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SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH**

**EXPLORING DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN
PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN GHANA: CASE STUDY OF THE WEST
AFRICA CENTRE FOR COUNTER EXTREMISM (WACCE)**

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my original research, and that no part of it has been presented for another (degree or diploma) in this institute or elsewhere. I am responsible for any shortcomings.

.....

.....

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Date

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SUPERVISOR’S CERTIFICATE

I hereby declare that the preparation of this dissertation was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines of supervision of dissertation laid down by Ghana Institute of Journalism.

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.....

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(Supervisor)

Date

DEDICATION

To the memory of my parents MR. & MRS AYANLEKE who did not live to witness this day.

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Primarily, my sincerest gratitude to GOD for HIS grace and mercy throughout this journey.

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ACRONYMS

CSOs.....	Civil Society Organizations
FBOs.....	Faith-Based Organizations
ISIS.....	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
NGOs.....	Non-Governmental Organizations
PCVE.....	Prevention and Countering Violence Extremism
VE.....	Violent Extremism
WACCE.....	West Africa Centre for Counter Extremism

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ABSTRACT

Violent extremism (VE) fully gained attention of the UN in 2015 even though that was not the beginning of the canker in the world at least was the first time the issue was brought up for discussion to finding a collective solution to the challenge. It is a common knowledge that issues of VE has been with the world since time in memorial but it is interesting to note that VE takes different shapes in different parts of the world depending on the drivers. Violent extremism is an issue of concern to almost every country in the world today and those in Africa are not exception. There are several push and pull factors that promote VE, hence there is no simple solution to preventing VE. Unfortunately, developing countries like Ghana are those that are most negatively affected on socio, economic and cultural grounds. Ghana is yet to witness a full-fledged VE activities recorded in the country but they were pockets of violence that fit into the typology of VE in Ghana. The consequences and destructive nature of VE among other things is a major challenge to peace in most developing countries in the world today. VE has an unfortunate reputation and potential to impede the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in low-income countries. In the face of the threat posed by VE, as a matter of great concern the United Nations came up with a “Master Plan” in 2016 to prevent the canker with a consented global effort and to attract the world’s attention to the phenomenon. The UN General Secretary’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism provided impetus for Member States to draft and domesticate Regional and National Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) to meet regional and national realities. The Plan of Action requires whole-society approach centred on human security and the community should be at the core of preventing VE. Communication has long been identified as one of the effective tools in PVE. Interesting, four out of the seven key area actions recommended for PVE namely Dialogue, Community Engagement, Empowerment, the Internet and Social Media are all core Development Communication Strategies that envisage a two-way communication approach that is pragmatic, value-laden and human-centric. The objective of this research is to explore the four key area actions recommended by the UN (or Development Communication Strategies) and how effectively Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) Practitioners are deploying these measures in preventing and countering VE. This research also aims at investigating results of the measures as suggested by the UN. The West Africa Centre for Counter Extremism (WACCE) is used as a case-study to have an in-depth understanding of the typology of VE in Ghana and the measures used in preventing and countering the scourge

Keywords: *Violent Extremism; Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism; Development Communication Strategies; Violent Extremism in Ghana; The West Africa Centre for Counter-Extremism; (WACCE); Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); The United Nations Development Programme*

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Issues of Violent Extremism (VE) are of huge concern to all countries in the world today and Ghana is no exception. Violent extremism manifest itself in various forms depending on the context in which it operates. Some Ghanaians and policy-makers are aware of the devastating effects of this social canker. The United Nations Development Programme (United Nations Development Programme, 2017) estimates that between the year 2011 and 2016 there has been 33, 000 fatalities caused by violent extremism world-wide with its related displacement and economic devastation leading to one of the worst humanitarian crisis ever witnessed on the continent of Africa (Romaniuk, 2015).

Increasingly, VE and terrorism has become a major security concern to governments and international organizations all over Africa and the world as a whole. While activities of VE groups such as Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), Al – Shabaab, Ansarul Islam, Group for the support of Islam and Muslim (JNIM), Islamic State in Greater Sahara, Islamic Central Africa Province (ISCAP) to mention a few, who are aiming undermining peace and security. (Romaniuk, 2015)

The term ‘preventing or countering violent gained prominence during the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism held in Washington D.C in February 2015. Government officials in attendance admitted that ‘intelligence gathering, military force, and law enforcement alone will not solve...the problem of violent extremism’ (Romaniuk, 2015). Violent extremism is a willingness to use or support the use of violence to further particular beliefs, including those of a political, social or ideological nature and may include acts of terrorism (Striegher, 2015).

Currently, there is no record or an empirical research that shows that there is a violent extremist group in Ghana. However, activities of some identifiable organized groups may suggest acts of violent extremism per the definition of (Striegher, 2015). The typology of violent extremism in Ghana currently are fierce and divisive political campaigns, vigilante violence and land guardism. (Romaniuk, 2015)

Even though Ghana has not witnessed acts of terrorism linked to any violent extremism groups, some Ghanaians were radicalised online and joined terrorist organizations. In December 2015, 10 people with university background joined Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) notable amongst them was Nazir Nortey, a graduate from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) who was killed in Syria (Muqthar, 2019). In the same year, 7 people were arrested for terrorist training at Jantong in the Northern Region (Muqthar, 2019). Between the year 2015 and 2017 the West Africa Centre for Counter Extremism (Muqthar, 2019) worked around the clock to dissuade 22 people from joining ISIS in Syria. (Muqthar, 2019)

In 2015, the United Nations Secretary-General presented a document “Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE)” to the General Assembly in New York. The document adopts a comprehensive approach to the challenge of Violent Extremism. The Plan of Action is divided into parts targeting a particular angle of the problem. The priority area 7 is mainly focused on the media and communication. This goes to buttress the importance the UN accord to communication in preventing and countering violence extremism. It is for this reason, this study is exploring how communication is effectively used in preventing violent extremism in Ghana.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

While scholars and P/CVE experts have all accepted that the media and communication are one of the main tools that can be used in preventing and countering violent extremism. There is a knowledge gap on how effectively Development Communication Strategies can be deployed as source of counter-narratives to prevent the ideologies of violent extremists prosper. These groups used all sort of avenues to lure people especially the youth to join them. The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism by the United Nations calls on both state and non-state actors to collaborate in order to eliminate violent extremism tendencies in the world.

Some Civil Society Organizations, law enforcement agencies, scholars, P/CVE experts have rolled out several initiatives to deal with the phenomenon. Out of the 7 key areas outlined by the UN, 5 directly falls under the ambit of Development Communication Strategies. This study intends to explore how effectively these measures are being deployed by the law enforcement agencies, scholars, Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) experts, Civil Society Organizations in P/CVE. There has not been any prior empirical research to investigate if the strategies are effectively implemented and the level of success of each one of them. The result of the research will help in identifying the gaps that may exist in preventing of Violent Extremism in Ghana.

1.3 Research Questions

What do we mean by Development Communication Strategies?

How do we deploy Development Communication Strategies in preventing and countering Violent Extremism?

Why is it that Development Communication Strategies are recommended in preventing and countering violent extremism?

1.4 Research Objectives

This research has two categories of objectives namely main and specific objectives. The main objective of the study is to explore the deployment of Development Communication Strategies in preventing and countering violent extremism in Ghana using the West Africa Centre for Counter Extremism (WACCE) as a case study

1. Interrogate what is meant by Development Communication Strategies
2. Examine how Development Communication Strategies are deployed in preventing violent extremism
3. Explore reasons behind adoption of Development Communication Strategies by the UN in preventing and countering violent extremism

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on preventing and violent extremism in Ghana, the will engage some stakeholders in combatting VE notably the law enforcement agencies, CSOs working in the domain of PCVE, scholars, researchers and the West Africa Centre for Counter-Extremism will be used as a case study to gain depth insight into the phenomenon of violent extremism in Ghana.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The impact of VE in any country in the world cannot be underestimated. There are several pull and push factors in the country that could easily be exploited by these groups. Especially, when some of these extremist groups are actively present within the borders of Ghana's northern neighbour, Burkina Faso.

The UN has mandated all Members States especially those in Africa to take huge interest in VE. In fact, the UN asked all Member States to domesticate the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism from the Sub-regional level to the Local level in each country. Policy-

makers can refer to this study to come up with a robust communication strategies to build a resilient communities to prevent and counter violent extremism.

This study will help to identify the key role communication plays in P/CVE and also determine the gap that might exist for policy-makers, P/CVE experts and all other stakeholders to fill. The study will ultimately contribute to knowledge in the role of communication in preventing and countering VE.

1.7 Chapterization of the Study

This study is structured into five chapters. Chapter one deals with introduction, statement of problem, research questions and objectives, scope of the study, significance of the study and Chapterization of the study. Chapter Two deals with introduction, theoretical foundation, review of related and relevance literature, assumptions, conceptual definitions of terms, operational definitions of concepts, importance of the study and conclusion. Chapter Three provides the Methodology, methods, research design, population, sampling technique and sample frame and size, sources of data collection and data collection instruments, techniques of data analysis and limitations and de-limitations. Chapter Four provides the analysis and discussions of key findings, while Chapter Five summarizes the key findings, draws conclusions and makes some recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Ever since the term ‘preventing or countering violent extremism gained prominence in 2015 during the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism held in Washington D.C, there are have been several research into the scourge to have a deeper meaning. A multitude of scholarly works on Violent Extremism carefully reviewed for the purpose of this study point to the fact that is conceptual. The largest share of existing literature on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism is conceptual as opposed to empirical (United Nations Development Programme, 2017). The concept of Violent Extremism is often interchangeably use with concept of terrorism, extreme violence and political violence. This chapter mainly looks at the conceptual framework of Violent Extremism in general and follows by the typology of Violent Extremism in Ghana.

2.2 Definition of the Concept of Violent Extremism

Even though the concept of Violent Extremism is recognised globally as one of the critical development challenges of our time, a universally accepted definition of Violence Extremism that encompasses a common understanding of the phenomenon across all regions in the international community. The present Plan of Action [...] considers and addresses violent extremism as, and when, conducive to terrorism. Violent Extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition. It is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief. (United Nations Development Programme, 2017).

For the purposes of this research, several existing literature on the subject of Violent Extremism were reviewed to have a deeper understanding on the concept of Violent Extremism and all pointed to the same conclusion the fact that Violent Extremism is conceptual and there is no universally accepted definition by scholars and practitioners of countering violent extremism.

The more research being conducted to explore the subject, the likely there will never be an agreed upon definition.

Though the United Nations admitted that the phenomenon of Violent Extremism is context-specific and there is no universally accepted definition, it attempted to provide a definition that will purposely guide deliberations on issues of violent extremism to and find solution. Else the natural question this will raise is, whether it is even possible to find solution to something that is not fully defined. This is referred to as the ‘universal’ definition for the purposes of this research.

The ‘universal’ definition by (United Nations, 2014) Violent extremism refers to the belief and actions of people who support or use ideological-motivated violence to activate radical ideologies, religious or political views.

In their definition of Violent Extremism, (van Zyl & Mahdi, 2018) ‘willingness to use or support the use of violence to further particular beliefs, including those of political, social or ideological nature and may include acts of terrorism’.

This definition introduced another concept that remained contested in the world today thus ‘acts of terrorism or terrorism’, and failed to clearly draw the thin line between these two concepts that sometimes overlap. The use of fear and coercion mainly for political ends are some of the main features that distinguish between an act of terrorism and Violent Extremism. ...VE [Violent Extremism] requires the employment of a mix of violence extremism, coercion and mass atrocities, with incentives for obeying that takes the form of service provisions delivered under the preface of ideological identities that leave no room for dissonance. (Mathias, et al., 2019). Some critics would even go so far as argue that VE is a synonymous to terrorism with ‘cosmetic’ improvements. (Striegheer, 2015).

It is important to clearly differentiate between these two concepts thus ‘terrorism or acts of terrorism and Violent Extremism’ in order to understand the immediate root-causes and motivations behind them to proffer preventive and counter-mechanism to disable the phenomenon of Violent Extremism.

Violent extremism is a violent type of mobilization that aims to elevate the status of one group, while excluding or dominating its ‘others’ based on markers, such as gender, religion, culture and ethnicity. In doing so, violent extremist organizations destroy existing political and cultural institutions, and supplant them with alternative governance structures that work according to the principles of a totalitarian and intolerant ideology. (Mathias, et al., 2019).

