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## COUNTER-TERRORISM SECURITY INTERVENTIONS IN KENYA: EFFECT OF PUBLIC SECURITY SCREENING ON SOCIAL RELATIONS IN NAIROBI COUNTY

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**ABSTRACT:** *Public security screening is a counter-terrorism strategy that involves searches and personal checks on people who seek to access buildings and other premises. The aim of the study was to establish the nature of counter-terrorism security intervention strategies and their influence on social relations in Nairobi County Kenya. Based on the study, this paper examines the influence of public security screening strategy on social relations. The study was informed by structural functionalism theory, balance scorecard theory and social identity theory. Mixed methods research design by use of concurrent triangulation technique was adopted. The study used a sample size of 384 respondents. Of these, 361 were heads of households, 15 were members of Nairobi County Security Board and 8 were survivors of terrorism acts. Convenient sampling technique was used to select heads of the households, purposive sampling techniques to identify members of Nairobi County Security Board and snowball sampling to identify terror survivors. Key informants interview schedule as well as interview schedule were employed as methods of data collection. The data collected was subsequently analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The results of the study indicated that public security screening in business buildings and other premises exist with the intention of securing public safety and permission to enter the building thus suspicion of individuals. The strategy relies on the cooperation of the public. The strategy presumes that every person seeking access to such spaces is a potential perpetrator and or victim of terrorism. Initially, the introduction of screening attracted mixed views. Some thought screening implied that one was a terror suspected. Screening has also affected social relations by rousing and increasing suspicion among citizens. In some cases, screening has been reported to compromise on the privacy of people. Consequently, to enhance its effectiveness, governments should enhance the laws on public security screening to elicit a sense of respect for privacy and subsequent cooperation among the public in its utilization.*

**KEYWORDS:** counter-terrorism security interventions, Kenya, effect, public security screening, social relations, Nairobi County

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## INTRODUCTION

The counter-terrorism security intervention strategies cut across social, cultural, economic and political lens of the society. Different terror attacks have had different impact on different groups of casualties and their relatives. Similarly, anti-terrorism measures have a spill over effect on

public sectors of administration and other non-targeted people. Most contemporary anti-terrorism strategies involve military power based on international legislation, allowance of engagement, laws to protect and pursue intelligence units and the exclusion of human rights among others. Even though such strategies can have a direct and indirect effect on terrorism, the results are mostly short-term. Moreover, their effects can be felt by the victims and all the members of society. It can take years for the victims, their family members and the whole citizenry to recover from the effects of terrorism.

Across the world, governments have come up with various security intervention strategies to curb terrorism. However, most of the mechanisms applied deal with immediate effects and counter-terrorism measures. Follow-ups on how terror survivors have adjusted their lives to cope with terrorism attacks have not been adequately done. Terror and the subsequent strategies to mitigate its occurrence breed suspicion in society. In Kenya, the common Swahili parlance that *usalama hunanza na wewe* (security starts with you) is meant to remind people that they should take responsibility for their own security. Unfortunately, in some extreme cases, such caution is taken to mean that individuals should never trust others. This has negatively affected social relationships in society. With the measures applied even in public vehicles people always rarely interact with their seatmates. Suspicion increases, especially, if the seatmate is of Somali origin. Places of worship have become places where people could seek solace and comfort. However, with the strategies existing, congregants no longer trust one another. The sharing and openness has decreased.

Whenever a terror attack takes place people get united to fight a common enemy. However, soon after, people go back to their ways of life where by everybody is for self. Public security screening often means that every member of society is considered a potential threat to security as well as the subject of safety measures. Few studies have been conducted on counter-terrorism security intervention strategies and their influence on social relations. These studies have mostly dealt with the causes, impacts and counter-terrorism measures (Shinn, 2006). However, its affects on peoples livelihoods in terms of interaction, trust, social grouping, inclusion and exclusions has not been adequate.

