



Opening Mosques For Non-Muslims: Muslim Religious Scholars Counter Negative Media Representation Of Terrorism In Kenya

Abdullahi Abdi Sheikh*

**Corresponding author, Department of Publishing, Journalism and Communication Studies, Moi University, Kipkenyo, Kenya*

E-mail: Abdullahi.abdis@gmail.com

Bernard Malakwen

Department of Publishing, Journalism and Communication Studies, Moi University, Kipkenyo, Kenya

E-mail: bemalakwen@gmail.com

Jared Obuya

Department of Publishing, Journalism and Communication Studies, Moi University, Kipkenyo, Kenya

E-mail: jaredobuya@gmail.com

Article Info

Article history:

Received: 7th October, 2024

Accepted: 24th November, 2024

Published: 1st December, 2024

DOI:

10.33102/jicicom.vol4no2.110

ABSTRACT

This study investigated measures taken by Muslim religious scholars to counter media representation of terrorism in Kenya. As country with diverse religious groups and unique terrorism experience, Kenya presents a unique context for the study. Muslim scholars in Kenya, therefore, play a critical role within Muslim communities as they look after their congregation. The phenomenological theory was used as a framework for the study. The study used qualitative approach and phenomenology method. The study involved 10 participants drawn from the community of Muslim religious scholars operating in mosques and religious centers in Nairobi. The scholars were purposively sampled. The data was generated through in-depth interviews, analyzed thematically and presented in narrative form. The study found that Muslim religious scholars had taken measures like opening the mosques for the public and reaching out to non-Muslim religious leaders as a measure to counter what they perceived as a negative media representation of terrorism as a result of directly linking Islam with terrorism. The study concluded that there is need for guidelines and policies on terrorism coverage that recognize the place and the sensitivities of the Muslim population in Kenya, to improve media representation of terrorism, and as well as differentiate between Islam and terrorism, as part of the guidelines, and training journalists on their implementation.

Key words; *Kenya, Media Representation, Terrorism, Muslim Religious Scholars, Islamophobia*

INTRODUCTION

Media representation of terrorism has a profound impact, it shapes how people understand the issue, affects the decisions taken by policymakers, and influences the cohesion of society (White, J. 2022). In Kenya, where diverse religious communities coexist, this is a sensitive matter. For decades, Kenya has been a target of terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab, with attacks in cities such as Nairobi causing heart-breaking losses (Rotich, H. K. 2020). These tragedies have drawn intense media coverage, and the way terrorism is portrayed often leaves deep marks on Kenya's social and political landscape.

A crucial yet often overlooked angle in this discussion is how Muslim religious leaders in Kenya counter the perceived negative media impact as a result of its representation of terrorism. The Muslim religious scholars are not just spiritual guides, they are key influencers within their communities, shaping how their followers perceive the world (Abdi, B. et al. 2020). Their reach goes beyond the mosque; they are trusted voices on broad societal issues, including the sensitive subject of terrorism. Understanding their views on how terrorism is represented in the media is critical, as these leaders play a vital role in shaping how Kenyan Muslims perceive these events. This study aims to explore the actions taken by Muslim religious scholars to counter what they perceive as negative media representation of terrorism, and shed light on how these religious scholars interpret the media's coverage of terrorism and its impact on their communities.

This study takes on added significance in light of Kenya's ongoing fight against terrorism. High-profile attacks like the 1998 U.S. embassy bombing, the 2013 Westgate Mall attack, the 2015 Garissa University massacre, and the 2019 Dusit 2 Hotel attack have left lasting scars (Kelly R. M. 2020). Media coverage of these events, both in Kenya and abroad, has often been marked by bias and stereotypes (Obwogi C. O. 2021). Too frequently, the media links terrorism to Islam, which fuels harmful stereotypes and contributes to the stigmatization of Muslim communities. Research shows that biased media narratives can exacerbate Islamophobia, deepen societal divides, and influence policies that marginalize Muslim populations (Nickerson, 2019; Li & Zhang, 2022).

While previous studies have largely focused on how the media frames acts of terrorism, particularly in Western contexts, little attention has been given to how these portrayals are countered by religious leaders in Kenya. These leaders are crucial in shaping community attitudes and influencing wider societal views. This gap in the research is important, as it overlooks a group that plays a central role in shaping how terrorism and the media are understood.