This definition is broad and general imbedded with three strict criteria that must concurrently be met before the phenomenon be considered Violent Extremism. This suggested the following must be present in the conceptualization of Violent Extremism; totalitarianism and intolerance, political non-conformism and use of violence. This idea of concept of Violent Extremism neglects individual violent extremists who might be more dangerous and not-easily identifiable. It also failed to recognize Violent Extremism occurs at the micro-level and can be perpetrated by an individual who might have self-radicalized and not necessarily through Violent Extremism Organization or Group. It is paramount to note that organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan (US), the Grey Wolves (Turkey), Golden Dawn and Hindu Nationalism (India) have tendencies that classify them as Violent Extremist Organisations so the phenomenon is not exclusively to Islamist groups.

Though not explicitly stated, (Mathias, et al., 2019) purposely extended their scope of conceptualization of Violent Extremism to mainly capture Islamist groups or Jihadist violence. This attempt made their definition vague and ‘loose’ which can easily be exploited by governments to abuse rights of citizens in the name of the fight against terror. According to

(Mathias, et al., 2019) one of the most notable issues surrounding the development of a broad conceptual understanding of violent extremism involves the manner in which common discourse uses it interchangeably with concepts such as terrorism and radicalization. The issues of Violent Extremism is mainly specific to local environments and the happenings within that setting so to attempt to develop a broad conceptual understanding without considering the fact that Violent Extremism is a local ‘beast’ and its manifestation is context-specific that needs to be addressed as such in the local environment. Most of the Preventive or Countering Violent Extremism initiatives or project do not achieve their desired-outcome mainly because the conceptual understanding and measures are often conceived from the top-bottom approach.

(Mathias, et al., 2019) Conceptualize violent extremism to be ‘macro-specific’ and a typical organised-crime, this will not paint a clearer picture of the phenomenon across Africa and especially in Ghana where this research is targeted. With the understanding that Violent Extremism manifests in differently in different parts of the world, the conceptualization of Violent Extremism by (Mathias, et al., 2019) cannot be faulted. This literature perfectly sit-in well with a hypothetical research that will attempt to explore Violent Extremism as a global phenomenon with a little more attention on Islamist or Jihadist violence that manifest same throughout the world.

In a report authored by (Ferguson, 2016) for the Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research (PaCCS), she considers Violent Extremism as ‘activities (beliefs, attitudes, actions, strategies) of people who support or use violence for political, religious or other identity-driven beliefs. This includes terrorism and other forms of identity-motivated violence from hate crime to genocide.’

Though this definition recognizes violent extremism as phenomenon that can occur at the micro-level and can be perpetrated by a lone wolf, (Ferguson, 2016) also attempted to state the

different forms of violence ranges from the 'lowest' to the 'highest' crime that could be as a result of violent extremism. However, the introduction of the concept of terrorism makes the definition broad and when used as the conceptual definition in seeking a deeper understanding of violent extremism in order to tackle the phenomenon may not specifically address the causes of the problem. Additionally, solutions that will be proffered might only be 'cosmetic' without dealing with the main causes.

The conflict tree analytical tool allows for the issues (core problems) in a conflict in this case violent extremism to identify the causes and effects of each issue. The conflict tree analytical tool uses a tree diagram with the roots (representing the root causes), trunk, (core problem) and the branches (effects). This suggests that to effectively deal with conflict (violent extremism) the root causes are the real reason for the conflict (violent extremism) so they need to be tackled for a more sustainable solution. The conflict tree is a visualizing and sorting tool. The tree visualises the interaction between structural, manifest and dynamic factors (Mason & Rychard, 2020)

(African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, 2018) Asserted that violent extremism occurs when 'a person or group decides fear, terror or violence are justified to achieve ideological, political or social change, and acts accordingly'

This definition conceptualised the phenomenon beyond theoretical considerations and made it pragmatic. (African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, 2018) Suggested though an individual or a group may harbour the idea to perpetrate an act of violence to register their disagreement and displeasure without physically carrying-out this act, it cannot be labelled as Violent Extremism. According to them if an individual or a group conceive and promote ideas and tendencies of Violent Extremism is immaterial unless the act is committed. However, it is interesting to note that the trap in their conceptual definition of Violent Extremism is the large

possibility of some people not performing the violent act themselves but influence a third party to carry-out the violence.

The conceptual definition of Violent Extremism by (African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, 2018) totally left the influencer off the hook and mainly focused on the perpetrator. Some critics would argue, an individual or group cannot be tagged violent extremist without actually perpetrating acts of violent extremism. This then begs the question is it the idea and narratives of violent extremism or the act that should be the foundation of the conceptual definition.

Though the definition remains contested, it generally resonates more with the reality from the African perspective. The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism was established by the African Union as part of the AU Plan of Action to Prevent and Combat terrorism, its mandate to conduct research into terrorism situation and terrorist groups in Africa. The conceptual definition of Violent Extremism by (African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, 2018) reflects more the phenomena in Africa mainly because their mandate is to focus their research on Africa. The failure to explicitly recognize a third party influencer in order to avoid all ambiguities in the conceptual elaboration of Violent Extremism. Earlier researchers on combatting the problem of violent extremism has mainly investigated on Islamist extremist narrative and the counter and alternative narratives that are developed to compete with the Islamist narratives in the 'war of ideas' (Groot, 2016)

For the purpose of this research and with regards to the social reality in Ghana where the research will be conducted, an attempt to develop a broad conceptual framework for the phenomenon without paying particular attention to the local context in Ghana will not achieve its desired outcome of understanding and addressing the canker in the Ghanaian society. This research proposed that:

Violent extremism is the belief of the use of violence to achieve ideological, political or religious aims and acts accordingly by an individual or a group sometimes with the support of an organized group.

2.3 Drivers of Violent Extremism (Factors Conducive For Violent Extremism)

Generally, the language of ‘driver’ is used in relation to violent extremism; whereas the term ‘pathway’ is used with respect to individual radicalization. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). Violent Extremism does not occur in isolation, often there are favourable conditions that promote group or individual violence. Drivers of violent extremism are causes or reasons why groups or individuals might be attracted to supporting or engaging in violent extremism (Hadayah, 2019). Nothing can justify violent extremism, but we must also acknowledge that it does arise in a vacuum. Narratives of grievances, actual or perceived injustice, promised empowerment and sweeping change become attractive where human rights are being violated, good governance is being ignored, and aspirations are being crushed (United Nations, 2015). There are several factors that lead to Violent Extremism however, the ‘important’ ones are classified as root-causes of Violent Extremism. Rarely just a simple manifestation of ideological drivers that validate an individual’s acceptance of VE [Violent Extremism], (Streigher, 2015).

Amongst the literature on motivations that lead to the process of radicalisation and result in Violent Extremism is the United Nations Development Programme’s conceptual framework (United Nations, 2016) highlighted eight drivers (Economic exclusion and limited opportunities for upward mobility, Political exclusion, shrinking civic space and limited opportunities for participation, Rejection of growing diversity in society, Changing that are also referred to as root-cause by most scholars and critics. Root-cause issues are global culture and banalization of violence, Role of global and regional politics, Perceptions of injustice,

corruption and mistreatment of certain groups, Rejection of socio-economic and political system, Weak state capacity and failing security)

Violent Extremism is often the result of existing conditions and circumstances that are socio-political, economic and sometimes historical. The impact of globalization can also not be neglected. The root-cause of violent extremism are complex, multifaceted and intertwined, and relate to the structural environment in which radicalisation and possibly violent extremism can start to take hold. (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). There is no single way to explore or examine the root-causes of Violent Extremism, these root-causes are not constant or static but fluid. These root-causes simply change according to the socio-economic cultural conditions in a specific locality. Some literatures try to distinguish between the root-causes of violent extremism and radicalisation. Others are of the opinion that since an individual is radicalised before becoming violent extremist, it is rather prudent to focus on the root-causes of radicalisation leading to violent extremism.

Critically examining the assertions of the two schools of thought on the root-causes of violent extremism, it can be said that they are all same and both eventually lead to influence the conduct of perpetrating a violent acts. This can easily be seen as the chicken and egg situation. Practically, in preventing and countering Violent Extremism a consented effort to tackle any of the root-causes of either radicalisation or violent extremism will yield a positive result by dealing with the phenomenon at the base.

The drivers of violent extremism are multiple and interrelated, with political, economic, historical, ideological and religious dimensions (United Nations, 2016). Based on existing literature, these factors can be categorised into two namely; Push and Pull factors. In the quest to gain holistic understanding of the phenomenon of Violent Extremism to foster responses beyond security-based and treat Violent Extremism as one of the developmental challenges

confronting the world today. Such current thinking is reflected within the VE Action Plan in which the Secretary-General placed much importance upon context and drivers – the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors – of violent extremism, together with processes of radicalization (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018).

According to (Jones, 2017) ‘push’ factors are socioeconomic, political and cultural in nature. Such factors include: high levels of social marginalization and fragmentation, poorly governed or ungoverned areas, government repression and human rights violation, cultural threat perceptions, and endemic corruption and elite impunity. However, ‘push’ factors emphasizing root causes of VE often work indirectly and in conjunction with other variables. On the other hand, (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018) proposed ‘push’ factors to be ‘the conditions conducive to violent extremism and the structural context from which it emerges. These include: lack of socio-economic opportunities; marginalization and discrimination; poor governance, violation of human rights and the rule of law; prolonged and unresolved conflicts; and radicalization in prison. From the positions of both (Jones, 2017) and (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018) the ‘push’ factors are structurally ‘embedded’ within the society; those are situations members of the society live with on regular basis.

(Jones, 2017), stated that the ‘pull’ factors work on an individual level and have a direct impact on recruitment and radicalization. They include: social status and respect from peers, a sense of belonging, adventure, and self-esteem, and the prospect of achieving glory and fame. ‘Pull’ factors also include personal relationships, the appeal of a particular leader, and the draw of social networks. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018), perceived the ‘pull’ factors to be ‘the individual motivations and processes, which play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action. These include individual backgrounds and motivations; collective grievances and victimization stemming from domination, oppression,

subjugation or foreign intervention; distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic and cultural differences; and leadership and social networks.

In other ways, 'push factors' refer to those factors that are structurally within the society, whilst 'pull factors' are psychological one that render an individual more susceptible to undertaking violent extremist behaviour (Nanes & Lau, 2018). On their part, (Georgian Center for Security and Development, 2018), defined push factors as 'conditions of the individual or their own life situation that pushes them away from main stream society and causes to become susceptible to violent extremism and radicalization.' Pull factors of Violent Extremism and Radicalization – 'factors that drive individual towards the acceptance of violent extremism and radicalization with positive incentives'.

The 'pull' factors of radicalization emerge as the main factors of radicalisation across studies focused on different geographical areas and ideologies. (Vergani, et al., 2018).

Apart from the model of 'Push' and 'Pull' factors that is well accepted by most scholars and critics there are others that also conceptualise the phenomenon (Arifi, 2019) noted that the USAID has developed a Summary of Factors affecting Violent Extremism (regarding mostly the Islamist type of Violent Extremism) and has divided these factors into three major groups; 1. Enabling environment factors, 2. Pull factors and 3. Push factors. However, it is important to state that this research is not exclusively focused on Islamic violent extremism in a bid to avoid the tendency belittling the severity of the danger of other non-Islamic actors.

It is imperative to recognise the fact that not all extremism or radicalism is violent. There are some individuals and organizations that hold extremist or radical position on an issue of interest but do not perpetrate any violent acts drive home their position or demand, they achieve whatever they want through non-violent extremism. In his to clarify some issues that tend to obscure the debate about how to prevent violent extremism, (Schmid, 2014) asserted that Non-

violent Extremism goes beyond passive, peaceful resistance: it involves an array of direct political actions, both individual and collective, such as hunger-strikes, demonstrations, sit-ins, blockades, acts of civil disobedience and other persuasive and even coercive tactics (such as non-cooperation in the form of strikes) – but all falling short of the use of violence against persons or objects (other than their own). Both means and ends of adherents of this political philosophy are non-violent.

