DE-RADICALIZATION AND RE-INTEGRATION OF BOKO HARAM COMBATANTS: QUESTIONS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

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The Nigerian government has made coordinated military efforts to eradicate insurgency and terrorism in the country, but despite the support of various foreign counterparts, it has had little progress. The government has recently made further efforts through Operation Safe Corridor to try a non-military approach to complement the military campaigns by de-radicalizing the Boko Haram combatants and re-integrate them into society. Therefore, this study examined the achievement of this method and the risks that come with it. The study is premised on the structural violence theory. The research adopted a survey research design and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analyzing the data. The study populations include 100 purposely selected male and female repentants of the Boko Haram sect who are undergoing de-radicalization programs. The entire population constituted the sample size study and a well-structured questionnaire was adopted as the research instrument. The findings show that de-radicalization assists these Boko Haram members who were forcefully conscripted into the group. However, there is neither an agreement nor disagreement as to whether the de-radicalization program can bring an end to the insurgency. The findings also showed that government does not provide adequate social and economic enablement for the repentants to be responsible members of society. Similarly, there is no adequate follow-up by the government on the progress of repentants on social reintegration. The study recommended the need for the government to follow up on the progress of de-radicalized repentant

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Boko Haram as they re-integrated back into society. The study is of the conclusion that, even though Nigeria has adopted de-radicalization as a strategy in combination with military action, issues are impeding the implementation.

Keywords: Boko Haram, De-radicalization, National Security, Reintegration.

Introduction

Insurgency and terrorism are the "old" forms of armed conflict that manifest themselves most frequently in today's world. The authorities needed to utilize every tool at their disposal to put a stop to the operations of the group because of the threat that they posed to the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force. According to Bilgin (2019), there has been a shift in the way modern states organize their security architecture since the end of the Cold War. Nowadays, armed conflicts do not take place between sovereign states but rather within sovereign nations; these conflicts are sparked by groups within a state that are actively working against the state (pp.23-34). The fact that the use of the state's coercive authority against terrorist organizations has been unsuccessful is currently paving the way for the implementation of an approach that does not include coercion (Owonikoko & Danjibo, 2019 pp.116-128).

The organization of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration (DDR) programs is one of the non-coercive tactics that has been utilized the most frequently. Nigeria, for example, has been in control of the terrorist activities of Boko Haram and its offshoot organizations in the North East (NE) for more than a decade. Operation Safe Corridor is a military-led de-radicalization effort that was recently launched as one of the countermeasures taken by the Nigerian state in response to the threat posed by the group in recent times.

Until now, the Nigerian government has made coordinated military efforts to eradicate terrorism in the country. But despite the support of various foreign counterparts, it has had little progress. However, the Nigerian government has recently made efforts through

Operation Safe Corridor to try a non-military approach to complement the ongoing military campaigns by de-radicalizing insurgents by providing a different perspective to the insurgents' previously extreme radical ideals, which leads them to believe that there is no hope in the current social order and that it must be overthrown through terrorism (Corner & Gill, 2014, pp.23-34). As a local project in Nigeria, Operation Safe Corridor aims to provide Boko Haram recruits with a voluntary escape route out of the group's ranks. It has shown some degree of success. Despite this, it continues to run across resistance from members of the political class as well as the general populace. It also has significant problems, which are preventing sponsors from having faith in it and discouraging potential deserters.

Moreover, there is a profound doubt about the efficacy of the de-radicalization strategy because the repentant Boko Haram recruits are perceived as being rewarded for the enormous carnage they have brought upon the country and the government is sympathetic with them. Thus, re-integration is a difficult task; and without a proper re-integration strategy, the possibility of recidivism is high (Corner & Gill, 2014, pp.23-34). Moreover, the law that would create a rehabilitation agency for former Boko Haram fighters who have come to their senses has been met with a generally positive reception from the public despite significant levels of opposition. For instance, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has unequivocally opposed the measure and has encouraged the National Assembly to direct its attention toward ensuring that victims of the Boko Haram insurgency receive justice and reparation for their losses (Adeyeye, 2020).

