

Counter-Terrorism Measures: Addressing Youths Unemployment and Poverty in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

The Nigerian state was known for peaceful co-existence before 2009 when the Boko Haram launched attacks that bedevilled peace and security sustainability in Nigeria. The country is subdivided into six geopolitical zones which includes the North-west, North-central, North-east, South-west, South-south and South-east. Thus, Northern Nigeria comprises North-west, North-central and North-east that makes up the area of study. The study made use of qualitative research design through the conduct of interviews for the purpose of this research. The findings therefore, reveal that most of the youths who engaged in terrorism activities is as a result of unemployment and poverty in this region. It is also revealed that, some of the youths are engaged in terrorism activities so as to get a source of living. This work therefore recommends that, youths in Nigeria should be gainfully employed and fully engaged in a skill in order to eradicate terrorism in Nigeria. Also, the paper recommends industrialization in Nigeria which could serve as a tool for source of generating revenue and a source of employment opportunities for Nigerians. Thus, through establishment of industries, jobs can be created for the youths and it can generate sources of revenue for the government in order to eradicate poverty in Nigeria.

Keywords: Counter-terrorism, Youths unemployment, Poverty, Northern Nigeria and Nigeria.

Introduction

The world over, different countries face different challenges based on their location whether such challenges are triggered by the natural environment like rain, thunder, flooding, erosion, earth quake and so on. In some countries, the challenges might be man-made and not natural disasters. A challenge that comes as a result of man-made conflict can be so traumatizing to the people especially the victims that are involved (Terwase, Abdul-Talib, Zengeni & Terwase, 2015). The world has witnessed many conflict situations from country to country ranging from Asia to Africa, Europe to American and the Oceania, etc.

Human made conflict on the other hand could be in different forms such as political, economic, social, and environmental. In Africa, the continent has witnessed a lot of conflict situations in most cases that are political and

economic in nature. Thus, most political conflicts may lead to violence if not resolved amicably between the aggrieved parties. There are African countries that shared moments of conflict where the military intervened in their governments and in some, the military organized coups and counter-coups in order to take over power. In the case of Nigeria, the country equally witnessed military coups and counter-coups. Nigeria over time, changed from military to civilian administration in 1999 when the military government handed over power to the elected government in 1999, where President Obasanjo took over power from military Head of State, under General Abdulsalami Abubakar (Terwase, Terwase, Puldu, & Abdul-Talib, 2018).

The country's democratic government was later faced with the Boko Haram insurgents in 2009 when they started launching their attacks

against the Nigerian Government. The country began witnessing conflicts between the terrorist groups in such a way that many people were killed by Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria. This paper thus, focuses on why the youths in Nigeria offered themselves to fight against their very own country and what measures can be taken to counter the terrorism activities in Nigeria and her neighbouring countries such as Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

Research Method

The research paper made use of qualitative research design via the conduct of interviews to acquire data to be used for this work. This research work equally used other sources such as journals, books and other internet sources for the collection of data for this research work.

Conflict Tools in Nigeria

These tools are unemployment and poverty. The paper shall discuss it in details for the understanding of this work.

Unemployment/Zoning Issue: The issue of unemployment has created a gap between the rich and the poor which has further bedevilled development in any given society especially in African countries. Those who are rich tend to manipulate those who are poor in order to achieve their desired goals, and in some cases, the rich aspire to use unemployed youths in achieving such desired objectives. Ajufo (2013) argues that youth unemployment has contributed to high rate of poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. Awojobi (2014) demonstrated how unemployment and poverty breed insecurity which can be evident in any given society where some of those that are unemployed may likely engage in societal vices such as armed robbery, prostitution, etc. as the case may be.

On the other hand, Adenike (2021) opined that unemployed youths could be less busy because they do not have jobs that are keeping them busy and may become available for use in conflict situations. Unemployment also contributes to the emergence of conflict in Nigeria especially in the Northern part of the country where the youths are largely unemployed. Onuoha (2014) in his work emphasized on why youths in the Northern part

of the country join the Boko Haram terrorist organization in fighting against the people and the government of Nigeria, the work revealed that, they engage in such careers as a result of unemployment otherwise referred as joblessness.

Adebayo (2014) also concurred on how Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria have survived over time; this is because the youth are available for use in fighting against the Nigerian State. The work opined that reduction in youth unemployment would serve as a panacea in resolving the conflict between the Nigerian State and the Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria. The work of Ayegba (2015) categorically puts it that majority of those people that are fighting for the Boko Haram terrorist organization in the Northern part of Nigeria are mostly youths and this is as a result of their inability to be meaningfully engaged. They do not have decent means of earning a living and that has contributed to their joining the terrorist group to fight the Federal Government of Nigeria.