2.4 Definition of the Concept of Radicalization

The concept of radicalisation is increasingly recognised as unsatisfactory in its explanatory power regarding violent extremism, given that a large number of individuals may hold ‘radical’ views without moving from there to perpetrate violent acts. (United Nations Development Programme, 2017) Another concept that often operates together with Violent Extremism is radicalization. Just as Violent Extremism, it does not have one unique definition mainly because it is context-bound. According to (Schmid, 2013), defining the term radicalisation is just as arbitrary as attempting to define the term violent extremism.

(United Nations, 2016) Conceived radicalisation as frustration and grievances grow, individuals and groups begin to search for organizations or ideologies that can either help to channel those frustrations or can blame them on external actors. Radicalisation may thus emerge from the inadequacy of wider systems for dialogue, communication and mediation among groups, the absence of inclusion and tolerance the social and political environment of a particular community, an inability to contain provocateurs and radicalizing agents, and the absence of viable alternatives for genuine empowerment in both the personal and the public spheres.

(van Zyl & Mahdi, 2018) Stated that radicalisation is the ‘process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups’.

However, as indicated by (Schmid, 2013) ‘much of the literature on radicalisation focuses on Islamist extremism and jihadist terrorism...’ This trend did not occur in isolation, it reflects contemporary reality. In recent years, violent Sunni extremists have been responsible for the largest number of terrorist’s attacks worldwide. In 2011, for instance, Sunni extremists were responsible for 56% of over 10,000 attacks worldwide and for about 70% of all deaths resulting from non-state terrorism (National Counterterrorism Center, 2012). So an attempt to neglect Islamist extremism belittles potential threats of extremist religious sects or groups. There are certainly other forms of radicalisation however, putting all of them under one conceptual definition is a challenge that most critics and scholars try to avoid. Just as Violent Extremism, radicalisation is also context-specific and rather a process than an event.

There is no argument that radicalisation is a process whereby an individual’s belief system and ideology shifts over a period of time (Striegher, 2015). As indicated in the opening paragraph, the phenomenon of radicalisation is context-bound so scholars, institutions and countries outlined definitions that suit their contexts and realities for its use in preventing and countering Violent Extremism and for drafting of domestic and foreign policies. Some radicalisations lead to violence and others do not lead to violence. When an individual who adopts a radical position on an issue is not as feared as someone who is radicalised as a result of socialization.

(African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, 2018) Asserted that radicalisation happens when a person’s thinking and behaviour become significantly different from how most of the members of their society and community view social issues and participate politically.

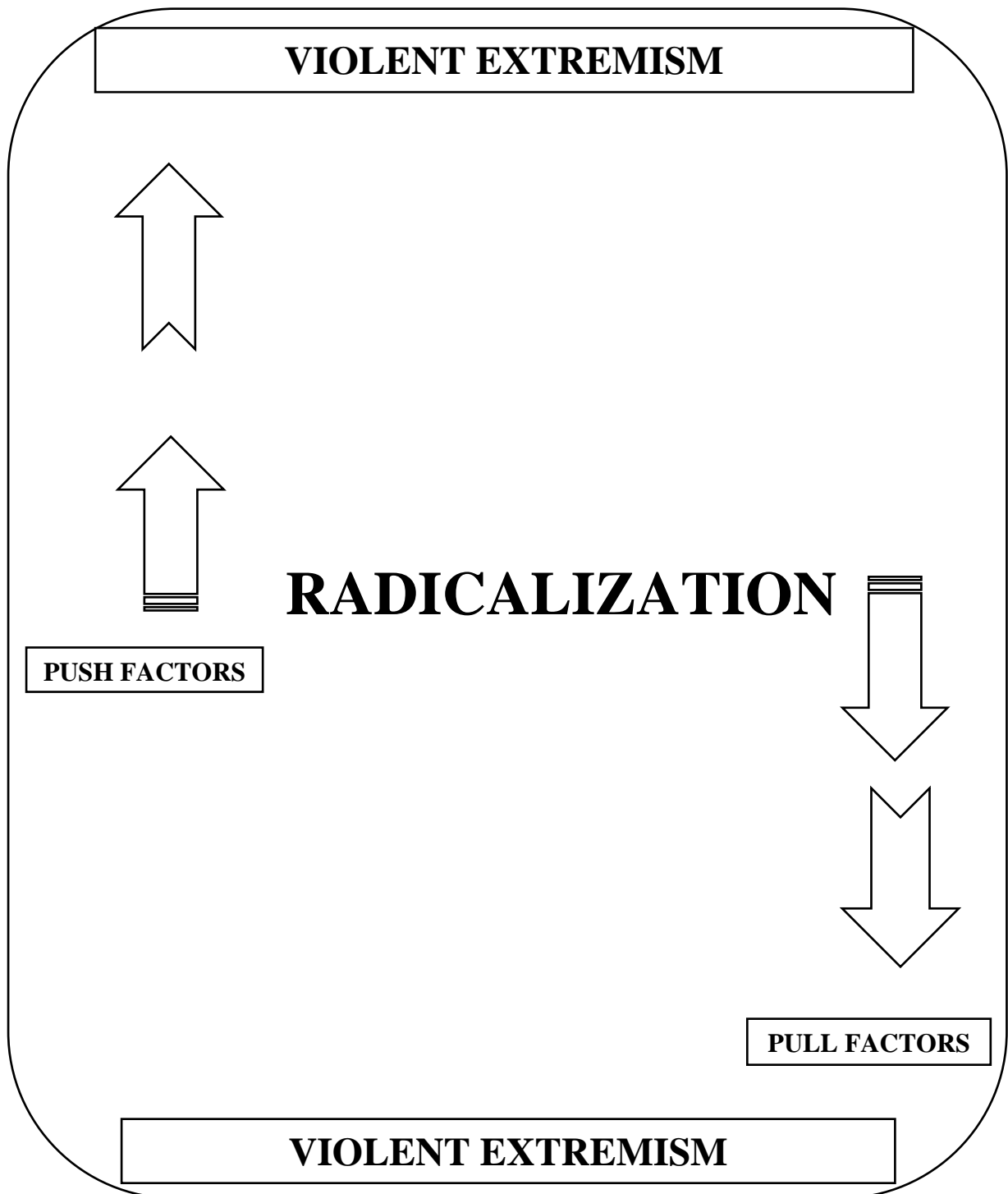
One of the underlining elements that needs to be considered whenever an attempt is being made to differentiate the concept of terrorism from that of violent extremism is the idea of political participation. Whether socially, racially, religiously, or politically motivated, it is evident that

individuals are driven to use violence for the strategic benefits of inciting fear and forcing political agendas; where others espouse violence as a part of their extremist ideologies and belief systems (Borum, 2004). In essence, the motivation for radicalisation is not limited to political participation as sought to suggest by the conceptualization by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism. Could it be due to their mandate to focus their research on terrorism situation and terrorist groups in Africa that accounted for their definition to be directly aligned with terrorism? As it has been identified by some existing literature on radicalisation, an individual or group may be of a 'radical' view but may not necessarily lead to perpetration of acts of terrorism.

Radicalisation may have many causes or factors, not one; there may be many different pathways to violence, and (conversely) different people on a shared trajectory may have many different destinations; some join extremist groups because of ideology but others may come to accept an ideology because they have joined an extremist group; it is possible to be 'radical' and non-violent; and that radicalisation is a dynamic, psycho-social process. (Glazzard & Zeuthen, 2016)

Most literature on radicalisation can be looked into under two broad perspectives; radicalisation is the process of adopting, changing or strengthening a set of ideas that are outside , or in opposition to, some of society's mainstream ideas (Scruton, 2007) and radicalisation is not guaranteed to manifest in violence (Neumann, 2013). The radicalisation process can be put under three broad categories of factors (situational, strategic and ideological) and sub-divides situational factors into pre-conditions and precipitant factors, before sub-dividing pre-conditions into enabling and motivational factors (Francis, 2012).

Conceptual Framework of Violent Extremism



AUTHOR'S CONSTRUCT, 2020

FIGURE 1: Conceptual Framework of Violent Extremism as Propose by this Research

Figure 1 above demonstrates the manifestation of the phenomenon of Violent Extremism. It is absolutely necessary to conceptualize the Violent Extremism to be able to have a proper understanding of the phenomenon to enable concerted efforts to prevent it from the micro-level before it escalates or degenerates, without proper conceptualization of Violent Extremism, we will only be attacking the symptoms not the root-causes. The phenomenon does not occur in a vacuum so the need for the conceptual framework to put this research into perspective.

The drivers of Violent Extremism are the reasons or causes an individual or a group might be attracted to Violent Extremism or ideologies of violent extremism. To identify the drivers of Violent Extremism, some guiding questions on the drivers of Violent Extremism need to be posed to determine the drivers of Violent Extremism. These are ‘WH’ questions or journalistic questions that will help unravel the drivers of Violent Extremism.

1. **What** is the risk of Violent Extremism in the local context and what are its forms?
2. **Why** are people drawn to Violent Extremism?
3. **Who** is being drawn to Violent Extremism?
4. **Where** are people being drawn to Violent Extremism?
5. **How** are people being radicalized?

These drivers are categorised into two; namely push and pull factors based on the motivations that attract people or groups to adopt ideologies or engage in Violent Extremism. Any of these factors may lead to the process of radicalisation. This process is mainly psycho-social and involves an individual or a group’s thinking and behaviour that is different from acceptable societal norms. Radicalization itself is not an event but a process. An individual or group that is radicalised does not always perpetrate violent acts; people and groups adopt radical posture or viewpoint on an issue without perpetrating acts of violence. Those radical viewpoints or postures that may lead an individual or groups to carrying out violent acts.

After an individual or group is radicalized to perpetrate violence, they tend to believe that it is solely through violence they can achieve the political, ideological and religious change they desire. They begin to exhibit tendencies of violence and eventually become violent. They perpetrate violent extremist acts by least or without any provocations. Since they are already radicalized, they only wait for a window of opportunity to open to them then, they carry out violence to register their frustrations. Some violent extremists are radicalized by another person or by a group, others undergo self-radicalization before they commit the violence act. Some lone wolves are radicalized by a group other are act independently of any organized group. There are different scenarios by which violent the act of violent extremism is committed but the underlining issue is that these violent extremists are radicalized through socialization in the society they find themselves and once the drivers are 'available' the environment becomes conducive for them to strive. The radicalization path may lead to Violent Extremism or terrorism.

All the two Drivers of Violent Extremism must not necessarily congregate before Violent Extremism takes place. Any of the factors can basically trigger violent extremism though the two factors operate at different levels. In an effort to prevent Violent Extremism, these drivers need to be tackled head-on at the grass root level.

TYOLOGY OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN GHANA

Though this research is primarily focused on Violent Extremism defined as the belief of the use of violence to achieve ideological, political or religious aims and acts accordingly by an individual or a group sometimes with the support of an organized group. It is equally relevant to outline some violence that commonly manifest in Ghana. As at the time of this research there is no group that officially been identified as a violent extremist group in the country but the phenomenon of Violence Extremism itself may take different shape in the country.

Based on the guiding questions on the drivers of violent extremism mentioned in *Figure 1* above, the typology of Violent Extremism in Ghana where this research is taking place can be outlined. It is important to differentiate between the various typologies of Violent Extremism in order to understand the critical root causes behind them.