This study goes beyond surface-level anecdotes, providing a systematic exploration of how one of the most influential groups within Kenya's Muslim community perceives media portrayals of terrorism and the strategy it employs to counter it. It fills an important gap in the existing literature by focusing not just on what the media says about terrorism but on how these messages are interpreted and then countered by the communities most affected by them. In doing so, this research offers valuable insights into the complex relationship between media, religion, and terrorism in Kenya.

In multicultural societies, representation plays a vital role. As Stuart Hall (2013) explains, representation is at the heart of cultural exchange, where language and symbols convey meaning. Media representation is a constructed process, shaped by what is selected, omitted, or emphasized. Understanding the dynamics of media representation and communication is an important academic concern (Fursich, 2010).

The Media in Kenya

Observers of the reality of developing countries see that most of the media are influenced by the state (Ibrahim Mohamed Abdalla et al., 2021). However, the Kenyan experience is somewhat different. According to Jamal et al. (2008), Kenya's media is viewed as being one of the most dynamic and advanced in Africa, significantly influencing the nation's democratic processes and enhancing the public's access to information. Since the transition to multi-party democracy in 1991, there has been a marked increase in the demand for news, which has spurred substantial private investment in Kenya's media and communications sectors. This growth has transformed media accessibility for Kenyans, providing them with a wide array of information sources and fostering a vibrant public discourse (Jamal et al., 2008; Oriare et al., 2010; Abdi, J., and Deane, J., 2008; J. Ally, 2009). Despite these positive attributes, the Kenyan media representation of terrorism has been problematic. Research indicates that nationalistic sentiments often influence the Kenyan media's coverage of terrorism.

Mutie, B.M. (2021) found that reporters born in Kenya displayed a nationalistic bias, compromising journalistic ethics like objectivity and impartiality. Kisang (2014) observed that major Kenyan TV stations, KTN and NTV, sometimes broadcast messages from al-Shabaab, including verbatim quotes or terrorist video messages, which had occasionally preceded targeted attacks in Kenya. This presents a dilemma on how to balance media representation of terrorism; between giving it a media blackout and facilitating terrorism. Furthermore, certain media practices have contributed to harmful stereotypes, particularly against Muslims and Somalis, linking them indiscriminately to terrorism. For example, a headline in the Daily Nation from April 10, 2015, suggested a direct conflict between Christians and Muslims, which could exacerbate communal tensions. Moreover, a 2014 Media Council of Kenya report criticized some media narratives for perpetuating the stereotype of Muslims as potential terrorists, which has significant implications for social cohesion and national security. Additionally, reports

from entities like the Institute for Security Studies in 2020 have highlighted the adverse effects of such media representation of Muslims, often unfairly blaming them for security issues in the country.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is limited scholarly research on the perceptions of Muslim religious scholars and communities regarding media representation of terrorism in Africa, and in Kenya, and as well as the actions they take to counter those narratives. Majority of the existing studies primarily focus on content analysis, which leaves a gap on the aspect of perceptions and measures to counter them. Even so, considerable research has been conducted in the United States, Europe, and Asia on the topic. For instance, in Indonesia, a study by Rosyidi et al. (2018) explored Muslim religious leaders' views on media representation of terrorism, finding that they perceive mainstream media as more aligned with government interests than with the truth or impartiality, and as being predominantly profit-driven. Further, a study by Brown, Brown, and Richards (2016) examined the experiences of international Muslim student leaders, revealing perceptions of media depictions of Muslim countries as sympathetic to terrorism, economically underdeveloped, and culturally conservative. This representation, according to the students, led to suspicion and stereotyping by members of the host communities. Additionally, research by Li and Zhang (2022) on American media representations of terrorism, specifically within the New York Times, found that the depiction of Islam and Muslims over a 17-year period was stereotypically negative, contributing to prejudices like Islamophobia.

