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Counter-Ideology as a Wider Strategy for Defeating the Boko Haram Terrorist Group

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Abstract

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MDRMDS, Ahmadu Bello University, 2017

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

There is a need to address current military strategies to defeat the resilience of the Boko Haram Terrorist (BHT) group. The purpose of this qualitative study was to provide a counter-ideology framework as an alternative strategy to defeat the group. The relational/vengeance and relative deprivation theories provided the theoretical foundation for the study, and the research question addressed the extent to which counter-ideology strategies can be instituted to defeat the BHT group. Data were collected through semi structured interviews from 20 participants who were Muslim clerics, community leaders, and military personnel, and data were analyzed using Nvivo software. The themes for the study were developed using a content analysis approach. The findings indicated that the resilience of Boko Haram was due to the group's ability to maintain an ideological consistency with the extreme version of Jihadi-Salafism. Thus, there is a need to develop an effective reconciliatory national security strategy that is focused on counter-ideology policies to augment the ongoing military strategy. Given that counter-ideology offers a nonmilitary counterterrorism approach, it can deescalate the security situation in Northeast Nigeria, which can lead to socioeconomic benefits for the youth in Nigeria.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my wife, Judith, who was supportive and my source of inspiration all the way to the end of this arduous academic journey. It is also dedicated to my children Wentirim, Akabialie, and Apaaknawen, who were affected in many ways by this quest.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The current military crackdown on the Boko Haram Terrorist (BHT) group in Nigeria has significantly affected the group's ability to undertake coordinated major offensive operations. However, relying on this military force and negotiations has not neutralized the group's ideology. Additionally, the continuous use of excessive military force against Boko Haram has resulted in significant increase in the death of innocent civilians caught up in the fighting. Considering the complexity of the threat from the BHT group, it is important to augment the current security measures with strategies that focus on targeting the ideology of the group (Muhammad & Mostarom, 2011). It is against this background that this study was initiated to ascertain the usefulness of counter-ideology as a strategy for defeating the BHT group.

Background

Ideology is a set of ideas, opinions, or narratives that provide individuals with an identity, a purpose, and a sense of importance. In religious contexts, ideology provides individuals with a social bond and a sense of redemption and atonement for sins and past shame. For terrorists, ideology provides them with a justification for their acts of violence. In other words, terrorist groups rationalize their actions within a framework of an ideological orientation to attract potential recruits (Sedgwick, 2007; Cohen et al., 2018). In the case of the BHT group, its ideological discourses and the way it sustains itself requires an understanding of how the group emerged. The emergence of the BHT group in Northern Nigeria since July 2009 has caused the death of many people through suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks. The BHT group phenomenon has also been

attributed to extremist impulses embedded in the sociopolitical realities of Northern

Nigeria (Agbiboa, 2013).

Such sociopolitical realities are linked to poverty, economic disparities between

the wealthy and the poor and religious violence in Northern Nigeria (Adesoji, 2010;

Bakare, 2016; Walker, 2012). As is to be expected, Boko Haram is taking advantage of

this situation to reinforce the ideological orientation of its members (Olojo, 2013;

Abdullah, 2017). This is evident as young people continue to follow the propaganda and

ideological narratives of Boko Haram (Flaherty, 2013; Onuoha, 2014). Apart from being

a brainwashing device, terrorist ideology also functions as a tool for exploiting religious

beliefs to incite hatred, violence, and schism in most societies in Northern Nigeria. It is

therefore not surprising that the BHT group uses ideology as a narrative to justify

violence against their perceived existential enemies.

Efforts by the government of Nigeria to halt the increasing violence of Boko

Haram have so far relied on two major approaches (Human Rights Watch, 2012). These

approaches are the carrot and stick strategies that seek to negotiate with Boko Haram and

at the same time imposing a military crackdown on the group (Abonyi & Ezeh, 2017).

However, these strategies, particularly the military crackdown on the group, have not

limited the activities of the BHT group. Though security and military responses remain

important, they have not addressed the Boko Haram threat in Nigeria like the case of Iraq

and Afghanistan (Bush, 2009; Onapajo, 2017). Wilkinson (2011) contended that the use

of military power was counterproductive in the war on terrorism following the 9/11

terrorist attacks in the United States. The extent to which counterterrorism strategies can

be successful against the BHT group in Nigeria therefore depends on a deeper understanding of the ideology of the group.

Researchers have argued that it is necessary to counter the group's ideological narratives by replacing them with compelling alternative messages, in comparison to the military approach that is currently in use in Nigeria (Ladbury et al., 2016; Fenstermacher et al., 2011). Nigeria's current military strategy in response to the BHT group has been suppressive and requires a change to ensure an effective counterterrorism effort (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012; Chinwokwu, 2013; Ra'ad al-Hussein et al., 2014). This is against the backdrop that the prominent ideological factor that drives the BHT group is influenced by the ideals of the political authority of Islam which relies on the instructions of the old-fashioned Islamic intellectual, Ibn Taymiyya (Barkindo, 2013). Relying on counter-ideological approach as a strategy for defeating terrorists' ideology is therefore feasible (Lerner, 2016). In the opinion of former President Obama, military force alone was not enough to defeat any terrorist group because ideologies cannot be defeated with weapons (Bello, 2017). Moreover, counter-ideology can change the minds of Muslims from believing that terrorism is authorized by Islam, assure non-Muslims that the religion of Islam is not the cause or source of terrorism, and can also rehabilitate terrorists (Abdullah, 2017). Thus, I conducted this study to address how counter-ideology can be used to augment the current military approach to defeat the BHT group.

Problem Statement

The activities of the BHT group in Northeastern Nigeria pose security challenges to the country. Though the use of military force against terrorists is a viable option, its

usefulness against terrorist ideologies has not yielded the intended results. After decades

of the armed forces of Nigeria waging military operations against the BHT group, this

has only reduced minimally the group's ability to conduct offensive operations (Agbiboa,

2013; Regens et al., 2016).

The group's resilience is linked to its ideology which is based on the radical

Salafist philosophy. Given that the terrorist ideology is a critical factor in the

radicalization of both individuals and groups, it is important that any strategy to defeat

the BHT group first dismantle the group's ideology. A multipronged and multifaceted

approach is as a consequence, a necessary strategy for eliminating terrorist ideologies

(Hassan, 2006). For this reason, counterterrorism efforts that do not include a counter-

ideology strategy cannot defeat the group's resilience. However, efforts by the Nigerian

government to defeat Boko Haram have been focused on military counterinsurgency

operations and intelligence-driven counterterrorism strategies.

Although several studies have addressed various counterterrorism strategies

against the BHT group, there is a lack of literature on counter-ideology as one of the

viable approaches for defeating the group. Other counterterrorism experts believe that

terrorist ideology is a significant factor that incites individuals to engage in terrorist

activities. As a result, if the ideology is not defeated, counterterrorism efforts by

governments will not be successful (Biddle 2002; Iyekekpolo, 2016). The need for the

government of Nigeria to adopt a new approach that explores counter-ideology as part of

a broad counterterrorism strategy is therefore a necessity.

Purpose

The increasing ideological motivation of the BHT group is a contributing factor for the resilience of the group and the precarious security situation facing Nigeria. Based on its orientation, the BHT group advocates a jihadist approach to religious domination and governance in Nigeria. The advocacy is based on the group's ideological narrative and an ideational framework that all the sociopolitical ills, economic, and moral problems affecting Muslims in contemporary Nigeria can be eliminated by the application of rigid Islamic norms (Bello, 2017; Oriola & Akinola, 2018). The purpose of this qualitative study was therefore to explore the suitability of a counter-ideology strategy as a complimentary counterterrorism strategy to facilitate the defeat of the BHT group.

Research Question

To what extent can counter-ideology strategies be instituted to defeat the Boko Haram Terrorist group?

Theoretical Framework

Various theoretical constructs have alluded to the Nigerian government's ineffective approach to combating the BHT group. Once a state is unable to provide required security and safety to its citizens, then citizens can become disloyal to the state (Uzodik & Maiangwa, 2012). In Northeastern Nigeria for instance, the locals have been compelled to pledge their loyalty to their community and religious leaders, and exposed them to terrorism as they strive to secure a common communal identity. Thus, the BHT group continues to exploit marginalized areas by using ideology to mobilize support from their sympathizers.

In this study, relational/vengeance theory and deprivation theory were used to explain the extent of security challenges confronting Nigeria's effort in combating the BHT group. The relational/vengeance theory clarifies the reasons for inter-group conflicts and helps explore the sociopolitical, economic, and historical relationships that exist among groups (Alozieuwa, 2012). The theory is based on the premise that value and cultural differences as well as the interest of groups affect the interactions among individuals and groups differently (Dixon et al., 2003).

The relational/vengeance theoretical framework applies to the activities of the BHT group in the context of the history of disagreement among tribal groups in Nigeria due to the negative stereotypes, religious intolerance, and discrimination (Faleti, 2006). For instance, the BHT group has been described by the local population and the government based on several negative perceptions (Okereke, 2011). The group is perceived as terrorists with psychiatric challenges. These perceptions have fed into the "we" and "others" dichotomy, creating mutual antagonism that has been violently expressed. As a result, the channels of communication between the government and the group are disrupted anytime attempts have been made to resolve the underlying issues, especially because the BHT group's violent efforts have not been understood.

Moreover, the relational/vengeance theory elucidates that as efforts to combat the BHT group intensifies, the government becomes the "we" and the group becomes the "others." This opposes the way the BHT group sees itself as they consider themselves bound by a common purpose of defeating the "unbelievers." Boko Haram members also consider themselves as deprived and regard the remaining members of the Nigerian

society as the "others." In their view, the use of brutal military force by the armed forces of Nigeria against them must inevitably attract reprisals from their members. The relational/vengeance theory is thus a theory that can illuminate the BHT group's resolve to avenge its members at all cost even in the face of the overwhelming military might of the Nigerian security forces against the group. Therefore, an effective method of preventing prejudice in the fight against the BHT group is to target their extreme ideology and stereotypes through counter-ideological interventions (Hayes et al., 1999). Through this process, people can critically assess their prejudicial thoughts without reacting negatively to the group (Hayes et al., 1999).

Similarly, the relative deprivation theory suggests that people feel dissatisfied and frustrated when they compare their socioeconomic status with others. The discrepancies between the aspirations of individuals and their daily lives tend to frustrate people and push them to join violent political movements. The theory therefore illuminates the behavioral effects of deprivation and the exploration of an individual's feelings of deprivation resulting from comparing their situation with a referent person or group.

The relative deprivation theory applies to the Boko Haram situation in Nigeria because the discrepancies in socioeconomic prosperity of the people living in the northern part of Nigeria provide one of the reasons for the deviant behavior of some individuals. Such deprivation and frustration may lead to people acting aggressively, which often manifests as terrorist acts (Dollard et al., 1939). Therefore, the relative deprivation theory provides a theoretical explanation for the feeling of inequality among Boko Haram members that drives them into acts of terrorism.

Nature of the Study

The research involved qualitative research methods to explore how counter-ideology strategies can contribute to the defeat of the BHT group. To facilitate this, I employed a phenomenological approach to enable me to understand the firsthand experiences of individuals who have been exposed to the atrocities of the BHT group. I conducted semi structured interviews with 20 participants to gather their responses to questions that addressed the research question.

Definitions

Counter ideology: The disruption of jihadist propaganda through the removal of their propaganda materials and messages including theological messages from the Internet and deporting the identified jihadist or jihadists (Sedgwick, 2012).

Counterterrorism: Includes proactive practices, military tactics, techniques, and strategy that government organizations such as law enforcement, the military, businesses, and the intelligence agencies use to identify terrorist groups and individuals to neutralize or prevent terrorist from conducting further attacks (Mahan & Griset, 2012).

Dawah: The fulfilment of the command to call people's attention and rationality toward the path of Allah based on an ideology that is generally believed to reward believers and provide further advantages to adherents (AlFaruqi, 1976).

Deradicalization: Is a process that involves reforming people who have been exposed to violent and extreme religious views or violent political ideologies into more moderate citizens (Altier et al., 2016).

Extremism: Any form of Islamic deviance that deviates from a pattern of behavior and opposes the democratic principles such as individual liberties, the rule of law, and the tolerance and mutual respect for people who practice different faiths and beliefs within a given social context (Webber et al., 2018).

Hadith: The recorded speeches, activities, tacit endorsements, and characteristics of Prophet Muhammad that are ranked next to the Qur'an and regarded as a source for Islamic religious laws and moral guidance (Junaidi et al., 2017).

Hijra: The relocation of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca accompanied by his followers to avoid the persecutions of the newly converted followers and also allow them to learn the laws of Islam from the Prophet himself (Uberman & Shay, 2016).

Ideology: Is a unified, dynamically changing set of ideas or beliefs held collectively by a group that is often expressed verbally or in semiotic, performative, ritualistic, or in a behavioral form (Griffin, 2006).

Izala: An Islamic reformist movement originally formed in Northern Nigeria but is now present in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Their mission is to counter any form of innovations introduced into Islam by the Sufi brotherhood (Hayatu et al., 2017).

Jihad: An individual moral struggle associated with a spiritual obligation to a noble cause which is observed with determination but does not mean a holy war (Aboul-Enein, 2009).

Radicalism: The process by which individuals are motivated to advocate a complete political or social reform through violence against perceived adversaries or

symbolic targets as a means of achieving political goals and behavioral change (Doosje et al., 2016).

Salafism: A puritanical form of Islam that advocates a rigid adherence to all Quranic injunctions and the prophetic traditions associated with the original ideals of Sunni orthodoxy and totally forbids religious innovations in any form (Lauziere, 2015; Kassim, 2015).

Sharia: A set of laws that guide all aspects of Muslim life and provide a clear path to fulfillment in life including daily routines and success in the hereafter (Johnson & Vriens, 2011).

Takfir: A theological doctrine in Islam that justifies the classification of Muslims who are considered to have abandoned the Islam faith as infidels (Kassim, 2015).

Wahhabism: A form of Islam that is based on an Islamic doctrine and is aimed at restoring unadulterated monotheistic worship by devotees and named after Muhammad ibn `Abdul-Wahhab (1703-1792), who is regarded as its founder (Qamar, 2015).

Assumptions

The participants in this research were stratified into three categories; Muslim clergy, community opinion leaders, and the military. I assumed that the initial respondents in this study would refer me to other potential participants in line with the snowballing strategy I chose. Given that the Muslim clergy are considered the ultimate interpreters of Islamic jurisprudence, I also assumed that they will drive the counter-ideology efforts by reaching out to most Muslims through the use of suitable counter radical narratives emanating from Islamic teachings.

Scope and Delimitations

The intent of this research was to focus on counter-ideology as the basis for defeating the resilience of the BHT group. The study covered the Northeastern part of Nigeria because Boko Haram operates primarily in the area. The years under review in this study covered the period from 2009 to 2016, a period associated with intensification in the activities of the group that earned them worldwide notoriety. Besides the growing influence of Boko Haram and the need to understand its current state, this study was also focused on identifying the ideological construct that shapes the group's resilience.

The BHT group is responsible for the current cross-border terrorism in West Africa, especially across Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. There are global concerns regarding the burden of managing the undeveloped economic status of these countries in addition to the problems associated with terrorism. However, this study did not focus on the impact of the group's activities in these countries.

Limitations

The participants were expected to be able to articulate their thoughts freely regarding the experience being studied. However, some participants, particularly, those within the community leader category found it difficult to express themselves well because the mode of communication used during the interview was in English. Their limited proficiency in the English language affected their ability to provide authentic accounts of their experiences given that I had to hire research assistants proficient in the local languages to administer the questionnaire.

Another limitation in this research related to the use of snowball sampling. Because of the sensitive nature of the research topic, there were some ethical problems. Keeping participants anonymous from each other was difficult because initial participants within the sample frame had to recruit other participants in line with the snowballing technique. Moreover, apart from the initial participants, I had no control over the sampling method used in the referral process, which could have had some elements of bias. To overcome these limitations, a sizeable number of referrals were collected out of which I randomly selected the eventual participants.

