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# FOUR

## Illiteracy, Poverty and Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: The Management and Policy Options

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### Abstract

*There have been the popular conception overtime that poverty and illiteracy are the factors that give rise to religious extremism, such as the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. But this research work has disproved that widely held beliefs by revealing that poverty and illiteracy do not directly lead to religious extremism, but they create the conditions that make people vulnerable and easy prey for cheap indoctrination into acts of religious extremism. Another way poverty can also contribute to religious extremism is that even those persons who belong to a particular religion, and who have a high socio-economic standard do tend to react with extreme violence if they witness the poverty and deprivation of their religious colleagues. It is in this regard that the research article examined illiteracy, poverty and Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: the management and policy options, using the secondary sources of data collection such as text books, academic journals, government documents, internet sources, newspapers and magazines, and so on. As a result of an in-depth investigation of various scientific reports on the issue, it was found that illiteracy and poverty are the prime causes of religious extremism in Nigeria. The findings show that these factors do not directly lead to religious extremism, but they create the conditions that make the people to be vulnerable to easy indoctrination into extreme religious views. The findings also show that illiteracy leads to misinterpretation of religious books of indoctrination which eventually gives rise to a perverted form of that religion*

*that subsequently manifest in religious extremism. It was also observed that religious extremism occurs in both the two major religious groups in Nigeria, that is, the Christianity and Islam, but the occurrence was observed to be of different dimensions. Findings from the work revealed that religious extremism is what gave rise to acts of Islamic terrorism in Nigeria perpetuated by groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP). Religious extremism has led to destruction of lives of hundreds of people and property, displacement of millions of people from their residents. Religious extremism has adversely affected the socio-economic lives and development of Nigerians, especially those in the northern regions of the country.*

*In conclusion, the article gave several management and policy options towards mitigating the above stated ugly trends, such as: monitoring and regulating religious preaching, creation of job opportunities for Nigerian youths, design and delivery of robust programme for destitute children, enhanced provision of education and literacy programmes, and so on.*

**Keywords:** *Extremism, Ideology, Illiteracy, Indoctrination, Nigeria, Poverty, Religious Violence*

## **Introduction**

Religion has been defined by a French sociologist, Emile Durkheim as, “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things” (Abubakar, 2022). On the other hand, extremism refers to the imposition of an individual or group’s beliefs, values, and ideologies over others through coercion in order to curtail civil and human rights (Schmidt, 2014, cited in Hassan, Khattak, Qureshi, & Igbal, 2021). Religious extremism results from a situation where religious individuals reject the ideologies and beliefs of others whose interpretation is different from their own interpretation. Extremism is a common phenomenon in every



region of the world (Rizvi, 1993, cited in Hassan, et al., 2021). There is a difference between extremism and radicalism. While extremists are bent on closed-minded supremacists, radicals on the other hand are open-minded egalitarians (Schmidt, 2014, cited in Hassan, et al., 2021). Radicalization has been viewed as the rejection of the status quo, usually democratic in nature, and adopting extreme political, social, and religious views, which are usually enforced through acts of violence (Shahzad, Adil, & Ghayas, 2022).

Radicalisation is a product of deprivation of individuals or groups, which often leads to alienation and the search for a separate identity, and a slight provocation at this stage erupt into violent action (Onuoha, 2014). Religious sectarian intolerance can be traced to the inability of different religious sects within a faith to tolerate their religious views and practices of each other, which often leads to acrimony and prejudice toward each other (Shahzad, Adil, & Ghayas, 2022). The cause of terrorism, such as Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has been traced to religious extremism (Osewa, 2019a). In a similar development, Adesoji, Adilaja and Penare (2016) have identified religious fundamentalism as the major cause of terrorism. Walter and Todd (2012) view terrorism as the *“premeditated use or threat of violence by individuals or subnational groups to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims.”*