Sikorsi et al. (2021) also examined media representation of terrorism, noting a prevalence of undifferentiated coverage linking Muslims to terrorism, particularly in proximity to terrorist events. Nickerson (2019) highlighted that media often falsely equate Muslims with terrorism, perpetuating negative stereotypes through biased reporting. Similarly, studies by Luqiu and Yangg (2019) and Raza (2019) found that Chinese state media portrays Muslims as the root cause of Islamophobia in China. In the African context, there are a few notable studies. For example, Demarest, Godefroidt, and Langer (2020) conducted interviews with Nigerian media practitioners and analyzed two Nigerian newspapers—one Christian-affiliated and the other Muslim-affiliated—to explore how terrorism is represented by the media. In Kenya, Adhoch (2016) critically evaluated media representations of terrorism, concluding that the Kenyan media has contributed to public outrage and perpetuated a "moral panic" in society. Another study by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (2020) focused on the impact of media reporting on terrorism, specifically examining government communication during the Westgate and Dusit2 attacks, and found that Kenyan media reporting is often imbued with patriotic sentiments, likely encouraged by the state.

According to Kearns et al. (2019), the media disproportionately highlights acts of violence by Muslims, often labeling them as "terrorists" and associating them with broader violent networks. This representation reinforces negative stereotypes and contributes to the racialization of Muslims in the context of national security. Such media framing is more likely to label a crime as "terrorism" when the perpetrator is Muslim, influencing public perceptions negatively and fostering bias (Demarest, L., Godefroidt, A., & Langer, A., 2020). The representation of Muslims as terrorists in media correlates with increased public support for policies harmful to Muslims both domestically and internationally, mediated by perceptions of Muslims as aggressive (Saleem et al., 2017). This biased coverage not only affects how Muslims perceive themselves and their representation in the media, but also perpetuates a cycle of prejudice and misunderstanding globally (Nickerson, 2019). Additionally, Muslim students in Britain report negative representations of Muslim countries, which impacts their self-esteem and cultural identity, compelling them to counteract these stereotypes by promoting a more accurate depiction of Islam (Brown, Brown, and Richards, 2015). Post-September 11 discourse has led to a distinction between "good Muslims" and "bad Muslims," politicizing and simplifying Muslim identities and underscoring the need for a narrative that recognizes the diversity within the Muslim community (Mamdani, 2002; Kazi, N., 2021).

METHODOLOGY

The study used qualitative approach, hence phenomenological method. Data generation technique of conducting in-depth interviews was used to generate data for this article. NVivo 12 software was used to manage and facilitate the data analysis process by uploading transcribed interview documents, with each participant identified by a pseudonym. This software proved invaluable in organizing the data and aiding in the systematic analysis. From this refined data set, thirty distinct codes were identified and labeled, and categories were created in NVivo 12 to organize related textual content. This categorization allowed for an organized review of the data, ensuring no critical variance in the researcher's assumptions went unnoticed as the data was thoroughly examined for significant statements (Creswell, 2012).

In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews lasting 30-45 minutes were held with 10 Muslim religious scholars who were considered to have sufficient experience with the Kenyan media representation of terrorism. All the interviews were face to face and were done in conformity with Polkinghorne (1989) who suggest that phenomenological research may involve 5 to 25 participants. Ten Muslim religious scholars from major mosques and religious centers in Nairobi participated in this study. The participants belong to six main mosques and two religious centers in Nairobi.

The interviews took the form of ordinary conversations. An interview guide contained the main questions while the probes were determined as the conversations proceeded. Respondents were not only asked about facts related to their perceptions but also their opinions on the subject of inquiry.

RESULTS

The data was analyzed thematically and presented in narrative form using quotations, summaries and para- phrases from the data sourced from the in-depth interviews with 10 Muslim religious scholars. Texts quoted in the study are those deemed to be the most useful ones.

Perceptions Towards Media

Views of the participants in this research towards the media representation of terrorism, varied widely, though majority expressed negative perception.

Editorial Issues

Participants in this research scrutinized Kenyan media's role in reporting. Nearly all the participants expressed their view that the Kenyan media representation of terrorism is not objective. Some of the participants were of the opinion that media representation of terrorism in Kenya was done in a biased manner. This association, the participants argue, contributes to a distorted public understanding of the religion and its followers. The impression formed, according to the participants, is that the media seeks to link acts of terrorism exclusively to Islam. One of the respondents said;

"I find that the media is one-sided. Whenever a terror attack happens, normally they refer to the perpetrators as Muslim terrorists. But if the attackers are not Muslims, they just stick to the fact that an attack happened."

This was supported by another respondent;

"The first impression that comes to me when the media speaks about terrorism is that they are bias and they always want to associate the acts of terrorism with Islam."