Limitations in this study also stemmed from the inherent weaknesses in how secondary data sources such as academic articles and books on counterterrorism were interpreted. Many of these data obtained from archival documents in Nigeria contained elements of propaganda designed to encourage readers to adapt a certain perspective. Furthermore, both governmental and parliamentary online sources on counterterrorism were disorganized. Additionally, there was also a lack of archival documents on counter-ideology as a strategy for counterterrorism. Due to these difficulties, the analysis of secondary data obtained from documentary sources could be deficient in the preferred intellectual rigor. These limitations could also affect the reliability of the findings concerning the usefulness of relying on counter-ideology to defeat the resilience of the BHT group.

Significance

The security problems caused by the activities of the BHT group makes it pertinent that Nigeria formulates appropriate strategies to halt the terrorist attacks from

the group. Examining the group's ideology as a basis for formulating counter-ideology strategies thus has both scholarly and practical significance. At the scholarly level, this study filled the gaps in the literature by incorporating counter-ideology measures into counterterrorism strategies. It also serves as a building block for future research into counter-ideology as an approach for defeating terrorist groups. The practical importance of this study lies in its potential of becoming the basis for developing a policy framework for countries in need of appropriate counter-ideology policies to defeat terrorism. The study also provides various counterterrorism stakeholders with insights into the importance of understanding the complex nature of terrorism ideology and the complementary role counter-ideology strategies, as part of broader counterterrorism measures, could play.

Another significance of this study is its prospects of driving a positive social change in Nigeria. Nigeria as a secular state treats citizens equally regardless of religion. However, the nature of terrorist acts being committed by the BHT group has elements of religious ideological undertones. Boko Haram's activities have therefore become a threat to the social equilibrium and proper social functioning of the people of Nigeria (Oyewole, 2013). Addressing the influence that ideology plays in sustaining the resilience of the BHT group is therefore necessary to ensure a nonviolent society that will keep Nigeria safe.

Summary

This chapter introduced the study and the background. The chapter also highlighted the purpose, scope, significance, problem statement, limitations and

delimitations, research questions, and the related theoretical framework. In Chapter 2, I

provide reviews of contemporary discourses and a survey of contending arguments

regarding the efficacy of counter-ideology as a useful counterterrorist strategy to defeat

the BHT group. In Chapter 3, I present the design and rationale of the research and my

role as the researcher, design data collection procedures, population and sample frame,

sample size, and an assessment of issues of quality and ethical considerations. In Chapter

4, I describe the research setting, demographics of participants, the data collection and the

analysis process, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results. Finally, I interpret the

findings and make recommendations for future research in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Developing effective counterterrorism strategies against the BHT group is contingent on an understanding of the ideology sustaining the resilience of the group. Having struggled to defeat the group militarily, the discourse on a counterterrorism strategy against the BHT group has now shifted to a new approach that is aimed at targeting the group's ideology. I reviewed contemporary literature on counter-ideology as a strategy for defeating the resilience of the BHT, which I present in this chapter. The literature review further provided a survey of contending arguments regarding the efficacy of counter-ideology as a useful strategy in prescribing counterterrorism measures to defeat the BHT group. From a scholarly perspective, I also evaluated the varied perspectives of relevant methodological context and theoretical techniques applicable to the field of counter-ideology.

Literature Search Strategy

A systematic process of searching through databases by using key concepts based on a topic or research question to retrieve results is a search strategy. I carried out the literature search for this study by conducting preliminary searches in the Walden University digital library to identify databases that were relevant to the topic. Political Science Complete, EBSCO, SAGE Full Collections, ProQuest, PsycINFO, and the digital library belonging to Homeland Security were utilized further. Google and Google Scholar were also relied on to access additional literature from keywords related to the research topic.

Because each of the databases functioned differently, separate search strategies were adopted for each database to increase the chances of finding more information. For each database, I limited the searches to themes, keywords, and important phrases as initial searches. There were instances during the process where the initial search of the literature did not provide relevant articles and peer-reviewed journals. In such cases, the search was reviewed by using a series of keywords in a variety of combinations to source for relevant articles in selected databases. I also obtained additional information by checking the reference lists of similar research conducted to ascertain the appropriateness of those references to the review.

Theoretical Framework

The Relational/Vengeance

The relational/vengeance theory is one of the theories that provide relevant context for appreciating the nature of terrorism emanating from the BHT group. The theory clarifies the causes of violent conflicts between groups as well as the sociopolitical and economic relationships among such groups (Alozieuwa, 2012). It is based on the premise of differences in cultural, value, and group interests that influence relationships among individuals and groups in different ways (Dixon et al., 2003). The relational/vengeance theory is relevant to the activities of the BHT group because of the numerous conflicts resulting from disagreements among religious groups in Nigeria due to negative stereotypes, religious intolerance, and discrimination (Faleti, 2010).

The BHT group has been described by the local population and the government based on several negative perceptions (Okereke, 2011). The group is perceived as

terrorists and psychologically challenged because citizens including the government of

Nigeria, who are Boko Haram's targets, do not understand the reason for the group's

violence against innocent people. These perceptions have created a scenario of "we"

versus "others," resulting in mutual antagonism which is often expressed violently. As a

result, negotiations between the government and the group have not resolved the BHT

group's violence. According to the relational/vengeance theory, as efforts to defeat the

group intensify, the government becomes the "we" and Boko Haram members are

categorized as the "others." Similarly, the BHT group sees itself as the "we" bound by

their common goal of defeating the "unbelievers" for Allah and regard the rest of the

Nigerian society as the "others." It is in this context that the use of military force by the

armed forces of Nigeria, regarded as the "others," against the group leads to retaliation.

Thus, the relational/vengeance theory explains the group's resolve to avenge its members

despite the military operations conducted against them by the Nigerian Security Forces.

Based on the fact that the genesis of the BHT group is also traceable to religious

extremism, an effective approach for preventing prejudice in the fight against the BHT

group may be to reduce stereotyping through mindful interventions. This study therefore

adopted the relational/vengeance due to its usefulness in illuminating the fundamental

issues that have accounted for the survival and resilience of the BHT group since their

emergence in 2009 to present-day.

Relative Deprivation Theory

The relative deprivation theory was founded by J. C. Davies in his study

"Towards a Theory of Revolution." The theory suggests that people feel discontent when

they compare the socioeconomic gap between them and others because they lack what they feel are their legitimate entitlements (Davies, 1962). The theory reinforces the frustrations associated with the feelings of deprivation and discontent as a point of reference. It also encourages the examination of individuals' feelings of deprivation resulting from a comparison of their situation to other persons. Gurr (1970) further explained that people become dissatisfied when they feel that they have less than they should have. Over a time, this dissatisfaction due to structural poverty and inequality leads to frustration and then rebellion against the (real or perceived) source of their deprivation. In effect, the disparities between legitimate aspirations and reality tend to frustrate people and eventually lead to violent political movements and terrorism (Gurr, 1970; Mavalla & Mbagwu, 2016).

In line with the relative deprivation theory, individuals or terrorist groups can also engage in deviant behavior when their means do not correspond to their goals. In the case of the BHT group, instead of deprivation, the discrepancies between their expectations and the needs that they have achieved is the reason for their frustration and the resultant violence (Forest, 2012). The essence of the theory is thus consistent with the fact that violent actions escalates in environments of continuous grievances caused by relative deprivation. Furthermore, the theory explains why people who are denied justice and privilege that they deem valuable in their societies, tend to align themselves to radical social groups as the only option for drawing attention to their complaints.

Relating this theory to Boko Haram, the group perceives themselves to have been economically and religiously deprived by the actions and inactions of the Nigerian

government. For instance, at the formative stage of the BHT group, members needed

Mohammed Yusuf as a leader and a mentor to guide them in their Islamic renaissance

drive. The arrest and subsequent extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf and other

members of the group by the Nigerian Security Forces was therefore considered as a

deprivation of the fundamental right to life of their comrades (Ordu, 2017).

Moreover, in their view, the refusal of the federal government to replace western

education with an Islamic educational model in Northern Nigeria constituted a

deprivation of their right of choice to select a model of education that is consistent with

their Islamic faith. Furthermore, Boko Haram views the Nigerian government's

opposition to the creation of the Islamic state for Northern Nigeria as a deprivation of

their rights to self-governance (Raineri & Martini, 2017). The rule by the federal

government is thus regarded by the group as part of an unbeliever government over

Muslims. Additionally, the presence of the Christian minority in the northern part of

Nigeria and the unwillingness of these Christians to relocate from what they believe to be

the holy territory of Allah, has been interpreted by Boko Haram as a deprivation of their

rights to their territory.

Review of Literature

Synopsis of Religious Dynamics in Northern Nigeria

The Hausa, Fulani, and the Kanuri tribes, who are mostly Islamic adherents,

dominate the northern part of Nigeria. Nigeria is also considered the most religious

divergent country in the world, with religious orientations being important in defining

Nigerians than any other identity (Delia, Barkindo, & Jacobson, 2015). Though other

religions like ancestral worship exist, Northern Nigeria is mostly polarized between

Christians and Muslims with a history of religious intolerance. In addition to religious

intolerance, Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria have lived in an environment

characterized by violent confrontations due to negative stereotypes (Chiluwa &

Odebunmi, 2016). These stereotypes have also become a focal point of polarized

religiopolitical ideations, which has made people less accommodating and more prone to

violent conflicts (Dowd, 2016; Esteban & Mayoral, 2011; Sampson, 2015).

     The relationship between Muslims in the north and Christian immigrants has been

characterized by conflicts due to ethnic and religious hostilities, which have impacted the

sociopolitical stability in the northern part of the country (Aliyu, Moorty, & Idris, 2016).

Religion is a central force for mobilizing people with diverse backgrounds toward a

common cause (Huntington, 1996). However, Christians and Muslims have felt

increasingly insecure and vulnerable in parts of Northern Nigeria. The religious bigotry

in Northern Nigeria usually start as normal civic disputes but often degenerate into

communal and religious violence. This development has led to the death of thousands of

innocent citizens and reflects the contentious nature Islam was introduced into Northern

Nigeria.

     Islam was introduced into Northern Nigeria by Saudi Arabia Muslim scholars

from two opposite directions (Nachande, 2017). The first version was introduced in the

Bornu Empire, which corresponds to present-day Northeastern Nigeria during the

Seventh and the Eighth Centuries. The second type emerged in Hausaland in what is

presently Northwest Nigeria. Another school of thought argued that Islam was introduced

by Fulani and Wagara Arabs merchants from Futa-Toro in Senegal in the Fourteenth

Century (Adeleye, 1971). Whether the introduction of Islam from these different sources

conveyed similar doctrine and practice of the religion is not clear and might be a reason

for the current conflicting practices of Islam in Northern Nigeria. For example, Nachande

(2017) suggested that indigenes who accepted Islam retained their native religious

practices, thereby tainting the purity of Islam. Among the Hausa people for instance,

Islamic practices were mixed with idolatry and witchcraft (Al-Bili, 2007; Okene &

Ahmad, 2011). These practices are regarded as a deviation from the tenets of true Islam.

The need to create the awareness to stop the innovations in the practice of Islam

set the stage for the first jihad in Northern Nigeria. This jihad was led by the Fulani

reformist, Usman Dan Fodio from 1757 to 1817 (Pieri & Zenn, 2016). The consciousness

created by Dan Fodio in the 18th Century started the groundwork for the subsequent

acceptance of Salafism in Northern Nigeria as a way of restoring the original Islamic

faith (Kassim, 2015). Salafism, also known as Wahhabism, represents the most extremist

Sunni Muslim followers of the Maliki School of Islamic Law. Consequently, over time,

Salafism evolved in Nigeria into two strands: the Radical Jihadist Salafist and the

Quietist Salafists versions. Both versions, however, forbid theological innovations and

advocate the return to the original practice of Islam in line with the Prophet's generation

(Ungureanu, 2011). The most divergent distinction between the two strands is the full

endorsement of the use of jihad by the radical Jihadist Salafist as a means of establishing

an Islamic state, a position which is opposed by the Quietist Salafist (Canci & Odukoya,

2016). These distinct theological traditions have made Northern Nigeria more susceptible to competing Islamic theological schools of thought (Kassim, 2015).

The contemporary manifestations of Wahhabis-Salafi across Northern Nigeria have been attributed to the works of Nasir Kabara (Khadiriyya), Ahmad Gulan from the Ahmadiyya Movement, and Dahiru Bauchi (Tariqqa). Others include Isiaku Rabiu (Tijjaniyya), Abubakar Gumi (Izala), and Sheik Ibrahim El-Zakzakky from the Muslim Brotherhood (Oyeniyi, 2014). Some scholars have also posited that the emergence of Salafist Jihadist like Mohammed Marwa and Muhammad Yusuf, who founded the radical Maitatsine Sect and the BHT group respectively, explains the reason for the current revival of Jihadist Salafism in Northern Nigeria (Adesoji, 2011; Loimeier, 2012; Iyekekpolo, 2016). Therefore, the radical jihadist orientation of the BHT group depends on the radical Salafism ideology as a tool for the mobilization of terrorist activities.

The Ideology of Boko Haram Terrorist Group

Many researchers have posited that ideology is crucial in understanding global terrorism (Goodwin & Strang, 2012; Oprescu, 2013; Shay, 2013). What has sustained the BHT group over the years is the ideological belief of its members in their struggles. The group's continuous attacks can therefore be viewed from the perspective of the ideological influence of the Salafist philosophy. This belief, in part, seeks to restore the orthodox Islam that was practiced by the Sahabah who was a companion of Prophet Mohammed and the two generations thereafter (Sampson, 2016). Additionally, its overarching intent is to overthrow the current secular government through a jihad and create a puritanical Islamic state that depends on the dictates of sharia in Nigeria. The

jihadist Islamist ideology is a form of Islamic civilization that connects beliefs, thoughts,

and myths to action (Cannizzaro & Gholami, 2018). Terrorist ideology has also been

linked to Wahhabism and the Salafist Jihadist ideology—a religious ideology associated

with extreme religious principles that call for absolute loyalty and commitment to a

jihadist cause (Moghadam, 2009).

 For Boko Haram, their distinct form of the jihadi-Salafism is characterized by an

ideological propensity for violent rebellion that is rooted in the militant alternative of

political Islam. The literature has also suggested that the group's ideological affiliation to

the jihadi-Salafism is consistent with the historical narratives derived from the jihadi

legacy of Dan Fodio. Moreover, Boko Haram's ideology resonates with the philosophy of

both the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda, whose version of Wahhabi-inspired

Salafism is blended with a revolutionary program aimed at toppling un-Islamic

governments in the Muslim world (Lassalle & Akgul, 2016). Boko Haram's ideological

orientation is also premised on the belief that all the sociopolitical and economic ills and

the resultant challenges of moral decadence confronting Muslims in contemporary

Nigeria can be eliminated by the application of Islamic norms (Forest, 2012; Kassim,

2015). As such, members of the group consider their call a religious imperative to

mobilize activists to wage jihad and overthrow the secular Nigerian government as a

means for creating an Islamic state.

 As is the case with most terrorist groups, the BHT group has exploited the

religious doctrines of the Jihadist Salafist to justify the group's implementation of some

Islamic doctrines for jihad. By infusing the ideology of jihadi-Salafism and the historical

antecedents of the revival of Islam in Northern Nigeria, the group has used the legacy of Dan Fodio's jihad to justify its version of jihad in Northeastern Nigeria (Agbiboa, 2016; Kassim, 2015). Boko Haram also elicits sympathy and legitimacy to its jihad cause by invoking the "us" versus "them" narratives (Agbiboa, 2013; Quiggin, 2009).

The ideology of Boko Haram is considered as a persuasive tool based on an extreme interpretation of the Islamic principles of jihad (Kassim, 2015), meaning that the group considers its religious battle as a legitimate one against those who in their view want to impose on Nigerians, a secular form of governance based on Western norms and values. They also believe that governing by any form of legislation other than the Sharıa was an act of profanity and polytheism (Muhammed, 2014). This strain of theological rhetoric, framed to include a rebellion and a jihadi campaign to target the Nigerian political elite, is therefore fundamental to the ideology of the BHT group.

Other ideological discourse motivating the jihadi campaign of Boko Haram is based on the dogmatic application of the doctrine of takfīr. As posited by Pieri and Zenn (2016), Boko Haram consider the concept of takfīr as a way of differentiating between true believers and those who in their view have accepted other social and religious practices in a manner that is inconsistent with the interpretation of Islam. By describing them as infidels, Boko Haram considers these people as legitimate targets of jihad. In other words, the application of the doctrine of takfīr obligates Muslims to declare jihad on political rulers because according to them, these rulers were usurping God's laws.