In consideration of the above issues, the purpose of this research is to examine the effectiveness of the Nigerian government's de-radicalization strategy in combating the Boko Haram insurgency in the country. Therefore, the study will interrogate the approach of reintegration, as well as its potential risk to national security. However, the objectives are to:

i. find out whether the de-radicalization of insurgents achieves better results than military action in Nigeria

ii. examine the risk of recidivism and re-engagement of insurgents in Nigeria's national security

Literature Review

An Account of De-radicalization of Boko Haram

Scholars on de-radicalization tend to create a conceptual differentiation between disengagement and de-radicalization in which disengagement is understood to mean a behavioural change (Feddes, 2015). In disengagement, the individual desists from or reduces their use of violence. On the other hand, de-radicalization aims at both behavioural and cognitive change. On this basis, the research argues that de-radicalization and disengagement describe processes whereby individuals or groups discontinue their participation in organized violence and/or terrorism. While de-radicalization aims for fundamental changes in ideology and attitudes, disengagement focuses on enabling behavioural alteration in the context of the denunciation of violence (Ngwa, 2020, pp.1-33). That is disengaged terrorists may not be de-radicalized or repentant at all. Oftentimes, physical disengagement may not result in any concomitant change or reduction in ideological support.

Previous research suggests that identity remains one of the principal preconditions for radicalization, in the sense that collective action will be unlikely in the absence of a cogent sense of collective identity or mutual feeling of belongingness (Toon, 2019, pp.1-13). Furthermore to which when a group of individuals are collectively spurred into action, it becomes difficult to switch it off (VSF, 2018). Other scholars examine the role of critical incidents or turning points such as traumatic events, which provide the devotees with necessary self-awareness and drive individuals to consider de-radicalization (Ngwa, 2020, pp.1-33). Amongst other factors, the research suggests that identity change could be attained through re-orientation, counselling, migration, and even equal education opportunities.

However, current efforts to counter religious terrorist groups like Boko Haram remain particularly militarized, which is targeted at weakening support systems, intercepting supplies, and thwarting

terror plots using available intelligence (Rizwan, Batool, & Khan, 2021, pp.9-20). Ideally, captured or defecting members of terrorist groups are often not incarcerated in detention centres (Frisch, 2011, pp.1-23). In this regard, Wayuta (2019) noted that detainees awaiting trial or judgment become a captive audience for de-radicalization efforts designed to disabuse them of the violence-justifying ideology to which they subscribe, dissuade them from active engagement in violence, and re-integrate them into society. Evidence also abounds to suggest that prison or the experience of incarceration has also been shown to be important to the de-radicalization processes (Mat, 2020, pp.155-174).
At the most basic level, incarceration plays a role in at least temporarily forcing the militant to disengage from the violence by taking them off the hostilities and survival contests on the battlefield. In the same vein, it can also provide the militants with the space to consider their ideology, reflect on the conflict, and develop longer-term strategies which can include non-violent approaches to achieving their political goals (Yaza & Ahmad, 2021, pp.78-78). In Nigeria, the pursuit of a practical way to evocatively address religious terrorism has led to the oscillation of different counter-insurgency strategies (military, political, and developmental approaches), all of which have fallen short of attaining predetermined objectives (Zunyou, 2017).

Given that non-military approaches including amnesty, political co-optation, and empowerment programs previously advanced by the government failed to achieve the desired results, there was more focus on military engagements to fight the terrorists. The recognition that the war model has not only failed to reduce violence but also increased the number of deaths in the conflict zones (and attracted mounting criticisms) may have motivated the state to reconsider the usefulness of non-military strategies, especially a de-radicalization strategy (Daugherty, 2019).

Approximated figures suggest that there are around 500,000 individuals in a variety of arm-carrying non-state militias scheduled to undergo various forms of Demobilization, De-radicalization, and Rehabilitation (DDR) programs across Africa (Daugherty, 2019). Nigeria's attempts to broaden its counterinsurgency framework to

accommodate de-radicalization programs obtained in the deployment of the home-grown Operation Safe Corridor, a prison-based de-radicalization program. The program seeks to provide defecting or captured Boko Haram devotees a pathway to de-radicalization. Despite the growing trend of incarceration-based de-radicalization, Nigeria's prison program has met with stiff opposition across different quarters. Not only is the viability of the program questioned but it has also been labelled insensitive by critics. Attempts to re-civilize ex-combatants can be seen as a misplaced priority due to the relatively slow pace at which the government is resettling persons displaced by the insurgency or even alleviating living conditions in displacement camps (Thurston, 2016).