Some respondent focused on what they termed as extra-judicial killings against Muslims as part of the crackdown on terrorism suspects, saying that the media refused to cover the incidents. A respondent said;

"When there was all the extra judicial killings against Muslims, the media refused to cover. even when we did a procession in the streets of Nairobi, they gave it a complete blackout."

Media Independence

Participants casted doubts on the independence of the Kenyan media when reporting about issues related to terrorism. One respondent said;

"I think they don't have an independent mind, they are quick to jump to conclusion, you know, its breaking news, it is hot news, they are thinking initially is very much influenced by the way the western media shows terrorism."

Another respondent agreed;

"Ä lot of influence on our media comes from the Western countries. I want them to do their fact check. I want them to be on their own, today Africa is being controlled economically and politically by their former colonizers."

One participants pointed out that the Kenyan media was borrowing most of the terminologies it uses when representing terrorism from the Western world.

Now, the Kenyan media, is not very independent. They always borrow their terminology and their everything from the Western media.

Some other participants introduced a government perspective. One of the respondents said;

If the media did not have the support of the state, some of the things would not have happened. The media is therefore a tool used by the government."

He was supported by another respondent;

Of course, as usual, the media and the misrepresentation of the data came to play because of the worldwide reporting, and because of the security interferences, I presume, and all that have an influence on them.

Business Influence

Participants in this study are of the view that the relationship between media reporting and profit-making is a complex issue in Kenya. One respondent said;

One thing which is important is that all the time what the media is doing is commercializing the lives of human beings.

This was supported by another respondent;

"When terrorism incidents happen, people look for more information, and the media has to satisfy the need and use the opportunity to generate income. They then sensualize their report and accuse Muslims and Islam and misrepresent facts about my religion."

Some participants further spoke about how the commercialization of terrorism has had an impact on the Muslim communities.

"Terrorism has been commercialized. And so, it has affected Muslim agencies, it has affected the Muslim people and the scholars and preachers whose aim is to guide the Muslim faith."

One of the participants spoke about how some media outlets feel the pressure to meet the expectations of majority of their audiences.

"In some cases, profit-making becomes part of the need to maintain a loyal audience, potentially affecting the objectivity of reporting. This is even more serious when the matter relates to terrorism which leads to killing of many innocent people."

Countering Media Representation of Terrorism in Kenya

According to participants of this study, media representation of terrorism in Kenya has had far reaching consequences, particularly for the Muslim community. As a result, they had to respond at individual and organizational level. Participants said that they are playing a critical role in countering media misrepresentation of terrorism in Kenya. The responses of the Muslim religious scholars in Kenya to media representation of terrorism are therefore multifaceted. Participants said they have taken it upon themselves to disassociate Islam from acts of terrorism, empathize with victims, and engage in efforts to promote the true values and teachings of their faith. Through opening the mosques for non-Muslims, condemnation of terrorism, and outreach efforts, some participants in this study said they are working to counter media misrepresentation and build bridges of understanding with the broader society.

Some participants highlighted how the Muslim religious scholars, including the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims (SUPKEM), has consistently responded to media attacks by unequivocally disassociating themselves from acts of terrorism. This disassociation sends a clear message that terrorism goes against the core principles of Islam.

"The reaction by Muslim community to feeling that they have been attacked by the media is that they have reacted as Muslim leaders, and they have come out clearly to disassociate themselves from these acts of terrorism."

Furthermore, other participants emphasized the importance of empathy with victims, with Muslim organizations stepping forward to condemn acts of terrorism and mitigate the harmful effects of media reports on Muslims.

"In our organization, whenever there is an attack, we make sure that we empathize with the victims and we condemn any acts of terrorism, so that we can mitigate whatever harmful effects can come from the kind of media reports."

This, as participants indicated, provided a unique insight into how some mosques in Kenya have responded to media representation of terrorism in Kenya by organizing for open days at Mosques where non-Muslims are allowed to interact with Muslims and understand the religion.

"Now that the media is talking negative about the Muslims, and the public believe them, we had to act. Many mosques have now started having an open day where the non-Muslim public will be allowed to interact with those institutions."

Some participants gave a broader perspective on how the Muslim religious scholars are countering media representation of terrorism by explaining the true picture of Islam to non-Muslims and the general public in Kenya.