Several persons and institutions have expressed mixed feelings with respect to the type of actions that can be counted as terrorism. For example, Yasir Arafat a one-time leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, once stated in an address to the United Nations Organization, that whatever acts that is carried out for just cause cannot be termed terrorism (Yonah, 1976). From Arafat’s view, the actions of Islamist, commonly referred to as terrorist acts can have justification when the cause

is just. The view of Arafat is similar but not equal to what political scientists and theologians have referred to as the concept of a just war. But a just war and a terrorist attack are still two different things, since terrorism has no bases for justification. The controversial aspect of this view is whether there is any known justification for acts of terrorism. Cardinal Martino, who served as the Vatican ambassador to the United Nations, and later the head of the Vatican Council for Justice and Peace, once described terrorism as the 4<sup>th</sup> World War, with the cold war between the capitalist and socialist block being the 3<sup>rd</sup> World War (Osewa, 2019b, cited in Osewa, 2019a). So, the illustration above implies that terrorism is a crime against humanity, and there is no moral justification whatsoever for acts of terrorism. The above views of Yasir Arafat may have been borne from the frustration experienced by the Palestinian due to the superior fire power of Israel in the dispute between the two regions. According to Hoffman (2002), one major effect of religious extremism in global history is the US terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, that led to the death of over 3,000 people, including 400 police officers and fire fighters.

The two major religious groups in Nigeria, Christianity and Islamic religious groups have been identified to exhibit various dimensions of extremism. For example, the southeast of Nigeria has witnessed a dichotomy between the major religions in that region into “Catholic-Anglican” dichotomy. The extremism between these two groups is commonly manifested in the refusal to give their daughters out in marriage to an opposite group, and violation of that position attracts excommunication enforced by the hierarchy of the respective churches. The emergence of Pentecostal churches has led to a third faction, which has literally threatened the mutual intended dominance of one of the Orthodox Church over the other. Unlike the south western region of Nigeria, there is a relatively balanced interaction between the two major religious groups (Abubakar, 2022). This, therefore,

implies that there is no uniform involvement in religious extremism in Nigeria. From the above illustration the northern part of Nigeria has been identified to be more engrossed in religious extremism than any other regions, as evidenced in the heinous acts of terrorism perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorist group with Northern Nigeria as their operational base. It is in this regard that this research article focuses its attention on the illiteracy, poverty and Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria in a bid to unravel the implications of the aforementioned variables on the recruitment and sustenance of the terrorist organization popularly known as Boko Haram, and to suggest public policies that would assist in arresting the ugly trend of Boko Haram insurgency and other similar acts of religious extremism and terrorism in Nigeria.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Frustration-Aggression Theory**

Frustration-aggression theory is also referred to as frustration-aggression hypothesis, and is one of the foremost theories in research on aggression. It was formulated in the 1930s. A link has been established between frustration and aggression through empirical evidence (Breuer & Elson, 2017). The frustration-aggression hypothesis was originally propounded by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939), and the theory state that, “the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression” (Dollard, et. al., 1939, p. 1). Aggression is a product of any frustration (Breuer & Elson, 2017). The occurrence of aggression is based on an initial act of frustration (Breuer & Elson, 2017). “Frustration produces instigation to aggression, but this is not the only type of instigation that it may produce” (Miller, Sears, Mowrer, Doob, & Dollard, 1941, p. 339). Aggression is one of the likely consequences of frustration (Breuer & Elson, 2017).

Apart from aggression, frustration can also lead to an increase or creation of prejudice (Grossarth-Maticcek, Eysenck, & Vetter, 1989) and depression (Seligman, 1975).

Some literatures on frustration-aggression hypothesis argued that the threat of the sanctions imposed on some individuals for engaging in aggressive behaviour leads to frustration on the part of those who earlier exhibited aggressive tendencies, and this they argued could further lead to exhibition of aggression (Breuer & Elson, 2017). It is in this regard, that Morlan (1949, p. 1) observed that, “the expression of an aggressive impulse does not result in catharsis, but, on the contrary, sets up a vicious cycle that leads to further aggression”. Breuer and Elson (2017) on their part added that aggressive acts does not occur in isolation but would always lead to further actions. In a similar dimension, Miller et al. (1941, p. 279) observed that, “the occurrence of the aggressive response depends on the subject’s understanding of the situation” (Miller, et. al., 1941, p. 279). Several studies attributed arbitrariness to acts of frustration and aggression (Cohen, 1955; Worchel, 1974; Zillman & Cantor, 1976; Rule, Dyck, & Nesdale, 1978; Kulik & Brown, 1979). Unjustified frustration has been observed to be responsible for an increased hostile aggression in comparison to a justified frustration which lead to a lesser aggression (Dill & Anderson, 1995). Nevertheless, frustration has the propensity to induce an aggressive behaviour, even when the act of frustration is not conceived as arbitrary by the aggressor (Berkowitz, 1988; Dill & Anderson, 1995). A study conducted by Kregarman and Worchel (1961) showed a reduction in act of aggression when the frustration that led to the aggressive behaviour is expected. Brown and Farber (1951) observed two conditions that determine the existence of frustration. One is that the goal to be achieved per se is vital to the individual, and secondly, the perception of the achievement of the goal as a likely outcome by the concerned individual. Nickerson (2023) noted that aggression can be mediated by several factors, such as the