On the issue of unemployment, a respondent opined that:

There are many Nigerians in the northern part of the country who are not working, no job, no source of livelihood, and some of them go about from one motor park to another in search for food to eat. It is a very difficult life style but they just have to continue moving, and in such way of life, such youths become tools in the hands of the Boko Haram terrorist groups. Some of them offer themselves just to have a means of living. In a situation where you find yourself working for the government or the private sector, you can agree with me that one will certainly be very busy and he or she knows that at the end of the day or the month there is something coming in as source of earning. In that case, you won't want to work for Boko Haram because they leave in the forests since they are fighting against the government.

Shuaibu, Salleh and Shehu (2015) corroborate on how Boko Haram does her recruitment into

the terrorist group through engagements of the youths who are unemployed. The work further opined that, the increasing rate of unemployment in the country is what gives room for the unemployed youths to be recruited into the Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria. Awojobi (2014) posit how poverty plays a major role in luring the Northern youths in Nigeria to joining the Boko Haram terrorist organization. The massive number of unemployed youths in Nigeria is a significant factor for their recruitment into the Boko Haram terrorist group. They find the terrorist organization as a means for them to get an earning for their living.

Again another respondent concurred that:

Give the youths jobs and you will find them busy doing something. In Nigeria, even when the issue of marriage comes into a discussion, you will hear some youths saying: I am not going to marry because I do not have a job. Now, when it comes to fighting against the government, there are some who feels that the government has not done anything for them. So, why should they not be involved in the fight? This means, there is negligence on the part of the government to provide an environment for the youths to be employed and for them to have a means of earning or a source of living.

More so, Salaam (2012) argued that unemployment could motivate vulnerable youths to resort to joining the Boko Haram terrorist group in fighting the Nigerian Government and this is as a result of the teeming mass of unemployed Nigerian youths. All these arguments gear towards understanding the impact of unemployment in Nigeria and its implication on our security architectural system in the country. Terwase, Terwase, Puldu & Abdul-Talib (2018) views how those that are unemployed may join Boko Haram and could become dangerous tools in their hands to fight against the Government of Nigeria. Another important reason why these youth join this Sect may be as result of frustration leading to aggression. In relation to all these, the issue zoning comes up which forms a nexus with

unemployment which further buttresses the reason for conflicts in Nigeria especially from 2009 to 2015. The country was bedeviled with the challenge of zoning the seat of power (Position of the President of Nigeria) between the North and South of which these idle youths keyed in to fight as a result of idleness.

According to Terwase, Abdul-Talib & Zengeni (2014) and Terungwa & Yuguda (2014), the Nigerian State which is located in the Western part of Africa is endowed with mineral resources and human capacity to excel in all ramifications. The country is known for her largest population in Africa, yet, the country is divided along ethnic, religious as well as geographical affiliations and that has contributed to her underdevelopment. Nigeria is politically divided between the North and South especially during the President Jonathan's led government where the issue of zoning became a political tussle in the country (Terwase, Abdul-Talib, Zengeni & Terwase, 2015; Yerima, Ibrahim, Terwase & Abdul Talib, 2016; Terwase, Yerima, Abdul-Talib & Ibrahim, 2016; Terwase, Yusuf, Mohammed & Sani, 2022).

The issue of zoning became tensed to an extent that the North united with the Southwest in 2015 Presidential elections and the then President Jonathan was defeated during the elections (Terwase, Abdul-Talib & Zengeni, 2015; Terwase, Yerima, Bello & Ibrahim, Abdul-Talib, 2016). Thus, Alao, Atere & Alao (2012) posit that the Boko Haram became so strong during the President Jonathan's led administration as argued by General Andrew Azazi (Rtd) that they (Boko Haram) were used to fight against the said administration. The statement by General Azazi (Rtd) led to his removal from office as the National Security Adviser (NSA) to the President and he was replaced with Con. Sambo Dasuki (Rtd) as the NSA. More so, after the removal of Gen. Azazi, the conflict between the Boko Haram and the Nigerian Government still continued.