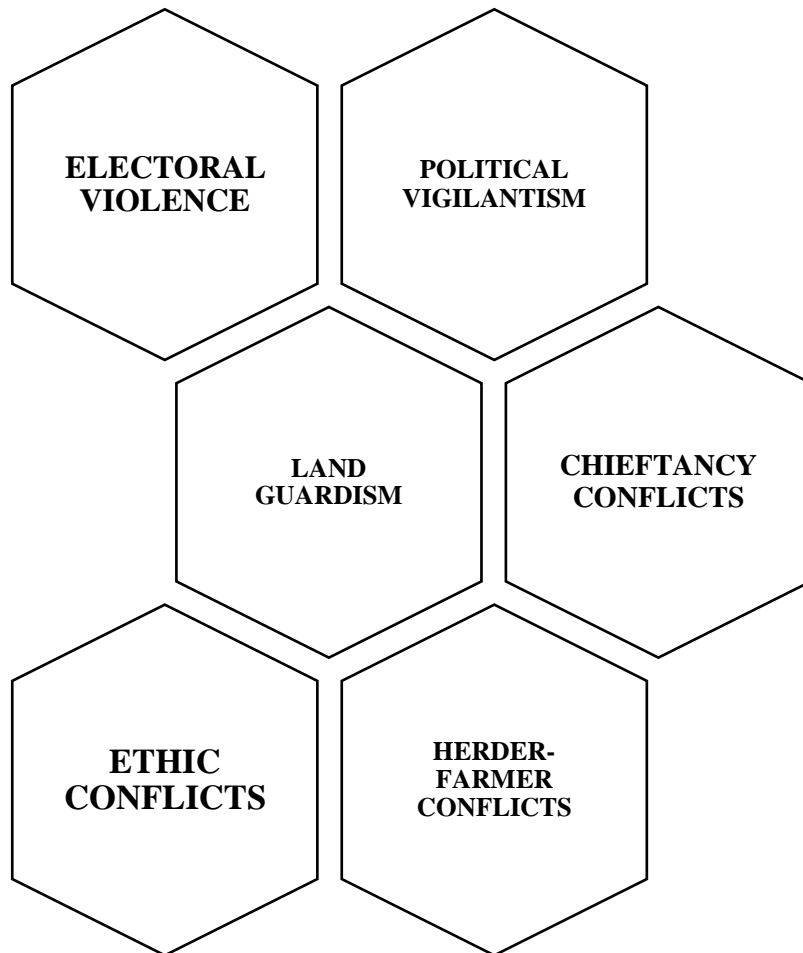


FIGURE 2: Typology of Violent Extremism in Ghana

Alternatively, the manifestation of the phenomenon of Violent Extremism in Ghana can be classified under the umbrella of Political, Social and Cultural.

POLITICAL	SOCIAL	CULTURAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vigilantism• Electoral violence• Political violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land guardism• Herder-farmer conflicts• Thuggery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chieftancy conflicts• Ethnic conflicts

FIGURE 3: Classification of Violent Extremism Tendencies in Ghana

2.5 Conclusion

The literature review focuses on providing a Conceptual Framework of Violent Extremism that will serve as a foundation for the elaboration of this research. The phenomenon this research seeks to unravel is context-specific and unique to different parts of the world. The conceptual framework that underpins this work was deduced from series of literature reviewed. It is worth noting that from the literature reviewed, although Violent Extremism, radicalisation and the act of terrorism are used interchangeably in everyday discourse, they are in fact three different and separate concepts that must not be misunderstood though they have interdependent relationships. Those concepts are like a slippery fish, understanding the relationship and the thin line between these concepts is key to successfully preventing Violent Extremism.

The issues of Violent Extremism is mainly specific to local environments and the happenings within that setting so to attempt to develop a broad conceptual understanding without considering the fact that Violent Extremism is a local 'beast' that needs to be tamed locally. Most of the Preventive or Countering Violent Extremism initiatives or project do not achieve their desired-outcome mainly because the conceptual understanding and measures are often conceived from the top-bottom approach. By carefully examining each concept in isolation, a clear distinction was established though not empirical, the drivers of Violent Extremism have been identified as the distinctive agent of the scourge.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The study employed qualitative data collection tools to gather data for the research. Semi-structured interviews was administered to a purposively-selected respondent for this study. The aim is to explore how Development Communication Strategies are being deployed in preventing Violent Extremism and also determine which of the strategies is bearing more fruits and why the others are not yielding same results. The 5 key areas (mainly communication-centric) out of the 7 recommended by the UN was used as an assessment tool to determine the one that is often used and the corresponding results.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The project was conducted by using qualitative paradigm to obtain data from the West Africa Centre for Counter Extremism (WACCE). The research opted for the qualitative method to primarily obtain the views of the participant on Development Communication Strategies in preventing Violent Extremism for further research into the phenomenon since this is an explorative study. Qualitative research approach was used to explore views of the participant on preventing Violent Extremism to gain deeper insight into the scourge.

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

Purposive interview was used to obtain data from the Executive Director of the West Africa Centre for Counter-Extremism. The interview was voice-recorded of course with the consent of the respondent.

3.3 Case Study

The design for this research was to use (WACCE) as a case study to enable deeper understanding of how effective are the UN General Secretary's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism especially the five priority areas that are human-centric and development

communication strategies. Generally, case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a phenomenon and its relationships with other dependent and independent variables. The case study afforded the researcher to obtain deeper information on preventing violent extremism in Ghana. (Muqthar, 2019), stated that in June 2016 WACCE saved ISIS recruit, stopped him from traveling to Syria and between 2015 and 2017 WACCE worked to dissuade 22 people from joining ISIS. From the work and experience of WACCE in preventing Violent Extremism over the years, the centre definitely dispose vast knowledge and experience in preventing Violent Extremism in Ghana therefore they can provide first-information on the phenomenon. Using WACCE as a case study will help in achieving the research objectives.

3.4 Sources of Data

Data for this research was obtained directly from participants and respondents mainly through the two instruments outlined. The study did not make use of any secondary data from any source. Data for this research was gathered from the West Africa Centre for Counter-Extremism as the organization was used as a case study for the study

3.5 Sampling Procedures

The research employed purposive sampling technique to gather information from respondents and mainly relied on non-probability method. Purposive sampling was adopted because it looked out for key characteristics of respondents and specific targets considered appropriate for the research. The study mainly targeted institutions and individuals who are into P/CVE and peacebuilding so purposive and non-probability sampling technique were used to achieve the research objectives.

3.6 Data Management

The data generated from the semi-structured interview were transcribed from audio to written text and notes that was taken during the interview was organised to enable proper scientific analysis. Relevant information from the transcription that met the research objectives were categorised into themes and analyse scientifically. Before the analysis, they were checked to ensure that they were no errors or mistakes. The few ones that needed to be cleaned and corrected were done so at the data cleaning stage of the process. Data for this research were saved in a secured environment to safeguard participant confidentiality.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

This research was initially planned for a mixed method to gain deeper insight into the phenomenon of violent extremism however, due to unavailability of data in the field and unwillingness of organizations and individuals in the field of peace building, conflict prevention and violent extremism to participate in this study. Moreover, there were financial and time constraints so the researcher was unable to obtain data from other organizations and individuals in the field of violent extremism.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

This research strictly observed the ethical standards while soliciting information from respondents. Verbal permission was sought from all participants before they were administered the instruments and their confidentiality was duly respected. A confidentiality clause was designed and put on the questionnaire to indicate that all data obtained is only for academic purposes and it will not be used for any other purposes or shared with any third party.

3.9 Profile of the West Africa Centre for Counter Extremism

The West Africa Centre for Counter-Extremism was founded by Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar in December 2014 as an independent regional organization focused on security and counter terrorism research in West Africa in response to the growing number of young West African

who were succumbing to terrorist ideals. The vision of the organization is to serve as the most credible and reliable institution for challenging violent extremism, promoting pluralism and inspiring peace.

The bedrock of WACCE's activities is research and outreach programmes targeted at uncovering the underpinnings of radicalization and violence extremism as an effective contribution to state and regional counter terrorism policies and strategies to promote sustainable peace in the sub-region.

WACCE is the leading organization primarily focused on preventing violence extremism in Ghana. In the last five years, WACCE has led in deepening awareness and understanding around violent extremism in Ghana. This helped in building community networks and expanding impactful initiatives throughout the country.

Through its Preventing Violence Extremism Programmes, WACCE successfully trained and empowered over 1600 youths and vulnerable individuals on peace building, leadership, community resilience against violence extremism with funding support from the US Embassy, British High Commission, Canadian High Commission, Members of Parliament of Ghana, Traditional rulers and other local partners.

The youthful and dedicated team at WACCE have demonstrated extraordinary commitment serving as the source behind great accomplishments in less than five years of its establishment. In 2016, WACCE through its local Counter Radicalization Programme, worked around the clock to stop a 22 years old radicalized young man, an ISIS recruit from traveling to Syria to join ISIS just a day before he was schedule to depart for Syria. 23 other have also been stopped from traveling to join terrorist groups.

WACCE has empowered 540 youths and marginalised groups in northern Ghana to ensure their effective electoral participation in Ghana's general elections supported by the Canadian

High Commission under the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives. WACCE strongly believe that the battle against violent extremism and terrorism cannot be won on the battlefield rather in the mind and heart of people in the local community. Currently, WACCE has Peace Network of 1300 Peace Ambassadors and Volunteers to amply the message of non-violence and tolerance in the local communities.

WACCE's internship programme has attracted high calibre of interns from the University of Ghana, University of Michigan (US), City University of New York (US), University of Reading (UK) and Coventry University (UK)

All this excellent work cannot go unnoticed, this is evident as WACCE has been referenced in the US Secretary of States' Report for Human Rights for 2019 for its work in security.

Funding and unavailability of data remains a huge challenge to the work of WACCE in preventing violent extremism in Ghana and beyond.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN GHANA USING THE WEST AFRICA CENTRE FOR COUNTER-EXTREMISM (WACCE) AS A CASE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to analysis of data collected on the field from the sampled population. The data was studied by classifying the information under various themes to reflect the research questions. This research set out to explore how development communication strategies are used in preventing of violent extremism in Ghana.

The study sought to ascertain the understanding of development communication and deployment of strategies that seek the involvement or engagement of key stakeholders in preventing violent extremism. The study was also interested in determining the outcome of five out of the seven priority areas identified by the UN in its Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. The findings of the study as presented here are organised around the main research questions upon which this research was conducted.

4.2 Conceptual Definition of Violence Extremism

The concept of violent extremism till today continues to be a phenomenon that does not have a universally accepted definition however, it is important to understand what constitutes violent extremism to be able to come out with corresponding response mechanism to prevent the canker in our society. Without at least an ‘operative’ definition of the phenomenon it even becomes more difficult to engage conversations about the subject. The Executive Director of West Africa Centre for Counter-Extremism (WACCE), Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar confirmed the position of some scholars and the UNDP that *Violent Extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition. It is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief. (United Nations Development Programme, 2017)* There is no one cap-fit-

all definition for the concept of violent extremism and the fact that it is context specific. The Executive Director of WACCE interviewed (19th September, 2020) noted that,

the terminology violence extremism, radicalization, terrorism all these have very imprecise definitions, and depending on who is looking at it and also depending on the culture of security on your environment you choose to include any or some or all of these.

The Executive Director of WACCE interviewed (19th September, 2020) stated that according to his organization,

Violent extremism is any kind of violence as the product of radicalization. Any kind of violence that is motivated by either power, by religion, by politics, by whatever, intended to cause fear and panic in the society.

That is basically the definition that guide all the activities of WACCE in preventing violent extremism in Ghana. Although WACCE admitted that there is no universally accepted definition for the phenomenon, they came up with the above conceptual definition to serve a guide for them in the course of their work.

To elaborate his point about the violent extremism being context-specific and occurs at the micro-level as opposed to what (Mathias, et al., 2019) sought to suggest in their definition of violence extremism. Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar the Executive Director of WACCE interviewed (19th September, 2020) mentioned that,

So the religious factor within mainstream discourse of violence extremism is what qualifies as violent extremism, academia seem to focus on the religious nature of it as a prerequisite for any kind of violence should be considered as extremism violence but I'm saying we should broaden the parameters of that to include what we are seeing in our environment

Considering the social climate in Ghana vis-à-vis violent extremism, the phenomenon occurs in different forms that often passed unnoticed without receiving the needed attention to avoid escalation. This study attempted to classify under the literature review some of the violent tendencies common in the Ghanaian society as part of this research. These violent conducts need to be considered as violent extremism to enable policy-makers develop a ‘global’ approach in dealing with them though their drivers might be different. Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar the Executive Director of WACCE interviewed (19th September, 2020) mentioned that,

Some people rather regard say vigilante violence, regard chieftaincy violence to serve as what we term as a conveyer belt to violence extremism conduct, it is already a violence extremism conduct. It does not have to lead to another form of... [violence extremism]

4.3 The Phenomenon of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism

This is another conceptual definition without any clear-cut and highly contested by scholars and practitioners in Preventing Violent Extremism. This is often the process that precedes the act of violent extremism conducts. WACCE’s understanding of radicalization is in tandem with what (Glazzard & Zeuthen, 2016) stated that it is psycho-social non-violent dynamic process. Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar the Executive Director of WACCE interviewed (19th September, 2020) explained that,

Radicalisation as a process an individual goes through influenced by multiple factors which includes negative religious ideals, negative political ideals, poverty, marginalisation, inequality, dysfunctional family or social background and a host of others depending on the reality of the person’s circumstance or society, he gets influenced by these factors and leads the person to a mental destination where he sees

the world in a binary mode, a mental destination where he regards violence as a legitimate way to express himself

Radicalisation is a process, radicalisation is not an incident or an activity or an act so it is process that gives meaning..., that lead to violent extremism conducts

also if someone is radicalised it does not mean they go about killing people or get involved in violence it just means that his mind is prime

4.4 Development Communication in Preventing Violent Extremism

Violent extremism is huge developmental challenge the world is faced today therefore Development Communication is a vehicle for stakeholder (target audience) engagement and involvement in development interventions that seek to proffer solutions to the challenge. The importance of this discipline in preventing violent extremism cannot be over-emphasized. The seven priority areas in UN's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism are human-centric approach in dealing with violent extremism. The guiding principles of Development Communication are anchored on human as a channel of communication. Consequently, this study sought to find out Development Communication in preventing violent extremism. Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar the Executive Director of WACCE interviewed (19th September, 2020) explained that WACCE performs Community Entry activities and stakeholder engagement when in a community talk about violent extremism.