reconsideration of an occurrence of events by individual, strong motivational drive to avoid aggressive acts, or dire consequences for doing so, or when there is the absence of the opportunity to behave aggressively. For instance, a person with a pacifist disposition is very unlikely to exhibit aggressive tendency when engrossed in situations of frustration.

Frustration can occur as a result of incompetent or selfish co-operators' wrong behaviour and attitude preventing an individual or groups from achieving a common goal that depends on cooperative efforts from others (Nickerson, 2023). The experience of frustration by people makes them to be aggressive towards the object of frustration. Frustration is an emotional distortion which occurs when there is a blockage of people's exerted effort aimed at reaching a goal. The aggression exhibited by people is not always directed to the source of frustration, either because this may be too dangerous with respect to attracting a severe penalty, or the source of frustration is not available or unknown, in this case, the aggression is directed to a less dangerous target or the nearest available object at the moment. This phenomenon can be referred to as a displacement (Nickerson, 2013). Competition among group of people can lead to frustration (Deutsch, 1949). It is in this regard, that Berkowitz (1989) observed that, "competitive encounters are at least partly frustrating as the contestants block each other attempts to reach the disputed goal and threaten each other with a total loss".

Aggressive act is more severe towards the perceived sources of the frustration (Dollard, et. al., 1939). Directing aggression towards source of frustration is one way of expressing retaliation to act earlier committed against someone (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976). However, situations have emerged where aggression is directed to sources that are not sources of frustration (Green, 1968). This type of aggression, just as stated earlier, is commonly referred to as a displaced aggression (Breurer & Elson, 2017).

Several studies have shown that aggressive acts towards a frustration can assist the aggressor to overcome the frustration (Buss, 1963, 1966; Thompson & Kolstoe, 1974). Certain aggressive acts exhibited towards a source of frustration can be for the purpose of defence (Ichheiser, 1950). Several studies have found that males are more aggressive than females (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Buss, 1963; Caprara, 1982; Verona & Curtin, 2006). In a related development, it has been observed that an aggressive act is more severe towards a partner of the same sex with the aggressor (Harris, 1974).

The occurrence of frustration can be due to a reduction in expected reward from effort exerted delayed, or outright removal of expected reward (Amstel, 1962, 1992). Several factors have been identified as sources of aggression. These include: insults, anxiety (Hokanson, 1961), unpleasant environmental circumstances and other annoying situations (Breurer & Elson, 2017). At the level of the society, the causes of frustration have been identified as acute economic recession, a lack or restricted access to common wealth and resources, or systematic and/or institutional discrimination against certain groups (Gurr, 1970). These challenges have been identified by Feierabend and Feierabend (1966, p. 250) as “systematic frustration”.

The relevance of the frustration-aggression theory to this article is based on the fact that since majority of the masses in Nigeria have been neglected by the Nigerian state in terms of provision of their basic needs, such as education, employment, health and other forms of poverty alleviation; they then resort to violence against the state and other innocent citizens in a form of revenge mission for their being short change by the government using the platform of religious extremism to hatch such plans. This is evidenced in the meaning of the term Boko Haram, which has been interpreted as western “education is an abomination”, a

term which implicitly includes hatred for modern government and civilisation.