Globally, the challenge of counter-terrorism has been felt in virtually every corner of the globe (Shinn, 2006). Fatalities due to violent terrorist attacks have been suffered by the United Nations family. It interferes with enjoyment of human life and socialization structures in the society. Citizens' security is a fundamental human right that cannot be waived at whichever circumstance and the protection of individuals is, accordingly, a primary responsibility of any Government. From the year 2006, there have been rise in individual, community, and governmental costs on security counter terrorism strategies, as well as introduction of new and sophisticated programs planned to fight terrorism. Shughart (2006) acknowledges that with this up rise the governments shifted their focus in resource allocation to meet the desired programmes to manage terror activities globally.

According to Lyman and Morrison (2009), there has been great alertness in relation to terror activities in Africa following the 9/11 terror attack. Ankomah (2014) gives a remark that numerous terrorist groups have brought chaos. An example of these groups include the Somali based Harakat

Al-Shabaab mujahideen (Mujahidin Youth Movement) referred to as Al-Shabaab. The Al-Shabaab mostly carry out their operations in the East Africa. Likewise, in West Africa, a renowned terror group known as Boko Haram has habitually abducted innocent school children. Al-Qaeda attacks have largely affected the Sahel and Maghreb countries. In Algeria, it is reported that Al-Qaeda in Maghreb (AQIM) has severally tried to seize power and illegally overthrow government (Cilliers, 2003). Pursuant to such crucial information on terror activities reports, various African States have responded differently to counteract the menace of terrorist occurrence. The Sahelian States in West Africa sought after the help of the American government in gaining jurisdiction of areas not under their control through new security legislation that have been effected (Lyman & Morrison, 2009).

Kenya's approach that attempted to adopt Suppression of Terrorism Act in the year 2003 was met with a great deal of condemnation, especially from the civil society; because that mode contravened human rights in addition to negatively target some mostly the Muslim (Kamau, 2006; Whitaker, 2008). Three of the countries in East African worked hand-in-hand to boost the security in the airports along with local aviation safety policies (The Combating Terrorism Centre at in West Point's Harmony Project, 2006). Of the three East Africa countries, Kenya has suffered a lot the brunt of terrorism due to the earlier mentioned factors. This experience acted as a springboard upon which reforms in the security sector to guard the countrywide security was executed. According to Möller (2007), to improve the security department there should be adjustments in regulations, administrative reorganization, and procedures.

### **Public Security Screening Strategy and Social Relations**

Public security screening strategy involves search operations in buildings and other premises. They rely on traditional methods of patrolling and bow-arrow and burglar alarm system that are designed to detect unauthorized access into confined area. These consist of an array of sensors, a control panel and alerting system, and interconnections (Jacobson, 2010). The sensors are capable of detecting unauthorized access by various methods like monitoring door and window contacts, by passive infrared motion detectors, ultrasound, vibration, electric or magnetic fields, or microwaves. There are also vehicle security systems that are designed specifically for the security of transportation machines. These typically include GPS trackers, rear view cameras, car alarms that raise a high volume sound if any unauthorized access is attempted, and closed circuit television cameras used to transmit signals to a specific place on a limited set of monitors. They are typically used for surveillance activities in public places, industries, offices and highly secured zones, glass break detector, which is a sensor used in electronic burglar alarms that detects if glass is shattered or broken. These sensors are commonly used near glass doors or glass store-front windows to detect if an intruder breaks the glass. Glass break detectors use a microphone that monitors any extreme noise or vibration from the glass. A detector circuitry detects a certain set threshold and raises an alarm; GPS tracking system which uses global positioning system to find the precise location of living/non-living entity, metal detectors which are commonly used to detect the presence of hidden metal. Metal detectors work on the principle of magnetic field. It consists of an oscillator producing an alternating current that passes through a coil producing an alternating magnetic field. If a piece of electrically conductive metal is close to the coil, eddy currents will be induced in the metal, and this produces an alternating magnetic field of its own. If another coil is used to measure the magnetic field, the change in the magnetic field due to the metallic object can

be detected. Motion detectors are used to monitor movements. It raises an alarm the moment it captures a moving object; security camera. Therefore, it is not possible to have a manned entrance at all times during business or school hours and that's where remote access control comes in.