Additional literature indicated that Boko Haram is not a monolithic entity with a unified purpose. The doctrine of takfir as part of Boko Haram's ideology is a major point

of disagreement that has caused the emergence of at least three offshoots that are competing for attention and followers (Karmon, 2014; Comolli, 2015; Kassim, 2015). Moreover these factions disagree on tactics and strategic directions of the group.

Abubakar Shekau heads the faction that has refused to negotiate and wants to implement strict Sharia law across Nigeria (Weeraratne, 2017). Another faction, the Islamic State of West African Province is headed by Abu-Musab al-Barnawi appointed by ISIS. Mamman Nur who is the son of Mohammed Yusuf and believed to be loyal to the al-Barnawi's faction leads the third group known as Ansaru (Onuoha, 2016; Kulungu, 2019). Such developments mean that the BHT group is currently an entity that continuously reshape and remodel itself with shifting agendas, tactics, and leadership.

Despite the lingering internal crisis within the group, each faction has relied largely on various aspects of the Salafist ideologies and further exploited them as tools for indoctrinating and radicalizing their members (Kassim, 2015). This trend makes it imperative to understand the link between the radical Jihadist ideology and terrorism in Northern Nigeria.

Link between Radical Jihadist Ideology and Terrorism in Northern Nigeria

Ideology has been portrayed in various intellectual discourses as an important motivating factor that drives individuals' and groups' activities towards political violence (Pettinger, 2017). On his part, Ender et al. (2014) posited that terrorist ideology includes religious, political, economic, psychological, and cultural factors that inspire the deliberate incitement of fear amongst people.

As already alluded to, Boko Haram's ideological underpinnings and goals are inspired by the Salafi Jihadist ideology. Agbiboa (2013a) viewed the Salafi Jihadist ideology which the BHT group identifies itself with, as an identity maker that compel members of the group to restore the medieval interpretation of the Quran. In doing so, members of the group selectively make references to the Quran and Hadith to justify their terrorist acts, even at the peril of their own lives (Maharajh, 2017).

The use of some Quranic verses to endorse the use of violence as justification to kill, maim, and destroy properties indiscriminately is therefore in line with the Salafist Jihadist ideology (Gray & Adeakin, 2015; Rich & Conduit, 2015; Shuaibu et al., 2015). The tactics used by the BHT group to achieve its objectives provide interesting insights into the link between the radical jihadist ideology and terrorism. However, there are gaps in the literature that did not clarify how the jihadist radical ideologues influence the resilience exhibited by the group.

Schmid (2017) conceded that it was difficult to measure the ideological motivation of terrorist since it was not feasible to administer any survey to terrorists. However, an important characteristic of every terrorist group is their strict adherence to their ideology. Moreover, the process of the indoctrination of members is a common feature that resonates with the radical Jihadist ideology and the nature of terrorism exhibited by the BHT group in Northern Nigeria. Such a process of ideological indoctrination that links terrorism to the Salafist Jihadist philosophy has 4 functions (Moghadam, 2009).

The first function is the sensitization process of the less privileged minority group who are impacted by the extreme social injustice, social-political exclusion, and economic hardships due to widespread corruption (Salaam, 2012; Adebayo, 2014). Historically, the existing poverty and economic deprivation in the northern part of Nigeria provides a fertile ground for imbibing such a narrative. Jihadist terrorists therefore employ political strategies and reformist actions to take advantage of the situation.

The second function of the ideological indoctrination is the strategy of blaming the ruling government for the hardship being experienced and to depict minority groups as victims of unfair treatment (Braddock & Horgan, 2016). A perception of repression and injustice by the government is often invoked by Boko Haram members to garner sympathy and support for their cause. The Nigerian government's employment of brutal military force as a preferred strategy against Boko Haram has, therefore, rather worked to the advantage of the BHT group.

As noted by Amnesty International (2015), the Nigerian government's choice of a repressive approach that has been characterized by the indiscriminate killing of suspected Boko Haram members had become a source of contention between human rights organizations and the Nigerian government. As a result, the American government had to suspend the sale of critical military armament to the government of Nigeria to help fight Boko Haram.

Closely connected to the second function is the third which attempts to create a group identity by exploiting existing differences to isolate those who do not belong to this

group. For this function, the BHT group often identify themselves as the "Army of Allah or Muhammad" and label those who did not belong to their way of thinking as enemies or infidels (Ball, Dagger, & O'Neill, 2016). The last function of ideological orientation is to adopt an approach to remedy the predicament of the minority by instigating a change. The BHT group is currently advocating for this type of change in a bid to create an Islamic state in Northeast Nigeria to bring together localities such as Toshiya, Yunusari, and Kannama all in the Yobe State.

The link between radical jihadist ideology and terrorism in Northern Nigeria further extends beyond ideological inspirations. The existing acrimony between Muslims and Christians in Northern Nigeria was also identified as an important factor that drives the link between radical jihadist ideology and acts of terrorism in Northern Nigeria. This situation has led to numerous clashes in the form of terrorist attacks from radical Jihadist and reprisals attacks from their Christian counterparts. The 1994 violence in Yola in Northern Nigerian towns where about 700 lives were lost and several public properties including mosques and churches destroyed, is an example that establishes the link between radical jihadist ideology and acts of terrorism (Okafor, 2014; Rufai, 2017).

Furthermore, the relationship between the radical jihadist ideology and acts of terrorism in Northern Nigeria is defined by the lack of social justice in the country. Due to the economic disparity and widespread poverty in that part of the country, the radical jihadists' movements appeal to the unemployed youth, the poor, and the marginalized Muslims (Falola, 1998). Adesoji (2011) further posited that the radical religious

beliefs and political patronage of religion are the underlying factors that sustain the growth of terrorism.

Tonwe and Eke (2013) supported this assertion and posited that the roots of terrorism were as a result of the economic and social woes experienced by the Muslim populations. Another reason is that some Muslim elites have embraced democracy and modernity to the detriment of Islamic ideals. Sampson (2016) suggested that the radical jihadist ideology is constructed around grievances that resonate with the people. It is in this light that Boko Haram was using the grievances of people as an excuse to justify their acts of terrorism. The situation is further aggravated by the presence of a large pool of unemployed and uneducated youth whose societal grievances makes them vulnerable to terrorist manipulation and exploitation. This is why Nigeria's current counterterrorism strategies against Boko Haram have to be reinvigorated to make them more comprehensive and robust.

Current Counter Terrorist Strategies against Boko Haram

Hakeem (2017) considered counterterrorism strategies to be the measures employed by inter-governmental organizations and countries to mitigate future terrorist attacks and proactively take actions to forestall and nullify the activities of terrorists. However, there are contesting views on why current counterterrorism strategies against the BHT group have not been successful. Sampson (2015) argued that, unless significant governance and political reforms are implemented to reverse the disparities in the socioeconomic situation in Northern Nigeria, the Boko Haram phenomenon will continue to trouble the country.

Other literature opined that the inadequacies of the government's counterterrorism responses against Boko Haram were the underlying reasons for the group's invincibility (Gray & Adeakin, 2015). Certainly, the counterterrorism strategies of various Nigerian governments since 2010 have rather exacerbated the Boko Haram phenomenon as the group's deadly attacks across the country had continued unabated.

Historically, the government of Nigerian had always used brutal military force for counterterrorism issues. It is therefore not surprising that various governments' responses to the BHT group have been predominantly military (David, et al., 2015; Gray, 2018). This was the mindset that informed the decision by then President Jonathan Goodluck to approve a military crackdown as a national strategy to counter Boko Haram and halt the growing terrorism in the country (Leach, 2016).

Ironically, the military's heavy-handedness approach against the group has only caused many civilian lives. Solomon (2015) concurred that the state-centric and military-focused nature of Nigeria's counterterrorism initiatives was a major reason for the failure to defeat Boko Haram. The use of this counterterrorism approach by the state remains a contradiction considering the fact that it was the failures of the state itself that created the Boko Haram problem in the first place.

A comparison can be drawn from President Goodluck Jonathan's counterterrorism strategy for combating terrorism with what was established by President G. W. Bush after the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States. The adaption of a national counterterrorism strategy by the government of Nigeria to counter the Boko Haram threat is similar to the U.S. Patriot Act which has also not been too successful. The ambiguity of

the militaristic approach espoused in the National Counter Terrorism Strategy cast doubts as to its suitability for countering terrorism in Nigeria (Eji, 2016).

The failure of President Jonathan's regime to defeat Boko Haram was because the underlying factors responsible for the resilience of the group could not be identified and neutralized (Leach, 2016; Bello, 2017). As a result, within the period 2011-2015, the recruitment activities of Boko Haram reached its peak with an estimated fighting force between 9,000 and 15,000 drawn from unwilling conscripts that included children (Amnesty International, 2015; Blanchard, 2016). By the end of 2015, Boko Haram had already taken control of at least 14 local government areas in Northern Nigeria.

Since the assumption of office in 2015 by current President Buhari, he has expanded the military approach by removing some senior military officers deemed as incompetent (Michael, 2018; Abubakar, 2017; Sampson, 2015). Furthermore, the Department of State Services introduced the Perception Management Program to rehabilitate, de-radicalize, and provide welfare packages to people who have been exposed to the BHT group (Sampson, 2016). Operationally, some seasoned Islamic clerics have also been employed to preach at selected radio and television stations on moderate Islamic teachings. According to Sampson (2016) (as cited in Okereke, 2012), the essence of this approach was to manage perceptions and counter radicalize the vulnerable population, particularly, the youths by the BHT group.

The Nigerian government has also relied on some legislative and criminal justice strategies to counter the Boko Haram menace. For instance, the vigorous implementation of the Terrorism Prevention Act and the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act which were

enacted in 2011 provided the government with additional arsenal in the form of a

criminal justice response to Boko Haram (Sampson, 2016). Though the law was intended

to ensure effective counterterrorism coordination and inter-agency cooperation in the

fight against Boko Haram, information sharing has remained limited due to inter-agency

rivalry. Besides, the mutual suspicion between the military and the judiciary have often

resulted in misunderstanding and sometimes open confrontations, thus attenuating the

effort towards defeating the BHT group.

The recent adoption of a multi-lateral process for combating Boko Haram by

forging partnerships with international, multi-lateral, and regional organizations is also an

effort in the right direction (Udounwa, 2013; Onuoha, 2014). The imperatives of such

international cooperation cannot be over-emphasized in view of the transnational

dimension of Boko Haram's threat and its affiliations to other terrorist groups.

Already, Nigeria has signed security pacts with neighboring countries such as

Cameroun, Chad, and Niger, to cut off sources of arms imports and the free movement of

Boko Haram foot soldiers (Akpan & Ekanem, 2014; Obamamoye, 2017). In addition, the

government recently collaborated with the United Nations in Abuja to introduce and

implement the 'Integrated Assistance on Counterterrorism' framework. This program is a

subsidiary protocol of the United Nations Counterterrorism Implementation Task Force

(Sampson, 2016).

The lack of progress in defeating the BHT group despite these efforts attests to the

fact that the fight against the group should be more of a war of ideas. Beyond the rhetoric

of de-radicalization, a major defect in the fight against the BHT group is the ideological

dimension which has been overlooked by various governments for far too long.

Counter-Ideology as a Strategy for Combating Jihadist Ideology

Having conceded that the Nigerian government's approach to fighting the BHT

group was counter-productive, an all-inclusive approach that includes a form of a

counter-ideology has become a viable approach for neutralizing the group (Bizina &

Gray, 2014). Bin-Hassan & Pereire (2006) also argued that terrorism flourishes when

opportunity, motivation and capability meet. Therefore, to be able to prevent the

phenomenon of terrorism, it is imperative to eliminate the aspect of motivation which

often drives the terrorist ideology. Moreover, because terrorism is a vicious by-product of

extreme jihadist ideologies, counterterrorism efforts should be focused on ideological

responses to prevent terrorist groups from replenishing their human losses. Accordingly,

counter-ideology is currently gaining more acceptance as one of the effective options for

combating the menace of terrorism (Gunaratna & Bin- -Hassan, 2015).

Abdullah (2017) argued that counter-ideology was crucial in defeating terrorist

ideology for three reasons: firstly, it dissociates Islam from acts of terror by disabusing

the minds of Muslims from the belief that the Islamic faith approves of terrorism;

secondly, it reassures non-Muslims that the problem of terrorism cannot be attributed to

Islam; and finally, it remains a useful strategy for restoring and reintegrating already

detained terrorists back into society.

The success rate of counter-ideology strategies depends on how it is implemented

in each country. For instance, the British counter-ideology strategy is preventive in nature

and aims at protecting people from exposing themselves to violent extremism. According to Blackbourn & Walker (2016), the content of every counter-ideology should be based on three focal points:

1. Unspecified indirect theological interventions that tackles misconception about jihad.

2. Outlining an effective communication strategy that delivers the narrative that fighting terrorism is not a war with Islam.

3. Promoting democratic values that ensures freedom of speech and the rule of law, and the guarantee of fundamental rights of all, devoid of any persecution.

Sedgwick (2012), however, cautioned that though counter-ideology is a viable option for defeating jihadist terrorists, it was likely to fail if the ideas espoused do not make sense to Muslims for whom the counter-ideology was targeting. It is based on this premise that Singapore has successfully implemented a counter-ideological response in combating the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist group (Gunaratna & Taufiqurrohman, 2016). In support of this approach, the Religious Rehabilitation Group, which was formed out of the Singapore Muslim communities, was tasked to provide the counter-ideological response to the Jemaah Islamiyah activities.

The successes chalked by the Religious Rehabilitation Group so far can be attributed to their meticulous study of Jemaah Islamiyah's ideology and the subsequent provision of appropriate counter-ideological narratives to challenge the group's misinterpretation of Islam. In the case of Boko Haram, an improved relationship between

the state and the Muslim clergy could serve as the engine that will eventually drive the counter-ideological efforts to target the group's resilience.

The Resilience of Terrorist Groups

Various scholars have contributed to the intellectual debate on why some terrorist groups survive despite the overwhelming military counterterrorism operations by security forces against them (Stigler, 2011; Rasmussen, 2011; Young & Dugan, 2014). So far, most studies have focused on specific actions by the state and organizational dynamics without providing any systematic investigation into the role of ideology in terrorist resilience.

The central role the ideology of a terrorist group plays in its resilience is also evident when that ideology resonates with the people. Forest (2012) claimed that the ideology of a terrorist group has no motivating power unless it resonates within the social, political, and historical context of those who support the group. Belcher (2007) also posited that popular support is a critical requirement that enable terrorists to avoid surveillance, detection, and elimination.

Terrorist groups often take advantage of existing grievances and the prevalence of local conditions to justify the group's rationale for using violence as a means for mitigating those grievances. The resonance of Boko Haram's ideology with its community members provides the compelling basis for its maintenance of organizational resilience despite the sustained military operations against them (Petersen, 2001; Scott, 2004; Jordan, 2014). Such organizational resilience is manifested in the local support enjoyed by the BHT group that enables the group to recruit more fighters, raise funds,

obtain essential resources, and maintain ideological relevance amongst the local

communities as a means of sustaining their cause (Ramsay, 2007).

Moreover, Johnson (2009) argued that the nature of government's responses to

terrorism often determined whether or not terrorists can gain the support of the wider

populace. It is obvious that the heavy-handed counterterrorism tactics of the security

forces of Nigeria against the BHT group had backfired and rather helped the group to

mobilize greater support from the local communities. Jordan (2014) agreed that military

operations against terrorist groups make them resilient and explained such operations end

up increasing the local support for the terrorists.

Summary

This chapter provided a synthesis of relevant literature to elucidate the usefulness

of a counter-ideological approach as a wider strategy for defeating the BHT group. The

literature reinforced the contentious nature that Islam emerged in Northern Nigeria,

consequently leading to religious bigotry and the emergence of Jihadist Salafist

movements such as Boko Haram.

The literature also supported the idea that the ideology of the BHT group is

aligned to the radical Salafist jihadist philosophy. However, there were gaps regarding

how the ideology can be exploited by terrorist groups given that Boko Haram has been

successful in using the ideology of the radical Salafist jihadist to sustain the resilience of

the group.