While the prison program focuses on ex-combatants, the Yellow Ribbon initiative by Neem Foundation, a civil society organization, focuses on educating young female adults who were once captives and or devotees of Boko Haram, as a means to de-radicalize and re-civilize them. As earlier stated, the study examines both programs in a bid to ascertain their impact on youth de-radicalization in the North East. On this account, it is pertinent to underscore the difficulties obtained in measuring the efficiency of de-radicalization in the absence of direct observation, monitoring, and evaluation of defecting Boko Haram devotees. In addition, the study depends on the submissions of de-radicalization theorists to arrive at its conclusion. Based on what follows, the Prison Program and Yellow Ribbon initiatives are examined based on existing frameworks and models for examining de-radicalization.

Re-integration of Boko Haram

Re-integration includes the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. It is essentially a social and economic process with an open timeframe, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and national responsibility and often necessitates long-term external assistance (United Nations, 2010). The re-integration of repentant extremists into civilian life is often the most

debated of the de-radicalization, rehabilitation, and re-integration programmes. It is argued that rebuilding interpersonal trust for the repentant extremists in a war-turned-community is difficult. The inability to stop the insurgency complicates the re-integration exercise and promotes distrust among the government and the affected communities. While affected communities were hostile to the programme, people in other parts of the country registered their displeasure about the exercise (Nathaniel, 2020).

For instance, Senator Ali Udume, representing Borno South Senatorial District on the floor of the National Assembly states that:

> *I disagree with the de-radicalization and re-integration exercise. The war is not over and some criminals that have been killing people say that you are doing Operation Safe Corridor for them. I am completely against that idea. They know my position on that, you can't do that. It is when you win the war and some people surrender that you think about something like that. (As cited in Nathaniel, 2020).*

When the Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA) set the prison programmes' eventual goal as being to "change the beliefs, views, values, and attitudes of the violent extremist prisoners (de-radicalization) rather than only changing their behaviour (disengagement from violence". Working towards this goal the programme used an individualised approach, identifying the risk-related needs of each prisoner, to implement interventions to reduce their risk of engaging or advocating violent extremism. The overarching de-radicalization initiatives in Nigeria have the intended goal of supporting the re-integration of former combatants into society through educational support, although it is recognized that full re-integration may be a longer-term objective and community needs would have to also be taken into account (Anyadike, 2017:5).

It should also be noted that these operations are primarily characterized by former combatants who are largely defectors and are seeking an exit from Boko Haram other than seeking to continue fighting for the cause by different means, as would have been the case for active former combatants. The focus on encouraging defectors as

opposed to collective disengagement (which tends to involve re-integrating active former combatants) can be understood in the context of unsuccessful attempts by the previous Nigerian government to engage in negotiations and offer an amnesty to the Boko Haram leadership (Agbiboa, 2015, pp.1-25; The Economist, 2016).

The programme aims to re-integrate defectors, and former combatants into a section of society which can be characterized as a "referent milieu", by and large, dominated and controlled by an antagonistic milieu of government troops and vigilante forces. Firstly, public sympathy for Boko Haram has plummeted in northern Nigeria, and while support for some markers of Islamist politics, such as greater Shari'a law, remain significant, views which may be constitutive of the radical or sympathizer milieus have also declined (Olojo, 2013, 1-17). Of course, this is not to say it is a reflection of northern Nigeria generally or that it is a durable attitudinal change, it could be a greater dissatisfaction with the tactics of Boko Haram rather than their broader agenda. Secondly, the State and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) have relative control over this ideational context. The CJTF started as a grassroots group of anti-Boko Haram vigilantes and has expanded significantly (with 26,000 members in Bornu state), and has come to play a considerable role in helping the government in their counter-Boko Haram efforts (Agbiboa, 2015, pp.1-25).

One of the difficulties which undermine the rehabilitation programme is the push-back against the re-integration of former Boko Haram. Communities do fear that the re-integration of former combatants will continue to spread support for Boko Haram's violence even if the group is defeated, and there is scepticism about former combatants who do denounce violence (Felbab-Brown, 2017). While the surveillance of re-integrated former combatants may reduce the likelihood of re-engaging in violence (even if there is no actual intent), community suspicion and poor discipline among the security forces may lead to the killing of former combatants as was the case with two of them released from the programme (Anyadike, 2017).