In that regards, the paper maintains it focus on the youths who do not have jobs and they offered themselves to be used by the Boko Haram especially those who are unemployed. Onuoha (2014) opined that the youths working for the Boko Haram become radicalized and they fought vehemently against the Nigerian Government. According to Tonwe & Eke

(2013), there is a great need for the Federal Government of Nigeria to question herself, why do the Nigerian youths offer themselves to fight against their own country? The work noted that members of the Boko Haram terrorist group are very poor youths who are also unemployed, however, they are used by the organization to terrorize the country. Uddin (2013) revealed that unemployment in Nigeria is the major reason why the Nigerian youths especially from the Northern part of the country easily join terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, whereas in the case of the Southern part of the country, unemployed youths are quick to join the Niger-Delta militant groups to fight the government and the oil companies.

Poverty

Another conflict tool used by the groups that fight the Nigerian government is poverty in the Land. Akinola (2015) examines how poverty has played a big role in both the emergence and the continuous existence of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Adenrele (2012) posits that severe poverty in the northern part of Nigeria is the very reason why some youths join Boko Haram to earn a living from their sponsors. Evans & Kelikume (2019) argue that poverty is a significant cause of having the terrorist group in Nigeria over time. The work of Khan and Cheri (2016) observed that an accumulative poverty in the Northern part of Nigeria has contributed to the continuous lingering of the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria.

More views on why some youths are ever to be against their country especially with focus to Nigeria, a respondent suggest that:

In most families in Northern Nigeria, there are many youths who are not even educated and some of them are from very poor background. Their parents never went to school and even the children too end up not attending school because their parents are very poor. So, the poverty from their homes has affected their psychological well-being. Such children are therefore; ready to be used by any group that is ready to offer them something which can serve as their source of earning. Poverty creates the gap between the

rich and the poor.

According to Iwuoha (2019), the Nigerian Government has failed on both sides to end the activities of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria and to fish out the sponsors of Boko Haram in the country. The Government of Nigeria charged Senator Ndume to court for being one of the sponsors of Boko Harm in Nigeria but he vehemently denied the allegation (Adibe, 2013). This work categorically suggest that, the Nigerian Government should appeal to her citizens to embrace peace and love for one another in order to end the war between the government and the Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria. On this note, the work shall further discuss other counter-terrorism measures in ending the said war in order to foster development collectively in our dear country.

Counter-Terrorism Measures

These are measures that can be taken in order to use for the purpose of fighting the Boko Haram terrorist organization. These measures shall be discussed below.

Job Creation: This is one of the major issues that needs to be addressed by the government and the people of Nigeria especially the rich. This can be done through collective and strategic engagement of the Public-Private Partnership in order to create jobs for our youths and well-meaning Nigerians. Nigeria has the highest population in Africa of over 200 million people which can also serve as a means to human capital development. The Nigerian Government can create jobs for the youths in order to reduce the rate of unemployment in the country. This can be a collective responsibility between the Government and the Private sector through Public-Private Partnership initiative (Terwase, Ibrahim, Abdul-Talib & Yerima, 2016; Terwase, Abdul-Talib, Zengeni & Terwase, 2015).

Industrialization: The work of Terwase, Abdul-Talib & Zengeni (2014) suggest that Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa and the country is endowed with mineral resources so much that all the states are blessed with one mineral deposit or the other. Therefore, there is high demand for industrialization where

the raw materials can be processed into finished goods. We have limestone in the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria, they are located in places such as Gboko, Benue State; Obajana, Kogi State; Abeokuta, Ogun State and Ashaka, Gombe State, and they produce cement out of the limestone as a result of the cement industries.

The cement companies thus, create job opportunities for the people to work in the companies and it forms part of their source of earning. The cement companies also serve as a major source of revenue for the government through payment of taxes. These are the ways of raising money for the government and the people. Through industrialization, companies can be established and the use of raw materials into finished goods can take place. That would promote job creation for the Nigerian youths where they can be employed to work with different industries in Nigeria. Equally, industrialization would also foster development when the revenue is used for development purposes.

Conclusion

Terrorism has created so much distrust between the government and the people especially those youths who offered their lives to work for the Boko Haram in Nigeria. Several researches have been conducted on why Boko Haram in Nigeria, to whose benefit is the existence of the insurgents groups and the destructions they have engaged in by killing people and destroying both public and private properties. This work in conclusion observed that, many youths engaged in Boko Haram activities in order to earn a living, to some, they have no sense of livelihoods and that has driven them into a state of poverty. The work therefore, suggests that creation of job opportunities can be of help to the government in eradicating poverty in the country. More so, job creation would serve as a means for the youths to be engaged with meaningful tasks and these can assist them to get out of poverty. Eradication of poverty and creation of job opportunities can serve as counter-terrorism measures in the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

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