

## Youth Resilience to Violent Extremism: An Evaluation of a Mentorship Intervention in Kenya

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### Abstract

In response to the rise in extremist violence within Kenya, the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism Programme was launched to counter the threat of violent extremism (VE) and prevent the radicalisation and recruitment of vulnerable youth. To assess the extent to which the Programme was able to achieve its objective, an evaluation of the Programme's key component – a mentoring and counselling-based project intervention, was conducted between 2017-19. In total, 347 youth, identified as being 'at risk', were included as part of the evaluation. This paper presents the principal findings of the evaluation and assesses the effect of the intervention on three key dimensions: the youth's attitudes, their social networks and levels of awareness of the risks of VE and the strategies for countering violent extremist activities. Using logit models and controlling for any confounding effects of socio-demographic differences, the evaluation finds evidence of improvements in the at-risk groups' knowledge of the risks posed by VE groups as well as the strategies for countering VE. However, mixed results were noted in the groups' attitudes towards violence, their levels of self-confidence and the extent and diversity of their social networks. Across two of the dimensions, more significant effects were also observed among 'at-risk' groups who were employed versus those who were unemployed. Some variability in outcomes was also found among at-risk groups who had been exposed to the intervention for longer compared to those who had been in the Project for shorter periods. Taken together, these findings underscore the need for extending the Project's existing engagements and incorporating a nuanced and sustained approach for engendering more long-term change. The analytical insights presented also offer critical lessons for designing and implementing similar interventions in Kenya and in the wider global context.

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### Introduction

One of the most consistent threats to global security is the problem of violent extremism (VE) - broadly defined as 'politically and ideologically motivated violence that intentionally targets civilians and/or non-combatants' (Neumann, 2010, p.12; Minerva Nasser-Eddine et al. 2010,

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Khalil, 2013). In 2018 alone, 71 countries recorded at least one death from terrorism, the second-highest number since 2002 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019). East Africa remained one of the worst affected regions, with Kenya<sup>2</sup> ranking as among the countries most severely impacted by terrorist violence (Ibid).

To prevent the spread of radicalisation and recruitment, Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) has emerged as a principle approach (Ris and Ernstorfer, 2017). Unlike traditional Counterterrorism (CT) measures, which aim to deter and disrupt terror groups, CVE is seen as a softer approach. It encompasses a range of policies directed at addressing the underlying drivers of VE, disrupting the tactics used to attract recruits, reintegrating the disengaged former combatants and building the resilience of communities and populations to reduce the risk and impact of extremist violence (Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2016; CSO, 2017).

Within the East African context, one such initiative to counter the threat posed by VE is the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE II) programme<sup>3</sup> in Kenya. The STRIVE II programme was implemented over three-years<sup>4</sup> to reduce the risk of radicalisation and recruitment in six target counties<sup>5</sup>. The Programme team employed Horgan's (2009) framing of radicalisation as the "social and psychological process of incrementally experienced commitment to extremist political or religious ideology" (p.152), but distinguished such processes from recruitment and membership to a VE group (Khalil, Horgan and Zeuthen, 2019).

To achieve the overarching objective of reducing the risk of radicalisation and recruitment, the Mentorship component of the Programme worked with at-risk youth in

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<sup>2</sup> In 2019, Kenya ranked 21 in the Global Terrorism Index.

<sup>3</sup> The STRIVE II project is funded by the European Union. The mentorship project is one component of a four-component programme, including 1. Law Enforcement Training, 2. Research, and 3. Communications. Law Enforcement and Mentorship constitute direct interventions, while Research and Communications are designed as supportive projects.

<sup>4</sup> The Programme was later extended by an additional year.

<sup>5</sup> The overall objective is based on the Theory of Change, which was determined by the Programme Team as a whole. The Monitoring and Evaluation Team led the process. However, all component Leads participated in the determination of the programmes' underlying logic and the connection between overall objectives and the project-specific outcomes.

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communities identified to be ‘hotspot’ zones<sup>6</sup>. Specifically, the intervention paired at-risk youth (mentees) with mentors – youth from the same communities facing similar structural challenges, who could serve as positive role models. Through a peer to peer learning framework, the project aimed to improve mentee’s resilience to VE by influencing changes in their attitudes, improving their networks and increasing their awareness of the risks posed by VE and the strategies for countering the threat of extremist violence. It was assumed that improvements in mentee’s resilience would ultimately contribute to reducing the risk of radicalisation and involvement in extremist activities.

The following paper analyses the outcomes of the mentorship project and interrogates the extent to which the intervention was successful in improving attitudes, strengthening networks and increasing awareness of the risks and also the strategies for countering VE. The first section of this paper contextualises the mentorship approach within the larger discourse on the drivers of VE and strategies for ‘prevention’ and building resilience. The second section outlines the methodological approach adopted to investigate the main research questions. Following this, principal findings are presented and discussed in conversation with insights gleaned from the literature. The concluding section summarizes the key takeaways for policy and programming.

### Unpacking Resilience

Owing to the nascent development of the field of CVE, there have emerged varying perspectives on the factors that lead individuals to become susceptible to radicalisation and recruitment (Mastroe and Szmania, 2016). While structural drivers - such as inequality, unemployment, discrimination and marginalisation, were most commonly associated with extremism, the consensus has since shifted (Khalil and Zeuthen, 2016; Chiozza, 2010; Bhatia and Ghanem, 2017; Østby, 2008). In part, because the ‘incidence of structural conditions has far outnumbered the rates of known extremists’, most of the thinking has subsequently

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<sup>6</sup> Hotspot zones were identified through a process of desk-based literature review.

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cohered around the notion that there exist no singular pathways to extremism (Khalil, Horgan and Zeuthen, 2019, p.10; Denoeux and Carter, 2009). Thus alongside structural factors, other drivers that are considered to be of significance include social networks (Dahl and Zalk, 2014), individual incentives (Collins, 1998; Mercy Corps, 2016, Khalil, Brown, Chant, Olowo and Wood, 2019), psychosocial factors (Rink and Sharma, 2016), enabling conditions<sup>7</sup> (Khalil and Zeuthen, 2016) and ideological motivations (Brubaker, 2015).

Recognising the complexity of factors that contribute to recruitment and radicalisation, an emerging field of policy programming and priority has focussed attention on the need for engaging with at-risk communities and preventing their commitment to and involvement in VE (Bhui et al., 2012; Khalil and Zeuthen, 2016; DuBois and Alem, 2017). A variety of strategies have, therefore, been implemented, including most prominently those that aim to improve the resilience of at-risk communities (Spalek and Davies, 2012). But despite the popularity of resilience focussed interventions, there has been little agreement on the meaning of the term<sup>8</sup> resilience (Davidson et al. 2016) and how it should be defined in relation to VE<sup>9</sup> (Wimelius et al., 2018; Sahgal and Elshmi, 2018).

Recent scholarship has, however, provided some conceptual mooring in offering more robust explanations of resilience. For instance, Grossman et al. (2020), define resilience as the “ability to resist and challenge the social legitimation of violent extremist propaganda, recruitment and ideology” (p. 4). A burgeoning field of research has, however, strayed away from conceptual definitions and has instead attempted to ‘operationalise and apply concepts of resilience in meaningful and context-relevant ways’ (Gielen, 2017; Grossman, 2017, p. 8).

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<sup>7</sup> These include factors that enable, facilitate radicalisation and involvement in VE. This list of enabling factors include radical mentors, recruiters, wider social networks, and online communities, some forms of traditional and modern media, etc. (Khalil and Zeuthen, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> There is no definition of resilience that commands consensus in either the academic or practitioner literature. It is used in a wide range of fields from the natural sciences to self-help books, and in each field the application of the term is different.

<sup>9</sup> For some terrorism scholars, the term refers to how well societies navigate through adversity, while for others resilience manifests before, during and after a crisis. In its broadest application, resilience is often discussed as a capacity for addressing the challenges that face different communities (Wimelius et al., 2018).

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This latter work has been concerned with ‘identifying and understanding the protective resources and mechanisms that underpin resilience’ (Wimelius et al., 2018, p. 5).

Inspired by such trends, a principal approach has been to view recruitment as an occupational choice (Schbley 2003; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Hidalgo et al., 2010). Drawing on rational choice models and insights from psychology (such as Rusbult’s investment model), proponents of this view have argued that commitment to VE is related to the access to poor and inferior alternatives (Altier, Thoroughgood, Horgan, 2014). Thus, to strengthen resilience to VE, the opportunity cost of VE activities must be increased by improving the economic prospects of at-risk groups. One of the most significant studies to test the validity of the model was the experimental research study conducted by Blattman and Annan (2015), who find that agricultural training and access to capital inputs, increased the opportunity cost of illicit activities for ex-combatants in Liberia. The generalisability of these findings has, however, been the subject of some debate. Using a similar experimental design approach, Lyall, Zhou, and Imai (2017) observed that training alone had little effect on the attitudes of at-risk groups in Afghanistan. The authors instead argued that training combined with cash incentives marginally increased support for the Afghan government, but this change was less explained by the opportunity cost argument (Ibid)<sup>10</sup>.