The use of some Quranic verses as justification for killing indiscriminately

resonates with the Salafist Jihadist ideology and is a tactic that has often been employed

by the BHT group. The link between radical jihadist ideology and terrorism in Northern

Nigeria however extends beyond ideological inspiration to include the lack of social

justice in Northern Nigeria. The gaps identified in the literature regarding the use of

counter-ideology as a viable strategy for defeating the resilience of the BHT group

formed the bases of the discourse in the research methodology presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The current difficulties confronting the government of Nigeria in defeating the resilience of the BHT group have created the need for appropriate strategies to combat the group. Because terrorist motivation is often driven by their ideology, it is also important to understand how the BHT group uses its ideology to sustain its activities. Thus, this study was concentrated on counter-ideological responses that will contribute to combating the phenomenon of terrorism in general and the BHT group in particular. This in-depth inquiry may provide decision makers with alternative counterterrorism strategies beyond the current military approaches against the BHT group.

To accomplish the purpose of the study, I conducted interviews that addressed the research question and themes in the literature review. The interview questions focused on the aspects of the ideology of Boko Haram that is responsible for the group's resilience and were designed to provide answers to the research question. This approach facilitated the discovery of additional insights into the usefulness of embracing an ideological response in the fight against the BHT group.

Study Design and Rationale

Every study must conform to an overall design to reflect the rigor in the methods and procedures used in collecting and analyzing data to answer a specific research problem. Relying on the experience of individuals, this research offered a counter-ideology approach to enhance the Nigerian government's effort in dealing decisively with the Boko Haram security challenges. The research is thus phenomenological in nature

and it described the lived experiences of the individuals who have either fought against the BHT group or experienced the group's atrocities. I also sought to determine the extent to which counter-ideology strategies could be used to defeat the resilience of the BHT group. The choice of a phenomenological qualitative approach was based on the idea that the resilience of the BHT group can best be appreciated from the perspectives of those who have been actively engaged in the implementation of various strategies aimed at defeating the group. Therefore, using a phenomenological approach facilitated a better understanding of the reasons why there is a lack of progress in defeating the BHT group and the reasons behind the resilience of the group.

The unit of analysis for this research consisted of the BHT group and individuals who through their shared experience were able to relate to the source of the resilience of the group despite the military operations against it. The study further relied on individual experiences relating to how the ideology of Boko Haram has influenced the resilience of the group. This study clarified the nature of the resilience of the BHT group and how counter-ideology can be utilized to defeat the group.

Role of the Researcher

A researcher's role is central to every study as the researcher gathers, organizes, and analyzes the perceptions of people in the research process. The accuracy of the qualitative researcher is also based on the level of sensitivity associated with the collection, viewing, analyzing, and reporting on the research data (Burkholder et al., 2016). In this research, I used interview protocols to gather the relevant data throughout

the process. I also relied on appropriate documents and archival records in compiling the report for this study.

Furthermore, I adopted the observer–participant role because it was the most appropriate and ethical approach for the research (Burkholder et al., 2016). This approach resonated with the emphasis I placed on the process of collecting data in the study instead of concentrating on the activities being observed (see Fields & Kafai, 2009). The approach also helped to mitigate the negative impact that my interpretations might have unintentionally introduced during the process of researching, given my military background.

Additionally, my role involved addressing biases. The questions researchers ask during an interview depend on their thought processes and may be influenced by inherent biases (Dibley, 2011; Fields & Kafai, 2009). Declaring my biases upfront was therefore an important step for collecting valid and reliable data from participants. The data were then analyzed through a process of content analysis that was based on a thorough assimilation of the text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As a way of further mitigating possible biases, I gave participants the opportunity to review my results after the research was concluded. Furthermore, I was also mindful not to infringe on the ethical requirements contained in the University of Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) form. To adhere to the requirement of optional participation in this research, participants were formally invited to share their insights in the study.

Methodology

Population and Sample Frame

Sampling a target population from which to gather data is necessary because it is impossible to collect data from everyone within the study area. In this study, the sample population comprised Muslim clerics, military personnel directly involved in the battle against BHT, and local community leaders within the study area (see Figure 1). This strategy was based on a specific number of participants who shared their insights and provided quality data to help explain in detail, the phenomenon under study (Burkholder et al., 2016).
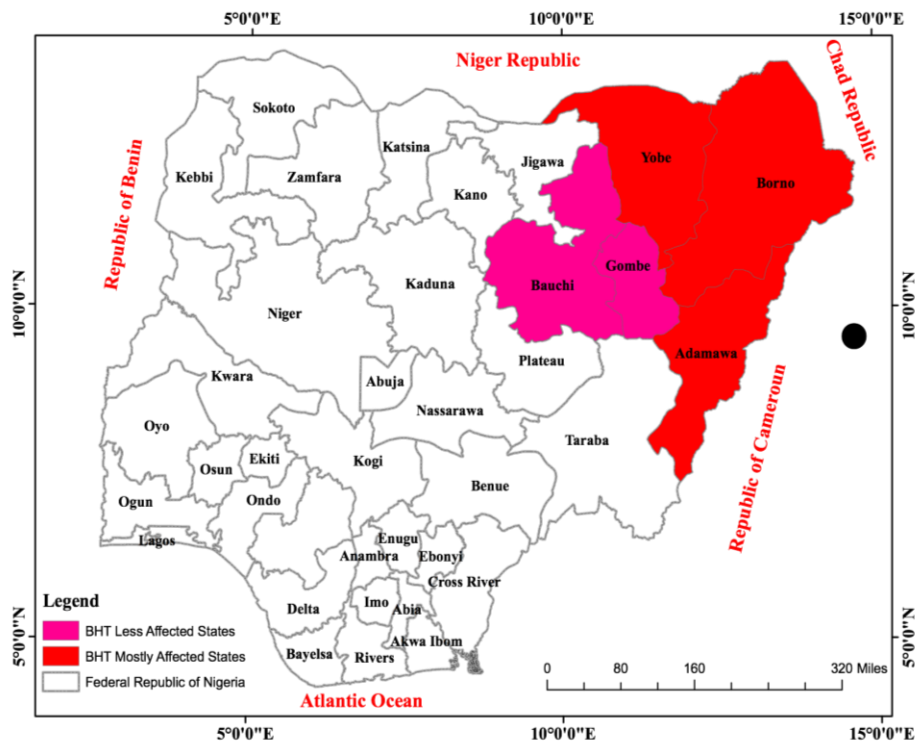
Figure 1. Map showing the study area.

Sampled participants were based on the snowballing technique, which relied on a chain referral process to target individuals who have in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process allowed for referrals from initial participants who had the expertise and showed similar traits of interest in the subject of the study. My choice of this sampling method was because the initial participants were limited to a small group, which made it easier for them to recommend other potential participants who met the participatory criteria (see Schwandt, 2015).

Participant Selection

Participants interviewed in this study were selected based on their experience, knowledge, and expertise on the research topic. The selection of participant from the Islamic clergy, community leaders, and military personnel to participate in the process also allowed me to obtain multiple perceptions and divergent views of the phenomenon. A letter was forwarded to the Nigerian Armed Forces Command and Staff College to seek permission for the military personnel to participle in the study. Participants completed an acceptance slip, which was returned to me before the interviews commenced.

Sample Size

A total of 20 participants were interviewed. Initially two participants from each category of the sample frame were invited to participate in the interview. I then relied on the snowballing technique for referrals from the initial participants. Through this process, the sample size was systematically increased to 20 participants and achieved a saturation

level in providing varying perspectives on how counter-ideology strategies could be initiated to defeat the resilience of the BHT group. In addition to the saturation level, this sample size was also dictated by triangulating the interview data with secondary archival documents to further deepen my insight into how counter-ideology could be used as a counterterrorism strategy in defeating the resilience of the BHT group. A summary of the sample space selection process according to the category of participants is at Table 1.

Table 1

Sample Space Selection Process

Category of Participants	Initial Participants Recruited	Recruitment through Snowballing	Totals
Military Personnel	2	5	7
Community Leaders	2	4	6
Muslim Clerics	2	5	7
Totals	6	14	20

Data Collection Process

The data collection process of this research was based on multiple sources. The process also focused on gaining insights into understanding how to counter the ideology of the BHT group as a mean to defeat the group's resilience. In line with this, I collected data from interviews, documents, and archival records.

Interviews. Interviewing requires a dynamic strategy for collecting rich qualitative data. In qualitative studies, the interviewer directs the interaction with

participants and provides participants with the opportunity to clarify any information in the interviews (Babbie, 2007). Given the nature of this study, individual, face-to-face interviews were appropriate because I sought to derive themes from the experiences of participants.

An interview can be structured, semi structured, or unstructured, with each of these forms being progressively less rigid in the questioning (Burkholder et al., 2016). I used a semi structured interview format in this study because it is typically employed in qualitative research. Semi structured interviews involve constructing interview protocols that are linked to the research question(s) (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Semi structured interviews also allow the researcher to anticipate probes during the interview and further explore participant's responses. In this study, I posed initial questions and followed them up with further questions derived from the initial answers to gather additional relevant information. Before the interviews, potential participants were asked to complete a consent form to indicate their readiness or otherwise to participate in the study.

Because interviewing relies on a clear set of questions, the questions should be designed to achieve the desired effectiveness. Interview protocols ensure consistency across an interview by guiding the interviewer (Josselson, 2013). An interview protocol includes a preamble, closing remarks, and the questions to be asked (Creswell, 2007). The name of interviewee, date and time of the interview, location of the interview, and any other relevant details should also be indicated in the preambles (Creswell, 2007). The interview protocol in this study provided a guide for conducting the interviews with the participants (see Appendix). The interview questions were the same for the Muslim

clerics, community leaders, and the military personnel and was structured this way to obtain varied insights into the study phenomenon.

Documents and archival data. There is a distinction between data collected from interviews and those gathered through documentation (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007). Prior to using documents and archival data, researchers must first assess and analyze the relevance and appropriateness of the documents before extracting its content. Documents relied on this study were therefore appraised according to four criteria: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning (Scott, 2006).

It is possible for the authenticity of documents featuring competent authors to be doubtful. In other instances, such materials may not produce a faithful explanation of their scholarly works and could be intentionally altered either for dubious motives or merely by inexperience. Moreover, qualitative data obtained may appear genuine but still be distorted. Such infractions in documents to be relied on in a research could also be a reflection of the author's biases. To offset this in the study, I ensured the authenticity and accuracy of materials used were appraised to determine their suitability. I also constantly ascertained the motives of authors to determine possible distortions in their materials, if any, before utilizing them.

I ensured the credibility of the documentary data collected for this study by assessing the intellectual rigor in those materials before using them. Interestingly, Scott (2006) averred that determining representativeness of documents could be a difficult venture for researchers. I also paid attention to issues of generalization and reliability by

using a pragmatic approach of triangulation and documentation which is similar to the criteria of validity in qualitative studies.

A final criterion I relied on in assessing the documents and archival data used in this research was 'meaning'. I achieved this by ensuring that the textual analyses of documents available were evidence based, clear, and comprehensive. In addition, I conducted inter-textual examination of materials to ensure that the contents of documents used were suitable within the historical setting of the study (Hill, 1993; Austin & de Jong, 2008).

Quality Assurance of the Research Process

Quality concerns played a central role from the commencement, data collection, through to the analysis and interpretation of the findings in this study (Ali & Yusof, 2011). I also employed responsible decision-making skills to ensure the quality of the study. Because quality assurance in qualitative research sometimes extends beyond the responsibilities for decision making, I ensured that the methodology followed throughout the research process was appropriate. Moreover, I made sure the phenomenon under study was truthfully recorded (Cook & Campbell, 1979; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Burkholder et al., (2016) posited that researchers can also ensure quality in phenomenological studies by addressing concepts that reflect the actual phenomenon being researched instead of focusing on the limitations of the study design. Throughout the research process, I focused on incorporating strategies that guaranteed rigor in quality (Reynolds et al., 2011). I also relied on the characteristics of the trustworthiness that addressed issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Lincoln & Guba (1985) indicated that an important criterion for establishing trustworthiness and rigor in every research is to ensure credibility. To ensure credibility in this research, I focused on presenting an accurate account of the phenomenon under study. Similarly, Kirk & Miller (1986) cautioned that the credibility of a study is compromised by errors when the response of participants to questions is given to satisfy a favored social response instead of a reflection of a personal experience. To mitigate this and promote the accuracy in this research, I established an early cultural awareness of the study environment by studying the backgrounds of potential participants and organizations even before the data collection process begun. This gave me an insight into the type of participants and organization I was going to engage.

Another approach that guaranteed credibility in this study was the honest manner I engaged participants who provided the data. Every potential participant I approached in this study was given the opportunity to either accept or decline participation. A letter of consent as already alluded to was therefore made available to every participant to endorse. This ensured that participants genuinely took part in the study without any form of compulsion.

Transferability

Transferability in this study was achieved by providing details of the conditions and settings under which the fieldwork for the research was undertaken. This approach provides readers with the opportunity to determine whether the findings of future researches under similar settings to this study environment, would lead to similar

findings. Thus, I provided sufficient contextual details about the research area especially, where the fieldwork was carried out to enable readers make such inferences. Shenton (2004), however, cautioned that trustworthiness is not necessarily compromised even when a similar inquiry produces results that are inconsistent with other works. Rather, Shenton said this should be considered as a reflection of multiple realities emanating from the phenomenon under study and an endorsement of dependability.

Dependability

Krefting (1991) confirmed that qualitative studies are considered dependable based on the consistency of the findings of the research. Though, meeting this criterion is difficult, researchers must always strive to ensure that the results of their studies are consistent with those of future researchers investigating the same phenomenon. In this study, dependability was addressed directly by reporting in detail the processes involved in the study to enable future researchers repeat similar inquiries and achieve comparable results.

Confirmability

As the last benchmark of trustworthiness in this study, I ensured confirmability of this study by making sure that the findings were derived from the participant's experience, instead of my own perception. In other words, I demonstrated that the findings of the study were derived from the research data rather than from my biases. The technique of reflexivity was also used in this study to establish the confirmability by maintaining a written record of the decisions I made in the course of the research. The record of my reflections on the research process regarding my values and interests as

documented in the reflexive journal reduced the impact of my biases if any, on the research design, data collection, and analysis (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006; Nakkula & Ravitch, 1998).

Researcher's Bias

The risk of bias from a researcher exists in all components of qualitative research and could affect a study if not addressed properly. My biases in this study were minimized by ensuring that during the interview process, I posed questions in a manner that encouraged participants to narrate their feelings. Throughout the interview, I also refrained from making any interjections of my personal perspectives regarding the phenomenon under scrutiny. To further reduce bias, I subjected the findings in the study through the process of triangulation to ensure the results conformed to other sources. Schwandt (2015) agreed that the central point of the triangulation process is to scrutinize a conclusion from more than one perspective.

Ethical Considerations

The interaction between researchers and participants in research work makes the research process ethically challenging for researchers because of their personal involvement in the process. In qualitative research, ethical guidelines are primarily focused on protecting research participants and adhering to the guiding principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Respect for persons. A qualitative research such as this study often involves an interaction between the researcher and human subjects. The autonomy, decision-making, and dignity of participants must therefore be respected. In this study, I adhered to the

requirements spelt out in the Walden University IRB to protect the rights of participants in the research. The IRB approval number for this study is 03-22-19-0591432. By subjecting myself to the IRB, I also provided protection for Walden University against any potential legal implications that might be caused by any unethical behavior on my part in the course of the research.

Additionally, the participants voluntarily consented to taking part in this research. These actions guaranteed that all the participants who took part in the research did so based on their own volition and were also fully aware of the procedures of the research including the potential risks involved (Denzin & Giardina, 2016).

Beneficence. The utility and value of beneficence is achieved in an ethical research by providing some benefits to the participants to balance the benefits that will accrue against risks (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). In this study, beneficence was a source of concern for Muslim clerics because they were confronted with multiple responsibilities of defending their faith and at the same time had to criticize the BHT group. Fortunately, the risks involved in this research did not exceed what normally confronts them in their daily lives. I therefore maximized the benefits of the research against the risk imposed on participants by respecting their wishes. For example, in instances where participants did not wish to answer particular questions, they were allowed to do so. As a result, the emotional well-being of participants was considered as an overriding factor despite the quest for rich data.

Justice. Allowing participants to narrate their experiences in a research is a justice issue. It is so because the researchers' understanding of the phenomenon being

investigated is based on a fair assessment of participant's experience. The researcher and participants' relationship therefore pose a challenge in qualitative research as the personality of the researcher can influences the manner data is collected.