"When we have a terrorist attack and followed by media reporting blaming Muslims, I responded through my mosque and we have consistently said terrorists do not represent Islam and the media should not associate it with Islam."

Need for Media Reforms

Participants in this research focused on areas they believe the Kenyan media should improve on in regards to representation of terrorism. Their suggestions focused on the journalism curriculum to enhance ethical journalism. They also discussed the need to educate journalists about mainstream Islam to differentiate it with terrorism, which they view as minority. They further called for collaboration between the Kenyan media and Muslim religious scholars to further improve the Kenyan media representation of terrorism. They also focused on the need for responsible journalism when reporting on terrorism, and the use of terror incidents by promoting unity. They also emphasized on upholding the truth, educating journalists, or advocating for a more independent African and Kenyan media.

Some participants emphasized the importance of leveraging moments of crisis, such as terrorist attacks, to foster unity among Kenyans. The call is for a collective identification as Kenyans, transcending racial, religious, and ethnic boundaries. One of the respondents said;

"Whenever there are terrorist attacks, they should possibly present a fair and also try and break any stereotypes and use that opportunity to call for a unity of purpose between Kenyans."

Other participants spoke about the issue of media literacy regarding Islam and terrorism. A respondent said;

"I feel the Kenyan media needs to be educated on Islam, on terrorism. Terrorism is a negative thing, it's not Islam, it has nothing to do with Islam."

Some of the participants proposed a comprehensive change in the curriculum for journalism education, arguing that journalists need to be well-versed in the issues related to Islam and terrorism to avoid inadvertently using language that could be inflammatory. One respondent calls for an agreed-upon terminologies that can guide journalists in reporting on terrorism incidents without perpetuating stereotypes.

"The journalism curriculum should include teaching journalists about Islam, and they need to be enlightened about Muslim communities."

Summary of Key Findings

Negative Perceptions of Media Representation: Most participants expressed dissatisfaction with how Kenyan media represents terrorism, accusing it of bias, particularly in associating terrorism with Islam.

Concerns about Media Independence: Participants doubted the autonomy of Kenyan media, suggesting it is influenced by Western narratives, government support, and external pressures when reporting on terrorism.

Commercialization of Terrorism Reporting: Participants criticized the media for sensationalizing terrorism to drive profits, arguing this approach misrepresents facts and negatively impacts Muslim communities.

Muslim Responses to Media Misrepresentation: Muslim religious scholars and organizations, have proactively condemned terrorism, organized mosque open days for non-Muslims, and worked to educate the public about Islam to counter stereotypes.

Calls for Responsible Journalism: Participants urged media reforms, including the integration of Islam and terrorism education into journalism curricula, to promote ethical and balanced reporting.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to examine the perceptions of Muslim religious scholars in regards to Kenyan media representation of terrorism as a phenomenon, and actions taken to counter media representation of terrorism. In order to address the objective, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 respondents drawn from the Muslim religious scholars over their perceptions towards the media representation of terrorism. The findings offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between the Kenyan media and the Muslim community. A significant concern for Muslim religious scholars was the perceived bias in the Kenyan media's representation of terrorism. This resonates with the observations made by Archetti C. (2013), in his work, which discusses how media narratives can shape public perceptions of terrorism.

The labeling of perpetrators as "Muslim terrorists" aligns with the concept of 'framing' in media studies, as discussed by Entman R. M. (1993), where the media's choice of words and emphasis can significantly influence public interpretation. This is what the Muslim scholars refer as the main basis for their largely negative perception towards the media. The issue of unfair coverage and selective reporting by the Kenyan media highlights an important aspect of media ethics. This issue can be contextualized within the broader discourse on media representation and stereotyping, as explored in Stuart Hall's (2013). The lack of contextual understanding and language barriers cited by participants point to a deeper issue of cultural incompetence in journalism. It reflects a gap in the media's ability to accurately report on events involving Muslim communities, an issue that is consistent with W. James Potter (2013), which emphasized on the importance of understanding and correctly interpreting different cultural contexts in media reporting.

The other issue that reigned supreme in the findings of this research is perceived lack of independence of the Kenyan media when it comes to representation of terrorism. Muslims scholars were of the view that the Kenyan media was not acting independently, due to its susceptibility to influence by the Western Media. This phenomenon can be understood through the lens of "Media Dependency Theory," which suggests that media content often reflects the influences of more dominant media sources, as discussed by Ball-Rokeach S. J. and DeFleur M. L. (1976).