### **Social Movement Theory**

The Social Movement Theory (SMT) has been identified as one of the most reliable theoretical framework that is applicable to a better comprehension of the phenomenon of radicalisation and violent extremism (Gunning, 2009). A social movement has been perceived as a set of beliefs and opinions held by people, which further instigates them to strive for changes in certain element of the social structure (Zald & McCarthy, 1987). The emergence of the SMT is traced to the 1940s, and it was based on the views that the movement is a product of irrational process of collective behaviour within strained environmental circumstances which led to a situation of mass dissatisfaction. The recruitment of individuals into this movement is as a result of their passive acceptance of these prevailing social forces. Contemporary SMT theories have observed that a more rational and strategic operating processes have been adopted in recent times. SMT researchers in the 1980s and 1990s noted that the basic task of any movement or organization is to plan towards its survival. This, therefore, implies that adherents of a movement must strive to maintain a body of followers. Individuals lost through attrition must lead to new recruitment in order to avert total mortality or extinction of the movement. In other words, the movement's influence and impact is hinged on its progressive growth (Borum, 2012).

SMT theorists also observed that members of movement in an attempt to recruit members into the movement operate as "rational prospectors" (Brady, Schlozman, & Verba, 1999). They desire a productive membership recruitment approach, so they go for those that they know would not turn down the offer of joining the movement. They conceived the recruitment process as comprising two phases: (1) rational prospectors deploy

information to search for those potential members who would fit the movement; (2) after identifying their target members, recruiters give notification on participatory opportunities and add inducements to persuade their targets to join the movement (Brady, et al., 1999). The magnitude of social bonding and relationship among members of the movement are vital to the actualization of the stages listed above.

A variant of SMT, called Framing Theory has been suggested by Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen of the Danish Institute for International Studies (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008). Framing Theory, according to Borum (2012, p. 18):

focuses on how movements and social collectives construct, produce, and disseminate meaning. This is a recursive process in which the movement's idea entrepreneurs attempt to frame messages in ways that will best resonate with the interests, attitudes, and beliefs of its potential constituency. Then as people accept the movement's frames of reference, they increasingly come to identify with the collective movement.

Framing theory is in consonant with the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria, who uses distorted Islamic teaching as a constructivist instrument to deceive and persuade recruitment of adherents into the group. Most of the crises that have ever erupted in the Northern region of Nigeria since the 1960s till date have religious undertone. These could be the beheading of somebody in Kano for alleged desecration of a piece of paper containing some Arabic inscriptions, to the killing of a non-Muslim in the region, as a protest action against a cartoon in Denmark mocking the Holy Prophet; or in solidarity with one of the factions in the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict; or one obsessed governor is implementing a sharia with political



undertone; or a general reaction to events in entirely different countries with no direct relationship with Nigeria's affairs (Abubakar, 2022). The northern region of Nigeria has perhaps the worst form of religious extremism in Nigeria (Abubakar, 2022), and the experience of this region shall form the basis of analysis of the social movement theory as applied in this research work, and also, due to the dangerous implications of Boko Haram and other related Islamic extremism to the nation's national security and international relations. Abubakar (2022) observed that the occurrence of religious extremism in the northern region of Nigeria has grossly undermined several sections of the Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, such as Section 10, which spelt out the secularism of the country; Section 38, which emphasized right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; and Section 39, which expresses right to freedom of expression of the Nigerian citizens. He further stated that the most dominant religion in the northern part of the country, Islam has done very little in curtailing violent extremism in that region (Abubakar, 2022). The above suggest that the inability of the majority of the people to reason logically made them malleable and susceptible to be indoctrinated with the ideologies of religious fundamentalism in line with the postulations of framing theory, which is an off shoot of the social movement theory. It is worthy of note that Donatella Della Porta is one of the first renown researchers on terrorism to apply SMT to violent extremism, which she exhibited in her study of Italian and German militants (Della Porta, 1995).

The application of the SMT is based on the fact that the Boko Haram militants in a bid to ensure the sustenance of the militancy and insurgency which they believed would successfully culminate into an Islamic caliphate (republic) continuously embarked on aggressive recruitment process from the vulnerable groups in the society. They tend to achieve this goal through assuming the role of rational prospectors in line with the SMT. In the same vein, the work also aligned with a variant of SMT, known as Framing Theory

as discussed above. The Boko Haram insurgents in line with the aforementioned framing theory promised its adherents an Islamic Republic that would be manned by the group members and their leaders. Also, the group leaders promised the adherents of the movement that if they die in the struggle, they would be entitled to seven virgins as wives in paradise. These constructionist viewpoints have in no small measure aided the recruitment process of Boko Haram leading to more formidable follower.