The backlash reaction to the programme has also extended to the prison where the re-habilitation programme takes place, as more than

100 prisoners protested against the perceived preferential treatment Boko Haram prisoners received (Hinshaw & McGroarty, 2015). Efforts at re-integrating former Boko Haram combatants are further made difficult by pressures to prioritize resettling the over two million people who were displaced by the conflict, and the emphasis that the government ought to provide equity in providing opportunity to youths, that is, to provide support to those who refused to join Boko Haram despite various appeal and persecution (Anyadike, 2017).

Thus, while successful re-integration may and can reduce the risk of recidivism and enforce norms due to the limited presence of a radical and sympathizer milieu, the re-integrating context presents problems for de-radicalization programmes insofar as there is community push-back against re-integration of the former combatant. Excessive force by the Nigerian security forces and the CJTF, such as the killing of re-integrated former combatants, and high level of suspicion by communities, risk counter-productiveness in deterring participation in the programme or pushing former combatants to re-integrate into social spaces where the state has less control. Therefore, the success and failure of recidivism reduction, in this context, are unrelated to de-radicalization but to the successful re-integration into the referent milieu. In addition to community opposition to the re-integration of former combatants, the Nigerian context is particularly distinct from other countries implementing de-radicalization programmes insofar as it has other existing re-integration programmes (Ebiede, 2015).

A related question circulating about the North is whether the government also has a plan for the re-integration of the members of the CJTF and how this can be achieved. While the Nigerian government has coopted a few CJTF members into the Nigerian security forces with the promise of having a plan for their re-integration for some others. (Felbab-Brown, 2017; Oduah, 2017). Support for the Boko Haram de-radicalization programme has been tainted by its comparisons with Disarmament, Demobilization and Re-integration (DDR) in the Niger Delta, which itself creates resentment in terms of resource allocation and the perceived lack of effectiveness. Considering these factors, there

are significant barriers to re-integration which may limit the success of the de-radicalization programme.

National Security

Security may also be defined as protection against something that might happen in the future or as the activities involved in protecting a country, a building or persons against threats danger, etc., (Wehmeier & Ashby, 2002). Essentially, security must be related to the presence of peace, safety, happiness and the protection of human and physical resources or the absence of crisis, or threats to human injury among others. The presence of peace could facilitate progress. Security is not a discrete or measurable variable in quantitative terms. But spending on security can be used as a proxy to quantify the volume of security especially if the spending is effective.

The United Nations Development Programme defines human security may be defined to include such chronic threats as hunger disease and repression. Security means protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life in homes, offices or communities (UNDP, 1994). Security is the state of being or making safe secure from danger, etc.

National security is the safekeeping of the nation as a whole. Its highest order of business is the protection of the nation and its people from attack and other external dangers by maintaining armed forces and guarding state secrets. Osisanya (n.d) also described national security as the ability of a state to cater for the protection and defence of its citizenry.

Abdulmalum and Abdulmajid (2021) opine that, because national security entails both national defence and the protection of a series of geopolitical, economic, and other interests, it affects not only defence policy but foreign and other policies as well. Foreign and defence policies should be seen as mutually reinforcing, not as zero-sum trade-offs in budgetary fights. While hard choices will indeed have to be made in national security spending, they should be decided by realities, not by fatuous comparisons or incoherent and tendentious concepts (pp.123-131).

At the inception of every government, the President or Governor swears to an oath to among other things protect life and property. Therefore, security is a key concern of the government (at all tiers) in Nigeria. The data is from 1980 to 2009, about 30 years and can be used to quantify the volume of security in place (all things being equal). The spending defines the perception of the government about the weight of security matters in Nigeria (Otto & Ukpere, 2012, pp. 6765-6770).