Other studies have, however, focused on the role of awareness and knowledge dissemination. One such study is the randomised control trial (RCT) conducted in Pakistan, which found that educational interventions designed to improve inter-group understanding, had a positive impact and reduced student interest in anti-Semitic groups (Amjad and Wood, 2009). The results of another education programme – Beyond Bali in Australia (Aly, 2013), also reportedly achieved some success in building the resilience of youth participants by raising their “awareness of the impact and the importance of resisting and responding to the influence of VE in positive and productive ways” (Aly, Taylor, and Karnovsky, 2014, p. 383). For Akbarzadeh (2013), while there were definite merits to educational and awareness-raising interventions in Australia, such interventions alone were unlikely to be successful if they did

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<sup>10</sup> The change was mostly explained by the government’s perceived ability to provide for its citizens (Lyall, Zhou, and Imai, 2017).

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not address the range of political, socio-economic factors that alienate and engender radicalisation. Based on their work with a community-based CVE programme in the US, Williams et al. (2016a and 2016b), however, concluded that awareness-raising interventions need to be targeted and an effective intervention to address the problem of VE was to develop ‘communities that were sensitised to the issue of violent extremism and were aware of the spectrum of appropriate actions to take in response to its prospective warning signs’ (p. 10).

Drawing on sociological research, other studies have focused on the psychological attributes and attitudes that make for more resilient individuals (Schbley, 2003). Among these is the research conducted by Ilyas and Malik (2016), who developed a framework for measuring resilience to VE. Using exploratory factor analysis<sup>11</sup>, they distilled key themes contributing to resilience, including self-efficacy - an individual’s confidence in his or her capacity and general optimism, i.e. idealism about capacity<sup>12</sup> (Ibid). Similarly, for Feddes et al. (2015) ‘a lack of self-esteem and agency has often been related to feelings of uncertainty and lack of personal significance which together have been associated with radicalisation’ (p. 401). More recently, Grossman et al. (2020), building on the research by Bandura (1999), Bowes and McMurrin (2013) and Walker (2005), have emphasised the role of attitudes towards violence. Employing exploratory factor analysis, they find that attitudes towards violence – notably lower levels of cultural acceptance of violence as a source of strength and respect - were strong predictors of resilience (cross-nationally).

In addition to such approaches, another line of questioning has emphasised the salience of social networks. Mainly, arguments have been made for CVE efforts to focus on *peers and friends*, based on the insight that at-risk individuals much like other youth, most often turn to their friends to discuss their frustrations. In a study using social network analysis in Kenya and Tanzania, peers were found to play a central role in either discouraging/encouraging the (at-risk) youth’s participation in violence (Russell, 2017). When

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<sup>11</sup> Factor analysis is a technique that is used to reduce a large number of variables into fewer numbers of factors. This technique extracts maximum common variance from all variables.

<sup>12</sup> Other factors (not psychological) that were also found to be of relevance were sanctity and education (family bonds and networks of trust and religious conviction).

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evaluating the results of a high school peer-gate keeping model in the US, William et al., (2016), similarly concluded that peer gatekeepers were better positioned to notice early signs of individuals considering acts of extremism.

Relatedly, several studies have indicated that social capital, defined as the sense of community (trust and belonging within one's community), sense of attachment to place (connection to one's neighbourhood or city), and civic participation (engagement with institutions or formal organisations), could also reduce the risk of radicalisation and recruitment (Norris et al., 2008; Mignone & O'Neil 2005; Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack, 2016). For instance, a study with Somali immigrants in the United States and Canada, (Ellis et al., 2016; Ellis and Abdi, 2017), found that groups that scored low on violent behaviour had stronger levels of attachments to their country of resettlement and scored lower on the social marginalisation scale. Similarly, for Bhui et al. (2012) higher levels of social contacts were associated with condemnation of terrorist violence (p. 6). For Lub (2013), such emphasis has generally rested on the assumption that by "enhancing the social ties of radical youths and their relationship to their broader social environment, personal problems will be minimised and feelings of social deprivation will also be reduced" (p.170).

For Magis (2010) and Wimelius et al. (2018)<sup>13</sup>, however, while social networks have been significant in building resilience, relationships with people in alternative social networks have also been found to be vital in broadening an individual's identity and enhancing their capacity to work, live and socialise with others. The results of the Tony Blair Institute's Global Dialogue, for instance, demonstrated that exposure to different cultures improved teenager's resilience to recruitment by increasing their 'open-mindedness', knowledge and experience of difference (Doney and Wegerif, 2017).

Overall, the evidence presented suggests that a plethora of factors seem to contribute to resilience to VE. Most of the robust empirical work has highlighted the role of individual traits: self-efficacy, optimism, and attitudes towards violence. Significant findings have also related to the importance of education and awareness focussed interventions outlining the

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<sup>13</sup> Wimelius et al. (2018) refer more to local resilience but similarly argue that promoting resilience requires building partnerships with a diversity of local actors.

risks of VE and the strategies for prevention. Considerable emphasis has also been found on the role of peer networks and the contribution of social capital, with Magis (2010) and others pointing out that exposure to a diversity of views and networks was likewise critical for building tolerance. Lastly, socio-economic characteristics such as employment, have also received attention in the literature, but the findings have been far from conclusive.

### Design of the Mentorship Project

Drawing on the lessons from the literature, namely the need for focusing on the complex interplay of pathways to VE and the importance of targeting at-risk groups, the Royal United Services Institute as part of the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism II Programme, designed an intervention to build the resilience of at-risk groups and prevent their radicalisation and recruitment to VE. At-risk groups were identified based on a set criterion, which was developed in partnership with community stakeholders following a series of workshops in key project locations<sup>14</sup> (For further details on the selection process, please see Table I).

**Table I. Selection Process of Mentors and Mentees**

MENTEES AND MENTORS SELECTION PROCESS
<p><b>Mentees process of selection:</b> Following consultations with stakeholders, ten criteria were identified. Of these four criteria, were identified as being primary, and the rest were classified as secondary. The primary criteria included, associating with violent criminals or gang members, close relations with a peer/relative who has been recruited to a VE group or is engaged in VE activities, professing radical or extremist views and tendencies, and affiliating with those espousing and displaying extremist views and tendencies. In addition to these factors, the six secondary factors included, dropping out of school, having a dysfunctional family background, being socially withdrawn, being part of a youth gang or criminal group,</p>

<sup>14</sup> There is significant agreement in the literature that stakeholders with a thorough understanding of the target group's social setting and context are crucial to identifying who is 'at-risk' in the community (Christensen, 2019).



converting to a different religion and having low employment prospects (Christensen, 2019). The youth in the project locations were recruited into the project if at least one of the primary criteria and another two or more of the secondary criteria were met. The use of a criterion-based approach was primarily adopted to provide a more consistent and structured process of recruitment. Additionally, community stakeholders were recruited to help with the identification of at-risk youth. The types of stakeholders, who were recruited to the project included teachers, community leaders, social workers and religious leaders. Owing to their status in the community as well-known and trusted individuals, stakeholders were expected to lend a degree of localised credibility and authority to the recruitment process (Ibid).

**Mentors process of selection:** Mentors were selected from the same geographical areas and communities as the mentees and were similar in cultural, religious, class, ethnic and political backgrounds. The selected mentors were slightly older than the mentees, better educated and had experience in managing comparable life challenges as their mentees. In addition, the selected mentors were expected to be mature, respectful, reflective, empathetic, and socially aware. The mentors were taken through structured training to equip them with skills and capacities needed to support and guide their mentees. The assumption within this approach was that mentors would be able to counsel their mentees, encourage them to set personal goals and think critically, reflect on messaging communicated by extremists, educate them on the factors that make youth vulnerable and provide advice on the strategies and fora available for responding to such threats (Ibid).

To build their resilience and ultimately reduce their risk of recruitment and radicalisation, at-risk youth (mentees) were paired with mentors and provided guidance and support for a period of up to two years (Table II provides a brief description of the Mentorship Activities). A peer-to-peer mentorship model was adopted following best practices, which find more favourable effects when mentoring is led by someone from ‘own group’ or a peer, than when it is led by a mentor who does not belong to the mentees group, e.g. teachers or other adults (Lub, 2013, Dubois and Alem, 2017).

Taking note of the emergent literature, the project team aimed to primarily strengthen the resilience of at-risk youth by improving their attitudes - self-confidence and justification of violence, assisting with development and diversification of their support networks and improving their awareness of the risks of VE and strategies for countering the threat. Socio-economic interventions to increase the opportunity cost of participating in VE, such as

vocational training and livelihood support, while not a core focus, were implemented through partnerships with other organisations<sup>15</sup>.