Security screening systems vary widely. Some allow students or employees to scan an access card for entry. Others involve video systems in which people hold up their identification card to a camera and state their name and reason for entry (if not a regular student or employee) and are granted entrance by either an on-site employee, such as a receptionist, or remote security personnel. In addition, a vestibule that is remotely monitored via camera and speaker can not only permit access to individuals with proper accreditation, but also hold potential intruders for the authorities, if it becomes necessary (Ritchie & Mogul, 2007).

Terror attacks have compelled governments all over the world to institute counterterrorism strategies. Countries like the US, Kenya and Britain, among others, employ both proactive and defensive counterterrorism strategies to safeguard their people and infrastructure from the destructive terror attack. Public security screening is one the strategies adopted to assist in counterterrorism security intervention.

In Kenya, the government initiated a policy in which people entering key government and private infrastructure must be screened. The government further called on all academic institutions to undertake thorough screening at entry points following the Garissa University College attack in April 2015 that claimed 147 lives. Despite these efforts, still the counter-terrorism measures have not been efficient in preventing terror attacks in some institutions of higher learning in Nairobi County (Schmid, 2013). The security guards contracted to undertake screening in the learning institutions lack adequate training on counterterrorism in that some of them can't recognize a grenade and explosives mostly used in attacks by the terrorists. Some institutions of higher learning have defective metal detectors while others lack them. In addition, security guards are sometimes allocated other duties by institutions administration leading to entry of people without screening. People and students entering the institutions also have not attached utmost significance to screening as a counterterrorism security measure due to lack of awareness leading to abuse and harassment of security guards when performing their duties (Sandler, Gaibullov & Santifort, 2012).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Counter-terrorism security intervention measures are designed to address not just the immediate aftermath of terrorism attacks. They also seek to ensure harmonious social relations in and among communities living together. This is more crucial considering that the planning and execution of terrorist attacks also exploits local community relations. Globally, studies have shown that security interventions tend to have adverse implications on social relations in the immediate environment as well as at the national levels (Alozieuwa, 2012). Nairobi County has not been an exception, due to growing terror threats and the myriad counter-terrorism security intervention strategies instituted by the state and its actors. These measures have impaired significantly on social relations. Therefore, in order to explain these effects and suggest the way forward, the study undertook a sociological analysis of the effects of security screening on social relations in Nairobi County.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Nairobi County, Kenya. The County has remained a hotspot of terror attacks, the latest being the Dusit Restaurant attack on January 15<sup>th</sup> 2019. Out of approximately 40 attacks that took place between the year 2011 and 2017, about 27 occurred in Nairobi County and its surroundings. As such, most of the survivors are found there. Due to the frequency of terror attacks, the residents of Nairobi County have had a different perspective of social relations compared to their counterparts from other counties in Kenya.

This study adopted mixed methods research design by use of concurrent triangulation technique. The study targeted all households living in Nairobi County that had been affected by terrorism directly or indirectly. In this group, the main target was the heads of households, security heads of the study area and survivors of terrorist attacks. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2009), there were 985,106 households in Nairobi County. This population formed the target population of the study. The sample size for the study was determined using sample size determination formula advanced by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{X^2 * N * P(1 - P)}{(ME^2 * (N - 1)) + (X^2 * P * (1 - P))}$$

Where:

n= Sample size

X<sup>2</sup> = Chi-square for the specified confidence level at 1 degree of freedom

