lastly, it emerged from the study that Uganda lacks formal, cross-sectoral protocols for information sharing between national/local government actors and CSOs on P/CVE (Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism) issues. This lack of a structured framework makes meaningful collaboration ad-hoc and difficult to sustain. This concurs with the views of (Khalili et al., 2024)who reported that the general absence of formal ways and protocols of community engagement has rendered an optional process hence limiting the importance this can offer.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

It has been learnt that Uganda's anti-terrorism interventions are perceived to have targeted individuals

showing early signs of radicalization, discouraged individuals susceptibility to extremist ideologies, offered psychosocial support and mentoring, rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees as well as integrating prevention, pursuance, protecting and preparing (mitigation) strategies. This implies that there is a need to build on the existing strengths in building a cross-cutting and sustainable anti-terrorism intervention framework for Uganda. However, they have showed huge weaknesses when it comes to disruption of social relation and community trust, marginalization and stigmatization of population, perceived injustices, inequality and lack of opportunity, limited community involvement and allies, inadequacies in meeting global demands and promotion of PPPs with CSOs and local communities explain why interventions to prevent terrorism have failed to end the recruitment and radicalization of individual into terrorism acts in Uganda. This implied that anti-terrorism measures need to be designed in a manner that strengthens social relations and community trust; avoid marginalization and stigmatization of suspect communities; observe and promote justice, equality and equal opportunity, community involvement and allies while adequately meeting global demands and promoting PPPs with CSOs and local communities

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the study conclusions, the following recommendations need to be observed. For instance, there is a need for government to apportion budget for implementation of local prevention (P/CVE) activities more than situating all funds on national and international interventions. This is because it was discovered that the only funds obtained are from donors or CSOs who are also facing operational challenges. This is important because addressing terrorism right from the grassroot is central to addressing the root of recruitment and radicalization. Secondly, transparent and democratic governance principles need to be adopted. This can heal the level of frustrations among the political aspirants. This is because the moment the political opposition perceives that they are witch-hunted than those in power, they end up joining violence to deal with the assumed suppressors. This process begins in creating a fair election process, fair justice system, allowing fair dialogue between opposition and government, meritocracy in the process of giving out jobs and many other democratic arrangements. Thirdly, it also emerged that terrorism is evolving and ever-changing face in tactics and nature, this thus informs us that there is a need to learn to live with terrorism by adapting to new technology and equipment used. There is no longer or large terrorism attack in the face of the public, as long as it instils fear and panic, it is terrorism. This mechanism will make it easy for the community and security agencies to learn to live with terrorism. Fourthly, it is important to make sure counter-terrorism measures are not perceived as targeting specific ideological or religious communities because thus creates a sense of being a 'suspect community'. When this is avoided, it reduces alienation of local populations, increases trust in law enforcement and security services, and promotes intelligence gathering and community-led prevention efforts. Fifth, there is a need to streamline the multiple actors involved in counter-terrorism (CT) and preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) efforts into a single unit to avoid overlapping or competing mandates. There is a tendency of CTD to restrict P/CVE efforts to themselves and rarely engage local authorities, leading to limited coordination and confusion about local roles. In addition, there is a national P/CVE strategy but many local-level actors are unaware of its existence and therefore cannot align their efforts. Sixth, it is important that an interrogation is done regarding the discretion provided to security officers by the law when it comes to terrorism offences. This is because anti-terrorism laws grant broad discretionary powers for surveillance and investigation with limited judicial or independent oversight. This lack of clear, judicially authorized procedures allows security officers significant latitude in interpreting the law, which can lead to a slow

and opaque process and creating risks for abuse and violating human rights. Seventh, there is a need for civil society, including religious leaders and academics to craft propaganda which can deal with extremist agenda. This can be grass rooted in mosques, schools, media and other community gathering. The reason behind CSOs manning this process is because state-led initiatives sometimes lack legitimacy in the eyes of the target audience. This will reduce the level of misinformation, disinformation, and malign information which is used to polarize society, spread fear and justify violence. Eight, it remains important that sensitization of communities is done continuously. This is because the success of deradicalization programs relies partly on community acceptance of former extremists. This is because when the community, influenced by its own prevailing ideologies or mistrust of state interventions, does not accept that individuals are no longer a threat, the programs lose credibility. Lastly, there is a need to reach an international and universal consensus upon the definition of terrorism. This definition needs to be informed by similar political and ideological perspectives. This will ease international cooperation and the designation of specific groups while creating a unified global front.

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