...you need to involve actors, development actors at the local level as well as the national level. So for instance, if I am doing PCVE [Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism] work and in any community, in the northern part of Ghana which we have been involving for so long, first we do what we call community entry activities. What does it mean? You need to be able to get the buying of the local community actors. First you go to the community leaders. Community leaders carry a higher legitimacy from

the people, so once you are able to get them to understand and to buy into this idea, it makes your work easier in terms of getting local support. So we meet the chiefs, traditional leaders and religious leaders, including youth and other community leaders to help them understand what it means to do what we are coming to do, before you actually come in to do PCVE work. And in doing that you involve them as well, you involve these traditional leaders and community leaders because it helps build a stronger level of support for what you are doing.

Without necessarily having a... providing any data, my experience shows that dealing within the local community is very, very effective, its potentially more effective than dealing within the media or at the media level.

... and a select group of people sought of gives you focus and narrows your scope of work and helps in deepening the impact of what you do...the facial interaction that you have with people is very, very powerful.

4.5 Understanding Development Communication Strategies in Preventing Violent Extremism.

Among other things, Development Communication and its strategies are research-base, empirical evidence and scientific data is heavily relied upon to determine the Knowledge, Practice and Attitude of beneficiaries and as well performing audience analysis and segmentation to be able to cause sustainable social change in any given society. Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar the Executive Director of WACCE interviewed (19th September, 2020) said that,

...we carry different levels of research on the target audience that we deal with. So you remember when I was talking about the classification of communities as vulnerable communities, we have some matrix in determining that, we are looking at the profile of

the community, what is the economic profile of this community, what is the demographic of this community, how many young people under the age of 22 are in education, how many of them are out of school, how many of them are employed, how many of them are unemployed, what is the crime profile of this community, what is the nature of crime in this community, what are the drivers of crime in this community, so we look at all that. And so that is general and specific to the community and not necessarily to the individuals alone. And then before we start a programme; usually the workshops, we carry out a survey and take information, data and their knowledge and understanding about what we are looking to do. And at the end of it we do an exit survey as well to gauge the understanding of what they have learned

We conduct specific research, so for instance we conduct research on universities, on the vulnerability of the Muslim youth to radicalization in Ghanaian tertiary institutions and it involves like five universities in six campuses. So this is very specific, we are looking at the vulnerability of Muslim youth to radicalization in tertiary educational institutions. And so yes we do research on the target audience.

Development Communication is premised on the notion that there is no one way to development but a multiplicity approaches as a result practice of communication adopt mixed approaches which combines different communication practice. In effect, Development Communication is a product of multiple approaches. Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar the Executive Director of WACCE interviewed (19th September, 2020) noted that,

The media level is important because it reinforces the PCVE programmes you do and also it reaches a broader audience, the local community [is] inevitable you are dealing with a select group of people and so...and a select group of people sought of gives you focus and narrows your scope of work

...positive messages are very, very important thus positive messages help people who are torn between you know...adhering to these radicalizing messages and sticking to the fundamental ideals, it helps them stick to positive lifestyles and ideals. Whiles counter narratives they are the narratives that help in critical situations, because someone is already with these ideals that he is victimized...someone who has a sense of victimhood and you have counter narratives they are very important in preventing the people from acting upon their ideals

Where a significant number of young people believe that (you know)... the west is against Islam, and acted along those lines. And so within that particular community those counter narratives are very important. There are other communities where you probably do not have these narratives popular or you may not be aware, but you need to apply positive messages that enforce the ideas of peace and peace building in the local community that further sends people away from [violent extremism]

4.6 Development Communication strives on Feedback

Development Communication is a two-way approach such that the process does not complete without feedbacks from participants. It the practice of communication that mainly promote exchange of information. Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar the Executive Director of WACCE interviewed (19th September, 2020) indicated that,

Feedback is very important to gauge the progress you've made and also the quality of work you do, so it helps in quality assurance and the impact of your work.

We have established different levels of communication channels to get feedback. We have platforms, seven WhatsApp platforms that we engage our participants.

4.7 The relevance of the Promotion of Development Communication by the United Nations in dealing with Violence Extremism

Though it has been accepted that violent extremism is a universal phenomenon that occurs in local environments, the corresponding preventive measures must reflect the exact manifestation of the phenomenon. The seven priority areas as Development Communication strategies is participatory and cut-across global cultures. These can easily be domesticated to suit local happenings in a particular geographical location. As global strategic document, the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism can easily be broken down into tactical and operational level to respond to the phenomenon of violent extremism. Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar the Executive Director of WACCE interviewed (19th September, 2020) said that,

And so as for the seven, we do not by design focus on any or exclude any, we do not, we do not have that plan or that approach now.

When people feel they are inclusive of a processes, they feel more positive participating in society, they are less likely to engage in violence and so we do all that.

4.8 Conclusion

The chapter presented findings obtained from an in-depth interview granted by Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar the Executive Director of WACCE. The interview was conducted in the office of Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar, Executive Director of WACCE in the presence of a research assistant who helped in voice-recording and note-taking. The data that was gathered were grouped under themes that emerged from the data collected with the aim of putting the processed data into the right perspectives.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This research was conducted to explore Development Communication strategies in preventing violent extremism in Ghana. It also examined the reason and effectiveness of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. The findings reported in the previous chapter are discussed in this chapter in relation to the researcher's proposed definition and conceptual framework on which this research was anchored and the related studies reviewed.

5.1.1 Conceptual Definition of Violent Extremism

The conceptual definition of violent extremism still remains highly contested by practitioners and academia. The West Africa Centre for Counter-Extremism (WACCE) agreed with the assertion above that there is no universally accepted definition for violent extremism. However, the organization has their own definition that guides all their activities in preventing violent extremism.

5.1.2 The Phenomenon of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism

WACCE through its Executive Director confirmed the position of other Preventing and Countering Violence Extremism Practitioners who have maintained that radicalization just as violent extremism does not have globally accepted definition. WACCE also indicated that radicalisation is a process that may lead to violent extremism and the fact that someone is radicalised does not necessarily mean the person goes about committing violent acts.

5.1.3 Development Communication in Preventing Violent Extremism

WACCE uses some development communication strategies in the course though it is not specifically known to them. They mainly engage the multiplicity approach in dealing with issues of violent extremism. They mainly use the media to reinforce the Preventing and

Countering Violent Extremism programmes to reach broader audience but they depend on participatory communication through workshops, trainings, community activities to send their information on violent extremism to their audience. The findings show that WACCE engages stakeholders and ensures that the latter actively participate in the process of development. Whenever they are in any community, they do community entry to get the buying of key opinion leaders. They maintained the facial interaction with the target audience is very powerful to send home their message.

5.1.4 Understanding Development Communication Strategies in Preventing Violent Extremism.

Development Communication as a discipline relies heavily on empirical evidence in determining the notion and understanding of the target audience. The findings from the study show that WACCE performs audience analysis and segmentation and other researches related to violent extremism. WACCE uses both positive and counter narratives through physical interactions with the audience. Specifically, the centre conduct research on universities, on the vulnerability of the Muslim youth to radicalization in Ghanaian tertiary institutions and it involves like five universities in six campuses.

5.1.5 The relevance of the Promotion of Development Communication by the United Nations in dealing with Violence Extremism

The findings from the research indicate that WACCE does not particularly focus on any of the seven priority areas outlined by the UN in the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. However, they acknowledge the importance of such document in preventing violent extremism for the fact that it is participatory and inclusive. WACCE believes that when people feel they are inclusive of a process, they feel more positive participating in society, they are less likely to engage in violence.

5.2 Conclusions

The study revealed that though WACCE may not specifically be aware of Development Communication and its notions, the organization in the course of its work uses some strategies of Development Communication. However, WACCE does not purposely focus on any of the seven priority areas in the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism which states other approaches that could be adopted to prevent violent extremism.

Finally, the research finding as presented in the previous chapter were analysed. Informed by these analyses, and the following recommendations have been put forward in order to effectively incorporating Development Communication Strategies in preventing violent extremism in Ghana.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, discussions and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made. Violent extremism is micro-specific and occurs in the local environment hence, it requires measures that will deal with the phenomenon at the grass-root with clear-cut strategies. It is recommended that:

- I. Academia and PCVE practitioners must come up with what constitutes violent extremism in Ghana and design a conceptual definition of the violent extremism.
- II. Also, the Government of Ghana must take up initiative to domesticate the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism to reflect the realities of the phenomenon in the country.
- III. Again, the government of Ghana should provide funding support to some organization working in the field of violent extremism, peace building and conflict prevention to carry out a holistic research to identify the manifestation of violent extremism

tendencies in the Ghanaian society and the treat it poses to the development of the country.

- IV. All Government of Ghana initiatives that requires social change should not be carried-out largely through the media to allow active stakeholder engagement for positive outcome of such initiatives.
- V. The approach WACCE uses in sending information about preventing of violent extremism which is human-centric and largely involves the active participation of stakeholders should be emulated by other organizations that are working in similar field.
- VI. Another research should be conducted to figure out which of the Development Communication strategy or combination of strategies that yields more positive results in the Ghanaian society.

5.4 Conclusion

The research findings as presented in the previous chapter were analysed. Informed by these analyses, recommendations were made in effectively incorporating Development Communication strategies in preventing violent extremism in Ghana

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APPENDIX

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDY AND RESEAFRCH

M.A DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DATA COLLECTION

My name is LAWRENCE AYANLEKE a candidate for Master of Arts in Development Communication from the Ghana Institute of Journalism. I am conducting a research on the topic: *Exploring Development Communication Strategies in preventing Violent Extremism in Ghana: Case study of the West Africa Centre for Counter Extremism (WACCE)*. This research is being conducted in partial fulfilment of Master of Arts in Development Communication. All information that will be obtained through this interview is only for academic purposes and will be treated with utmost standard of confidentiality. Your responses are expected to enhance knowledge in PCVE in Ghana.

Kindly note that this interview will not take more than one hour to complete and all discussions will be recorded by the research assistant in order not to omit any salient points from the respondent.

EXPRESSION OF CONSENT

I have read or the purpose of this research as stated above was read to me by the researcher and I decided on willingly to participate in the research having understood that the research will contribute to knowledge on P/CVE in Ghana. If I do not participate, there will be no penalty or loss of right. I still reserve the right to stop participating at any time, even after I have started.

I agree to give permission for my participation in the above mentioned research. My signature below also indicates that I have received a copy of the consent form and adequately understood it and willingly avail myself to participate in the study.

Respondent's signature

Date

Place

.....

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Researcher's signature

Date

Place

.....

.....

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Witness' signature

Date

Place

.....

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INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE DIRECTOR OF THE WEST AFRICA CENTRE FOR COUNTER EXTREMISM (WACCE)

SECTION 1 – Understanding Development Communication Strategies

1.1 What is the phenomenon of violent extremism in Ghana?

1.2 How does WACCE communicate preventing violent extremism messages to the target audience?

1.3 What channels do you use to reach your target audience?

1.4 Does WACCE involve the youth as a target when crafting violent extremism messages?

1.5 Are you familiar with development communication or the concept of participatory communication?

SECTION 2 – Understanding the deployment of the Strategies

2.1 Would you consider preventing violent extremism through the media more efficient and effective?

2.2 Do you conduct research on your target audience?

2.3 Which approach do you mainly use in preventing violent extremism in Ghana?

2.4 In educating the public against the dangers of violent extremism, do you adopt positive or counter narratives?

SECTION 3 – Understanding adoption of the Strategies

3.1 Is there any mechanism at WACCE that is used to receive feedbacks?

3.2 Are you sometimes guided by the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism by the UN General Secretary?

3.3 Do you focus on some of the 7 priority areas in preventing violent extremism?

3.4 What communication channels did WACCE use to persuade or dissuade those youth who were saved from joining violent extremist groups outside the country?