Between 2017-19, the project offered support to over 347 at-risk youth (mentees) in six locations, Nairobi (Eastleigh and Majengo) and Mombasa (Kisauni, Likoni, Majengo and Kwale). Of these, 254 had completed at least one year and 93 had completed two years of the intervention. The mentees were mentored by a total of 42 mentors (5 mentees per mentor)<sup>16</sup>.

*Table II. Description of Mentorship Activities*

MENTORSHIP ACTIVITIES
<p><b>One on one meetings:</b> Each week one on one meetings were organised between the mentors and the mentees. During these meetings, mentors were meant to counsel and advise the mentees and help them develop plans for achieving their personal goals and objectives. In addition, mentees who were experiencing specific psychological problems also received some professional counselling support from a licensed psychologist.</p>
<p><b>Group bi-weekly meetings:</b> The group bi-weekly meetings were organised to facilitate discussion among all mentors and mentees living within a specific area. The aim of the bi-weekly meetings was twofold; first was to discuss the attitudes and behaviours within their communities that were correlated with violence – e.g. lack of empathy, crime, low self-esteem, limited critical thinking skills, etc. The second was to expose mentees to the steps that they can take both individually and jointly to reduce the threat of VE.</p>
<p><b>Training of Mentors:</b> The trainings were meant to expand the capacity of Mentors to better equip and support the Mentees. In total sixteen training sessions were held during the first two years of the project. The types of topics covered during such sessions included building the mentees' self-confidence self-awareness, engaging mentees in conversations on violence, expanding mentees networks and support systems and improving mentees understanding of the drivers of VE, such as e.g. police violence, unemployment, marginalisation of religious communities, etc.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholder engagement:</b> In each area, stakeholders consisting of religious leaders, social workers, teachers, peace committee members and parents, were engaged. Monthly meetings were organised between the stakeholders and the mentors. The purpose of these meetings was to provide a forum for discussion on the emerging risks and trends of radicalisation within the community and identify appropriate strategies to best support at-risk groups.</p>

<sup>15</sup> The effect on these interventions is not directly measured as an outcome because the interventions were undertaken by external partner organisations. The STRIVE II programme, did not exercise any control over delivery and only made recommendations to the partner organisations to include Mentees within their programmes.

<sup>16</sup> The Project strove to ensure this balance but during the endline (when some of the mentees had graduated out of the programme) there were fewer mentees assigned to each mentor.

**Linkage with networks offering skills training:** As part of the efforts to address the socio-economic constraints faced by mentees, attempts were made to link these groups to an existing organisation offering vocational training, life skills and scholarship opportunities.

## Methodology

The main objective of the evaluation was to interrogate the effect of the Mentorship Project on strengthening the resilience of at-risk youth to VE. To achieve this objective, a quantitative one-group pre-post design was combined with qualitative Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Based on the Programme's Theory of Change, the Monitoring and Evaluation Team in consultation with the Project Team identified three critical intermediate outcomes of the Mentorship project. The outcomes identified, included mentees' - *attitudes, networks, and awareness of the risks and strategies for countering the threat VE*. It was hypothesised that the Mentorship project would strengthen the resilience of mentees through its effect on the intermediate outcomes and in doing so ultimately prevent their radicalisation and recruitment to VE.

In keeping with the findings from the literature on the factors identified as protective and underpinning resilience, indicators were mapped onto the intermediate outcomes of interest. Specifically, the outcome of *mentees' improved attitudes* was assessed through two sub-indicators capturing attitudes towards violence and levels of self-confidence. The outcome on *enhanced networks* was analysed through sub-indicators of access to social networks, and diversity of support systems. To capture the Project's focus on *raising awareness of risks of VE and strategies for countering VE*, three sub-indicators were constructed - mentees' awareness of risks of joining VE groups, understanding of the actions taken to address VE; and their ability to identify platforms available for discussing VE issues (See Annex 2 for further details on the definition and construction of the Outcome Measures).

### *Quantitative Approach*

A quantitative approach was adopted following a one-group pre-post model. Outcomes were compared at the beginning of the Project (baseline) and then at the end. To assess the effect of the Project over time, the cohort of the mentees was split into those who participated in the Project for one year (midline) and those who took part in the Project for two years (endline). Thus, for those completing one year of the Project, the outcomes between the baseline and at the midline were compared. Similarly, for the mentees who participated in the Project for two years, the outcomes at the baseline and the endline were compared.

For capturing changes in the outcome measures, the quantitative survey was implemented in three rounds - 2017 (baseline), 2018 (midline) and 2019 (end-line). Data collection was led by local enumerators who had previous CVE experience. The surveys were conducted via a mobile-based platform called SurveyCTO. To facilitate the real-time monitoring and cleaning of data; all data that was collected was immediately sent to a cloud-based server from where it was accessed and monitored. Data protection was guaranteed by SurveyCTO's robust systems for data storage and encryption. In addition, all personally identifiable physical information was stored in lockable safes.

In analysing the changes observed between the baseline, midline (1-year participants) and end-line (2-year participants), a maximum likelihood (ML) estimation<sup>17</sup> model was employed. Since the outcome variables of interest were binary, logit models<sup>18</sup> were used to assess the effects of the mentorship intervention (independent variable) on the outcome measures (dependent variables). In specifying the model, the coefficient of the mentorship intervention variable, considered as a dummy, took a value of "0" for baseline and "1" for the group of mentees at the midline and similarly the value of "0" for those in baseline and "1" for the group of mentees at the end-line.

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<sup>17</sup> The ML estimate is the value of the parameter that makes the data that was actually observed as likely as it could be (Gailmard, 2014)

<sup>18</sup> The logit regression is one of the most popular approaches in regression analysis that is used to explain the relationship of a number of independent variables to a dichotomous single outcome variable.

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The estimated parameters of the logit model provided the direction and the statistical significance associated with the effect of the independent variables on the binary outcome variable. The estimated parameters, however, did not provide the probability of mentee's reporting an outcome of interest with changes in the explanatory variables. To interpret the results, average marginal effects were computed for each regression equation, based on the logit model, to estimate the predicted probabilities. Average marginal effects, (presented in the study findings section), represented the effect of a unit change in the explanatory variable on the probability of observing the outcome of interest<sup>19</sup>.

#### *Description of the Control Variables*

The choice of control variables used in this study was guided by the insights from the literature and the Programme's overall Theory of Change. In all the regression models, mentees' gender, age, education, employment status, location, participation in an external CVE training, and mentors' gender and participation in other CVE trainings, were controlled for. The reasons for including the control variables, were as follows:

**Gender** variable in this study was constructed as a dummy that took the value of "1" for female mentees and "0" for male mentees (reference category). The inclusion of gender as a control variable drew on recent research in the field of VE, which has found that pathways to recruitment tend to be gendered and the sources of resilience were also different for women versus men (Petrich and Donnelly, 2019; d'Estaing, 2017; Sjoberg, 2017, Winterbotham and Pearson, 2016; Badurdeen, 2018, Sahgal and Zeuthen, 2018).

**Age** of the at-risk youth was included in the study since age has been found to be an important predictor of vulnerability to recruitment. Within the African context, especially, a study by UNDP (2017) found that rates of recruitment, were higher among those who were younger and below the age of 35 years. A dummy variable was used to measure age, which took the value of "1" for the mentees with ages ranging from 25-35 years and "0" for those between 14-24 years (reference category).

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<sup>19</sup> See Annex 3 for the construction of the logit model.

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**Employment** was included bearing in mind the arguments made by rational choice theorists (Schbley, 2003; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Hidalgo et al., 2010), about the role of employment in increasing the opportunity cost of participation and involvement in VE. The significance of such factors has also been highlighted in the Kenyan context where recruitment to groups such as Al Shabaab was found to be higher among those who were unemployed and lacked job prospects (Botha, 2014). In this study, employment was measured as a categorical variable, which took the value of “1” for unemployed (reference category) “2” employed (part or full time), and “3” for self-employed.

**Education levels.** This study also controlled for the mentees’ level of education to account for the possible effect of educational attainment on resilience. Evidence from CVE literature has suggested that education could be a key factor in building resilience to VE as it could reduce susceptibility to extremist messaging (UNESCO, 2017). The measure for the mentees’ level of education was categorised into three categories and took the value of “1” little education (reference category), “2” for primary, “3” secondary and “4” for post-secondary education.

**Area.** The Project was implemented in six areas – Eastleigh, Majengo Nairobi, Kisauni, Likoni, Majengo (Mombasa) and Kwale in the counties of Nairobi, Mombasa and Kwale. Dummy variables were included for each area (except the reference group – Eastleigh) to control for differences across the areas that could influence the outcomes of interest. Moreover, following the insight lent by Wimelius et al. (2018) regarding the absence of “universal protective factors”, it was important to account for the variety of strengths and resources at the community level that could contribute to individual resilience.