N= population size

P = population proportion

Therefore, in the study the sample size was:

$$n = \frac{3.841 * 985106 * .5(1 - .5P)}{(.05 * .05 * (985106 - 1)) + (3.841 * .5 * (1 - .5))}$$

$$= 384 \text{ respondents}$$

The study purposively selected Nairobi County. In addition, the study used proportionate sampling to determine the number of respondents from each cluster (sub-county/constituency) that is Dagoretti North, Dagoretti South, Embakassi central, Embakassi East, Embakassi North, Embakassi South, Embakassi West, Kamukunji, Kasarani, Kibra, Langata, Makadara, Mathare, Roysambu, Ruaraka, Starehe and Westlands including survivors and County Security Board to give a total of 384 respondents

Key informants interview schedule as well as interview schedule were essentially employed as methods of data collection. Data analysis methods entailed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative analysis involved using descriptive statistics where frequencies and percentages were utilized in order to describe the background characteristics of the respondents. In relation to quantitative analysis, the raw data from the field was first cleaned, edited and

classified to ensure that the critical information to the research objectives were isolated. Coding of variables then followed to ease entering of data into an SPSS version 22 program where outputs in form of tables were obtained and used for data presentation. Qualitative data, on the other hand, was analysed by selecting the common themes that was presented by the respondents in relation to the study objectives. Qualitative data was presented in form of direct quotations from the respondents as well as indirect quotations as formatted by the researcher without altering the meaning.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Screening of the public is a security strategy used to detect intruders in public places and building. Several strategies are applied when undertaking security screening and all of them are geared towards building peace. The study sought to document these strategies and people's opinions of them. Table 1 below presents the results.

**Table 1: Public Security Screening Search Strategy and Social Relations**

| Statements   |   | SD   | D    | U    | A    | SA   | Total | Mean |
|--|---|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|
| We have security screening in operation buildings and other premises | F | 19   | 33   | 61   | 163  | 108  | 384   | 4.00 |
|  | % | 5    | 8.6  | 15.8 | 42.4 | 28.1 | 100   | 80.0 |
| Security screening are effective in bringing out social interaction  | F | 17   | 47   | 58   | 232  | 30   | 384   | 3.55 |
|  | % | 4.3  | 12.2 | 15.1 | 60.4 | 7.9  | 100   | 71.0 |
| The general public cooperate to be screened                          | F | 17   | 47   | 58   | 232  | 30   | 384   | 3.55 |
|  | % | 4.3  | 12.2 | 15.1 | 60.4 | 7.9  | 100   | 71.0 |
| People are comfortable with these security screenings                | F | 41   | 63   | 77   | 194  | 8    | 384   | 3.16 |
|  | % | 10.8 | 16.5 | 20.1 | 50.4 | 2.2  | 100   | 63.2 |
| Security screening has an effect on how people relate in the society | F | 0    | 8    | 58   | 166  | 152  | 384   | 3.11 |
|  | % | 0    | 2.2  | 15.1 | 43.2 | 39.6 | 100   | 62.2 |

*Source: Field research (2019)*

Table 1 shows that 80.0% of the respondents said that their existed security screening in operation buildings and other premises. Moreover, 71.0% indicated that security screening was effective in bringing about social interaction. Another 71.0% were of the opinion that the general public cooperated to be screened. Lastly, 63.2% stated that people were comfortable with these security screenings. These results indicated that public security screening had been implemented in most public spaces in Nairobi County. Moreover, people were appreciative of these measures and tended to cooperate with screening agents or officers. The results were explained further in detail as described in the following sub-themes below.

### Security Screening Search in Operation Buildings and other Premises

Due to terrorism, security screening emerged as a strategy for preventing recurrence of such heinous acts in public buildings and other premises for the sole purpose of managing security. Out of it people have been able to build networks of interactions. Thus the study results from Table 1 above showed that most of the respondents (80%) agreed that there existed security screening

search operations in buildings and other premises. These included traditional methods of patrolling and bow-arrow and burglar alarm systems. They also consist of an array of sensors, a control panel and alerting system, and interconnections. The sensors are capable of detecting unauthorized access by various methods, vehicle security systems that are calculated purposely for the security of one's vehicle. Such screening also include CCTV cameras and glass break detectors.