Please be assured that your personal data and responses provided are strictly confidential. Thank you for participating in this research.

APPENDIX

TRANSCRIPTION OF THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW CONDUCTED ON 12TH SEPTEMBER, 2020 WITH MR. MUTARU MUMUNI MUQTHAR, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE WEST AFRICA FOR COUNTER-EXTREMISM

Detail of interview

Interviewer:	Lawrence Ayanleke
Respondent:	Mr. Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar (Executive Director, WACCE)
Date of Interview:	12 th September, 2020
Place of interview:	Executive Director's office, Kokomlemle - Accra
Time of interview:	2:30 pm
Duration of interview:	30 minutes, 23 seconds

Interviewer: what is the phenomenon of violent extremism in Ghana?

Respondent: *The challenge of violence extremism in Ghana is largely still a new phenomenon and so, not many people understand what is meant by radicalization or violent extremism specifically, including practitioners [in] this field it is still a largely new phenomenon within the context of security generally. But of course we all know people who participate in this area know that the challenge of violent extremism has been a big and growing one in the at least five years. But violent extremism has never been part of main stream discourse at the national level in terms of media or within security circles until somewhere in august 2015 when a young guy, a graduate from KNUST left this country and sent a message home to his parents announcing that he had joined ISIS and that was when the nation became alarmed and you know... it generated a lot of consciousness around the challenge of violent extremism and terrorism generally. But of course it meant that by the end of the following year we had at least twelve other important individuals, young people who had left this country to join terrorist groups elsewhere. This meant that the vulnerabilities for violence extremism were present in this environment even before Nazir left to join ISIS in 2015 August. And of course fast forward to today we have been able to deepen consciousness and awareness around the challenge of*

violent extremism especially largely in the media and in local communities. As an organization our work is focused on uncovering the drivers of radicalization and violence extremism, we are looking at the underpinnings, the factors that motivates individuals to become radicalized to engage in terrorism. Radicalization is the single biggest factor that leads individuals to engage in terrorism, And so to effectively fight terrorism you need to tackle radicalization and to tackle radicalization you need to understand the drivers of radicalization and that is what WACCE is about. That is our main focus in the local communities. Our work targets largely the youth, the youth we identify as the single biggest demographic that is susceptible or vulnerable to radicalization. And in the last three years we have launched a campaign called PVE in Ghana, Preventing Violent Extremism... which involves organizing workshops, and information sharing seminars and forums in communities and with groups we regard as suspect groups and suspect communities. Communities by our own matrix fall within groups we call vulnerable groups... and we may go into that if you are interested in what forms the basis of classifying a group or a community as a vulnerable group. But largely we have used a lot of channels in terms of communicating our message in terms of what... I mean we are looking at mainstream media, we use Facebook, we use twitter, we use radio stations, we use television to communicate this. We sometimes publish written works and the programs we do and national dealings in the newspapers, so we use broad channels of communication. Beyond that we engage with the people physically at the local level in terms of organizing workshops and information sharing sessions within the local community. And in the last five years we have trained through several approaches over 1600 youths, youths and people we call peace ambassadors and agents of change in the local community. And dealing with this threat one of the most important things has to do with information, the currency and relevance of information, the young people at the local community they are the people who have the highest level of proximity to the treat and information surrounding threat. And so when you train them

to understand what it means to be radicalized... what are the signs of radicalization, they are the people who can feed you real time information and to help at the national level in terms of what measures or actions to undertake and so we have been able to develop that mechanism that helps us to determine the pulse of security at the local level... maybe I will stop here you can ask specific questions.

Interviewer: Do you have a particular message for the youth in terms of preventing violence extremism?

Respondent: *So we have counter narratives. Narratives that are meant to... dissuade individuals from engaging in potentially radicalizing actions or ideals. Actions or ideals that already put them in a position to act along radicalization lines or along those vulnerabilities. So for instance there is a popular narrative among some segments of some Muslim communities that the west is against Islam, those are narratives that resonate well with already vulnerable individuals, you need to be able to develop narratives or information that counters that. The fact that the west is against Islam you need to be able to counter that using information that can help do that. We need to also develop positive messages, messages that reinforce peace, messages that reinforce the centrality of peace among vulnerable people. And so we do a combination of that in terms of preventing violence extremism in the local community.*

Interviewer: You made some very good points about counter narrative and positive narrative, these two models or approaches which one from your experience have you seen to be more productive in preventing PCVE?

Respondent: *I think both are important because both reinforce the other and...these messages you don't apply them universally, there is a level at which in terms of communication, there is a communication level where you can say that generally, you can use these narrative generally and you can also and must also apply these selectively specific to needs of that particular*

demographics or community. So I am a product of the local community, and so some of these vulnerabilities I am very, very familiar with it, because at some point I had endured in these ideologies and ideals that make people susceptible to radicalization, where a significant number of young people believe that (you know)... the west is against Islam, and acted along those lines. And so within that particular community those counter narratives are very important. There are other communities where you probably do not have these narratives popular or you may not be aware, but you need to apply positive messages that enforce the ideas of peace and peace building in the local community that further sends people away from [violent extremism] (you know)...getting involved in radicalizing messages or becoming vulnerable through radicalization.

Interviewer: In essence you do not have one approach cut-for-all?

Respondent: *No no...You look at your audience and then apply that. So for instance if I appear on television depending...there different television stations and the focus or their target audience, so I appear on national television and I am talking about radicalization and in terms of using narratives or counter narratives I mean... I will apply both, I will talk about both generally because you are speaking to a very broad audience and a broad target audience you may not be able to do the segregation and to be able to apply a specific message, you know... but positive messages are very, very important thus positive messages help people who are torn between you know...adhering to these radicalizing messages and sticking to the fundamental ideals, it helps them stick to positive lifestyles and ideals. Whiles counter narratives they are the narratives that help in critical situations, because someone is already with these ideals that he is victimized...someone who has a sense of victimhood and you have counter narratives they are very important in preventing the people from acting upon their ideals. So it is difficult to say one is more important than the other or one is more effective than the other in my experience. And when I am talking about this I am not talking about from theoretical*

perspective or academic perspective I am talking about in the practical sense in the local community.

Interviewer: Do you consider preventing violent extremism through the media more effective than engaging people at the grassroots?

Respondent: *Without necessarily having a... providing any data, my experience shows that dealing within the local community is very, very effective, its potentially more effective than dealing within the media or at the media level. The media level is important because it reinforces the PCVE programmes you do and also it reaches a broader audience, the local community [is] inevitable you are dealing with a select group of people and so...and a select group of people sought of gives you focus and narrows your scope of work and helps in deepening the impact of what you do...the facial interaction that you have with people is very, very powerful.*

Interviewer: You may not know about development communication or participatory communication as an academic discipline but you are directly practicing the principles that guide participatory communication, the fact that you involve the beneficiaries, you involve the local communities in your communication approach in dealing with violent extremism tells me that you may not know, but you are doing development communication or participatory communication which is actually the key, which is actually important... tool to deal with this canker, and that is laudable

Respondent: *Maybe to speak to that when you talk about development... sometimes there is the tendency to see PCVE work or security work separate from development, they are inherently linked. So you need to involve actors, development actors at the local level as well as the national level. So for instance, if I am doing PCVE work and in any community, in the northern part of Ghana which we have been involving for so long, first we do what we call community*

entry activities. What does it mean? You need to be able to get the buying of the local community actors. First you go to the community leaders. Community leaders carry a higher legitimacy from the people, so once you are able to get them to understand and to buy into this idea, it makes your work easier in terms of getting local support. So we meet the chiefs, traditional leaders and religious leaders, including youth and other community leaders to help them understand what it means to do what we are coming to do, before you actually come in to do PCVE work. And in doing that you involve them as well, you involve these traditional leaders and community leaders because it helps build a stronger level of support for what you are doing.

Interview: Do you conduct any research on your target audience? It may not be necessarily a very formal research but do you do analysis... probably you are going to this community to engage them on preventing violent extremism, do you before going to a community try to find out some information about the community before going in there, how to talk to them, what is their level of understanding of violent extremism? Do you know about violent extremism? Do you do all that?

Respondent: *Okay...so we carry different levels of research on the target audience that we deal with. So you remember when I was talking about the classification of communities as vulnerable communities, we have some matrix in determining that, we are looking at the profile of the community, what is the economic profile of this community, what is the demographic of this community, how many young people under the age of 22 are in education, how many of them are out of school, how many of them are employed, how many of them are unemployed, what is the crime profile of this community, what is the nature of crime in this community, what are the drivers of crime in this community, so we look at all that. And so that is general and specific to the community and not necessarily to the individuals alone. And then before we start a programme; usually the workshops, we carry out a survey and take information, data and*

their knowledge and understanding about what we are looking to do. And at the end of it we do an exit survey as well to gauge the understanding of what they have learned. So all these are different levels of research you do. Beyond that we conduct specific research, so for instance we conduct research on universities, on the vulnerability of the Muslim youth to radicalization in Ghanaian tertiary institutions and it involves like five universities in six campuses. So this is very specific, we are looking at the vulnerability of Muslim youth to radicalization in tertiary educational institutions. And so yes we do research on the target audience.

Interview: Is there any mechanism at WACCE that allows you to get feedback?

Respondent: *Oh yes I mean...feedback is very important to gauge the progress you've made and also the quality of work you do, so it helps in quality assurance and the impact of your work. And so we have established different levels of communication channels to get feedback. We have platforms, seven WhatsApp platforms that we engage our participants and... there is what we call WACCE peace network, it is a network of young people that we have engaged with at different levels, some of them through workshops, some of them through information sharing programmes and forums [fora] that we organize, so we have this WhatsApp platforms. This morning I was engaged with them, trying to help them contribute to debate around. There are political parties talking about manifestoes now, what would you like to see in a party's manifesto regarding youth. So things like this you help them participate in what is going on. And it helps them feel they are part of a process, a process that is meaningful in society so we have that. Beyond that our social media platforms, there a lot of people engaged in sending us messages, sometimes not necessarily related to security or related to what we do, but it is a means of engagement. And for a fact this has been a very important source of engagement, in 2016 we had a program called community counter radicalization programs, so we are dealing with the local community it involves even...in Accra here Mamobi, kanda areas, groups that*

have bases, I don't know whether you are familiar with this. In the local communities people have places, joints where they sit together as young people. I mean in almost all the zongo communities they have it, not only in zongo communities in some...depending on the built up environment they have places they sit and engage, so we did this things. And beyond that we had a national media dissemination of information around this. So there was a program called Iqra on TV3... I am not sure you are familiar with it, and so we had this program on Iqra for two weeks. The program was focused on radicalization, and the recruitment of vulnerable people into terrorist activities. And there was a young guy who had been recruited by ISIS, had been radicalized online. And just a day before he was meant to leave for ISIS through Burkina Faso, he was supposed to meet up with some others in Burkina Faso for them to leave for ISIS he watched that program, and the program was speaking directly to his situation, the processes he has gone through, the sought of approaches this recruiters use, and the narratives that got him attracted to this idea of jihad, and that was what made the difference. So he went online, he had never heard about me or WACCE and the work we do. So he went online searching for WACCE, he came on social media, went to our social media page and was sending us messages, he sent me messages, after the program i think I saw it later, but I thought this was a random guy sending you messages that... he wants to talk to you, he is in a desperate situation, he needs your help. And then I didn't respond immediately, then he sent more messages and that's when I called him, because he left his phone number... and I called him, and my brother he was crying on the phone, he was crying... that this program saved his life. That was the only reason why he did not leave for ISIS. And subsequently we retrieved very disturbing information, the things they were sending him, the images, the details of his roles and the radicalizing stuffs he went through. And so social media is a very powerful, very effective source of engagement.

Interviewer: Which year did this happen?