**CVE training.** The measure of this variable was based on a question posed to respondents on whether they had ever received any external CVE training (i.e. apart from the one offered by the Project). Given the plethora of CVE projects and activities in the target communities (Khalil and Zeuthen, 2014; Finn et al. 2016), the inclusion of this variable was meant to control for any variation in the outcome measures which could be attributed to participation in other CVE activities not linked to the intervention. CVE training or activities

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was constructed as a dummy variable and took the value of “1” if the respondent had ever received CVE training other than the one offered by the Project, and “0” otherwise. This set up implied that those who had not received CVE training were classified as the reference category.

**Mentors CVE training.** Due to the proliferation of CVE interventions in the Project’s target areas and the recruitment of youth (such as mentors) who could serve as role models and act as agents of change, the study also controlled for the possible influence of the CVE knowledge gained by mentors from other programmes implemented in the project areas. To measure a mentor’s participation in an external CVE training, a dummy variable was constructed that took the value of “1” if the mentor had ever received an external CVE training, and “0” otherwise (reference category)

**Mentor’s Gender:** The areas where the Project was implemented, tended to be conservative and women’s involvement in activities, especially outside the household was not encouraged (Badurdeen, 2018). At the design stage, therefore, efforts were made to recruit female mentors to ensure that female mentees felt comfortable sharing information about their lives and circumstances. To account for any changes in the outcome measures that were influenced by the level of comfort the mentees felt with their mentor (on account of their gender), the study controlled for the mentor’s gender. The effect of the mentors’ gender was captured through a dummy variable that took the value of “1” for female mentors and “0” otherwise (reference category).<sup>20</sup>

The inclusion of these set of control variables made it possible to account for changes in the outcome variables which could be explained by changes observed in these variables between the baseline-midline and baseline-end-line. Thus, while not controlling for all

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<sup>20</sup> The design of the programme made it difficult to include dummy to control for the differences in the mentorship styles of the mentors. This was due to two primary reasons: (a) each mentor was assigned at most five mentees during the first year of intervention. However, due to the fewer number of mentees (93) in the second year of intervention, mentors were assigned 2-4 mentees. Statistically, including a dummy variable for the mentors in the sample of 93 mentees presented collinearity problems that led to a loss of observations and (b) the bi-weekly meetings between the mentors and the mentees in a particular area, made it difficult to assume that changes in a mentee's outcome could be ascribed to their relationship with a specific mentor.

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exogenous factors (all factors unrelated to the Project), the inclusion of control variables allowed for a more rigorous interpretation of the changes observed.

### *Model Specification and Goodness of Fit Tests*

All the estimated logit regression models were tested for significance, accuracy and quality of predictions. As a first step, the paper utilised the *Classification Table* method to measure the extent to which each model accurately predicted the outcome variable. *Classification Tables* were calculated by comparing the predicted scores of observations, with their actual responses (actual data) (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 2004). Majority of the models included in the study (eight out of 12) were found to have percentage correctness above the 70% threshold, indicating a better fit. For the other four models, the overall correction prediction was also found to be quite high - above 60%<sup>21</sup>.

As a second step, the paper used the *Hosmer-Lemeshow* test to test for the goodness of fit of each regression equation. The Hosmer-Lemeshow test was computed by dividing the sample into sub-groups, 10 sub-groups, to calculate if the observed event rates matched the expected event rates in the population subgroups (Ibid)<sup>22</sup>. The Hosmer-Lemeshow test results of 11 out of 12 regression models were associated with larger *p* values above 10% percent threshold, indicating that the regression models fitted the data quite well.

In addition to the above, the paper utilised the *Likelihood Ratio* test to assess the fit of the regression models (Long and Freese, 2006). The test used the global null hypothesis approach in examining the overall significance of all the explanatory variables used in the regression model and assessed whether the model with explanatory variables fitted significantly better than the one with just an intercept (intercept only or restricted model). In this test, the null hypothesis was constructed by assuming that no regression coefficient was significantly different from zero. The LR  $\chi^2$  of most of the regressed models where the

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<sup>21</sup> While a higher threshold is considered to be more desirable, Hosmer, Lemeshow and Sturdivant (2013,.) warn against an overreliance on such tests - "classification tables are most appropriate when classification is a stated goal of the analysis; otherwise it should only supplement more rigorous methods of assessment of fit" (p. 173).

<sup>22</sup> This test is usually computed as the Pearson  $\chi^2$  from the contingency table of the observed frequencies and expected frequencies.



mentorship variable was found to be significant, was also found to be highly significant (at the 1% level of significance), indicating the robustness of the models employed.

### *Qualitative Approach*

In addition to the quantitative interviews, FGDs were also conducted to triangulate the quantitative findings and to provide mentees with a platform to articulate and reflect on whether and the extent to which (if at all), the Project had impacted their lives and circumstances. Separate FGDs were implemented across the six project locations with both midline and end-line participants, in the summer of 2019. Six FGDs were conducted with a total of 72 participants.

The FGDs were facilitated by experienced local qualitative researchers who also received additional training on the design of the questionnaire, the purpose of the Project, principles of do-no-harm and the specific vulnerabilities of at-risk youth (mentees). FGD participants were selected purposively but based on specified criteria to ensure representation in terms of gender, levels of engagement (active versus less active), and the number of years of involvement (two years versus one year).

Transcripts for all FGDs were prepared and transcribed in English. The transcripts were then thematically organised and analysed by the researchers. Key themes were developed following a deductive approach and as such, were guided by the research questions and the outcomes of interest.

### *Ethical Considerations*

All at-risk youth were informed of the purpose of the quantitative and qualitative interviews and were assured that responses would be kept confidential and their anonymity would be preserved. Furthermore, recorded consent (recorded in the survey tool) was taken at the beginning of the quantitative survey interviews and verbal consent was established for all FGD participants prior to the discussions. Respondents were also informed of their right to withdraw their participation at any stage of the interview process.

Additionally, to create a supportive and trusting atmosphere, a concerted effort was made to employ data collectors from the same community as the mentees. Further, mentors served as the first line of communication and data collectors only accessed the mentees in the presence of their mentors. The interviews were also conducted in the language preferred by the mentees, including the dialects spoken in specific project areas.

Participants were also compensated for their time and travel, but the amount was kept to a minimum to not influence their response. Moreover, since all beneficiaries (mentees) were included in the quantitative survey, there was no differentiation made in who received compensation. In the case of the FGD's, however, as only a few respondents were selected, the compensation was kept small to cover the cost of travel.

#### *Methodological Limitations*

The empirical results of the study, however, need to be interpreted, bearing in mind some qualifications. The study has adopted a longitudinal one-group pre-post design, owing to funding and budgetary restrictions. Therefore, in place of a strict quasi-experimental approach involving the selection of a different control group, the same groups of respondents were interviewed at the baseline and then again at different points (with the provision that midline and endline cohorts were different). One major concern with this approach was that any changes observed could not be attributed to the Project alone and that other changes in the mentee's circumstances could also contribute to observed changes. Further, it also rested on the assumption that there were no time-based trends, i.e. the changes observed were not attributable to the growth and development of the mentees over time.

To address the first set of limitations, within the logit estimation model, efforts were made to control for key socio-demographic characteristics in the model as previously specified. Additionally, the mentee's previous exposure to similar programmes and engagements were also controlled for. However, even though these critical socio-demographic variables were included in all of the estimation models, extraneous variables were not included due to the difficulties in obtaining reliable area-specific disaggregated data.

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Of particular concern were variables relating to the political violence (e.g., protests, internal armed conflicts, rule of law, corruption, etc.) and other shocks (e.g., terror attacks, anti-terror police crackdowns, etc.), which could have influenced the outcome variables<sup>23</sup>.

Concerning the time-specific trends assumption, this was partially addressed by tracking the changes in the outcome indicators for two different cohorts – midline and end-line. Evaluating the performance of the two cohorts, made it possible to compare and gauge the changes across time. While not completely ruling out the possibility of time trends, this approach at least made it feasible to assess if the changes observed were consistent and if they improved over time (albeit for different cohorts of mentees). Further, the FGDs provided a deeper insight into the mechanisms and processes of change, i.e. the aspects of the intervention, which may have contributed to the observed changes, as assessed by the mentees.

Nevertheless, while one-group pre-post designs are far from ideal, experimental and quasi-experimental designs - considered to be more rigorous, have also been difficult to implement in the case of CVE related interventions (Feddes & Gallucci, 2015). In particular, finding a comparable control group has posed a challenge given the individual specific pathways to VE, which make it hard to ensure comparability on observable and non-observable characteristics (Koehler, 2017). The moral and ethical problems of ‘consciously risking a control group of clients to radicalise into terrorism and violent extremism’, have also been recognised (Ibid, p. 92). Pre-post designs, therefore, present an alternative for gaining

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<sup>23</sup> The paper tested the effect of the political climate on outcome measures by employing the internal armed conflicts and political instability data from [Uppsala Conflict Data Program \(UCDP\)](#) to control for the political climate. The database provides a country’s annualised intensity-scaled measure of internal armed conflicts that takes the value of “1” if the internal conflict's related death range between 25–999 and “2” if it at least 1000. For Kenya, the annualised intensity level of the internal armed conflict was consistently “1” for all three years of the programme. Because of lack of area-disaggregated data and collinearity problems from the non-variations in this indicator, this variable was ultimately not included to capture the effect of the political climate. The paper also tested for the political climate using the [Armed Conflict Location and Event Data](#) survey, which is one of the most up-date databases for tracking political violence. However, the model fit did not increase with the inclusion of the total number of political violence and protests recorded in the Project target areas. This was in part attributed to the aggregation problems associated with obtaining a single annualised Project area-specific political climate event data. Because of these challenges, area-based dummies were found to be a better fit for controlling for variations across areas including, differences in political climate and shocks.