For instance, deriving meaning from the accounts of the experiences of the participants could be misunderstood and end up not producing the quality of the information required. To address the challenge in this study, participants were offered a fair and equitable distribution of burdens and benefits. Accordingly, participants from vulnerable populations were not exploited in any way throughout the research process (De Chesnay & Anderson, 2019).

Summary

In this chapter, the study area, the role of the researcher, and the research methodology, were examined. The criterion for recruiting the study participants, data collection, ethical procedures, and limitations relating to the study was also explained. The design further established the rigor in the methods and procedures used to collect the data. Consequently, this qualitative research study was framed in a phenomenological approach that described the lived experiences of individuals relating to using counter-ideology as a counterterrorism strategy to defeat the resilience of the BHT group.

Interview schedules, the assessment of relevant documents and archival records were employed in the research process. The collection of data was done through the snowballing sampling technique. A clearly defined population sample comprised Muslim clerics, military personnel directly involved in the battle against BHT, and community leaders in Muslim communities within Northern Nigeria. The establishment of

trustworthiness in this study was underpinned by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The ethics of the research also conformed to the appropriate ethical guidelines for the protection of the research participants throughout. The guiding principle of not harming anyone in the research process was further addressed. In Chapter 4, I presented the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a counter-ideology strategy as a response to the activities of BHT group. This was important because of the increasingly ideological motivation of the BHT group and the ineffective military approach against the group. Interviews were conducted to elicit the shared experiences of 20 participants comprising Muslim clergy, Muslim community leaders, and military personnel who have fought against the BHT group. The study helped interrogate the group's belief, which is underpinned by the ideological narrative that all the sociopolitical ills and economic problems confronting Muslims in contemporary Nigeria can be eliminated by applying rigid Islamic norms in line with sharia laws. This research may constitute an appropriate framework for developing policies to counter the ideologies of terrorist groups. The results can thus meet the needs of counterterrorism practitioners, policy makers, and general readers. The study can also serve as a source of reference material for combating terrorism using counter-ideology strategies.

The chapter includes a discussion of the research setting and participants' demographics followed by the process of data collection and analysis. Evidence of trustworthiness is also highlighted. The results of the interviews are then presented including how the findings emerged from the data. A summary of the chapter is also provided.

Research Setting

The research was conducted within physical, social, and cultural locations that reflected participants' natural settings. This approach allowed me to focus on making meaning from the participants' views within their environment. The study setting comprised nine states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Yobe and Taraba, Kano, Jigawa, and Kaduna States. The social settings of these states included poverty and unemployment that directly related to the emergence of Boko Haram in Northeastern Nigeria. The influences of cultural and religious factors and the socioeconomic discontents in parts of Northern Nigeria have also been cited as some of the reasons for the North-South/Muslim-Christian divides in Nigeria. These complex factors are the main factors that influence Boko Haram's continuous existence. Through a phenomenological investigation into this complex sociocultural phenomenon, I collected data in the natural setting of the participants and subjected the data to content analysis to establish themes.

Demographics

I interviewed 20 participants pooled from different backgrounds. The background of participants included community leaders, Muslim clerics, and military personnel who have fought against the BHT group. All participants were Nigerians and their ages ranged between 20-59 years. Most participants fell within the range of 40-49 years (40%). Participants were also of diverse religious backgrounds, with 50 % representing Muslims, 30 % representing Christians, and 20 % belonging to other religious orientation. The diverse religious backgrounds provided varying perspectives of the phenomenon under

study and enhanced robust data analysis and interpretation of the results. Most

participants were married (60 %), and there was an even distribution of education levels,

though 15% did not have any formal education. All participants were assigned nicknames

to ensure their confidentiality. Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of study

participants.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Description	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Age				
20-29	4	20	20	20
30-39	6	30	30	50
40-49	8	40	40	90
50-59	2	10	10	100
60 and above	0	0	0	100
Marital status				
Single	4	20	20	20
Marred	12	60	60	80
Divorced/separated	4	20	20	100
Other	0	0	0	100
Religion				
Christian	6	30	30	30
Islam	10	50	50	80
Traditional	4	20	20	100
Other	0	0	0	100

Educational background				
Primary	5	25	25	25
Secondary	5	25	25	50
Diploma/NCE	2	10	10	60
Degree/HND	5	25	25	85
No education	3	15	15	100

(*table continues*)

Data Collection

Participants were stratified into three groups made up of Muslim clerics, community leaders, and military personnel. The number of participants initially projected to take part in the study was about 30. However, 10 participants did not avail themselves to be interviewed even though they had earlier on agreed to do so. The first participants for each category were recruited through an invitation letter. Thereafter, the snowballing technique was used to garner additional participants. There was no potential threat to the Muslim clerics and community leaders, as the interviews took place in the comfort and safety of their homes. Similarly, the interview for the military personnel took place at the Nigerian Armed Forces Command and Staff College in Kaduna-Jaji, an environment that also guaranteed the safety of the participants.

Before engaging participants for the interviews, I gave them the opportunity to complete a consent form, which emphasized the confidential and voluntary nature of the study. Most participants subsequently indicated their interest within 4 days of being informed about the study and were further given a week to reflect on their decision to participate in the study. The completed consent forms were retrieved from them and the

interviews was scheduled based on participant's preferred locations and timeframes. Each interview lasted at most an hour-and-a-half, which allowed participants to express their thoughts thoroughly.

Before each interview session, I introduced myself and confirmed the identity of participants. As part of my introductory remarks, I expressed my gratitude to them for responding positively to the invitation to participate in the study. Then I took time to go over the consent form with participants to reinforce the confidential nature of the study. I informed participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the process and also assured them that their identities will not be retained in any future publication of the study. To ensure that participants stayed focused during the interview process, I reviewed the interview protocol, the research question, and the purpose of the study with each participant before commencing the interview. Additionally, I informed all participants about my intention to use a voice recorder during the interview. I explained to participants that using the voice recorder ensured that their thoughts were accurately captured in the data analysis. None of the participants objected to the recording of the interviews.

Participants were also assured of the respect for their feeling. For instance, I informed them to freely express their feeling, especially if they felt uncomfortable about answering a question or did not wish to answer a question. Though the interviews were conducted with the interview protocol, I also used probes to elicit additional insights from the participants as they shared their experiences. At the end of each interview, I thanked participants and informed them of a possible follow-up meeting if necessary. Afterwards,

I transcribed the interviews using NVivo 12 software to analyze the content and the information was saved as Microsoft word documents. The transcripts were subsequently reviewed, and the main recurrent themes identified.

I used a system of back-ups to store the data. This was to ensure that the safety of the research documents was protected from possible losses caused by any software or hardware failure and malicious virus attacks. Soft copies were also duplicated and stored on various flash drives. Furthermore, computer files that contained identifiable data were arranged in a hierarchical structure of files and grouped in identifiable folders. The locations of all electronic data were also subjected to strict protective protocols by restricting access to files and folders using passwords accessible only to me. Hard copies of the research papers and data collected in the forms of interview notes and audio tapes were kept secured in a locked filing cabinet that was only accessible to me.

As is the case in most interviews, difficulties were encountered during the data collection stage of this study. One of the problems was the inability of some participants to understand the English language. This affected the data gathering process despite the use of a translator. For participants who could read and write, I observed in several instances that some of them felt embarrassed and avoided eye contact with me because of their inability to understand some key words in the interview protocol. This may have created a sense of inadequacy for them during the interactions. I therefore made efforts to reassure them to make them comfortable. The security situation within the geographical area of study also presented some difficulties in the data collection process. This was

evident in the instances where some potential participants were reluctant to cooperate and share information.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis**</div>

The data were first converted into a textual form using NVivo 12 software, which was in line with the methodology described in Chapter 3. Thereafter, I transcribed the data gathered from the responses to the interview questions. I also reflected on the meaning of the data retrieved to develop an understanding from each participant's perspectives.

Before organizing the data, I read through the transcripts several times to familiarize myself with the details in the data. I also used marginal notes and a summary of my field notes, as an aid to further interrogate the data. To ensure a more efficient data analysis process, I later compressed the data into meaningful segments leading to the discovery of the central themes. The 10 questions in the research interview protocol that produced the themes and subthemes were asked in the order specified in Section C of the appendix to this study.

Responses from the 20 participants were put together according to corresponding question numbers and stored in their respective designated folders. For instance, all the responses to Question 1 by the 20 participants were collated and stored in the folder named "Responses to Question 1." The same process was replicated for the other nine questions and the responses stored in their respective folders. Each folder was then scrutinized for the identification of phrases that related to the research question. For example, with Nvivo software, several common phrases emerged from Question 1, which

was related to how the ongoing campaign by the security forces against Boko Haram has contributed in sustaining the group's popular support. Some of the common phrases included "they sympathize with the activities of insurgents." Another phrase that featured prominently was "A key factor that undermines the government's counterterrorism efforts." Other phrases included "abject poverty," "economic inequality and social marginalization," and "youth bulge."

The second interview question was related to the extent to which the resilience of Boko Haram has been impacted by ongoing counterterrorism efforts by the Nigerian government. Common phrases that emerged included "the oppressive counterterrorism efforts by the Nigerian Security Forces have emboldened the group," "aggressive offensive against Boko Haram terrorists," "ongoing counterterrorism efforts," and "changing the narrative with a counter narrative to win the heart and minds of the populace." Similarly, responses from remaining eight interview questions also produced insightful common phrases.

To identify themes from these common phrases, I conducted a second and more thorough reading of each interview transcript and secondary data collected, keeping in mind the research question. The initial phrases identified were synthesized by harnessing key thoughts and ideas that shared commonalities across the interviews conducted. This process allowed for the generation of the first set of the themes that were more defined. Using content analysis, the emerging principal themes were further segregated into subthemes. A summary of themes and subthemes derived from the interviews conducted are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Curtailing both the active and passive support for BHT group	☐ The influence the Salafist ideological narrative of the group ☐ Fighting for a larger and aggrieved Muslim constituency ☐ Effective Mobilizing Mechanism for support of Boko Haram
Requirement for a broad approach for de-radicalization of BHT group	☐ Incorporating moderate Muslim clerics in the de- radicalization effort ☐ Winning the hearts and minds of citizens in the North East of Nigeria ☐ Engaging the former Boko Haram fighters Engaging the former Boko Haram Fighters in Negotiations
Impact of Boko Haram activities on the socio-economic status of Nigeria	☐ Loss of livelihoods of people living in Northeast ☐ The socioeconomic disparities between the North and South of Nigeria
Boko Haram use of the Print and Electronic media to Garner Support	☐ Government use of social media to counter Boko Haram Ideology ☐ Engaging the community using social media for counter-ideology

The identified themes and subthemes were then tabulated and the data stored in individual theme folders. Keeping track and organizing data from participants' responses this way was beneficial in analyzing the results of the study which added credibility to the analysis of the data (Saldana, 2015).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I used triangulation from additional and different data sources to promote confidence in the accuracy of this research and ensure credibility. This strategy enabled me to attain a complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied and made the research findings comprehensive and well developed (Noble & Smith, 2015). Another

approach that guaranteed the credibility of this study was the fact that participants took part in the study without any form of compulsion. The credibility of a study can be tainted when the responses to questions from participants' are given to satisfy a desired social response rather than as a reflection of a personal experience of the phenomena being investigated (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Using member checking, I shared the results of the data, its interpretations, and conclusions with the participants, and they certified that their thoughts and intentions were captured accurately.

Transferability

I provided adequate contextual details about the research area where the fieldwork was carried out. This gives the readers the opportunity to determine whether the existing study environment is similar to other situations and whether the findings from this study are applicable to those settings. In addition, I described the phenomenon under study in sufficient details to enable readers evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other settings, situations, and people (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

The detailed description of the processes involved in this study is to ensure dependability and enable future researchers to repeat similar inquiries and achieve comparable results. I also relied on the audit technique to establish dependability in this study. This audit technique was used by inviting another researcher who was not involved in the research process to examine both the process and product of the research study (Creswell, 2013: Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln & Guba further stated that the essence

of this was to evaluate the accuracy of the process of the research and determine whether or not the findings, interpretations and conclusions drawn were supported by the data. Moreover, I described in detail the processes involved in the study so that future researchers can repeat similar inquiries in different settings and still produce comparable results.

Confirmability

I relied on my reflexive journal to establish confirmability in this study. The journal contained records of my reflections regarding the study and all the events that happened in the field. The personal reflections captured the background, my perceptions, and interests on the research process. I also demonstrated that the findings of the study were derived from the research data rather than from my biases.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

This section reports the results of the study based on the research question and the analysis of the data collected. The research question was: To what extent can counter-ideology strategies be instituted to defeat the BHT group? The identities of participants were concealed to protect their confidentiality. The ensuing analysis of the themes and sub-themes were derived from the data collected and are based on my interpretations of the shared experiences of participants.

Theme 1: Active and Passive Support for Members of Boko Haram Terrorist Group

Boko Haram enjoys local sympathy and support from the ranks of the uneducated, unemployed, and impoverished youth in Northern Nigeria. The effect of this support has continuously offset the superiority of the Nigerian Security Forces in the field.

Participants observed that the public support enjoyed by Boko Haram typically relied on both active and passive elements within the population in Northeast of Nigeria.

Unlike the active supporters, passive supporters do not make personal sacrifices in the form of suicide attacks. Instead, they only sympathize with the activities of the group because they considered the members of the group as part of the local community. The unwillingness of the local populace to betray Boko Haram members was therefore a contributing factor to the resilience of the group against the government's counterterrorism efforts.

In the words of Muhammed; "The military's indiscriminate strikes are counterproductive regardless of immediate benefits, because they kill the local civilians thereby alienating members of the affected communities." Counterterrorism efforts against BHT group should be hinged on counter-ideology strategies that focus at gaining the support of the population in the Northeast of Nigeria instead of alienating them by relying solely on military operations.

John suggested that the military should avoid the indiscriminate destruction of lives and properties and rather preserve the gains made thus far. These can be achieved by preventing reprisals attacks from Boko Haram, stabilizing liberated towns and villages, and rebuilding them. Furthermore, Danladi complained that the combat operations to evict Boko Haram from Northeast of Nigeria had inflicted unimaginable high level of casualties on civilians causing resentment towards the Nigerian Security Forces:

Almost a decade of military operations has only resulted in mass displacement of people, destruction of properties, loss of harvests, and further tarnishing of the honor and dignity of many innocent people who are falsely accused of being Boko Haram collaborators.

In Hassan's view, any counter-ideology strategy to defeat the BHT group in Northeast of Nigeria should be based on gaining the support of the local people. However, he said, "the deprivation of large segments of the population in Northeast of Nigeria and the oppressive counterterrorism approach by government has worsened the socio-economic plights of the people." This situation has created a fertile ground for the resentment of the Nigerian Security Forces and invariably strengthened BHT group's capacity to mobilize mass support amongst the local population.

Abdulai expressed similar sentiments and stated that "A key factor frustrating the government's counterterrorism efforts is the economic dislocation of the people as a result of the military operations against Boko Haram members." He further indicated that existing economic inequality, social marginalization, and the youth bulge has reduced the options available to many young Nigerians and this is one of the reasons for the apparent support Boko Haram was enjoying from the local population.

Regardless of its lost territories, Boko Haram has shown significant staying power by demonstrating versatility in its terrorist activities. Ali said, "this quality has made the group a formidable threat to Nigeria's security." In his view, there was a limited appeal amongst Nigerians for Boko Haram's ideology. However, the group has been able to take

advantage of the indiscriminate operations of the security agencies to whip up negative

sentiments against the government.

Most participants believed because of Boko Haram's strict adherence to the

Quran even to the exclusion of the Hadith and other generally accepted secondary

sources of Islamic law, the group does not enjoy popular support among mainstream

Nigerian Muslims. Mustapha said: "The basis of this opinion was due to the group's

wrongful appropriation of Islam for the justification of its acts of terrorism." Johnson

stated that "there was no proof that Boko Haram commanded broad-based support among

Muslims." He added that Boko Haram's rhetoric was focused on two trends:

> The security forces were using brutal military force to attack pious Muslims as a
>
> way of preventing the formation of a Sharia caliphate in Northern Nigeria; and the
>
> aggressive evangelism by Christians in the North will eventually disenfranchise
>
> Muslims and render the creation of a Muslim state in the North impossible.