Respondent: 2016

Interviewer: It appears you carry most your activities in the zongos and the Muslim communities, is there any particular reason for this, because violence extremism doesn't have any religious collaboration or anything...or is it the case that you carry most of your activities in the *Zongos* or Muslim communities?

Respondent: *We carry our activities in communities that we describe as vulnerable communities, but for a fact it is disproportionately focused on the Muslim communities. It is not necessarily a deliberate approach, but is a consequence of our focus on countering radicalization. And so whiles it is disproportionately focused on the Muslim community, it is not meant to be focused on the Muslim community, but it so as a consequence of the character or the narrative that we are fed with publicly. So for instance, I agree with you. The stereotypical assumption of who a potential terrorist is or radicalized individual is on the basis of race, religion or ethnic background is not only false but it's dangerous. And so we are very aware of that. If you look at the trend of things since 2015 when this young guy left to join ISIS, there seem to be a narrative that projects the Muslim community as a vulnerable environment for radicalization or as a group that is susceptible to radicalization. And I mentioned earlier in some study we did on the tendency or the vulnerability of the Muslim youth to radicalization in the tertiary educational institutions. You can see the linkage with the first guy who left to join ISIS, national discourse around this at the time seemed to be pointing at youth in educational institutions or Muslims in educational institutions who are becoming radicalized and getting involved in terrorist activities. We did this study. And the finding does not support that. Especially the fact that KNUST has that group or group of people who are propagating terrorist propaganda. The results did not show that. So yes, we focus on the Muslim community*

and we focus on the Muslim community of the because of the trends that have developed, but as an organization our focus is not on the Muslim community, it is focused on vulnerable communities.

Interviewer: Violence extremism itself till today we are still struggling to get a universally accepted definition for the phenomenon. So what is WACCE's definition or your conceptual framework that guides the work you do at WACCE... don't you consider electoral violence, chieftaincy violence, local traditional ethnic conflicts as all part of violence extremism?

Respondent: *Interesting question... yes of course, the terminology violence extremism, radicalization, terrorism all these have very imprecise definitions, and depending on who is looking at it and also depending on the culture of security on your environment you choose to include any or some or all of these. In our work we regard violence extremism is [as] an expression or out root of radicalization. The relationship between radicalization and violence extremism. And so violence extremism is a product of radicalization. I will spend a bit of time on this. And so when you see people engage in violence it is a...a process occurs before that happens, it may be over a period of time, it may be short, it may be instant, it may be very long, and that process is a process where an individual comes to accept and view violence as a legitimate way to express himself. So it maybe... it may take place over several days, several weeks, several months, several hours, several minutes or it could just be instant. Because at the point where you use violence is when you believe that is a legitimate tool or way to express your grievance or register their grievance. When you see two people engaged in fighting, physically fighting, it means that they believe that that is the legitimate way to express their grievance, because they are fighting over something, it could be an ideology, it could be some product it could be anything of some value. So chieftaincy violence... how does chieftaincy violence occur? People engage over the subject of chieftaincy, leadership, a lot of them go to court, the court makes a decision, the participants or the parties get home or before they get*

home they put aside the court rulings and engage in physical violence, it can expand to different limits or different levels and this is very common throughout Ghana, chieftaincy violence is very common throughout Ghana. So what we are seeing is a product of violence extremism. Either chieftaincy violence, ethnic violence, religious violence, political violence in the form of vigilante violence, these are all... expressions of violence extremism, but in mainstream discourse when it comes to terrorism, they do not often capture this as typical violence extremist conduct. Post September 11 terrorism; tend to focus on the religious nature of terrorism and so all other stands of violence to focus on religious violence as a product of radicalization, any kind of violence today that seems to be motivated by religion is very easily and quickly branded as violence extremist conduct. Whereas people who have gone to violence resulting from competition over resources, competition over leadership and power, competition over other ideas, ideals relating to politics and yet they do not seem to attract the label violence extremism. But in our opinion all this come under the umbrella of violence extremism. And the reason why some of this, the reason we may not get that label in terms of academia is that some of this violence incidents are specific to the locality and to the communities or countries or societies where they happen, and until you elevate it to that level, to national and international level you may not get it accepted in mainstream academia as examples of violence extremist conduct. The chieftaincy conflicts that happened here when you go to Nicaragua you may not have chieftaincy violence happening, when you go to northern Ireland you may not have chieftaincy violence happening, but we know the Irish did terrorism, and their brand of terrorism was different, and if you dwell on that enough you would even know that the mainstream media in the UK never even referred to the northern Ireland terrorist actions as terrorism. In nearly all or most of the media publications they referred to it as the troubles in Northern Ireland, and so they choose to call it what they want to call it because if it gives the country a very negative image if they say it is terrorism, so they will rather call it

the troubles of Northern Ireland. I don't necessarily see any reason for that. Even when the queens own family members died in that, the queens own nephews or cousins were victims of that terrorism in Northern Ireland. So here it is left with academia today and practitioners in CVE [Countering Violence Extremism] to be able to appropriately categorize this violence we see as violence extremist conduct that is happening here. This is our terrorism; this is our terrorism in Ghana. In Nigeria they have a brand of terrorism, now herdsmen, cattle herdsmen seem to surpass mainstream terrorism in Nigeria in terms of fatalities, and that is still terrorism... so it is about the nomenclature, what you want to give to it. But this is ours and it should be appropriately be described as such.

Interviewer: In a nutshell, the underlining element is the religious factor?

Respondent: *So the religious factor within mainstream discourse of violence extremism is what qualifies as violent extremism, academia seem to focus on the religious nature of it as a prerequisite for any kind of violence should be considered as extremism violence but I'm saying we should broaden the parameters of that to include what we are seeing in our environment, other than that..., here, I mean we might be very limited in looking at violence extremism. What constitutes violent extremism and I have seen attempts at [by] some people rather regard say vigilante violence, regard chieftaincy violence to serve as what we term as a conveyer belt to violence extremism conduct, it is already a violence extremism conduct. It does not have to lead to another form of... [violence extremism] I do not know whether you get the point I am making. This already is violence extremism you know...conduct that is already a violence extremism conduct going on in our country and so it does not necessarily need to fit into what people in Sri Lanka call terrorism or people in Northern Nigeria call terrorism, people in Mali call terrorism, no, it has to be what it here in our local environment.*

Interviewer: at WACCE, how do you define violence extremism?

Respondent: *Violent extremism is any kind of violence as the product of radicalization. Any kind of violence that is motivated by either power, by religion, by politics, by whatever, intended to cause fear and panic in the society.*

Interviewer: So that is the definition WACCE base all its activities on?

Respondent: *Yes, yes very broad*

Interviewer: There is the UN General Secretary Plan of Action to prevent violent extremism, do you sometimes pick some elements or are you guided by that sometimes?

Respondent: *Yes, if you operate in this field you need to work within a framework of say the United Nations, ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Strategy or the AU and more importantly your own national counter-terrorism policies and strategies so, we consider all that and the very primary ones you will resort to is looking at the SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals] and what the goal is within the UN, you know so you look at goal number 16, they focus on peace, justice and institutions so, we operate within that framework and in any case you want to make sure you work along the national laws and National Plan of Action against the threat or the things you are dealing with. Of course, it has taken long for Ghana to come out with its own counter-terrorism policies and strategies and now we are told we will have one before the end of the year but it is not something that publicly known or available yet, so definitely yes, we work within that framework.*

Interviewer: The UN Plan of Action against violent extremism empowers member states to domesticate the global document to their local phenomenon or what happens locally, do we officially have such document in Ghana?

Respondent: *No, we just have a document that has been prepared at the end of the year I think, last year 2019... counter-terrorism strategy document and counter-terrorism policy... I have...I mean I asked for it many, many times, I do not have the document yet, the completed document yet but I understand that is available now.*

Interviewer: I am interested in Nazir, how were you able to persuade or dissuade Nazir

Respondent: *Nazir's case is different, we were not involved in Nazir's case. Nazir is the guy who, I mean the graduate from KNUST so were not involved in his case, his case first came to light nationally through the media, through the daily guide and other sources picked it up. We were centrally involved in another guy, another guy we call Isaac that is not his real name. What happened was that, like I mentioned earlier, he just by accident watched our programme, there are several other people we prevented from (you know) advancing further in their radicalisation process leaving this space to join terrorist groups elsewhere. This guys after he got (I mean), he listened to us and realised that he was on the wrong path, he reached out to us. So, what happened next was that we needed to assess his level of radicalisation, we need to understand how critical is it, how much information has he been exposed to and also what can we learn from him (you know) obviously he is dealing with these guys who are very sophisticated and really so good at manipulating people. So the first time (I mean) I met with him, we had a conversation, (you know) he was very pathetic because the guy was completely, completely... I do not know he was very devastating because at that point he did not really know what to do with his like again because he thought he had found the right path for himself only to realize that it is a total sham. So they had taken him through this process of radicalization, feeding him with information that (you know) cumulatively and eventually led to him leaving completely without doubt that coming to fight for ISIS is the most important and greatest cause for him. So (you know) they have a very sophisticated way of dealing with this so they scan online for potential recruits. And to understand this guy's case, you need to*

understand his background. Because the question people often ask, there is not...we do not often have the right answer that what leads people into radicalization? What will make someone engage in terrorism? Is easy to say Muslims are terrorists, it is easy to say poverty makes people terrorist or negative religious ideas make people terrorist but why is it that the majority of the poor people are not terrorists? Why is it that the majority I mean over 1 billion Muslims are not terrorists? Why is that in Ghana (you know) we do not have Muslims rising up and killing people? So these are very complex things and it requires very dedicated and clinical study of the phenomenon. And so...no two cases are the same. So this guy, to understand you need to do proper study and research around these things and in this country as it is many other countries in our region we do not invest in research, we do not put just a few thousands of cedis or dollars into something and expect a good outcome from it. So for instance, the guy's case, you look at his background, what would make that kind of person, you need to look into his background. He came from an environment, a majority of them did not choose to go to ISIS, they did not (you know) get to go to ISIS or say they want to go and engage in this and yet, he did. So this guy's case...and before that, in [at] WACCE we look at...we define radicalisation in relation to terrorism, we define radicalisation with certain (you know) parameters, so we look at the underpinnings or the drivers, the guys came from a very dysfunctional family background, his father died when he was in primary school and his mother remarried in another village, he did not follow his mother to her mother's new home or village. He spent time with his uncles but that was not sustainable so over time it meant that even in primary school he has to fend for himself, he struggled to complete junior high school and the rest was complete (you know), there was no any kind of supervision or support for him. He managed, he finally got through with senior high school without any good grade, without any parental or family support and without any chance of getting any job. He talks about how he applied for pupil's teaching, several places he is gone for pupil's teaching he never got a

chance and he cannot go further in [his] education because he did not have good grades. And so, the element of marginalization come in because he does not feel identified, he does not identify with any kind of family structure in his life. And so, he said his teacher gave him a phone or bought him a phone, the moment he could get online, he would add anyone he can add as a friend on Facebook, so over time, he made a family online and this was his regular source of interaction and so he derived some joy and sense of belongingness being on that space. It was through that, this guy from Algeria, they became friends on Facebook. And sometimes, what people say whether on Facebook or they say to people is the product of what is in there or what the person feels. So the guy realised this guy could be a potential recruit so he said he engaged him and it was easy for the recruit because it did not take long and this young guy was talking about he wants to go to school or he wants to get a job. He regularly, he made like this is his biggest goal, he is struggling in his life, this is what he needs in his life. And the guy came in and asking him, do you... so he asked him, are you a believer? He said yes! So you believe in ALLAH, he said yes! He said do you the purpose of our lives here on earth is not to amass the wealth of this world? Do you know that GOD's purpose of creating you is not to make money or create any wealth and he went on and on, talked about the fact that, look your time here is very finite, it is very limited no matter how much money you make, you are going to die one day, no matter how wealthy, how powerful you are... he would make [set] example like Bill Gates, Bill Gates will die one day, Mark Zuckerberg will die one day, Dangote will die, all the people will die and the only thing that will be meaningful is their commitment to GOD. So, he took this guy through this, not a day or two. This thing kept going on and on, he moved him to a point where he believed that there is no cause more important than fighting the cause of ALLAH. He is not any learned guy in Islam so he is talking about Jihad, the guy does not understand what Jihad is, explained that he needs... so he asked him, would you be ready to fight the cause of ALLAH? He said yes! Why not? So he was explaining