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more empirically founded insights and have been advocated as critical approaches for evaluating CVE interventions in instances where more robust designs were not thought possible (Romaniuk and Fink, 2012)<sup>24</sup>.

### Socio-Demographic Background of Mentees

The Project included 254 mentees at the midline and 93 mentees at the end-line. Within the two groups, the proportion of men was higher than women, in keeping with the general profile of VE actors (UNDP 2017). Most of the mentees were within younger age brackets - the proportion between the ages of 14-24 years was 75% and 61% at the midline and end-line, respectively<sup>25</sup>. In line with the Project's design, there were county-wide differences and most mentees were from Mombasa (51% at the midline and 56% at the end-line), followed by Nairobi (35% at the midline and 27% at the end-line) and then Kwale (15% at the midline and 17% at the end-line). Similar to the lower educational of VE recruits in the African context (UNDP 2017), the majority of the mentees had not completed post-secondary education at the baseline. However, there were significant reductions in the proportion of midline (4% point) and end-line (6% point) participants, which suggests that there were improvements in the mentee's levels of educations. Significant pre-post changes were observed in the employment status at the midline and end-line, especially the share of self-employed mentees increased by 6% point (for the midline group) and 13% point (for the endline group), respectively. Combined with the figures on the reduction in the percentage of mentees who were unemployed across both time-periods, such changes indicated positive shifts in employment levels. The number of mentees who were beneficiaries of external CVE trainings significantly increased for the endline group by an approximately 25% point. This significant increase was due to the proliferation of CVE interventions targeting the at-risk youth in the Project's target areas.

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<sup>24</sup> They stress the importance of baseline data to conduct a before-and-after comparison along with stakeholder engagements.

<sup>25</sup> The difference between the baseline-end-line is that Mentees aged over the course of the programme.

*Table III. Demographic Characteristics of Mentees*

	1 Year Intervention Cycle (254 Mentees)		2 Year Intervention Cycle (93 Mentees)	
	Baseline %	Midline %	Baseline %	Endline %
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	73.62	73.62	72.04	72.04
Female	26.38	26.38	27.96	27.96
<b>Age</b>				
14-24 years	77.56	74.80	77.42	61.29
25-35 years	22.44	25.20	22.58	38.71
<b>County</b>				
Nairobi	34.65	34.65	26.88	26.88
Mombasa	50.79	50.79	55.91	55.91
Kwale	14.57	14.57	17.20	17.20
<b>Highest level of education</b>				
Little or no education	5.6	1.6**	9.67	3.23*
Primary	41.73	38.98	44.09	35.48
Secondary	42.52	44.88	36.56	47.31
Post-secondary	10.24	14.57	9.68	13.98
<b>Employment status</b>				
Employed part-time & full-time	48.82	42.52	44.09	35.48
Self-employed	16.14	22.05*	18.28	31.18**
Unemployed	35.04	35.43	37.63	33.33
<b>Receipt of other CVE training</b>				
Not a recipient	55.91	56.69	55.91	31.18
Recipient	44.09	43.31	44.09	68.82***

Notes: \*, \*\* and \*\*\* denotes statistically significant differences in the means at 10%, 5% and 1% levels of significance respectively.

## Findings

The results of the effects of the Mentorship project in strengthening the resilience of at-risk youth to VE in Kenya were analysed as per the specific outcomes of interest. In the following section, the key findings from the regression analysis are first presented and then a detailed discussion on the implications of these insights is explained and interrogated in the context of the broader literature in the succeeding section.

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*Mentee's attitudes to violence and self-confidence*

The inferential statistics demonstrated limited improvements in indicators of *self-confidence* and *violence*<sup>26</sup>. For the indicator on *self-confidence*, insignificant effects were noted when controlling for socio-demographic variables. However, significant effects were found among employed mentees. At the midline, employed (part or full time) and self-employed mentees were 9% and 14% more likely to report changes in their *self-confidence* levels compared to those who were unemployed (reference group). Among the mentees who participated in the Project for two years (endline), study findings indicated that self-employed mentees were 20% more likely to report changes in their *self-confidence* levels compared to those who were unemployed.

On the outcome variable – *attitude towards violence*, contrary to the hypothesised relationship between the Mentorship project and mentees attitude towards violence, the regression results demonstrated that the likelihood of mentees stating that violence was not acceptable under any circumstances reduced by 8% for midline participants and by 9% for end-line participants. The results, however, indicated education and employment-based differences. Employed mentees, both self (22%) and part and full time (17%), were more likely to agree with the statement that “violence is not justified on any grounds” at the midline but not at the endline. For the end-line respondents, the level of education status was more significant. Mentees with lower levels of education - primary and secondary education, were more likely to agree that “violence is justified for other reasons such as self-defence, defence of others and political reasons”. (See Table IV).

*Mentee's support systems and diversity of networks*

The intervention did not significantly expand mentees' support systems and enhance the diversity of their networks, when controlling for socio-demographic differences and related variables. Significant changes were, however, noted in the employment status of mentees – employed mentees at the midline were 14% more likely to report having support

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<sup>26</sup> Descriptive statistics of the outcome variables were also computed and are included in Annex 1.

systems and diversity of networks as compared to those who were unemployed. Similarly, positive and significant effects were also observed among employed mentees at the end-line, but the effect was larger (18%) compared to 14% for the midline group. However, Mentees of Mentors who had previously attended CVE trainings were less likely to report having supportive and diverse networks at the midline.

*Table IV Effect of Mentorship on Mentees' Attitudes (Outcome 1) and Support Systems and Networks (Outcome 2)*

Outcome	Attitudes				Networks	
	Attitudes towards violence; Violence is not justified		Improvement in Self-confidence; Agreement with three indicators		Support systems and diversity of networks; Agreement with two indicators	
	Midline	Endline	Midline	Endline	Midline	Endline
	Average marginal effects		Average marginal effects		Average marginal effects	
Mentorship cycle	-0.0785*	-0.0931**	-0.0220	-0.0113	-0.0201	-0.0558*
	(0.0469)	(0.0415)	(0.0365)	(0.0364)	(0.0345)	(0.0333)
Gender	0.0659	-0.00164	0.0239	0.0634	0.0399	-0.0934
	(0.0587)	(0.0967)	(0.0452)	(0.0837)	(0.0420)	(0.0677)
Age (25-35)	-0.0915	-0.0177	0.0325	0.0506	0.0371	0.0207
	(0.0589)	(0.0939)	(0.0436)	(0.0868)	(0.0445)	(0.0767)
Primary	-0.116	-0.510*	0.0530	-0.0974	0.0389	0.0627
	(0.138)	(0.261)	(0.104)	(0.144)	(0.0956)	(0.124)
Secondary	-0.128	-0.499*	0.0487	0.0771	0.127	0.110
	(0.139)	(0.263)	(0.105)	(0.145)	(0.0971)	(0.129)
Post – Secondary	-0.0421	-0.423	0.0583	-0.175	0.0442	0.111
	(0.151)	(0.286)	(0.115)	(0.179)	(0.104)	(0.149)
Part and full employed	0.173***	-0.0539	0.0893*	0.0382	0.134***	0.179**
	(0.0570)	(0.0971)	(0.0459)	(0.0878)	(0.0414)	(0.0766)
Self employed	0.218***	-0.0724	0.135**	0.199**	-0.0398	0.0169
	(0.0709)	(0.108)	(0.0532)	(0.0989)	(0.0473)	(0.0831)
CVE training	0.154***	0.112	0.0549	-0.0688	-0.00553	0.0636
	(0.0473)	(0.0836)	(0.0364)	(0.0724)	(0.0349)	(0.0669)
Mentor gender	-0.0433	-0.122	-0.00772	-0.154**	0.0176	-0.0680
	(0.0499)	(0.0838)	(0.0388)	(0.0766)	(0.0368)	(0.0650)
Mentor CVE training	-0.0334	-0.172*	-0.0274	0.00889	-0.0998**	-0.116