Related Empirical Studies

Maina, Abba, Isa, and Umar (2022) assessed people's willingness to accept repentant Boko Haram and the role of Government and Non-Governmental organizations toward public risk-free coexistence campaigns. Primary and secondary sources of data were used for this study. First, a structured questionnaire was used to source data from 382 sampled respondents. The results revealed that most respondents were affected by Boko Haram, 74%, while 26% were not. Furthermore, the study also showed that most respondents are not ready to accept Boko Haram Repentance, with 79% because they killed their relatives, burned their social environments, caused hardship, and migrated. Also, they fear that when the government fails to fulfil their promise, they can rejoin the group because they are not to be trusted. At the same time, with few people, 21% are ready to accept the Boko Haram repentance because they believe peace will be restored. Some of the reasons are some were forced to join the group, some were their relatives, and lastly, some were brainwashed. Finally, the following recommendations were proffered. Firstly, the government and NGOs should increase their efforts to enlighten the people to accept Boko Haram because, based on the findings, enlightenment camping is not enough. Secondly, the Government should ensure they fulfilled their promise to Boko Haram repentance after they were integrated because if they fail, they can rejoin the group again (pp.238-44).

Okunlola and Olaniran (2022) investigated the influence of insurgency on human security and development in North East Nigeria. It draws that data from secondary sources including journals, textbooks and the internet. The study acknowledged that the insurgency had had

a devastating impact on the region's economic, personal, community, food and environmental security. Furthermore, the impact led to continuous underdevelopment in the region. Therefore, the government should meticulously implement the region's disarmament, demobilization and re-integration process. This measure will put in place adequate human security in the region and stimulate development (pp.49-69).

Sogo, Shanta, and Ehian (2020) analysed the adverse consequences of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria. This study perceives the evil effects of the Boko Haram insurgency as a retaliatory consequence for the political state for its failure to fulfil its social contract with civil society concerning making provision for the needs of all its citizens. To these ends, there should be an urgent need for community sensitisation through awareness programmes about terrorism and the adverse effects of such acts in society. The necessary stakeholders should increase the levels of awareness of the implications of terrorism in society. There should be more enlightenment programmes put forward by government and international organisations like the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, and other non-governmental organisations, emphasising the extent to which terrorism can bring a nation and its future to ruin (pp.81-98).

Similarly, Salihu (2021) examined Boko Haram youth de-radicalization programs in North East Nigeria. Using qualitative secondary analysis, the research examines the effects of Operation Safe Corridor prison-based de-radicalization program targeted at low-risk Boko Haram combatants, and Yellow Ribbon Initiative, an education-based re-civilisation program designed for young adult women associated with Boko Haram. Together with pioneer countries like Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, the structural design and implementation of OSC remain shrouded in utmost secrecy. Even though it claims to have rehabilitated over 2,000 ex-Boko Haram combatants, there is no medium to independently ascertain these claims. Relatedly, the Yellow Ribbon Initiative also claimed to have successfully re-integrated thousands of women, with little to no means to validate their claims

independently. Premised on the need to implement context-specific, inclusive and robust counterinsurgency programs, the research takes issues with both programs. Furthermore, the lack of accountability and transparency in the operations of both programs put into question their credibility and objectiveness. Alternatively, the study suggests the need for a paradigm shift from de-radicalization to counter-radicalization, as this will put the government on the offensive side against radicalization (pp.21-40).

Big-Alabo and Big-Alabo (2020) studied Boko Haram and terrorist activities in Nigeria while looking at the ethical implications and responses of the Christians. Data was collected from secondary sources like textbooks, journal articles, interviews, institutional materials and internet sources. The study also reviewed the concept of terrorism and a brief history of Boko Haram. The findings of the study showed that since Boko Haram acts of terrorism are simply a display of violence to terrify the populace and the government, it can be said that their actions and activities which include violence are unacceptable and could be termed wrong taking cognizance of the consequentialist view which opines that the morality of an action depends on its results. The ethics of care which is seen as a context-based approach to preserve relationships negates Boko Haram's acts of terror which has a considerable effect on several relationships. The findings further showed that the Christians responded by rejecting to integrate with Muslims and also encouraged Christians to move to areas where there were major Christian settlements while others had to fall back to the natural tendency of self-preservation (pp.108-115).