Northern Nigeria in general is confronted with many security challenges that tend to be

exploited by Boko Haram to gain public support. James acknowledged that:

> The poor public safety and security, ethnic, religious, and sectarian rivalry, are
>
> some of the challenges that have played to the advantage of Boko Haram and
>
> made it possible for the group to solicit support for its cause from the population.

The relative importance of these challenges however, varied demographically and also

depended on the geographical location.

In the Northeast of Nigeria where Boko Haram is active, the group is exploiting

the geographical location and the demography of the area to exacerbate the situation.

Abdul claimed that: "By invoking Don Fodio's jihad as cultural and historical points of reference, Boko Haram is able to justify the use of jihad against their perceived enemies as 'enemies' of Islam." The sophisticated weaponry, vehicles, bombs and ammunition at the disposal of Boko Haram also points to the level of financial and logistics support available to the group. Despite the high level of poverty in Northern Nigeria, access to financial support has helped in making the group resilient. According to Abdul . . . "ransom monies received from kidnapping is one of the group's primary sources of funding. The group is also believed to be funded by Islamic terrorist groups such as ISIS and AQIM."

The impact of the Salafist ideological narrative on Boko Haram support. The practical nature of Salafi-Jihadism has enhanced the strategic outlook of Boko Haram and made the group appealing to the youth in Northern Nigeria. Salifu averred that: "Boko Haram draws its Salafist ideological inspiration from AQIM. It is therefore not possible to defeat the group's ideology without first understanding their philosophy." The fervor with which Boko Haram fighters pursue their goals serves as an ethical framework for soliciting the support of the youth within the areas they control. For this reason, David said, "The military-dominated solutions in the fight against Boko Haram cannot defeat the group because some sections among the population support the Salafist ideological narrative." Such support from the populace in his view has resulted in Boko Haram's ideological resilience.

Conventional strategies that aim at dissuading people from supporting terrorist groups tend to presume that only ideological brainwashing drive people to voluntarily

join these radical groups. But in the opinion of Charles, the precarious security and political conditions in the Northeast of Nigeria are partly the reason why some community members are compelled to support Boko Haram. He stated that: "Boko Haram offers loyal community members some respite from the existing insecurity as part of its Salafist ideological narrative." Sandow conceded that Boko Haram was resilient and adaptive. He said: "The military onslaught on the group and its Salafist ideology are some of the reasons Boko Haram use to justify their terrorist acts against the Nigerian state.

Fighting for the Muslim constituency. Boko Haram also portrays itself as a defender of the Muslim constituencies in Northern Nigeria against the Nigeria State aggression and victimization of members based on their Islamic faith. The group's exclusivist Salafist identity and its strategy of playing the defender of the Islamic faith and victims of the Nigeria State have swelled up its support base amongst its ideological adherents. Aliu noted that: "Members of the group are inspired by the belief that they are fighting for the aggrieved Muslim constituency."

Seidu observed that Boko Haram sympathizers were in a minority and represented a fringe of Northern Nigeria's Salafi community. He stated that "Boko Haram's resilience has been aided by the group's ability to attract external reinforcement from other regional terrorist groups." Sani agreed that "The proximity of AQIM who also see themselves as fighting for Muslims makes it easier for Boko Haram to attract the required external support for its survival." Ogbey further said:

The sophisticated manner Boko Haram suicide bombers detonated a Vehicle-

Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) next to the National Police

Headquarters in Abuja in 2016 points to the involvement of external support from

terrorist groups like AQIM and Al Shabaab who also consider themselves as

fighting for Muslims.

Mechanism for mobilizing resources for Boko Haram. An important reason for

the resilience of Boko Haram is the group's ability to continuously mobilize and increase

its human and material resources. John said: "At its inception, Boko Haram's strategy for

mobilizing forces was to recruit its fighter mostly from the gullible and misguided youths

drawn from the ranks of school dropouts and the Amajiris/ madrassas (Islamic schools)

system." However, currently the group is also able to recruit intellectuals and strategic

leaders as members.

This position was corroborated by Kabiu who stated that: "The arrest and

subsequent conviction of a lecturer from the Kogi State University in November 2013,

for recruiting some youths into Boko Haram, is an example of Boko Haram's ability to

recruit intellectuals and strategic leaders." Bello also disclosed that another mechanism

the group has used to solicit support was by offering business loans to financially

desperate families. Later, he said: "Such families are coerced into supporting the group

when they are unable to repay the amount owed. The group also fund itself from ransom

monies extorted from kidnapped people."

Besides, Boko Haram has on several occasions used its international affiliations to

attract foreign fighters. Boko Haram's recent engagement of foreign fighters to attack

troops' formations in the North East of Nigeria attests to this assertion. According to

Dramani, this trend. . . "posed threats to the sub-region and requires a review of the

ongoing military operations against Boko Haram if its resilience has to be defeated."

Theme 2: Requirement for a Broad Approach for De-radicalization of Boko Haram

Terrorist

       The lack of progress by the military-based strategy in defeating Boko Haram has

necessitated the need for a more comprehensive approach to subdue the group's

resilience. One of such initiatives which have been adopted by the Federal Government

of Nigeria in corroboration/partnership with the Nigerian Armed Forces is the de-

radicalization program.

       Ogbey referred to Nigeria's 2014 National Security Strategy which included

counter-radicalization, communication, and de-radicalization and indicated that the

strategy's focus on the use of soft power to defeat Boko Haram was flawed. In his view,

"the de-radicalization aspect of the 2014 National Security Strategy was a misplaced

strategy and policymakers should review it." He further stated that: "The program is

riddled with problems and challenges because the classification has been skewed towards

'low-risk' and 'high-risk' defectors."

       Such classification presented an obstacle to potential defectors who are not certain

of the category they will be assigned to if they defected. Abdulai, Hassan, and

Muhammed proposed a reliable process of bringing people who have been associated

with Boko Haram back to their communities as part of the de-radicalization program.

Hassan argued that:

> For displaced people to successfully return and rebuild their lives, first, social workers and psychologists need to be sent to the communities to heal members from the trauma they have experienced." Thereafter, traditional and religious leaders, such as Imams, should be engaged to prepare the community for the arrival of the former Boko Haram associates.

This means that Former Boko Haram members should only be brought back to their communities at the later stage of the process.

Dramani described the current Boko Haram de-radicalization program as a laudable option to augment the ongoing military approach but has failed to defeat the resilience of the BHT group. He however added that: "The effectiveness of the de-radicalization program is fraught with problems because it is largely focused on recidivism reduction, which in itself is difficult to measure." Richard observed that: "because the social dimension of the de-radicalization program has been neglected, there is an increased tendency for the process of the re-integration of former combatants into society to be negatively framed."

In Nigeria, various de-radicalization initiatives have tried unsuccessfully to support the re-integration of former combatants into society through educational support. Salifu said the reason for this was because "the framers of the de-radicalization program in Nigeria misunderstand de-radicalization to mean a process in which former Boko Harm fighters reject the radical ideology they once embraced." Ali stated that: "Full re-integration is a long-term process and requires that community needs within the Northeast of Nigeria are taken into account."

Though the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) which is a community based anti-Boko Haram vigilante group plays an important role in fighting the BHT group, its role in the process of reintegrating former Boko Haram fighter has so far been negative. Mustapha claimed that:

> When former Boko Haram fighters return to their communities after the de-radicalization program, they come under constant surveillance from the CJTF. This has negative implications for the de-radicalization program insofar as enforcing disengagement and enforcing social norms by the CJTF is concerned.

The CJTF's scrutiny of the re-integrated former Boko Haram fighters may have reduced the likelihood of former Boko Haram fighters to re-engage in terrorism. However, Abdul, Seidu, and Sani were unanimous in their assessment that the CJTF's abrasive suspicion of former fighters and the poor discipline among them has in some cases resulted in the killing of former combatants released from the de-radicalization program.

Abdul further criticized the manner the de-radicalization program was being implemented. In his opinion . . . "one of the difficulties which undermine the de-radicalization program is the push-back against the re-integration of the former Boko Haram fighters." Even though former Boko Haram fighters may have denounced terrorism, he expressed doubt over whether those former fighters will not be surreptitiously giving support to the group's terrorist activities in the future.

Incorporating moderate Muslim clerics in the de-radicalization effort. The Nigerian government's de-radicalization program in various prisons in the country had made significant strides in de-radicalizing former members of Boko Haram. Moderate

Muslim clerics working in these prisons have served as intermediaries between former

fighters and the government to drive the required reforms. According to Mustapha, by

leading Friday prayers . . . "prison Muslim clerics help to change former fighters who use

extremists Salafist motifs to recruit people in the prisons." Bello observed that, in the

prison context, "the efforts of Muslim clerics to de-radicalize former Boko Haram

fighters has a major setback because the former fighters do not see themselves as

criminals and therefore may not be repentant after all.

Despite these difficulties, the prisons still provide the right environment from

which Muslim clerics can engage individuals or group of former fighters in the de-

radicalization process. Kabiru stated that: "Religious re-education and vocational training

are some of the key elements that can inspire a more effective de-radicalization program

in the prisons." Aliu emphasized the need for credible interlocutors who would relate to

the personal and psychological needs of prisoners. Sandow, Charles, and David agreed

that because Muslim clerics were expected to relate to the psychological needs of

prisoners' during the de- radicalization process, they needed to be trained as counsellors

as well.

Johnson and Richard explained that many of former fighters who participate in

the de-radicalization program often returned to terrorism because of lack of support and

assistance from government. Richard further said: "The de-radicalization program should

make conscious efforts to facilitate the transition of former fighters into social networks

as a way of averting recidivism." This reinforces the generally held opinion that the de-

radicalization programs cannot be successful without considering the wider religious, political and social context in which the program is carried out.

Siedu stated that "The over-reliance on only Muslim clerics in the de-radicalization programs is not a feasible approach for reforming Boko Haram fighters." James therefore said a mixture of ideological, religious re-education, and vocational training was necessary to de-radicalize former fighters. He further explained that . . . "former fighters who have gone through the de-radicalization program usual ended up being harassed by the Police and the CJTF."

Winning the hearts and minds of citizens in Northeast Nigeria. Boko Haram's elusive nature of blending quickly with the rest of the population after carrying out terrorist attacks means the military has to work closely with members of the public to enable them defeat the group decisively. In this regard, Salifu said, "The military in recent times has embarked on measures aimed at improving community relations with members of the public." This endeavor by the military is laudable and must be commended. Sandow expressed concern that:

> There is a feeling of betrayal amongst individual informants within the community who have acted on their own volition to provide actionable intelligence on Boko Haram to the security forces. Government has not done enough for them, considering the hardship members of the community have been going through over the years.

Based on this position, Muhammed said, "This does not negate the fact that the ongoing community engagement strategy by government to win the hearts and minds of the locals and counter the ideological propaganda Boko Haram is not making any impact."

A multifaceted peace-building effort that targets communities in the Northeast of Nigeria is also a necessity for winning the hearts and minds of community members who are exposed to Boko Haram activities. Abdulai stated that "Several community members within Boko Haram territories are bombarded by the group's charismatic preachers with a violent form of Islam." Unfortunately, because those community members lack the ability to reason logically, they simply accept that version to be the absolute truth. In the opinion of Abdul, "it is only when the Nigerian Security Forces improve the way they interact with the communities that they can win their allegiance and subsequently defeat the resilience of Boko Haram."

Some Nigerian Muslims endorse the implementation of the Sharia law in the Northern part of Nigeria. However, many Muslims in Nigeria do not support the ideology of Boko Haram which promotes the abduction and rape of women and girls, and also misuse the doctrine of takfir to target moderate Muslims. Aliu said, "The extreme ideology and brutality of the BHT group has alienated most civilians from the group." Kabiru also insisted that "The BHT group has no mechanism for sustaining the support of ordinary people by winning their hearts and minds voluntarily." Boko Haram has alienated civilian populations in areas they control because many of their actions are considered atrocious, brutal, and unIslamic.

Dramani stated that, "to win the hearts and minds of the local population, policymakers have to formalize and improve the authority of local institutions by making decisions at the local level more inclusive." This will enable communities who are even in remote areas to offer counter-narrative responses to facilitate the defeat of the BHT group. Sani was of the view that "addressing any lingering grievances of community members could be a powerful tool for winning the hearts and minds of the local population to facilitate the defeat of the ideology of Boko Haram."

However, the security crackdown unleashed on ordinary civilians by the Nigerian military, all in the name of countering Boko Haram was negating the effort of winning the hearts and minds of the people. Ali stated that "The Nigerian Security Forces cannot win the battle for the hearts and minds of the local population if they consistently violate the human rights of the citizen and subject them to inhumane treatment."

Negotiating with Boko Haram fighters. The debate over the best strategies to defeat Boko Haram is a controversial issue in communities that have experienced devastating atrocities from the group. However, majority of participants were skeptical about the prospects of engaging Boko Haram in any meaningful dialogue or negotiations. Charles stated that:

> The problem is that over the years of the Boko Haram crisis, government had often appointed and tasked various Committees to engage key members of the group. However, when the Committee presents its report, the recommendations are not implemented by the government.

David was of the opinion that "any attempt to engage Boko Haram in any dialogue will be useless given the background of many failed and subverted attempts due to the existing mistrust between both parties."

Rather, David called for collaborative efforts that will involve the local community and civil society in tandem with security operations. Sani, Ali and Ogbey agreed that, prominent Nigerians and civil societies have tried previously to establish negotiations channel between the Nigerian government and Boko Haram. In all these instances, the initiatives broke down and did not yield any positive results because Boko Haram showed no real commitment towards abandoning its terrorist campaign against the Federal Government of Nigeria. James and Johnson doubted whether the armed campaign by Boko Haram could be brought to a negotiable and peaceful end.

Despite the previous failures in negotiations with Boko Haram, there are still calls for government to continue to engage the group. Mustapha stated that "The persistence of these calls stems partly from the acceptance of the fact that military operations alone cannot defeat the resilience of the group." Participants who favored dialogue with Boko Haram stressed that negotiating with Boko Haram and releasing some of its members from the prisons could facilitate the process of reconciliation. Seidu stated that "as a way of building confidence between parties, negotiations on issues such as prisoner release could also help that process."

Even those confronted with the daily threat of Boko Haram terrorism expressed the opinion that engaging Boko Haram in negotiations should be part of a holistic approach to resolving the conflict. Hassan said:

Realistically, the Nigerian Security Forces have done everything possible to defeat Boko Haram militarily, but to no avail. The only way to end this conflict once and for all is for the government to engage the remnants of Boko Haram in negotiations.

Nonetheless, traditional Northern leaders who in the past served as intermediaries in the attempt to negotiate peaceful settlement of the conflict between the government and Boko Haram are now reluctant to do so. Bello said, "Northern traditional leaders do not want to expose themselves and be further accused of being associated with religious fanaticism because they engaged with the group in previous negotiations."

Theme 3: Impact of Boko Haram Activities on the Socioeconomic Status of Nigeria

This theme was aimed at understanding participants experience regarding the socioeconomic implications of Boko Haram's atrocities in Northeast of Nigeria where the group is active. Most participants noted that the activities of Boko Haram constituted a serious threat to the socioeconomic development of Nigeria which has affected commercial activities in the Northeast of Nigeria in particular. As a result of this situation, Sandow said, "There is food scarcity in Nigeria because traders from Northern Nigeria are unable to transport their foodstuffs to other parts of the country." Sandow explained that farmers out of fear for losing their lives have now abandoned their farming activities and livelihoods. He said: "This has significantly reduced food production and worsened the problems of household income generation, as well as, food supply to the major cities."

The activities of Boko Haram are also geared towards dehumanizing women and children. The increasing cases of rape of women and the abduction of children especially girls, attest to this security threat. As a result, Abdulai said:

> Professionals in Northeastern Nigeria were migrating and abandoning their professions and occupations on account of the insecurity in the area. Most of these migrants from the North of Nigeria are in their productive ages and are engaged in farming and trading.

The unfavorable business environment created by the terrorist activities of Boko Haram has also become a disincentive for local and foreign investors.