the concept of Jihad to him. He said the first time he mentioned Abu Bakr Baghdadi the leader of ISIS, he had never heard of him. He did not even know ISIS, he does not... the guy is somewhere in the North-East Wulensi area, he does not know what is going on, even in Ghana he does not even aware of what is going on in Ghana, let alone (you know) in Iraq and these places. He never heard about him so he sent him a picture of Abu Bakr Baghdadi. He said this called is called hamiru humineen he is the (you know) the Prophet...like the pious of the pious or the leader of the pious, he traces his descendants through to the Prophet so he made this guy looked like he is a representative of GOD in present day Islam. So he would asked this guy to put this image up on his profile and these are indoctrination tactics people use, so it demonstrate your commitment to the ideals. So he did all these, so one of the days he put it up and his friends were asking him who is that? What are you doing? And in the process they tell you that, look! The whole world, there are more corrupt individuals than those who are not including your parents, including everyone, everyone is misguided so, what you are doing, you do not have any business dealing with anybody, do not be talking to people about these things. So they would make you see yourself having attained an elevated level piety in discovering of the truth of life. So you feel distinguished so everyone else around you is misguided, so you are not obliged to talk to people about anything, this is the truth it does not matter what anyone says so realise that when you read especially from other places in Europe and Asia, radicalised individuals, one the signs: it gets to a point where they rescind from society. They redraw from society, from friends from everyone to escalate their commitment to this new-found ideals. So this guy, all these things happened to him. And it gets to stages where, they now ask him for specific commitment, what role you are coming to play. You can either play the role of researcher for information, you can play the role of suicide (I mean) mission, you can play the role of logistics, all these things. So they chose, he did tell me they chose the suicide mission for him and comes with all sorts of motivations, and they asked him where he going to come

to, at the time, ISIS in the West Africa Province had been established, the allegiance had been established already so gave the option to come to ISIS West Africa or ISIS Central, that is Syria. So, he chose to come to ISIS in Syria. So subsequently, I asked him why did you choose that. He was smiling he said the uniforms are nice (laughter) and they showed him, they gave all these images, the uniforms, (you know) there is a team of fighters in very brand uniforms playing games, boxing, doing entertainment and he loved it, if you see it, you will love it, I am telling you, far better than what our national governments give to our people, our security men, they had all that, they showed him where he is going to stay, his house, his bed (you know) they assured him, this is not a big problem, he will be very happy. So (I mean) this guy was completely one-hundred and ten percent committed to this. Until he watched the programme and we spoke in specific details, the things they say to recruits or potential recruits (you know) the narratives they use, this dunia, there is a Surah, there is a verse in the Quran that takes about the wealth of this world is not up to the weight on an ant specific to the Quran. So, if someone uses that to a vulnerable individual, it is easy to see the emptiness, the worthlessness of this world especially if you had gone through so much and yet you are not seeing anything good, you would more easily believe in this. And they want to create a binary world, they create a binary outlook for you as in 'you and them situation'. It is either you are right or wrong, you are at the side of GOD or against GOD (you know) all these things, they are tactics they use. So there is a process, a process where you come to accept that violence is a legitimate tool, the radicalisation process but in the process you come to mental destination where you see the world in a binary mode between right and wrong, between us and them (you know) between good and evil and for you, you either be on the side of good or on the side of evil, you cannot be somewhere in between, there are no grey areas and so at that point the person develops uncompromising ideals so when you have a conversation with the person, let us say, the rightness of music in Islam, it is not about you can do music if it is not accompany by beatings,

(I mean) drumming no, it either it is there or it is not there. He does not have space for compromise or grey analysis, either Lawrence is a great guy or Lawrence (I mean) is a bad guy, he does not consider the fact that, yeah! Even though Lawrence is a great guys he is also done somethings that he may not be proud of or even though he is not a good guy, he is done other great things that we should recognize. He does not have that sort of analysis in his brain, he only has that, either this or that and so these guys go through that process. Even in the process we initiated called re-radicalisation process, we did an ad-hoc programme, it got to a point, where this guy after a long conversation, this guy was silent for a while, he was crying and then shook his head and said that he has regretted not going. Can you believe it? Just when you that (I mean) this guy understand the right path and has discovered that he has been fooled all this time. He said he had regretted not going and I asked him why would he say that. He said, look at his life, that it what he told me, he said I should look at his life. It tells you that the ideals are not gone completely, it does not go off like that, it takes time so you have to look at the big drivers in his path to radicalisation and to work on it and counter those drivers, it is about money considerations? Is about religion? So you find an Imam to guide him on the right way religious wise, if it about the economic situation, you find a good job for him, if it is a combination, you do all that to help put him into mainstream society so we brought him down to Accra here, there is a guy call Muhammed Bagayah, the who used to do the Iqra Show. When I brought this guy, I made him lead him so we were trying do a programme that can help reverse his outlook for two weeks. So, to reverse it, is a complex process, you yourself you do not even know, you are not certain about everything about the guy's life. We have to spend time with him taking him through processes, for instance we took him to Kimpiski hotel. This is a very, very almost unlikely place for this guy, we took him there and walked him through the facility, the hotel to see things, sit him down let him get food to eat and see life in its fullest there and let him understand that in this life he can potentially live a good life like this, all

these people do not have anything superior to you, they just learn the right thing and follow the right processes and when they say luck, it is because you follow the right processes and got themselves prepared and something good happens so this, your life could be as good as this. So things like that, it bring [brought] a shock to him and then over time, you worked on other things. Religion, they tell you that there is a verse in the Holy Quran takes about the fact that you should kill the non-believers or kill the kufar, there is also a verse in the same Quran that takes about the fact that if you take away any person's life is as if you have taken the life on an entire humanity and if you save anyone's life is as if you have saved the entire humanity. So these are contrasting verses in the same Quran. So if you are looking for evil to justify your evil you can find it in the Quran, if you are looking to justify any good you can find it in the Quran. But most of the time they in context, the verses are done in context to interpret it, you cannot just interpret it in isolation (you know) so we took him to an Imam that [who] can help him to refocus his understanding of religion and the ideals that might have motivated his path towards radicalization. We did our own thing and eventually, we decided that the guy needs to go back to school because he is very, very focus on his ideas, how he feels (you know) he needs him to read and read the right things. So we got him to write WASSCE again, he made better grades so he went to a journalism school in Tamale. There is a school called Olive School of Journalism in the north. WACCE paid for his school fees, he graduated last year, he is working with a radio station. He calls me for interviews, I have done a lot of interviews for their station (you know) for us, his case was a great success. Of course, I have seen that this year, I have seen a lot of positive developments, he is done a lot of... I mean I have seen his writing on Facebook and his more positive than previous ones. That is the character of radicalisation and the way we deal with it here, there is no any national de-radicalisation programme here and it is also part of the fact that we, do not want to accept the fact that it is a reality in our space.

Interviewer: Isaac not real name, was he a practising Muslim?

Respondent: *Yes, he was a practising Muslim*

Interviewer: That is before he got in touch with the group online?

Respondent: *Yes, he was..., if you want I mean if you do not mind I can arrange a meeting with you or an interview with him if you want to talk to him*

Interviewer: Back to WACCE, in your submission there were two concepts that you were juggling between thus violent extremism and terrorism. What is the thin line between violent extremism and terrorism?

Respondent: *So when you talk about terrorism, mainstream understanding of terrorism it has scholarly or even practice wise seem to be from a state counter-terrorism approach, seem to be combat-focus, I do not know whether you get the point I am making. So when you are engaged in fighting terrorism with adversary forces with lethal weapons, with combat missions it is more appropriately [termed] fighting terrorism and the manifestation of radicalization, the process that lead individuals to engage in violence, the conduct, that violent extremist tendencies in terms of either signs or actuals, is what you consider as violent extremist conduct but in our work, we see the two as not entirely separate from each other but when you read mainstream literature you see a distinction between or a separation on the two. Violent extremism is a build up to terrorism, it is a whole part. The exception here is that radicalisation is a mechanism, radicalisation is a process, radicalisation is not an incident or an activity or an act so it is process that gives meaning..., that lead to violent extremism conducts. So before anyone get involved in violent extremism conducts, like I mentioned earlier something must happen, it does not happen out of nothing, there is something that happens in the person's brain or the person's experience. So let me properly define it, you look at radicalisation as a process an individual goes through influenced by multiple factors which includes negative religious ideals, negative political ideals, poverty, marginalisation, inequality, dysfunctional*

family or social background and a host of others depending on the reality of the person's circumstance or society, he gets influenced by these factors and leads the person to a mental destination where he sees the world in a binary mode, a mental destination where he regards violence as a legitimate way to express himself. Let me ask you, if you grow up in an environment where the crime rate is very high, unemployment is high for [the] youth and there is poverty, there is marginalisation... you do not even know what it takes, you do not participate because your circumstance does not give you motivation to participate in what is going on. They are holding a town hall meeting, there is only a few elites who do these things and I feel isolated by this, I come from a poor background and I am fed with some negative religious ideals or something. I need to survive, this world is like a war zone, it is a competition, we need to survive. Yes, you see elite trying to make things nice, they are also competing it may not be as rough as people in the lower level. So I need to survive in even in my state and in the process I may see violence a legitimate tool if I have to use it. And also if someone is radicalised it does not mean they go about killing people or get involved in violence it just means that his mind is prime. It is put in a position where violence is acceptable when he has to use it so, he needs what we call a trigger, like...something that can trigger it to spark this violence and so that is the distinction, it is a process. When you see someone engaged in violence extremism conduct, this process must might have happened in his life maybe immediately after September 11 they used to give, US Department of State and many people working in this field, they used to give timelines when it could take place. Now people are saying no, people are moving away from giving this timeline, technology and social media has narrowed the time between ideals and actions. Somebody could just wake up because Israel has occupied Goran Height, Israel has done whatever against Palestinians and he has always find himself identifies with the cause of Palestinians, it can escalate his commitment to violence just like that. (You know) These things... this same process is what lead individuals to engage in terrorism. So there is the

tendency for people to do the distinction between terrorism and violent extremism as a miniature of terrorism, the violence at the smaller levels for the vulnerabilities that lead to terrorism and the actual conduct in warfare as...violence extremism that leads to that. And the good thing about the usefulness of this work at this time is that there is still a lot of imprecise things in it so gives you the opportunity, with the knowledge and information you have to define things for yourself and in your own way.

Interviewer: in a nutshell, does it mean WACCE see violent extremism and terrorism as identical and treat both phenomena the same way?

Respondent: *You cannot say you will treat them the same way, I made the initial point about the combat-focus nature of terrorism. So states see countering terrorism from a combat perspective whereas people like us we make a separation say there is a root approach to countering terrorism and the branch approach to countering terrorism. So the root approach relates to violence extremism so you are looking at the drivers of radicalisation that lead to terrorism so the violent extremism is a product of the drivers, the drivers, the things that relate to marginalisation, poverty, inequality can lead people to engage in violence extremism conduct, it can escalate beyond that to actual engaging in terrorism. So for instance, maybe one of the factions in Islam here in Ghana attacks another, it may be reported depending on what happened, it may be reported as terrorism. Civil society may look at it and say these are examples of violent extremism conducts that take [took] place. From our perspective, we will regard it as violence extremism conduct. And violent extremism does not have to be manifested physically, it could be in ideas, it could be in written forms, it could be expressed in any other form. It is grey, I mean we have talked about these things for a very long time and so there is the tendency for you to... say they are part of same thing depending on your approach to dealing with it*

Interviewer: The UN Plan of Action to prevent violent extremism has seven priority areas, do you at WACCE focus on any of the priority areas?

Respondent: *We focus on what the reality on the ground is, the often reference for, has to do with at any time what the state is doing and especially, the SDGs that we look at (you know) goal number 16. And of course, our work is not solely repose on just that, we do other things that are supportive of what countering violence extremism...like doing programmes relating to inclusive participation and good governance and electoral violence. When people feel they are inclusive of a processes, they feel more positive participating in society, they are less likely to engage in violence and so we do all that. And so as for the seven, we do not by design focus on any or exclude any, we do not, we do not have that plan or that approach now.*

Interviewer: Thank you so much for granting me this interview and be assured that the information you shared with us will be kept confidential and only for academic purposes

Respondent: *You are welcome, I appreciate that, if at any point you need any clarifications on anything or you need any further information, do not hesitate to get in touch, thank you.*