Lanshima (2019) conducted a study on the motives of the Boko Haram terrorist sect, ideologies which fall on both the left and the right of the political spectrum. The study then focused on using a theory that comprehensively explains why this sect came into existence and the audacity of its operations. The researcher predicated his analysis on the theoretical foundations of sub-cultural theory, under which Boko Haram propagates and sustains its activities. Data for the study was gathered through observation of secondary sources like books, journals, internet, media, official documents et cetera. The method of data

analysis which involves giving a qualitative description to quantitative information brings simplicity and coherence to the work. The study concluded that paradoxically, these motives are woven around three themes, namely, religion, politics, and economy. The study suggested arresting and thoroughly investigating all identified persons linked with the sect. Perhaps, they may provide some clues in terms of awareness to the Nigerian State and security agencies. Also, train and re-train Nigerian security agents and effectively equip them to handle terrorism. This will also go a long way in making it possible for Nigerian security agents to carry out targeted attacks without endangering civilians.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the theory of structural violence which states that some violence is avoidable but becomes inevitable due to the deprivation of some basic human needs in the areas of political, socioeconomic and cultural structures because those suffering from these deprivations are linked with the variables mentioned above by structural violence theorists.

According to Galtung (1969), people are subjected to a form of violence known as structural violence when a social structure or institution causes them harm by preventing them from gaining access to necessities. Galtung further argued that direct and structural forms of violence, including things like family violence, gender violence, hate, crimes, racial violence, police brutality, state violence, terrorism, and war, are strongly interconnected with one another. Its direct connection to social injustice lies in the fact that different persons and various social institutions are affected differently by it (Galtung, 1969, pp.167–191).

Structural violence may occur as a result of a lack of human agencies which may cause an action of a person to result in unequal distribution of resources (Smith, 2016). Structural violence exists when some groups, classes, genders, and nationalities are assumed to have, and do have, more access to goods, resources, and opportunities than other groups, classes, genders and nationalities, these unequal

advantages are built into the very social, political and economic systems that govern societies, states and the world.

In the interpretation of Boko Haram's evolution and violent activities, the proponents of structural violence theory admit that there is endemic poverty and hopelessness in Nigeria generally but more severe in the northern part of Nigeria. It was debated that the root cause of violence and anger in both the north and southern parts of Nigeria is endemic poverty and hopelessness; hence the Nigerian government was advised to address the socio-economic deprivation in the country which is most severe in the north (Sintei. & Koro, 2019).

In this present situation of Nigeria, it is pertinent to argue that the north's socio-economic crisis lies in its system of patrimonial economic system, which disallows women from participation in economic activities, and the bad governance in Nigeria that places distribution above production (Aremu, 2011, pp.1-12). Aremu further argued that the non-participation of women in economic activities does not lead to violence and terrorism, yet, it is only the adult males that sustain that society; because, for male to sustain their families has become difficult, especially with the North no longer with political power at the centre makes the northern elites unable to meet up their demands which in turn makes it difficult for crumbs to go to the less privileged and hence, violence in the northern part of Nigeria (Aremu, 2011, pp.1-12).

Moreover, the theory explains the socioeconomic conditions for violent acts such as those of Boko Haram activities in Nigeria. It argues that human beings have some basic needs to achieve and when the failure to do this is caused by somebody, it then leads to violent activities (Dongel, 2015; Sunday, 2017). The socio-economic condition of people can explain the violent activities such as that of Boko Haram in Nigeria particularly in the northern part where unemployment among the youths, corruption, poverty, injustice, and a worsening standard of living are the order of the day. Frustration as a result of economic deprivation may lead to violence in some developing countries.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted in this study. A survey is a type of research that involves gathering data from a predetermined group of people to get knowledge and insights about a variety of issues. The main instruments used in the process of conducting the survey are questionnaires and in-depth interviews. This study made use of a cross-sectional survey because respondents that were selected come from different economic, social and political backgrounds. The population of this research comprises male and female repentants of the Boko Haram sect who are undergoing de-radicalization programs.

The researchers were able to purposively select 100 repentant Boko Haram members who are undergoing re-radicalization for interrogation. This number was determined by the number of respondents who were available and willing to participate in this study. Out of the 100 distributed copies of the questionnaire, a total of 92 were retrieved while 8 were unreturned. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analyzing data obtained in the course of the study.