Outcome	Attitudes				Networks	
	Attitudes towards violence; Violence is not justified		Improvement in Self-confidence; Agreement with three indicators		Support systems and diversity of networks; Agreement with two indicators	
	Midline	Endline	Midline	Endline	Midline	Endline
	(0.0625)	(0.104)	(0.0480)	(0.0893)	(0.0491)	(0.0831)
Observations	508	186	508	186	508	186
Model correctness	60.43%	66.67%	78.35%	74.73%	79.13%	76.88%
Log likelihood	-329.18	-114.37	-257.98	-101.69	-239.00	-92.32
Likelihood ratio $\chi^2$	45.24	24.25	14.89	24.20	34.26	23.44
Prob > $\chi^2$	0.0001	0.0841	0.5330	0.0851	0.0050	0.1024
Hosmer-Lemeshow $\chi^2$	9.02	5.31	2.76	7.79	5.15	4.35
Prob > $\chi^2$	0.3406	0.7236	0.9488	0.4542	0.7413	0.8244

Notes: (i) Violence is justified, agreement with at most two indicators and agreement with at most one indicator is the comparison group for the attitude towards violence, self-confidence and support systems and diversity of networks indicators respectively (ii) \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* denote significance levels at 1%, 5% and 10% respectively (iii) All estimates have been controlled for the area-wide differences (iv) Standard errors in parenthesis (v) Reference categories for age, education and employment variables are age group (14-24), little or no education, and unemployed, respectively (vi) Model correctness is based on the classification table

### Awareness of risks and strategies for Countering VE

Significant and positive improvements were noted in the mentees' awareness of the risks of VE. In particular, the likelihood of mentees identifying at least four risks of joining VE groups increased by 14% among the midline participants and 16% for the endline participants. The results further demonstrated that mentees' education and employment levels were significantly associated with their ability to identify the risks of joining VE groups. Mentees who were more educated were more likely to identify risks of joining VE groups at the midline. At the end-line, the employment status appeared to matter more as mentees who were self-employed were 17% more likely to identify the risks as shown in Table V. In addition, mentees of female mentors were 13% more likely to identify the risks of joining VE groups at the endline. Interestingly, mentees at the midline and those at the endline, who had received other CVE training were less likely to correctly identify the risks of joining VE groups.

Similarly, significant improvements were noted across the two indicators used to measure mentees' understanding of the strategies and forums available for addressing the



threat of VE – *actions taken to address VE and fora for discussing VE issues*. With regard to the indicator on *actions taken to address VE*, significant changes were observed in the percentage of mentees who identified at least four actions that could be taken to address VE (37% for the midline and 18% among the end-line participants). There were no systematic socio-demographic differences, with the exception that at the endline those who were employed were less likely to identify at least four actions, compared to those who were unemployed.

For the outcome indicator – *fora for discussing VE issues*, positive changes were also noted at the midline compared to the baseline when controlling for socio-demographic factors. Mentees at the midline were 24% and those at end-line 16% more likely to identify at least four fora for discussing VE issues. There were, however, some systematic differences, especially at the midline. Mentees who were self-employed were 11% more likely to report at least four fora for discussing VE issues. At the endline, employment levels were not found to be significant, and in fact, those who were self-employed were less likely to identify at least four fora. Here again, participation in other CVE trainings was found to lower the identification of fora for discussing CVE issues. Mentees who were in the Project for one year (midline) were 32% less likely to correctly identify at least four fora for discussing VE issues if they had attended an external CVE training. Similarly, endline mentee participants were 17% less likely to identify four or more fora for discussing VE issues in their community.

**Table V. Effect of Mentorship on Mentees' Awareness of Risks and Strategies for Countering VE (Outcome 3)**

Outcome	Identification of At least 4 risks of joining VE and radical groups		Identification of at least 4 types of actions that can be taken to address VE		Identification of at least 4 fora for discussing VE issues	
	Midline	Endline	Midline	Endline	Midline	Endline
	Average marginal effects		Average marginal effects		Average marginal effects	
Mentorship cycle	0.141*** (0.0441)	0.156*** (0.0374)	0.369*** (0.0485)	0.179*** (0.0403)	0.236*** (0.0427)	0.154*** (0.0349)
Gender	0.00397 (0.0552)	-0.00922 (0.0795)	-0.0165 (0.0595)	0.000590 (0.0906)	0.0181 (0.0524)	0.00759 (0.0401)
Age (25-35)	0.0877 (0.0536)	-0.0307 (0.0808)	-0.0251 (0.0600)	-0.0445 (0.0903)	0.0301 (0.0517)	0.00215 (0.0407)
Primary	0.125 (0.153)	0.227 (0.203)	0.102 (0.138)	0.326 (0.237)	-0.0587 (0.123)	0.0499 (0.108)
Secondary	0.176 (0.153)	0.260 (0.205)	0.128 (0.139)	0.304 (0.239)	0.0281 (0.123)	0.123 (0.106)
Post – Secondary	0.280* (0.161)	0.311 (0.216)	0.191 (0.152)	0.246 (0.256)	0.139 (0.132)	0.0757 (0.112)
Part and full employed	-0.0263 (0.0533)	-0.106 (0.0879)	0.0104 (0.0577)	-0.170* (0.0933)	0.0735 (0.0513)	-0.0707 (0.0467)
Self employed	0.0856 (0.0645)	0.167* (0.0888)	-0.0190 (0.0724)	-0.155 (0.103)	0.106* (0.0623)	-0.0985* (0.0526)
CVE training	-0.148*** (0.0455)	-0.205*** (0.0762)	-0.0197 (0.0487)	0.0218 (0.0814)	-0.318*** (0.0451)	-0.169*** (0.0567)
Mentor CVE training	0.00804 (0.0593)	-0.0267 (0.0847)	-0.0744 (0.0647)	-0.143 (0.0918)	-0.0513 (0.0564)	-0.0186 (0.0425)
Mentor gender	0.0276 (0.0467)	0.134* (0.0700)	-0.0226 (0.0510)	-0.0770 (0.0805)	-0.0498 (0.0450)	-0.0151 (0.0373)
Observations	508	186	508	186	508	186
Model correctness	66.73%	75.27%	68.31%	70.43%	75.59%	86.02%
Log likelihood	-307.40	-88.21	-307.31	-99.92	-269.05	-57.17
Likelihood ratio $\chi^2$	46.89	47.69	82.51	39.62	96.43	10.03
Prob > $\chi^2$	0.0001	0.0001	0.0000	0.0009	0.0000	0.2632
Hosmer-Lemeshow $\chi^2$	5.26	7.69	6.87	10.88	13.10	76.70
Prob > $\chi^2$	0.7292	0.4639	0.5506	0.2089	0.1083	0.0000

Notes: (i) Identification of at most three risks of joining VE is the reference category for the risks of joining VE indicator (ii) \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* denote significance levels at 1%, 5% and 10% respectively (iii) All estimates have been controlled for the area-wide differences (iv) Standard errors in parenthesis (v) Reference categories for age, education and employment variables are age group (14-24), little or no education, and unemployed respectively (vi) Model correctness is based on the classification table

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## Discussion

Based on the above findings, a mixed picture emerges in the changes observed in the key outcomes of interest. To understand the relevance of the findings and how they fit together, the following section discusses and analyses the quantitative results by drawing on insights from the FGDs.

**Mentees' attitudes.** When controlling for socio-demographic and other related variables, the intervention was not found to have significantly improved the likelihood of protective factors such as mentee's level of *self-confidence*, for either the midline or the end-line participants. Additionally, contrary to expectations for the indicator - *attitudes towards violence*, the likelihood of mentees justifying "violence in defence of self and others" increased for both cohorts. Despite such overall trends, socio-economic factors – namely, employment was found to be positively and significantly related to all three sub-indicators.

Thus, in spite of the emphasis within the literature on the importance of *self-confidence* and *attitudes towards violence* (Ilyas and Malik, 2016; DuBois and Alem, 2017, Grossman et al., 2020), limited effects were noted, suggesting that these represented more complex changes. The paucity of the available literature on 'how' Mentorship projects have more generally contributed to attitudinal shifts (DuBois and Alem, 2017), implies that there exist no defined pathways for instituting such change. Moreover, as Lub (2013) has also asserted that youth-focused interventions have not been as successful in improving self-confidence largely owing to the ambiguity in the processes linking confidence levels to socially desirable behaviour or improved social relations. In addition, insights from similar studies that also tested for the effect of resilience training programmes found that levels of self-esteem increased only marginally over the course of the programme and that the relationship between self-confidence and radicalisation was neither linear nor straightforward<sup>27</sup> (Feddes et al., 2015). Indeed, in the follow-up qualitative interviews, when

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<sup>27</sup> The relationship was more curvilinear, such that while "a moderate level of self-esteem is associated with resilience to violent radicalisation, higher levels of self-esteem (narcissism) can make individuals more susceptible to radicalisation" (p. 407).