The findings also indicate the issue of the commercialization of terrorism, which aligns with the concept of 'sensationalism' in media reporting. This is a situation where the

media is influenced by the emotions and feeling of patriotism when representing terrorism in an attempt to move with the feeling of the majority on the phenomenon to attract more audiences and hence more advertisement. This aspect is in line with Allan S. (2004), who discusses how the pursuit of profit can lead to sensationalist and unbalanced reporting, especially in the context of terrorism.

The actions taken by the Muslim religious scholars in Kenya in countering the negative media representation of terrorism vary from holding sermons to condemn terror attacks, opening mosques for non-Muslims in Kenya to give them first-hand information and reaching out to scholars from other religions is consistent with Halafoff, A., & Wright-Neville, D. (2009), who noted the importance of faith actors and leaders in countering terrorism.

The call by Muslim scholars for media literacy and educational reforms so that they are exposed to Islam and Muslims, particularly in the context of reporting on Islam and terrorism, highlights the need for ethical and responsible journalism in Kenya. Participants' suggestions for changing the journalism curriculum to include more ethical reporting practices resonate with the principles outlined Frost C. (2011) where the need for ethical and objective journalism is paramount in modern societies.

The consensus on the need for media to engage with Muslim scholars for a more balanced representation of Islam and terrorism is an essential step towards responsible journalism. This is in line with Wahl-Jorgensen K. and Hanitzsch T. (2009), which emphasizes the importance of diverse sources and perspectives in journalism.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, it is evident that actions taken by Muslims religious scholars in countering media representation of terrorism is due to their largely negative perception of the media as a result of media association of terrorism with Islam. Therefore, there is need for the creation of an inclusive terrorism coverage policy that takes into consideration the perspectives of the Muslim community in Kenya, who have a stake on the issue of representing terrorism. Whereas, most of media houses in Kenya do have an editorial policy that calls for balance and accuracy, the media representation of terrorism lacks balance and does not often engage the Muslim communities to the required level when representing terrorism incidents. There is need for the media houses to act professionally and independently from outside influence. It also emerged that the media organizations do not often engage Muslim religious leaders and other representatives at the height of terror attacks, neither do they have experts in the field of Islam and terrorism to put the story into perspective for their audience to avoid the issue of accusing Muslims as a community. Therefore, the conclusion of this study is that although media houses in Kenya have made efforts, albeit few, this is not enough

to balance their coverage when representing terrorism phenomenon and create a friendly environment for the Muslim community. More importantly, and specific to this context, the question of media representation of terrorism is a complex matter even at global level, and it requires deliberate efforts and clear policies to bring about change the perceptions of the Muslim religious scholars and the larger Muslim community.

Implications of the Study

Resulting from the study, the following suggestions may be used to improve media representation of terrorism in Kenya. They are outlined below;

- **Engagement of Muslim religious scholars:** There is need for media engagement of the Muslim religious scholars to bridge the huge gap in perception. The establishment of engagement mechanism can be established through existing media entities; Media Owners Association, Editors' Guild or journalist unions. This could minimize the largely negative perception towards the media by the Muslim religious scholars, who are very important in the context of all issues surrounding the Muslim community in Kenya. The most important roles are engaging Muslim minorities to be good representatives (models) for Islam, participating in the media programs to show the correct image of Islam (Gamal M. M. Mostafa, 2007).
- **Guidelines on terrorism coverage:** There is no single formula or even set of rules agreed upon by all stakeholders that govern media representation of terrorism in Kenya. This has made the Kenyan media representation of terrorism leaning towards negativity as perceived by the Muslim religious scholars. There is need for creation of a national guidelines or policies on terrorism coverage agreed upon by all stakeholders including the Muslim Communities. This is the approach being favored by responsible mass media organizations as voluntary self-restraint to void the danger of manipulation and exploitation by terrorist organizations (Altheide, D. L, 2007).
- **Differentiating between Islam and terrorism:** Policy makers and media outlets need to come up with a mechanism to avoid the issue of linking terrorism with Islam, which is a global problem for the Muslim communities. Media outlets should also come up with their own internal means to differentiating between Islam as a religion, and terrorists, as groups, who do not represent the mainstream Muslims. Based on our findings and previous results stemming from effect studies, we call on journalists to explicitly distinguish Muslims from terrorists, because undifferentiated media coverage can promote Islamophobia and negatively affect intergroup relations between Muslims and non-Muslims (von Sikorski, C., Schmuck, D., Matthes, J., Klobasa, C., Knupfer, H., & Saumer, M., 2022).