Analysis and Data Presentation

Table 1: Presentation of Demographic Information

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	82	89.1
	Female	10	10.9
Age Group	Below 25 years	44	47.8
	26-30 years	26	28.3
	31-40 years	19	20.7
	41 years and above	3	3.3
Marital Status	Single	68	73.9
	Married	18	19.6
	Divorced	6	6.5
Educational Qualification	Educated	17	18.5
	Uneducated	75	81.5
The active number of years	Below 5 years	9	9.8
	5 - 10 years	55	59.8

as Boko Haram recruits	10 years and above	28	30.4
	Total	**92**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Analysis from Table 1 which contains demographic data of respondents indicates that 89.1% of the respondents are males, while 10.9% are females. This shows that there are more male repentant Boko Haram members than females. The table illustrates that 47.8% of the respondents are below the age of 25, 28.3% are between the ages of 26-30 years, 20.7% are between the ages of 31-40 years, while 3.3% of the respondents indicated that they are above the age of 40. This confirms that most Boko Haram recruits are youths below the age of 25. Also, the Table shows that 73.9% of the respondents are single, 19.6% are married, and 6.5% indicated that they are divorced. This shows that the Boko Haram insurgency group recruit people who are not married as they are believed to have nothing to lose when caught during their operations.

Further, the analysis indicates that 18.5% of the respondents are educated, while 81.5% are uneducated. This shows that illiteracy is one of the factors that make people join insurgency groups like Boko Haram. Also, the analysis showing the respondent's active number of years as Boko Haram recruit revealed that 9.8% of the respondents have been a member for less than 5 years, 59.8% have been a member between 5-10 years, while 30.4% indicated that they have to be a member of Boko Haram for over 10 years.

Research Question 1: What are the achievements of de-radicalization over military actions in the fight against insurgency?

Table 2: De-radicalization or Military Action

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
De-radicalization more effective than military action	42 (45.7)	17 (18.5)	5 (5.4)	13 (14.1)	15 (16.3)
De-radicalization assists Boko Haram members who were forcefully conscripted	39 (42.4)	16 (17.4)	10 (10.9)	13 (14.1)	14 (15.2)
Military actions can bring permanent solutions to the conflict	28 (30.4)	17 (18.5)	14 (15.2)	16 (17.4)	16 (17.4)
Amnesty like in Niger Delta can make Boko Haram fighter surrender and give up their fight	33 (35.9)	24 (26.1)	14 (15.2)	11 (12.0)	10 (10.9)
De-radicalization can bring an end to the conflict	17 (18.5)	16 (17.4)	31 (33.7)	15 (16.3)	13 (14.1)

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 2, showing the responses on whether de-radicalization has achieved better results than military actions in the fight against insurgency revealed that 64.2% of the respondents agreed that the de-radicalization program is more effective than the military action. A total of 59.8% of the respondents attested that de-radicalization assists Boko haram members who were forcefully conscripted. A total of 48.9% of the respondents agreed that military action can bring a permanent solution to the conflict, while 34.8% disagreed. However, 15.2% are neutral in their opinion Also, 62% of the respondents confirmed that amnesty like in Niger-delta can make Boko haram fighters surrender and give up their fight. Likewise, a total of 35.9% of the respondents agreed that the de-radicalization program can bring an end to the conflict.

Research Question 2: How have recidivism and re-engagement of insurgents affected the national security of Nigeria?

Table 3: Risk of Recidivism and Re-engagement in Terrorism on National Security

Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Possibility of de-radicalized members re-engaging in insurgency acts	41 (44.6)	11 (12.0)	11 (12.0)	14 (15.2)	15 (16.3)
The social rejection of repentant Boko Haram members by people	42 (45.7)	11 (12.0)	9 (9.8)	13 (14.1)	17 (18.5)
The government provides adequate social and economic enablement for repentants to be responsible members of society	9 (9.8)	12 (13.0)	14 (15.2)	17 (18.5)	40 (43.5)
There is adequate follow-up by the government on the progress of repentant on social re-integration	12 (14.6)	10 (12.2)	11 (13.4)	10 (12.2)	39 (47.6)

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Analysis in Table 3 presents responses on the risk of recidivism and re-engagement affecting national security. The analysis revealed that 56.6% of the respondents attested that there is a possibility of de-radicalized members re-engaging in terrorist acts. A total of 57.7% of the respondents agreed that the social rejection from people in the society explains why repentant back to being fighters again. However, 62% of the respondents disagreed that the government provides adequate social and economic enablement for repentants to be responsible members of society. Also, 59.8% of the respondents

disagreed that there is adequate follow-up by the government on the progress of repentants on social reintegration.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the Nigerian government's de-radicalization strategy in combating terrorism. This study adopted the theory of structural violence which states that some violence is avoidable but becomes inevitable due to deprivation of some basic human needs.