Metal detectors are mostly used during public security screening to detect the presence of hidden metallic objects. Metal detectors operate using the principle of magnetic field. It consists of an oscillator producing an irregular current that passes in the course of a coil producing an irregular magnetic field. In case a piece of electrically conducting metal is close to the coil, currents are induced in the metal, and this produces an alternating magnetic field of its own. When a different coil is used to measure the magnetic field, the transformation can be detected in the magnetic field due to the metallic object. Motion detectors are applied to check and control movements. The detectors raise alarm the moment they capture a moving object on the security camera.

One of the household respondents in Kibra had the following to say: "Public security screening is everywhere from barriers surrounding buildings to screening procedures that have produced long lines of people waiting to enter a facility". Further, a member of the Nairobi County Security Board observed thus:

A lot has changed in Kenya since the attack at the Westgate Shopping Mall years ago. Other shopping centres have increased the number of their security officers, and frisking people before they enter buildings, public transport vehicles and even churches is now common. While the attack contributed to a fall in revenues in the country's important tourism sector, it has also boosted business in the private security industry. In a way it has [boosted business] because our clients have been concerned. We get police officers coming here to help train our people. They've taken on additional security officers, they've invested in new equipment, CCTVs and access control.

From the above responses, it was evident that security screening has become an integral part of society and that people have come to terms with screening. Screening in all places has meant that all people and their environment are considered potential security threats. All are suspects as well as potential victims of terror. This has had a negative impact on the harmonious social relationships. Increasingly, people have become suspicious of strangers. There are less free interactions and social relationships are always tense.

### **Respondents Perceptions on the Effectiveness of the Security Screening**

Table 1 also shows that most of the respondents (71%) opined that public security screening has been effective in curbing insecurity. Public security screening helps the public to be alert for potential criminals. It also gives clients and the public a sense of safety and hence instils confidence on the safety of public buildings and places. More importantly, such screening helps to detect gadgets that might be used to harm others and thus supports measures to deter terror attacks.

However, as already pointed out above, if it is not properly handled, screening could adversely affect social relations. A household respondent from Westlands Sub-County expressed this fear by saying:

It's really hard to know who these people are, they can be anyone and can be anywhere, and everybody is a suspect these days. As you see, we have to pass through a scanner when we enter the buses, the malls, and offices and all the time the police are stopping you to ask for identification, life in Kenya is not like it used to be.

A terrorist survivor also stated thus "as you can see we have all this security screening but Dusit was still attacked, therefore we keep asking ourselves does this screening really work or it is intended to only make us be seen as criminals."

Out of the above views, it is clear that the public finds it difficult to delineate a terrorist from non-terrorist. However, security screening can aid by identifying those who are intent on conducting terror activities. Moreover, although the citizens support security screening there are still doubts over its success.

#### **People's Comfort with Security Screening Search**

The study results in Table 1 above further show that majority (63.2%) of the people were comfortable with the security screenings in buildings. This implied that most people understood the motive for such screening. They understood that screening was a lawful means of ensuring security and meant to curb terrorism.

Crowded places also constitute a potential threat to terrorism. The study established that some Kenyans understand the dangers of being in such crowded spaces. One household member from Dagoreti North narrated an incident that made her fear being in crowded places:

I talked to one young guy who was imprisoned on charges of terrorism. He told me he was selling peanuts and was an Al-Shabaab recruit. He was going around selling his peanuts hiding a grenade under the peanuts box. As he was about to let it explode, he saw his mother whom he had not seen for months after leaving home. That is the only thing that made him stop killing innocent people that day.

Similarly, a survivor of terrorism explained her experience thus: "I have never enjoyed this screening services. They are just interfering with individual privacy at the end of the day creates a lot of misunderstanding with others as we struggle to accept this services." However, a member of the Nairobi County Security Board members expounded that the screening activities were meant to ensure safety and everybody should learn to cooperate and be patient with sometimes-long queues.