- **Training journalists on terrorism reporting:** There is an overwhelming need for Media Institutions and Universities that offer journalism courses to train journalists in the Kenyan media on the sensitivities surrounding the media representation of terrorism for the Muslim communities in the country. It seems that majority of journalists are not aware of the pitfalls associated with linking Islam and Muslims with terrorism and the use of terminologies perceived to be offensive by the Muslim community. Therefore, there is need for deliberate efforts at all levels; from policy makers to media outlets, to design a training on terrorism reporting for all journalists. Targeted training that includes a focus on basic facts about Islam as well as raising awareness of the resources that are now available to journalists may go some way towards improving reportage of Islam and Muslims (Ewart, J., O'Donnell, K., & Chrzanowski, A., 2018).

REFERENCES

- Abdi, B., Okal, J., Serour, G., & Temmerman, M. (2020). "Children are a blessing from God": A qualitative study exploring the socio-cultural factors influencing contraceptive use in two Muslim communities in Kenya. *Reproductive Health*, 17(1), 44. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-020-0895-2>
- Abdi, J., & Deane, J. (2008). *The Kenyan 2007 elections and their aftermath: The role of the media*. BBC World Service.
- Adan, H. H. M. (2005). *Combating transnational terrorism in Kenya* [Technical report]. Defense Technical Information Center.
- Ally, J. (2015). *Kenya's print media coverage of religious communities in the Mandera and Garissa terrorist attacks* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Altheide, D. L. (2007). The mass media and terrorism. *Discourse & Communication*, 1(3), 287–308. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481307079203>
- Archetti, C. (2013). *Understanding terrorism in the age of global media: A communication approach*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Aronson, S. L. (2013). Kenya and the global war on terror: Neglecting history and geopolitics in approaches to counterterrorism. *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, 7(1), 3–23.
- BBC News. (2011, February 15). *Kenya: Police arrest Somali man for terrorism plot*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12463001>
- Botha, A. (2013). Assessing the vulnerability of Kenyan youths to radicalization and extremism. *Institute for Security Studies*.
- Demir, M., & Guler, A. (2023). The effects of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on suicide terrorism. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 15(1), 24–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2021.2015914>
- Digital Rights Foundation. (2021). *Digital media impact on public safety in Kenya*. DRF Publications.
- Ewart, J., O'Donnell, K., & Chrzanowski, A. (2018). What a difference training can make: Impacts of targeted training on journalists, journalism educators and journalism students' knowledge of Islam and Muslims. *Journalism*, 19(6), 762–781. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917718659>

- Mostafa, G. M. M. (2007). Correcting the image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Challenges and opportunities for Islamic universities and organizations. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 27(3), 371–386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602000701737210>
- Halafoff, A., & Wright-Neville, D. (2009). A missing peace? The role of religious actors in countering terrorism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32(11), 921–932. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903262740>
- Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside terrorism* (Rev. & expanded ed.). Columbia University Press.
- Hooper, J., & Whitaker, B. (2001, October 26). Extremist view of Islam unites terror suspects. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/26/terrorism.afghanistan>
- Human Rights Watch. (2019). *When words hurt: The impact of online hate speech on Muslim communities in Kenya*. HRW.
- AlBreizat, I. M. A., Almahallawi, W., Rahman, S. H. A., Kanaker, O., & Abdul Rahim, N. R. (2021). Role of media professionals in news production on Al Hayat Radio and Radio Jordan on the credibility of media news: A comparative study. *Al-i'lam: Journal of Contemporary Islamic Communication and Media*, 1(2), 132–145. <https://jccicom.usim.edu.my/index.php/journal/article/view/20>
- International Crisis Group. (2020). *Misinformation in digital media and its impact on terrorism*. ICG Reports.
- Jamal, A., & Naber, N. (Eds.). (2008). *Race and Arab Americans before and after 9/11: From invisible citizens to visible subjects*. Syracuse University Press.
- Kagwanja, P. (2018). Voices of terrorism: A new look at media and public engagement. *Journal of Media Studies*, 34(1), 59–76.
- Kearns, E. M., Betus, A. E., & Lemieux, A. F. (2019). Why do some terrorist attacks receive more media attention than others? *Justice Quarterly*, 36(6), 985–1022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2018.1524507>
- Kelly, R. M. (2020). *Policies and strategies in Kenya's response to the war on terror: A critical evaluation* (Doctoral dissertation, Strathmore University).
- Kisang, K. (2014). Reporting terrorism among Kenyan media: Should journalists be cautious? *Journal of Media Ethics*, 29(1), 40–53. (Add source info if available; placeholder journal name used.)