Analysis of respondents' demographic data indicates that there are more male repentant Boko Haram members than females. The analysis shows that the majority of the respondents are below the age of 25. This confirms that most Boko Haram recruits are youths. Also, the findings revealed that 18.5% of the respondents are educated, while 81.5% are uneducated. This indicates that illiteracy is one of the major factors that make people join insurgency groups like Boko Haram. Further, the analysis showing the respondent's active number of years as Boko Haram recruits revealed that 59.8% have been a member between 5-10 years, while 30.4% indicated that they have been a member of Boko Haram for over 10 years.

Objective one of this study was set to determine whether de-radicalization has achieved better results than military actions in the fight against insurgency. The findings show that 64.2% of the de-radicalization program is more effective than military action. The majority of the respondents attested that de-radicalization assists Boko haram members who were forcefully conscripted into the group. Similarly, a good fraction of the respondents also confirmed that military actions can bring a permanent solution to the conflict and amnesty like in Niger Delta can make Boko haram fighter surrender and give up their fight. However, there is neither an agreement nor disagreement as to whether the de-radicalization program can bring an end to terrorism.

In buttressing this point, it is crucial to use both tactics at once. In some circumstances, de-radicalization may be more effective than taking military action. Later investigations indicated that de-

radicalization was a more economical course of action than military intervention. De-radicalization programmes are fundamentally less expensive than other counterterrorism tactics; as a result, their use is becoming more widespread. Salihu (2021) suggested the need for a paradigm shift from de-radicalization to counter-radicalization, as this will put the government on the offensive side against radicalization (pp. 21-40).

The second objective explored the risk of recidivism and re-engagement affecting national security. The results showed that there is a high possibility of de-radicalized Boko Haram members re-engaging in terrorism. The majority of the respondents affirmed that social rejection from society pressures repentant terrorists to re-engage in insurgency acts. The findings also showed that the government does not provide adequate social and economic enablement for repentants to be responsible members of society. Similarly, there is no adequate follow-up by the government on the progress of repentants on social reintegration. A study conducted by Maina, Abba, Isa, and Umar (2022) on people's willingness to accept repentant Boko Haram revealed that repentant Boko Haram members fear that when the government fails to fulfil their promise, they can rejoin the group because they are not to be trusted. At the same time, only with few people are ready to accept the Boko Haram repentance because they believe peace will be restored.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The de-radicalization strategies are being carried out without detailed feedback from members of the communities on the conditions they want before accepting repentants back into the communities. Moreover, the risk of recidivism and re-engagement is strong. The reason for this cannot be dissociated from the aforementioned issues identified and the fact that the timeframe for re-habilitation and re-integration is too short for full de-radicalization. The possibility of recidivism and re-engagement is further enhanced by the fact that nothing is taught in the skill acquisition camps as the repentants are merely given tools without support to create their business and source customers. Even though Nigeria has adopted de-radicalization as a strategy in combination with

military action, there are issues affecting its implementation. As shown in the study, there is low confidence in the public in the efficacy of de-radicalization strategies of the government as being implemented. However, there is still the belief that de-radicalization is a better approach than military action. Another crucial point as revealed in the study, there is no guarantee that the de-radicalization program in Nigeria can end conflicts. There is also a lack of follow-up on the progress and challenges that the re-habilitated repentants face in the process of reintegration. The foregoing challenges show that more still needs to be done for de-radicalization strategies to be successful in the country.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

i. The de-radicalized repentants should be given greater financial support to establish themselves at the end of their skill acquisition programs
ii. There is a need for follow-up on the progress of de-radicalized repentants as they re-integrate back into society. This means that parole officers will need to be employed to monitor their progress and challenges that the repentants might be facing to guide them against re-engagement.
iii. The competence of trainers in the skill acquisition centres should be prioritized. This is because of the complaints by the repentants that they are not trained at all.

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