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asked to reflect on key aspects of *self-confidence*, mentees confirmed that while the mentorship related interventions had improved their ability to plan for their future and to set more positive goals, their feelings of contentment were lower as they now appeared to have had higher aspirations for their lives –

*The Mentorship project has helped me to decide on my plans. It has also really helped me (to understand how) I can get to and achieve my dreams. But I am not content with my situation right now; I still have hopes, visions and ambitions to get to the level that I want.*<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, the finding that attitudes towards violence did not improve but declined for the midline and end-line respondents, while not encouraging, was consistent with the results of other studies. A study by Mercy Corps (2018) also found that access to secondary education increased the likelihood of at-risk youth supporting the use of violence for a political cause by 11%. Further, qualitative interviews with the mentees alluded to the partial role that exogenous factors may have played in influencing such attitudes, especially in explaining the higher rates of mentees reporting “violence could be justified for the defence of self and others”. During the period between the baseline – end-line, Kenya had undergone a hotly contested General Election. The incidents of political and ethnic violence, which followed, affected many parts of the country, including the project locations<sup>29</sup>. During the follow-up interviews, some mentees justified violence as a strategy for protecting their interests and those of their communities, especially in the context of the elections when many felt their rights and those of their communities were being violated. Given the high incidence of violence in the areas where the mentees resided, a more context-specific engagement with the concept of violence was needed.

Further, while employment seemed to be positively associated with both sets of attitudes, the direction of the relationship was not clear. In particular, consistent with the caution urged by Lyall, Yang-Yang and Kosuke (2017), on the limited relationship between employment and resilience, it was not apparent from the analysis presented whether

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<sup>28</sup> Focus Group Discussion Respondent MM1 in Majengo-Kisauni.

<sup>29</sup> PEV largely affected areas of Rift Valley, Nairobi and Coast. For more details please see: <https://www.csis.org/blogs/smart-global-health/post-election-violence-kenya-and-its-aftermath>

employment engendered improved attitudes or if attitudinal shifts led to improved employment prospects.

**Mentee's support systems and diversity of networks.** The intervention did not significantly improve the likelihood of mentee's reporting support systems and diversity of networks when controlling for socio-demographic differences. The main factor found to be significant was employment at both the midline and endline. But as with the above findings, the direction of causality could not be determined.

Nevertheless, the responses from the qualitative interviews were quite illuminating and helped to explain the reasons for some of the limited results observed. Most FGD respondents reported that they had support systems and people they could talk to in case they had a problem. In particular, mentors were reported as providing critical support for solving personal problems -

*When I face a problem, I can talk to my mentor, who always inspires me. We are good friends. When I have a problem, I can tell her about it and know that she won't judge me. She always wants me to be in a better place.<sup>30</sup>*

However, the same respondents also maintained that their networks of contacts continued to be limited and had not expanded substantially, in the course of their involvement in the Project. Specifically, while they were accommodative of diverse opinions and views, the nature of their friendship circles remained the same and they continued to associate with those who share their views and opinions. This was also the case for those who had previously attended CVE trainings and thus had been exposed to alternative networks. (specifically, midline participants).

Thus, it was the second aspect of diversifying and building networks (Magis, 2010; Doney and Wegerif, 2017), which was more challenging. Such findings, however, resonate with those noted by Grossman (2017) on the difficulties with strengthening such networks or what she terms "bridging relations". Specifically, mere exposure was not found to be sufficient and that 'more intensive experiences of both proximity to and separation from different others'

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<sup>30</sup> Focus Group Discussion Respondent MM6 in Eastleigh-Majengo.

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was needed to strengthen inter-community connections (Bannister & Kearns, 2013: 2701 in Grossman, 2007).

**Mentees' awareness of risks and strategies for countering VE groups.** The findings demonstrated that the Mentorship project was associated with improvements in certain types of VE knowledge. Knowledge of risks of joining terrorist organisations, in particular, improved for the midline and the end-line participants, in keeping with arguments proposed by Williams et al. (2016a). Specifically, FGDs revealed that mentees were able to identify a complex list of factors extending from structural, to individual and enabling.

*Some people want to get back to the police and seek revenge, especially if one of their relatives was killed by the police without reason. For others, the problem stems from unemployment. There is also a lot of poverty in these areas, and people are poor and illiterate; when they find a place where they can get money, they will go without thinking about the consequences. Peer pressure is also an important factor, as some have relatives who are already in Somalia. Others want to go and have an adventure or an experience<sup>31</sup>.*

Education was significantly associated with awareness of the risks of joining VE groups, for the midline respondents. For the respondents at the endline, the employment status appeared to matter more as mentees who were self-employed were more likely to identify the risks. While the direction of causality was unclear based on the available data (i.e. whether higher education or employment led to improved knowledge of it was the other way around), improved educational and employment have been known to 'create the conditions that build defences, against violent extremism' (UNESCO, 2017, p.22; Sas et al. 2020).

Further credence to the role played by the Project in improving mentee's awareness levels, was also indicated by the finding that those who had attended external CVE trainings were less likely to be able to correctly identify the risks of joining VE groups. This implied that participation in external CVE trainings did not improve mentee's awareness levels. In part, these findings reflected a stronger focus within the Project on the risks associated with

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<sup>31</sup> Focus Group Discussion Respondents MM6, 3, 75 in Eastleigh-Majengo

joining such groups, including the likelihood of arrest, sexual abuse, social stigma, discrimination, etc.

Regarding mentees' understanding of CVE issues, the results demonstrated positive changes in the levels of understanding across two of the three main indicators. Specifically, improvements were noted in the likelihood of mentees identifying at least four actions that could be taken to address VE and in the likelihood of mentee's identifying fora for discussing VE issues. FGD responses revealed that Mentees felt particularly passionate about the urgency and the need to respond to the problem and the strategies and steps that governments, donors and communities could take to counter the threat.

*We need to address the extremism first before it becomes violent. We don't have to wait until the extremism leads to violence.*<sup>32</sup>

*CVE programs need to be taken to schools so that students can be taught about it when they are still young and so that when they are old, they already know the dangers of CVE*<sup>33</sup>.

*Guidance and counselling should also be introduced at a young age and should be done frequently - maybe once a month by someone from outside the school or even the teachers*<sup>34</sup>.

*The government should reduce the amount of power they use because excess power doesn't solve anything. They can use different ways to solve issues, for example, through dialogue.*<sup>35</sup>

The higher likelihood among the midline versus the endline respondents, nevertheless, was interesting. It suggested some unevenness in programming and especially in efforts to

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<sup>32</sup> Focus Group Discussion Respondents MM6 Eastleigh-Majengo

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Focus Group Discussion Respondents MM9 Eastleigh-Majengo

<sup>35</sup> Focus Group Discussion Respondents MM4 Kisauni-Majengo

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spread awareness on the strategies for countering violent extremism. Respondent fatigue could explain the difference, however, this explanation seemed to be not as valid, given that endline participants were more likely to identify the risks of VE and therefore did not lose their enthusiasm in answering all types of knowledge and awareness-based questions.

Overall, the results for this indicator were largely consistent across the socio-demographic categories. Similar to the findings noted with regard to the indicator - awareness of risks, those who had participated in CVE trainings led by other organisations were less likely to identify strategies and forums for discussing VE issues. Thus, the lower likelihood among participants who had attended external trainings further attested to the Project's positive and significant role in increasing levels of CVE understanding<sup>36</sup>. However, the decrease in likelihood reported by those who were employed (for both indicators), was not particularly insightful, except to suggest that employment was not significantly correlated with the level of understanding of CVE strategies.

## Conclusion

Together, the study found a somewhat varied picture in the extent to which the Project was able to meet the intended outcomes. There was more variability in the effect that the Project engendered in mentees' attitudes, support systems and networks, compared to the change in their knowledge of VE and understanding of CVE. Variability was also found across the indicators (those found to be significant) among the mentees who had been part of the intervention for two years compared to those who had been part of the Project for one year.

The findings, however, seem to be in line with the results of previous studies which have similarly underlined the difficulties with instituting attitudinal change as opposed to improving better knowledge and understanding. Further, while deeper and more extended engagements were likely to be associated with more positive effects in knowledge levels, the

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<sup>36</sup> However, as stated above the results reported control for select factors and therefore there may have been other confounding factors that could be influencing the relationship (See Limitations section).



findings underscored the critical importance of sustaining efforts throughout the implementation cycle.

The analysis presented in this paper has provided a starting point to begin such conversations. Going forward then, efforts should be directed at strengthening the connection between the different aspects of self-confidence, i.e. encouraging mentees to be more assertive and goal-oriented and also connecting them to resources and opportunities that can assist them in achieving their goals (Lub, 2013). Specifically, given the significance of economic factors, the Project should consider combining a livelihood approach with the current counselling model and assessing the added effect of both sets of interventions.

Additionally, the Project ought to assist and help mentees explore supportive and diverse networks. This should continue to be of focus given the strength of the evidence that finds social capital and diversity of networks to be key protective factors (Norris et al., 2008; Mignone & O'Neil 2005; Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack, 2016). Furthermore, since the Mentorship project will eventually conclude, from a sustainability perspective as well, it is recommended that the Project consider facilitating connections and relationships with other stakeholders and actors in the community.

