

## A Critical Discourse Analysis of 'Youth Radicalisation': A Case of the Daily Nation Kenya Online Newspaper

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**Abstract :** The purpose of this study is to critique 'radicalisation' and more particularly 'youth radicalisation' by exploring its usage in online newspapers. 'Radicalisation' and 'extremism' have become the most common terms in terrorism studies since the 9/11 attacks. Regardless of the geographic location, when the word terrorism is used the terms 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' always follow to attempt to explore the journey of the perpetrators towards violence. These terms have come to represent a discourse of dominantly pejorative traits often used to describe spaces, groups, and processes identified as problematic. Even though ambiguously defined they feature widely in government documents, political statements, news articles, academic research, social media platforms, religious gatherings, and public discussions. Notably, 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' have been closely conflated with the term youth to form 'youth radicalisation' to refer to a discourse of 'youth at risk'. The three terms largely continue to be used unquestioningly and interchangeably hence the reason why they are placed in single quotation marks to deliberately question their conventional usage. Albeit this comes timely in the Kenyan context where there has been a proliferation of academic and expert research on 'youth radicalisation' (used as a neutral label) without considering the political, cultural and socio-historical contexts that inform this label. This study seeks to draw these nuances by employing a genealogical approach that historicises and deconstructs 'youth radicalisation'; and by applying a Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) of Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse Kenyan online newspaper - The Daily Nation between 2015 and 2018. By applying the concept of representation to analyse written texts, the study reveals that the use of 'youth radicalisation' as a discursive strategy disproportionately affects young people especially those from cultural/ethnic/religious minority groups. Also, the ambiguous use of 'radicalisation' and 'youth radicalisation' by the media reinforces the discourse of 'youth at risk' which has become the major framework underpinning Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) interventions. Similarly, the findings indicate that the uncritical use of 'youth radicalisation' has been used to serve political interests; and has become an instrument of policing young people, thus contributing to their cultural shaping. From this, it is evident that the media could thwart rather than assist CVE efforts. By exposing the political nature of the three terms through evidence-based research, this study offers recommendations on how critical reflective reporting by the media could help to make CVE more nuanced.

**Keywords :** discourse, extremism, radicalisation, terrorism, youth

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