Foreign investors provide livelihood opportunities to community members through the job opportunities that are created. James mentioned that the current situation has destroyed the socioeconomic image of Nigeria and further added that: "the vicious onslaughts on foreign investors who provide large scale services in the host communities in Northeast of Nigeria are inimical to the socioeconomic prosperity of individuals." Charles stated that because of the growing insecurity in the North of Nigeria, the socio-economic conditions in the area have been impacted negatively. He added that: "Many people including businessmen are fleeing the North to a more peaceful environment in the southern parts of the country.

Mustapha further disclosed that "The precarious security situation in the Northeast of Nigeria has created many school dropouts, increased unemployment, and thuggery amongst the young people." In David's view, the overall effects of Boko Haram's activities are fast affecting Nigeria's socio-economic development and its

overall economy potentials. He said, "Despite the enormous resources at the disposal of the country, Nigeria has been compelled to focus its priorities on security to the detriment of viable human capital development and investments in other productive sectors."

Prior to the emergence of Boko Haram, tourism was a viable sector in Nigeria with abundant economic and socio-cultural benefits in the Northern part of the country. Salifu stated that "Due to the current security threats posed by the sporadic bombing by Boko Haram, the industry has virtually collapsed." In Ali's view, for Nigeria to achieve a favorable environment for socio-economic development to thrive, there should be an inter-religious dialogue. . . "where Boko Haram would be engaged actively in a collaborative manner to foster peace in the Northern parts of the Nigeria."

Loss of livelihoods of people living in Northeast Nigeria. Johnson and Mustapha intimated that Boko Haram was responsible for the deeply entrenched social and economic marginalization and the loss of the livelihood of a large section of people in the northeast region of Nigeria. The loss of peoples' livelihoods according to Muhammed has been occasioned by . . . "the bombing of churches, mosques, police stations, schools, including Universities and other government infrastructures." Aliu said . . . "the extremist activities of Boko Haram in the northeast have generally brought almost all the socio-economic activities to a standstill thereby affecting the livelihoods of majority of community members in the region"

The social problems in Nigeria have a direct impact on the political environment, security, and the economic situation in the country. Seidu was of the opinion that any turbulence in any of these sectors usually has a direct impact on the others. He said: For

instance, political instability usually leads to economic problems, which then triggers social and security concerns." In his view, the remedies for the prevailing socio-economic problems due to the activities of the BHT group can be found in the political, economic, and socio-cultural space in Nigeria.

The loss of the livelihoods of the people in Northeast Nigeria can be attributed to the activities of Boko Haram. This situation is present in a mixture of volatile, ambiguous and complex security issues that have rendered many people unable to attain their full economic potentials. Sani identified the socio-economic issues in the Northeast of Nigeria to include the "lack of education, loss of livelihood, cultural and religious discrimination, overpopulation, unemployment, and poverty." Abdul stated that the socio-economic consequence of the atrocities of Boko Haram was "the loss of livelihood and the associated poverty which has become common in the region.

Ogbey pointed out that "these factors which are prevalent in Northeast of Nigeria have had negative influence on the economic activities of individuals and their livelihoods." Other participants agreed that the current insecurity in Northern Nigeria was due to the high level of poverty in that part of the country as a result of loss of livelihoods of the people. Bello concluded that "the situation was making communities that have lost their livelihoods to be vulnerable to the nefarious recruitment schemes of Boko Haram."

The socioeconomic disparities Between the North and South of Nigeria. A sharp socio- economic disparity exists between the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria. Though the Northern part of the country is highly populated, their level of

education for instance in comparison to people in the South was below expectation. There was broad consensus amongst participants that young Nigerians in the Northern region are confronted with abject poverty and socio-economic dislocation. Kabiru observed that: "The socio-economic disparity has been exacerbated further by the oppressive counterinsurgency campaign being waged by the Security forces which tend to make the youth support the BHT group."

David blamed colonialism for the socio-economic disparities between the people in the North compared to those in the South of Nigeria. He stated that "What the colonial masters did was to create an elite economic class in the Southern part of the country to administer the Northern part of Nigeria." Overtime, Hassan said, "This fault line has been further exploited to the extent that the level of mass poverty in the North has become endemic compared to the South." Bello and Dramani disclosed that the socio- economic disparities in the North of Nigeria has made the region a safe haven for mobilizing and recruiting new members. Richard noted that the BHT group has been able to successfully frame these longstanding socio-economic grievances to their advantage. In his view . . . "the combination of these socio-economic grievances has been exploited by the group to gain legitimacy in it terrorist attacks."

Theme 4: Boko Haram use of Social Media to Garner Support

The threats posed to the Nigeria state by Boko Haram's online propaganda are enormous. This theme therefore provided some clarity over the intentions of the group in the social media domain. James stated that:

The proficiency of terrorist organizations in the use of social media to

communicate and propagandize their members is on the rise. The efficacy of

Boko Haram's operations is based on their reliance on easy-to-use social media

platforms as broadcast channels.

Sandow said, "Boko Haram is skillful in the use of various social media platforms. No

one should therefore dismiss the importance the group places on the use of android

phones." Aliu confirmed the fact that: "Boko Haram fighters use complex

communication technologies that depend on social media platforms to communicate both

publicly and secretly to their members."

Social movements are often driven by grievances such as the deterioration of

political, social, and the economic situations of the people. Such grievances which are

common in the Northeast of Nigeria where Boko Haram operates can be exploited by the

group through the use of social media platforms. Sani said: "Boko Haram members rely

on the print and online social media to blame the government for these grievances and

seeking public sympathy for their cause." Kabiru stated that Boko Haram has mastered

the use of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and email to facilitate

their social interactions with the population. Richard pointed out that the dissemination of

instant messages from Boko Haram members to its sympathizers during its social

mobilization was not limited to only social media. He said: "They also use traditional

media platforms such as print media, radio and television which offer rapid and wider

coverage." On his part, Ogbey said:

The urgency for Boko Haram to disseminate information to its followers and the

process of sharing intelligence obtain from social media platforms amongst

security agencies has become a contest amongst the security agencies, thus,

becoming more of a dilemma in the quest to defeat Boko Haram.

Seidu was of the opinion that Boko Haram has become very conscious of the usefulness

of social media in propagating its messages. He said: "The group is therefore taking

advantage of the accessibility to mass audience to incorporate the use of social media

platforms in their indoctrination and radicalization agenda."

Through social media, Bello said Boko Haram is able to directly connect with a

vast majority of its audience. Sani also intimated that: "On a daily basis, Boko Haram

sends several messages on various social media platforms to its followers, enemies and

would-be recruits." This regular broadcast and exchanges on social media has helped the

group to establish good comradeship with their sympathizers. Johnson stated that by

using Facebook, Boko Haram had moved away from their dependency on mainstream

media. "Boko Haram's shift to the use of Facebook has helped them in bringing the

group's messages closer to its target audience," he said. Charles recalled that from 2013,

the use of social media had increasingly played significant roles in Boko Haram's

messaging. He said, "Boko Haram frequently used Facebook to post its communications

because of the platform's wide coverage among the population in Northern Nigeria."

Social media messages from Boko Haram often centered on the legitimacy of

Islam and the use of passages from the Quran to extol the religion. They also preach

messages against democracy and the so-called Western form of education. Muhammed

said the use of various social media platforms by Boko Haram to communicate the routine in member's daily life was a way to attract more individuals to join them. Boko Haram's strategic use of social media also demonstrates the resourcefulness of the group in mobilizing sympathizers from other countries within the sub region. Abdulai stated that "The increasing access of Boko Haram to social media platforms have made it possible for a pool of potential supporters to be recruited into the group."

The good thing in the battle on social media platforms against Boko Haram is that the security agencies can also use same social media for networking amongst themselves in the fight against the group. Salifu explained that, security agencies in other geopolitical zones in Nigeria could communicate with other security agents in the Northern geopolitical zone through the social media platforms.

Government use of social media to counter Boko Haram ideology. The use of social media by government and the security forces in Nigeria to combat Boko Haram terrorism and other forms of crimes has evolved over the years. Given that BHT group now propagate its ideology via the use of social media, the same social media can be used by the government to enhance the level of interaction amongst security agencies as they endeavor to counter Boko Haram's ideology. Mustapha observed that the recent use of social media to counter the ideology of Boko Haram has contributed significantly in improving support from some community members in the Northeastern part of Nigeria.

Because the government has been slow in espousing a superior counter-ideology in combating Boko Haram, this has led to delay in defeating the Boko Haram ideology. Hassan said the inability to use social media to re-orientate and enlighten community

members about the dangers posed by Boko Haram activities may run the risk of

damaging the security forces' relationships with community members in the northeastern

part of Nigeria. He said that:

> The essence of espousing superior ideology using social media platforms is to
>
> build trust with communities members through consultation as a way of
>
> enhancing the legitimacy of on-going counterterrorism efforts against Boko
>
> Haram. The security forces therefore need to augment the fire for fire approach by
>
> increasing community engagement using various social media platforms.

Dramani was of the view that the effective use of social media to combat

terrorism depends on the support and cooperation from the general public. The use of

social media to engage community members in the Northeastern part of Nigeria could . . .

"lead to an improved community engagement that can facilitate the passing of terror

related actionable intelligence to the security agencies for them to take swift action."

Bello advocated for the aggressive use of social media by government to sensitize

community members about the dangers of Boko Haram activities and the need for them

to actively support the security agencies to defeat the group. He stated that "Community

members can serve as informants via social media by helping to prevent possible Boko

Haram threats."

Engaging the community using social media for counter-ideology. After

several years of delays, the Nigerian government's counter terrorism strategy has now

acknowledged the importance of using social media interventions to counter the ideology

of Boko Haram. Even at that, Richard stated that:

The approach has so far been confrontational and seemingly contradictory in terms of its rhetoric and practice. This has led to the strategy being criticized by community members in the Northeast of Nigeria. The use of social media for counter-ideology against Boko Haram has also been less concerned with counter-radicalization given that Boko Haram members employ Islam to justify their violent actions.

In this regard, Sani and Dramani both agreed that a more realistic approach for using social media in any counter-radicalization effort to oppose Boko Haram's ideological messages was for government to partner community groups, non-governmental organizations, and the Muslim clerics to develop counter-narratives. Hassan stated that "Social media can play a vital role in promoting a counter-narrative to facilitate counter radicalization and de-radicalization to reform Boko Haram sympathizers." Abdul was of the opinion that a comprehensive counter-narrative should include "the political, historical, socio-psychological, theological, and instrumental dimensions of the violent extremist ontology in question."

Any social media strategy for countering the Boko Haram ideology should be based on three steps. First, the message should be attractive and tailored to different audiences, especially to the youth. It is therefore important in the first step to admit the validity of the youth's grievances by offering alternative strategies for addressing those grievances. The second step is to be particular with the background and credibility of the messengers because the identity of the bearers of the message matters in the area of ideological de-radicalization. As Mustapha put it:

The message to be conveyed should be transmitted by credible messengers such as Muslim clerics or Sheikhs. Hearing the theological counter narrative directly from credible and respected Sheikhs will resonate well with Boko Haram fighters and they are likely to imbibe the message because they know them.

Finally, the third step is the use of social media to promote and propagate the counter narrative messages.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings after analyzing responses from 20 participants in the study. I used the NVivo software in the data analysis and applied a thematic analysis framework to interpret the data collected. This enabled me to find the central ideas embedded in the data and further identify common phrases and themes.

Participants observed that the willingness of the local populace to provide safe sanctuaries for Boko Haram members was as a result of the ongoing counterproductive military operations which have alienated the locals. The further said, regardless of the immediate benefits of the military campaign, it was not effective in defeating the ideology of Boko Haram. The participants also indicated the need for a more comprehensive de-radicalization program to defeat the group's resilience. Others advocated for Muslim clerics to lead the counter-ideology strategies aspect in the de-radicalization effort by engaging the former fighters in religious re-education.

Participants were of the opinion that a critical part of any counter-ideology strategy required for defeating the resilience of Boko Haram is for the Nigerian Security Forces to improve their interaction with the communities to win their allegiance. Some

participants were of the view that Boko Haram has become conscious of the usefulness of social media in their indoctrination and radicalization agenda. However, social media platforms could also be harnessed by security agencies to develop a counter-ideology strategy to defeat against Boko Haram's ideology. In Chapter 5, I provided a summary of the study after which my interpretations and findings were shared. Finally, I concluded followed by my recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to provide a counter-ideology strategy to defeat the BHT group, which has not been done by the Nigerian Armed Forces. This study was focused on how Boko Haram's ideology motivates the resilience of its members. Any attempt to eliminate this ideology and defeat the group requires a multifaceted approach with emphasis on counter-ideology. Although it has been acknowledged that counter-ideology responses to terrorist propaganda is an important part of every counterterrorism strategy, up until now, the Nigerian authorities have no clear counter-ideological framework against Boko Haram. Additionally, there were limited empirical data on counter-ideological work against the BHT group, which justified the importance of researching on this topic. To bridge this gap in literature, I interviewed 20 participants made up of Muslim clerics, community leaders, and military personnel. This study thus provided the framework from which counter-ideological work could facilitate the eventual defeat of the resilience of the BHT group. The outcome of the study provided insights into the extent to which counter-ideology strategies can be instituted to defeat the BHT group along the following themes:

1. Curtailing both the active and passive support for BHT group.

2. Requirement for a broad approach for de-radicalization of BHT group.

3. Impact of Boko Haram activities on the socioeconomic status of Nigeria.

4. The use of the print and electronic media to garner support.

Interpretation of the Findings

Support for Members of Boko Haram Terrorist Group

Theme 1 revealed that the resilience of Boko Haram was grounded on the Salafist ideology. The group was also found to enjoy limited local sympathy and support from the ranks of educated, uneducated, and impoverished youth across Northern Nigeria. Participants explained that these supporters were unwilling to betray Boko Haram members—an act that also contributed to the resilience of the group against the government's counterterrorism efforts.

However, researchers have indicated a limited appeal among Nigerians to Boko Haram's ideology. For example, Onuoh (2014) and Weeraratne (2017) suggested that because of Boko Haram's strict adherence to the Quran to the exclusion of the Hadith and other generally accepted secondary sources of Islamic law, the group does not enjoy popular support among mainstream Nigerian Muslims. Despite the limited appeal among Nigerians for Boko Haram, there is a lack of support for government's response to the group. This was found to be due to the indiscriminate military strikes against the group, which have been regarded as counterproductive. Participants further explained that because the military operations often killed innocent local civilians, the security forces have alienated members of the affected communities. Onuoha (2014) and Human Rights Watch (2015) both stated that the local population, local opinion leaders, civil society organizations, and the media have all criticized the military for their indiscriminate killings of civilians. Research has also confirmed that the military response by the government of Nigeria to defeat the ideological orientation of Boko Haram has been

largely unsuccessful (Abiodun & Abila, 2018; Allen, 2017; Botha & Abdile, 2019; Hentz & Solomon, 2017). Further, the predominantly military approach to counteracting Boko Haram will continue to generate tensions between the government and the local people unless a broader counterterrorism approach is adopted to identify the source of the group's resilience and target it (de Montclos, 2014; Sampson, 2016; Serrano & Pieri, 2014).

Some of the participants also explained that the reason for the resilience of Boko Haram was because of the role the group's ideology plays in winning sympathy from Muslims. These Boko Haram sympathizers believe that the group is fighting for the aggrieved Muslim constituency in Nigeria. For example, Kassim (2015) indicated that Boko Haram indoctrinates its followers to believe that the group is defending the tenets of Islam, their struggle is for Islam, and that their philosophies represent the true Islam. To further accentuate the impression that its ideology is founded on Islam, they quote portions of the Quran, the Hadits, and opinions of classical Muslim scholars, to justify their terrorist acts against their perceived enemies (Boutz, Benninger, & Lancaster, 2018; Tibi, 2017). Additionally, Boko Haram leaders elicit support from individuals by consistently using religious rhetoric to justify the group's campaign of violence against the Nigerian State (Brigaglia, 2015). Such rhetoric has been designed to appeal to Muslims support and provide a narrative that generates fears amongst pious Muslims of the looming threat of Islam losing grounds to the forces of immorality (Pieri & Zenn, 2016).

Participants confirmed that the BHT group expected Muslims to be in constant war against non-Muslims because in their mind, the state was collaborating with Christians to target Nigerian Muslims. Armed jihad was therefore the only means to change the current fate of the Muslims in their quest to establish the Caliphate. This conclusion is supported by literature that confirms the fact that because Boko Haram's ideology was based on the submission and allegiance to Allah alone, members considered killing themselves as an act of martyrdom and the way to sacrifice for Islam (Hove & Chenzi, 2017; Juergensmeyer, 2017; Nilsson, 2017).