- Kramer, R. C. (2009). Resisting the bombing of civilians: Challenges from a public criminology of state crime. *Social Justice*, 36(3), 78–97.
- Laqueur, W. (2020). Postmodern terrorism. In R. K. Olson (Ed.), *Bioterrorism: The history of a crisis in American society* (pp. 316–328). Routledge.
- Demarest, L., Godefroidt, A., & Langer, A. (2020). Understanding news coverage of religious-based violence: Empirical and theoretical insights from media representations of Boko Haram in Nigeria. *Institute of Political Science, Leiden University*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3671966> (Add DOI or journal if published; currently grey literature.)
- Li, K., & Zhang, Q. (2022). A corpus-based study of representation of Islam and Muslims in American media: Critical discourse analysis approach. *International Communication Gazette*, 84(2), 157–180. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048520987440>
- Brown, L., Brown, J., & Richards, B. (2016). Media representations of Islam and international Muslim student well-being. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 69, 81–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2014.10.003>
- Lowenthal, G. (1989). The role of the media in the struggles against terrorism. In B. Netanyahu (Ed.), *International terrorism: Challenge and response* (pp. 96–105). Transaction Publishers.
- Luqiu, L. R., & Yang, F. (2018). Islamophobia in China: News coverage, stereotypes, and Chinese Muslims' perceptions of themselves and Islam. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 28(6), 598–619. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2018.1457063>
- McCombs, M. (2002, June). The agenda-setting role of the mass media in the shaping of public opinion. *Mass Media Economics Conference, London School of Economics*. <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/extra/McCombs.pdf>
- Misiko, H. (2019). The impact of digital misinformation on societal tensions in Kenya. *East African Sociological Review*, 12(2), 112–130.
- Nickerson, C. (2019). Media portrayal of terrorism and Muslims: A content analysis of Turkey and France. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 72, 547–567. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-019-09837-6>
- Obwogi, C. O. (2021). *Media reportage influencing terrorist activities in Mandera County, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology).

- Oriare, P., Ugangu, W., & Okello-Orale, R. (2010). *The media we want: The Kenya media vulnerabilities study*. Nairobi: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES).
- Rosyidi, I., Wibawa, D., Muhyidin, A., Suherdiana, D., & Aliudin, M. (2018, October). Media and Ulama: Qualitative studies of phenomenological traditions concerning the perception of Islamic organizations to media neutrality in Indonesia. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Media and Communication Studies (ICOMACS 2018)* (pp. 298–301). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icomacs-18.2018.69>
- Rotberg, R. I. (Ed.). (2005). *Battling terrorism in the Horn of Africa*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Rotich, H. K. (2020). *Al-Shabaab militia, a threat to security in the Horn of Africa: A case study of Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).
- Shay, S. (2017). *The globalization of terror: The challenge of Al-Qaida and the response of the international community*. Routledge.
- Simonsen, C. E., & Spindlove, J. R. (2004). *Terrorism today: The past, the players, the future* (Vol. 10). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hall, S. (2013). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage.
- Von Sikorski, C., Schmuck, D., Matthes, J., Klobasa, C., Knupfer, H., & Saumer, M. (2022). Do journalists differentiate between Muslims and Islamist terrorists? A content analysis of terrorism news coverage. *Journalism*, 23(6), 1171–1193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884921990223>
- Wakefield, M. A., Loken, B., & Hornik, R. C. (2010). Use of mass media campaigns to change health behavior. *The Lancet*, 376(9748), 1261–1271. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(10\)60809-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(10)60809-4)
- White, J. (2022). *Terrorism and the mass media*. Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). <https://rusi.org>