#### **Public Cooperation during Security Screening Search**

Initially, the introduction of security screening in Nairobi County attracted different views from the public. Some believed that screening implied one was a suspect of security threats. Still others understood screening as a mere government regulation. The research results in Table 1 show that most of the respondents (71%) agreed that the public cooperated with security officers during screening. Therefore, it was deduced that people cooperated to avoid being suspected as criminals, to avoid endangering their lives and the lives of others and because screening was a legal



requirement. As one household respondent from Starehe pointed out: "I have no option of not being screened, If I refuse then I cannot access the building or the venue of various activities".

In an interview, a terrorism survivor indicated that some people were uncomfortable with the manner in which screening was undertaken in some areas. As he explained:

We allow ourselves to be security searched in various buildings and open areas as it is a routine in those places, but people who do so should be humane in its undertaking. It so much like a punishment to most of us as no one explains why they do so. In fact there are private items in our bags we don't want strangers to see but now they see.

Nevertheless, a member of the Nairobi Security Board also said, "all of us should consider security screening as part of our daily lives just cooperative, safety belongs to all of us".

From the above remarks, it is clear that security screening is not a matter of choice but a legal requirement aimed at facilitating safety for those who seek access to certain spaces. Therefore, security screening has become a routine activity. However, in some cases, citizen's privacy is interfered with. Moreover, considering due to its mandatory nature, screening makes the state to look like a military barracks in which orders are supposed to be followed without question. People also become suspicious of others as they are forced to surrender themselves and their luggage to strangers for screening.

### **Security Screening Search and its Effects on People's Relations**

Table 1 further shows that 62.2% of the respondents expressed concern about being close to or living in the midst of Somali-Kenyans and Muslims. One household member from Eastleigh said: "I try as much as possible to stay away from Somali people or someone who looks like a Muslim, experience has taught us that a terrorist can be one of them." When asked to clarify on these sentiments, she added, "Every time there is an attack here, it is either a Somalia or a Muslim so how can I trust these people? Better be safe than sorry." Such findings reveal the terrorism in Kenya has contributed to suspicion of specifically the Somali people and the Muslims.

Concerning the effect of screening on the public, a Nairobi County Security Board member remarked:

We agree that terrorists have various tactics they utilize when they want to undertake their criminal acts. Yes, since security screening came into existence people feel that they are not trusted by their state as law abiding citizens and they are there to cause havoc.

In a nutshell, public security screening is intended to keep potential terrorists and objects of terror away from areas where members of the public operate. Public security screening has played a significant role in deterrence of terror acts, so much so that terrorists have had to devise new ways to bomb targeted buildings. The commonest form of such strategies involves sneaking explosives into vulnerable areas such as luggage bays, visitor lobbies and parking areas. This is quite possible, given that bomb explosives are easy to make and convenient to transport in a concealed manner, other modes of execution include shelling, cyber and vehicle mounted attacks (Biggs, 2017). Therefore, expanding public security screening can help to avert these threats.

However, even though it serves its purpose public security screening has produced some negative social challenges. Those who do not support screening, for instance, feel that they are being coerced to act against their wishes. Moreover, screening has increased suspicion among the members of the public. The challenge of ensuring security in buildings against the threat of terrorism remains a reality. Nevertheless, the best strategy for dealing with terrorist threat targeting buildings remains to be routine security checks performed by uniformed security officers on a daily basis in all government buildings.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Public security screening is championed as an anti-terrorism strategy because it deters entry of potential agents of destructive terror acts into public spaces. However, it relies on the cooperation of the public. The strategy presumes that every person seeking access to such spaces is a potential perpetrator and or victim of terrorism. Initially, the introduction of screening attracted mixed views. Some thought screening implied that one was a terror suspected. Screening has also affected social relations by rousing and increasing suspicion among citizens. In some cases, screening has been reported to compromise on the privacy of people. Consequently, to enhance its effectiveness, governments should enhance the laws on public security screening to elicit a sense of respect for privacy and subsequent cooperation among the public in its utilization.

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