Requirement for a Broad Approach for De-radicalization of the Boko Haram Terrorist Group

The findings from Theme 2 indicated that the de-radicalization program as expressed in the 2014 National Security Strategy was an option to augment the ongoing military approach. However, most of the participants said that the strategy has failed to defeat the resilience of the BHT group due to many problems. The challenges confronting the Nigerian government's de-radicalization program explain why it has not made any significant impact in defeating Boko Haram's ideology, which underlies the group's resilience (David, Asuelime, & Onapajo, 2015; Tella, 2018).

One of the problems with the de-radicalization program included setting it up in the Nigerian Prisons Service (Barkindo, 2016). There was a lack of awareness on how former Boko Haram fighters should be managed among prison staff at all levels of the de-radicalization program (Barkindo, 2016). Moreover, risk assessment on the de-radicalization process was only focused on the risk of former Boko Haram fighters

escaping. Furthermore, there was short supply of credible speakers who could relate to the personal and psychological needs of former Boko Haram fighters in the prisons.

Participants also accused some members of the CJTF of affecting the efforts of the de-radicalization process during their counterinsurgent vigilante work by harassing former Boko Haram fighters who have been successfully de-radicalized. This opinion is confirmed by a footage showing members of the CJTF involved in slitting of the throats of Boko Haram suspects and then pushing them into open mass graves (Allen, 2017; Amnesty International, 2014). Despite these challenges, the Nigerian government has made some positive strides in de-radicalizing former members of Boko Haram in various prisons.

It was also observed by participants that the Nigerian government has conceded the need to fight Boko Haram by engaging them in a war of ideas rather than a military fire power approach. Accordingly, some Islamic clerics have been engaged by government to preach on radio and television as a way of preventing radicalization and averting the luring of individuals into terrorism. Government has permitted Islamic clerics to engage with Boko Haram fighters to challenge their interpretation of the Quran and their belief system with the hope that they can be reformed and reintegrated into society (Sampson, 2016). The use of Islamic clerics in forestalling extremism has been effective in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (Aljunied, 2012). Similarly, Islamic clerics in Nigeria can also collaborate with community leaders, traditional, and religious leaders as well as nongovernmental organizations to play meaningful roles in the de-radicalization process by facilitating dialogue and reconciliation (Aljunied, 2012).

Participants also suggested that the ongoing community engagement strategy by the government to counter the ideological propaganda of Boko Haram was not making the expected impact. They attributed this to the government not addressing the grievances of community members. Consequently, the government and the security forces will have difficulty appealing to the local population to facilitate the defeat of the ideology of Boko Haram (Eji, 2016; Falode, 2016; Sergie & Johnson, 2015). Thus, an effective tool for appealing the local population is for the government to formalize and improve the authority of local institutions by making local decision making more inclusive. This could be achieved through the active participation of those who will be affected by the outcome of such decisions.

There was no consensus in the opinions of participants about the prospects of engaging Boko Haram in any meaningful dialogue or negotiations. The literature has supported this lack of consensus. Some scholars support the "no negotiation" stance, whereas others support meaningful dialogue with terrorist groups (Atkinson, Sandler, & Tschirhart, 1987; Hoffman, 2004; Lake, 2002; Neumann, 2007; Speckhard & Akhmedova, 2005). The pro-negotiation scholars maintain that the government unconsciously dialogues with terrorists, whether it recognizes this or not. For this reason, many Boko Haram scholars support the prospect of dialogue and negotiations with Boko Haram (Nwankpa, 2017). However, Uchehara (2014) and Agbiboa (2014) argued that efforts by government to dialogue with Boko Haram, including the recent amnesty offer extended to its members, have failed due to distrust on both sides and the breakup of the

group into different factions. But some scholars argue that maintaining the notion of no negotiation with BHT group was not less damaging than negotiating.

Impact of Boko Haram Activities on the Socioeconomic Status of Nigeria

Participants were unanimous in their views concerning the negative socioeconomic impact of Boko Haram activities on Nigerians. The loss of the livelihoods of individuals, increasing amount of unemployed youths, and poverty in Northern Nigeria were the main concerns. This finding is supported by various scholars whose works have shown that the emergence and growth of Boko Haram was closely associated with the high levels of poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment in Northeast Nigeria (Kolade, 2018; Rogers, 2012; Salaam, 2012). According to official statistics, the most significant risk factor responsible for the spread of poverty and unemployment among the youth in the northeast region of Nigeria was the Boko Haram insurgency (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012; World Bank, 2013).

The social problems in Nigeria caused by the activities of the BHT group were also observed to have had a direct impact on the political environment, security, and the economic situation in the country. The unemployment situation in Northeast Nigeria was not only a problem to individuals but also creates economical and psychologically challenges to Nigerian society (Ajufo, 2013; Ayegba, 2015). Due to the unemployment, there has been an increased dependence on family, which has been correlated with the high rate of poverty prevailing in the country. The unemployment among the younger population had also been the cause of the increase in various crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, and other deviant behaviors such as terrorism in Nigeria.

There is a link between the socioeconomic dislocations in Northern Nigeria and the viability of recruiting new Boko Haram members. This link is consistent with research indicating the ability of some influential people and actors in Northeast Nigeria to manipulate and influence some poor and discontent individuals to engage in terrorist acts (Adelaja, Labo & Penar, 2018; Akubor, 2016; Dauda, 2017). Similarly, Umar (2013) believe that poverty and the continuing economic disparities in the northeastern part of Nigeria were responsible for the terrorism in that region. He further stated that a country like Nigeria which is facing economic stagnation, higher level of unemployment, and disparities in economic development was a fertile ground for terrorism to flourish.

Moreover, participants expressed their concerns on how the existing poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, discrimination, and economic marginalization in Northern Nigeria have been used by Boko Haram to recruit its members. This resonates with the assertion that economically deprived youth in Northern Nigeria can be easily recruited by the extremist group, due to the economic hardship in that region (Umar, 2013; Olojo, 2013). The huge number of unemployed young people living on the margins in Northern Nigeria further complicates the situation.

Boko Haram use of Social Media to Garner Support

It was apparent in the findings of this study that Boko Haram has mastered the use of social media tools to facilitate their social interactions with their members and the larger Nigerian population. This finding resonated with the view of U Eyo & Collins (2018) that presently, about 90 percent of terrorist groups' such as Boko Haram communicate over the Internet through the use of social media. The reason is because the

youth favor social media interactions which enable them to freely share messages and even contribute to discussions regarding the activities of BHT group.

Ogunlana (2019) further illustrated the fact that Boko Haram has embraced innovative social media technologies for spreading its religious ideology, raising money, conspiring, planning, and executing their attacks. Similarly, Hakeem (2017) confirmed that as a consequence of the massive military crackdown on Boko Haram, the group has resorted to the use of social media such as video releases, obviously to sustain its resilience.

The present danger according to majority of participants is that Boko Haram has succeeded in transforming social media into tools of propaganda. Such publicity through the use of social media has also been weaponized to coordinate attacks, communicate, and spread messages of hate and their violent ideology. The ideologies of Boko Haram which is found to be consistent with the literature reviewed are against democracy and the so-called Western form of education. They also extol the activities of the group by wrongly using passages from the Quran. Furthermore, Agbiboa & Maiangwa (2014); Omoera & Ryanga (2017), confirmed that Boko Haram websites serve as a virtual training grounds that post messages in the form of propaganda videos to boost the morale of members.

The study findings also provided insight into the Nigerian government's acknowledgement of the importance of using social media interventions to counter the ideology of Boko Haram. Participants were optimistic that, as part of the counter terrorism strategy against Boko Haram, the security agencies can also use social media

for networking amongst themselves in their operations. Jibril, Mohammed & Yakubu (2017) confirmed this finding from their research which concluded that law enforcement and intelligence agencies now employ social media analytics to improve situational awareness by identifying terrorist locations and generating early warnings on the activities of Boko Haram operatives as a means of obtaining real-time alerts.

The study findings are also consistent with participant's observation of government's slow pace in the use of social media platforms for gathering information and surveillance to combat Boko Haram. The weaknesses in information gathering and surveillance by the security operatives and their inability to check the influx of illegal aliens at the nation's porous borders was cited as an example some of the inadequacies facing the security agencies (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012).

Some participants were also of the conviction that government's response in countering the ideology of Boko Haram's was not enduring. Olojo (2017) for instance explained the influential role Muslim clerics could play in the broader struggle against Boko Haram. They further observed that Islamic clerics could play important roles to counteract Boko Haram by using social media to promote and propagate counter-narrative messages against the group. Another observation that resonated with these findings was for government to partner with community groups, non-governmental organizations, and the Muslim clerics to develop counter-narratives against the BHT group (Agbiboa, 2014).

Limitation of the Study

There are some limitations to this study. Firstly, there is dearth of archival documents on counter-ideology as a strategy for counteracting the BHT group. This compelled me to develop a research typology that relied on secondary data sources such as academic articles and books, many of which contained elements of propaganda specifically designed to encourage researchers to imbibe a parochial perspective. This limitation emanating from the lack of prior studies and poor literature support could have had an impact on the theoretical foundations for the research question that was investigated and potentially affect the reliability of the findings concerning the usefulness of defeating the ideology of the BHT group.

Secondly, the sampling errors associated with the snowballing method of obtaining the data is a limitation concern. I had no control over the sampling method used in the referral process which could have had some elements of a bias resulting from, the tendency of initial participants to nominate people that they knew well. Because of this, it is highly possible that the subjects share the same traits and characteristics. This limitation was however overcome by collecting a sizeable number of referrals from which I randomly selected the participants.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this study are presented in two parts. The first part focuses on recommendations to the government of Nigeria as related to the findings and the second segment focuses on areas for future research. The following recommendations could help Nigeria to effectively respond to the BHT group:

☐ The Nigerian government should work toward winning the hearts and minds of the population in Northeast of Nigeria by addressing the longstanding socio-economic inequalities and the human security issues in the region.

☐ The Nigerian government must develop an effective reconciliatory national security Strategy based on a Religious Rehabilitation Group similar to the Singaporean experience that will focus on formulating counter ideological policies. Such a strategy will curtail the recurrence of extremism and also mitigate the effects the government's coercive approach.

☐ Though the CJTF has recorded successes in containing Boko Haram, the Nigerian Government needs to be carefully. The Nigerian government should start a process to monitor, incorporate or employ the youth from such militias once the conflict comes to an end to avert those militias themselves becoming a threat to the state in future.

☐ The social media landscape must continuously be monitored through an effective Counter-ideological Communications strategy. This should be done by using multiple mediums of communications to develop a communication campaign to counter the ideational packages that the BHT group espouses to persuade individuals and elicit support from its followers. Such a strategy should be based on three steps. First, the message should be attractive and tailored to the youth. The second step should take into account the background and credibility of the messengers because the identity of the bearers of the

message matters in ideological de-radicalization. The last step should engage

the use of social media to promote and propagate the counter narratives.

☐ The Nigerian military should be employed more in a non-combatant role to

facilitate political dialogue to win the trust of Boko Haram members and

attract their leaders to a negotiated solution

Further research on the efficacy of counter-ideological programs should explore

the role of cultural and tribal affiliation in developing counter-ideology strategies.

Another area that deserves further research is how to evaluate the effectiveness of a

counter-ideology policy in defeating Boko Haram. Unless there is a proper framework to

evaluate the counter-ideology policies, their effectiveness in defeating Boko Haram's

resilience may not be established and no lessons would be learned.

Implications

The state of insecurity in Nigeria as a result of the activities of the BHT group

continues to impact negatively on individuals, families, organizations, as well as, the

larger society. Despite the abundance of human and natural resources available in the

country, chronic youths' unemployment is evident in Nigeria. Such a phenomenon

amongst the unemployed youth erodes their confidence for a brighter future and creates a

vicious cycle of poverty that serves as a fertile ground for radicalization and recruitment.

The potential impact of this qualitative study for social change is that counter-ideology

offers a non-military counterterrorism approach for defeating the resilience of Boko

Haram. Defeating Boko Haram will eventually improve the security situation in Nigeria

and help the youth to achieve their full potentials.

The study also presents empirical rationalization to the debate to shift focus away from the current military-centric counterterrorism approach to a more appropriate counter-ideology response as a means to defeat Boko Haram. As already alluded to, the human rights abuses perpetrated by the military has greatly contributed to the current hostile relationship existing between the military and the civilian population in Northeast of Nigeria. This study could also serve as a non-military counterterrorism policy process based on counter-ideology. Furthermore, it will facilitate greater communication, coordination, and collaboration amongst the security agencies and help eliminate the acrimony between the civilian population and other relevant stakeholders in dealing with the threat of terrorist ideologies.

Conclusion

There have been various efforts by the government of Nigeria for nearly two decades to control the terrorist activities of the BHT group. The group, however, have proved resilient as they continue to carry out attacks within Nigeria and even beyond. This study therefore examined Boko Haram's ideology and its territorial ambitions as a basis for developing counter-ideology strategies to defeat the group. The findings from this study were drawn from interviews conducted within the field and secondary archival sources.

Twenty participants volunteered and took part in the semi-structured interviews to reach saturation. The dataset was consequently analyzed using NVivo software after which a thematic analysis framework was applied in interpreting the data collected. This

enabled me to find the central ideas embedded in the data and further identify common phrases and themes.

This study was anchored on the relational/vengeance and relative deprivation theories. A major conclusion from the research was that the resilience of Boko Haram and its capacity to survive for a longer time was premised upon the group's ability to maintain an ideological consistency with global jihadī-Salafism. The antecedent of such ideology is drawn from the historical jihadist tradition of Don Fodio in Northern Nigeria. Though Nigerian government has an upper hand against the BHT group, this advantage can easily be lost if the government remains absorbed in the current exclusive military and security approach.

Consequently, it is suggested that the end of Boko Haram terrorism will be determined largely by the extent to which the Nigerian government is able to effectively employ counter-ideology strategies in its counterterrorism campaign. While military might is important to decimate Boko Haram, counter-ideology will be more decisive in preventing the group from replenishing its membership through the means of new recruitments.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Section A: Preambles

Topic: Counter-Ideology as a Wider Strategy for Defeating the Boko Haram Terrorist Group

Research Question: To what extent can counter-ideology strategies be instituted to defeat the BHT group?

Purpose: This interview protocol guides the researcher's interview with Muslim clerics, community leaders, and military personnel who have been engaged in combat operations against the BHT group.

Date:

Time:

Name, Title and Unit of the Interviewee:

Interviewer:

Section B: Socio- Demographic Characteristics of Respondent

1. Name of Camp--

2. Age (years): (a) 20-29 [   ] (b) 30-39 [   ] (c) 40-49 [   ] (d) 50-59 [   ] above

   60yrs [   ]

3. Religion: (a) Islam [   ] (b) Christianity [   ] (c) Traditional Religion [   ] (d)

   Others (specify) [   ]

4. Marital status   (a) Single [   ]   (b) Married [   ]   (c) Divorce/separated [   ] d)

   Others

5. Level of Education: (a) Primary [   ] (b) Secondary [   ]   (c) Diploma/NCE [   ]

   d) Degree/HND [   ]   e) Other (please specify---------------

Section C: Questions to Participant

1. How has the oppressive counterinsurgency campaign by the Security forces'

   against Boko Haram contributed in sustaining the group's popular support?

2. What extent has the resilience of Boko Haram been impacted by ongoing counter

   terrorism efforts by the Nigerian government?

3. What is the role of ideology in the terrorist behavior of members of the BHT

   group?

4. How will a reorientation of the minds of Boko Haram supporters help in defeating

   the group's ideology?

5. To what extent would you say the ideology of the BHT group is responsible for

   the resilience of the group?

6. Since Boko Haram has survived numerous military operations, how can counter ideology strategies effectively neutralize the group?

7. What role can the military play in targeting and defeating the ideology of Boko Haram?

8. Why has the Nigerian Armed Forces De-radicalization Program remained unsuccessful in the fight against the BHT group?

9. How does the ideology of the BHT group attract the youth?

10. What are the vulnerabilities of the ideology of the BHT group?

Closing question: Can you recommend any other person(s) that in your view, can provide further insights into the questions posed?