Regarding attitudes towards violence, efforts should be made to embed discussions on violence within the larger socio-political contexts. As Grossman (2017) and Bandura (1999) point out, the attitudes towards violence tend to be 'products of the reciprocal interplay of personal and social influences' (Bandura, 1999: 207). Thus, any discussion on violence should begin at the 'intersection of how individuals interact with and are influenced by both group-level and broader societal dynamics, value moments and trends' (Grossman, 2017, p. 19)

Lastly, the variations in improvement for the midline versus the endline participants, suggest that while programmatically long-term designs may be more appropriate for mentorship-oriented interventions, efforts should be made to sustain the level of implementation during the entire project cycle.

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## Annex 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Outcome Variables

### *Descriptive Statistics I: Attitudes and Networks*

Outcome variable	1 Year Intervention Cycle (254 Mentees)			2 Year Intervention Cycle (93 Mentees)		
	Baseline (%)	Midline (%)	Change (%)	Baseline (%)	Endline (%)	Change (%)
<i>Attitude towards violence</i>						
Violence is acceptable for defense	48.03	55.51	7.48	33.33	50.54	17.21

& other reasons						
Violence is not acceptable	51.97	44.49	-7.48	66.67	49.46	-17.21
<i>Improvement in self-confidence</i>						
Agreement with at most 2 indicators	77.56	79.13	1.57	69.89	69.89	0
Agreement with three indicators	22.44	20.87	-1.57	30.11	30.11	0
<i>Support systems and diversity of networks</i>						
Agreement with at most 1 Indicator	18.90	21.65	2.75	20.43	29.03	8.6
Agreement with 2 Indicators	81.10	78.35	-2.75	79.57	70.97	-8.6

### *Descriptive Statistics II: Mentees' Awareness of Risks and Strategies for Countering VE*

Outcome variable	1 Year Intervention Cycle (254 Mentees)			2 Year Intervention Cycle (93 Mentees)		
	Baseline (%)	Midline (%)	Change (%)	Baseline (%)	Endline (%)	Change (%)
<i>Risks of joining VE groups</i>						
At most 3 risks	72.05	56.69	-15.36	84.95	56.99	-27.96
At least 4 risks	27.95	43.31	15.36	15.05	43.01	27.96
<i>Action taken to address VE</i>						
At most 3 actions	61.42	26.77	-34.65	81.72	49.46	-32.26
At least 4 actions	38.58	73.23	34.65	18.28	50.54	32.26
<i>Fora for discussing VE issues</i>						
At most 3 fora identified	79.53	57.09	-22.44	96.77	61.29	-35.48
At least 4 fora identified	20.47	42.91	22.44	3.23	38.71	35.48

## **Annex 2: Definition and Construction of Outcome Measures**

### *Intermediate Outcome 1: Mentees attitudes*

*Attitude towards violence:* Participants were asked the question; "Person A tells Person B – "In some circumstances, violence is justified" How should Person B respond - in which circumstances should they say violence is justified?" Responses were provided with options that included violence being justified for a political objective, religion, revenge from police,

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personal gain, material gain, for self-defense and defense for other people and lastly violence being not acceptable under any circumstances. This outcome indicator was thereafter constructed as an indicator that took value of “1” for the response violence is not acceptable under any circumstances and “0” for other options where violence is permissible, be it for self defense, the defense of others or material gain.

*Self-confidence:* This indicator was developed to determine whether participants agreed with statements regarding their contentedness in life, the ability to achieve goals and solving problems<sup>37</sup>. The respondents were asked whether they agreed with the statement “I am currently content with my life”, “I am able to make plans to achieve my goals” and “I can solve my problems”. The responses were coded on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree), 2 (agree), 3 (Disagree) and 4 (strongly disagree). The self-confidence indicator was constructed as a binary variable that took a value “0” if the respondent chose either strongly agree or agree in at most two of the three questions and value “1” if the respondent chose strongly agree and agree in all of the three questions. The construction of self-confidence indicators in this manner measures the respondents' attitudes as well as their outlook about life.

### ***Intermediate Outcome 2: Mentees Networks***

*Support systems and diversity of networks:* We measured the participant’s support system and diversity of network by directly asking them whether they agreed with the statement, “I have friends and people I can talk to if I have a problem” and “Most of my friends have somewhat different views to me”. The overall support systems and diversity of networks indicator was constructed as a binary variable that took the value of “0” if the respondent chose either strongly agree or agree in at most one of the two questions and value “1” if the respondent chose strongly agree and agree in all of the two questions.

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<sup>37</sup> Derived from Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale 1965.

***Intermediate Outcome 3: Mentees' awareness of risks and strategies for Countering VE***

*Risks of joining terrorist organisations:* The respondents were asked, "In your opinion is there any effect of joining such groups for the individual?" Responses were coded from the risk of being arrested, targeted, disappear before he/she joins the VE group, being killed, sexually abused, suffer trauma or loss of purpose in his/her life. The outcome variable was categorized into a binary variable that took the value of "0" if the respondent identified at most three risks associated with joining VE and value of "1" if at least four risks were identified by the respondents.

*Actions taken to address VE:* This outcome variable measures the percentage of respondents who were able to identify four or more steps that could be taken to addressing VE. Respondents were asked, "Is there anything that should be done to address the threat of VE?" The outcome variable was categorized into binary variable that took the value of "0" if the respondent identified at most three actions and "1" if the respondent identified at least four actions that could be taken to address VE issues.

*Fora for discussing VE issues:* This indicator was developed to measure the number of fora identified by the at-risk youth to discuss issues to do with radicalisation. Respondents were asked, "What are the types of places and groups that the youth can go to for help related to violent extremism?" Responses ranged from family members, friends, teachers, religious leaders, role models in and outside the community, and other peers who are not necessarily friends, NGOs, security forces, government agencies, and political parties. The outcome variable was categorized into binary variable that took the value of "0" if the respondent identified at most three fora and value "1" if the respondent identified at least four fora for discussing VE issues.

**Annex 3: Logit Estimated Models**

Logit regression techniques are used for models with binary outcomes. For example, the outcome variable – attitudes towards violence – takes the value of “1” for the response “violence is not acceptable under any circumstances” and “0” for other options where violence is permissible, be it for self defense, the defense of others or material gain.

We can write the probability of the outcome variable  $i$  that takes the value of “1” as:

$$P(\text{outcome}_i = 1) = \frac{e^{G(x)}}{1 + e^{G(x)}} \quad (1)$$

Where  $P$  stands for the probability of the response taking the value of “1”,  $e$  is the exponent,  $G(x)$  stands for the function of the independent variables written as:

$$\begin{aligned} G(x) \\ = \\ \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_i + \beta_2 G_i + \beta_3 A_i + \beta_4 E_i + \beta_5 \text{Emp}_i + \beta_6 \text{CVE}_i + \beta_7 \text{Ment}G_i + \beta_8 \text{MENTCVE}_i + \\ \beta_9 \text{Ar}_i \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

Where  $\beta_0$  stands for the intercept,  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6, \beta_7, \beta_8$  and  $\beta_9$  are the parameters to be estimated,  $T_i$  is the mentorship intervention dummy variable, the treatment that equals “0” for baseline and “1” for mentees at the midline. Similarly, for the mentees at the endline,  $T_i$  equals “0” for baseline and “1” for endline values.  $G_i$  mentees’ gender,  $A_i$  mentees’ age,  $E_i$  mentees’ education level,  $\text{Emp}_i$  mentees’ employment status,  $\text{CVE}_i$  is Mentees participation in other CVE training,  $\text{Ment}G_i$  mentors’ gender,  $\text{MENTCVE}_i$  mentors involvement in other CVE and  $\text{Ar}_i$  is the area of Mentee  $i$ .

Since equation 1 gives the probability of the outcome variable taking the value of 1, the probability of not taking the value of 1 can be given as:

$$1-P(\text{outcome}_i=1) = \frac{1}{1+e^{g(x)}} \quad (3)$$

By combining (1) and 3 (3), we can obtain:

$$\frac{P(\text{outcome}_i=1)}{1-P(\text{outcome}_i=1)} = \frac{1+e^{G(x)}}{1+e^{-G(x)}} = e^{G(x)} \quad (4)$$

Since the right-hand side is non-linear in independent variables, we can take the logarithm of equation (4) to obtain.

$$\text{Log} \left( \frac{P(\text{outcome}_i=1)}{1-P(\text{outcome}_i=1)} \right) = G(x) \quad (5)$$

The model for estimation using logit can be written as:

$$\begin{aligned} &P(\text{outcome}_i=1) \\ &= \\ &G(x) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_i + \beta_2 G_i + \beta_3 A_i + \beta_4 E_i + \beta_5 \text{Emp}_i + \beta_6 \text{CVE}_i + \beta_7 \text{Ment}G_i + \\ &\beta_8 \text{MENTCVE}_i + \beta_9 A_i \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

Where  $\varepsilon_i$  is the logistically distributed error term.

The partial derivative of equation 6 with respect to the explanatory variables will yield the marginal effects. The average marginal effects, which is interpreted in this study, shows the effect of a unit change in the explanatory variable on the probability of observing the outcome of interest.

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