### **The Political Opportunity Structure Theory**

The Political Opportunity Structure Theories buttress the implications of certain arrangement in the governmental structure that would serve as an opportunity for non-state actors to deploy non-conventional and belligerent actions in order to take advantage of the perceived weakness in governmental framework and launch attack against the state or any other constituted authority as a way of making certain demand (McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1994; Meyer, 2004). Political opportunity structure theories can easily be understood through observing circumstances that have caused a decline in state powers, authority and deterrence, a situation that therefore, bolster the drive to achieve an illicit collective interest by extremists of various shades and opinions (Tilly, 1978; Skocpol, 1976). As a corollary to the foregoing, "Ethiopia provides a good example illustrating how state instability and periods of weakness can encourage resort to violence" (Gleditsch & Ruggeri, 2010, p. 302). Similarly, since the emergence of the democratic regime of Nigeria in May 1999, following series of military regimes, which have transformed the nation into a near failed state. The non-state armed groups have threatened her internal security through the engagement of young men for the atrocious acts. The most prominent of these groups is Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad, popularly referred to as Boko Haram, an Islamic

terrorist group, whose heinous acts have reached an alarming proportion, which resonated at both the national, regional, and international levels. The death toll caused by the activities of Boko Haram between 2009 and 2014, was estimated at ten thousand fatalities. With the surge of Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations undermining the peace and development of Nigeria, questions arise as to the role of the government and other actors in mitigating the ugly trend of violent religious extremism in the country (Unuoha, 2014).

The theory assumes “that leaders who have entered powers by irregular means will have a high likelihood of conflict, but that the positive effect of initial irregular entry will dissipate with longer tenure, as these leaders become more secure in office” (Gleditsch & Ruggeri, 2010, p. 303). The theories argue that the weakness and vulnerability of governments at any level stimulates collective violent actions against the state by non-state actors who would always predicate their violent offensive against the government on several demands, which may be either political, economic, social or religious in nature. In the light of the foregoing, a study based on surveys, interviews, and focus groups embarked upon in Nigeria in 2013, found that poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, as well as weak family structures, account for young men's availability and susceptibility to religious radicalism. Itinerant preachers cashed in on the above situation, and propagated extreme dimensions of religious beliefs, and portrayed the government as unproductive and corrupt. The above situation has afforded Boko Haram Islamists the opportunity to recruit and train youths for activities, such as errand running and suicide bombings (Unuoha, 2014). The neglect of the social infrastructural needs of the citizenry by the Nigerian government over the years has contributed to the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency.

Therefore, the application of this theory to the Nigerian situation with regards to the Boko Haram insurgency, is based on the fragility and weakness of the Nigerian state, which has led to several manifestations typical of a failed state, such as, the massive corruption perpetrated by various public officials, inability to address the challenges of ethnicity, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, bad governance, lack of popular participation in governance, bureaucratic waste, incredibility and lack of transparency in the electoral process, unresponsiveness of the public services to the plight of the citizenry, police brutality, and all forms of state repression of the media and civil society groups, the public identification and perception of inadequacies in the 1999 Constitution, lack of autonomy of local governments, lack of adequate investment in public education, and so on. These and many other challenges have made the Nigerian government to be susceptible to extremists attacks, with dissatisfied citizens and others who have eventually become unpatriotic due to the aforementioned issues, aligning with Boko Haram and other related violent groups, either as informants or outright members to avenge their dissatisfaction, and to at least cause a favourable change of governmental actions and policies through their acts of terrorism.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The secondary method of data collection and analysis was adopted in this research work due to its ability to enable the researchers have a wide coverage of issues without necessarily involving in field research, and it is also not too capital intensive in comparison with the research conducted using the primary method of data collection. These advantages are what made this method indispensable in this research study.

### **THE NEXUS BETWEEN ILLITERACY AND BOKO HARAM ISLAMIST IDEOLOGIES: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION**

Illiteracy has been identified as a major cause of Boko Haram insurgency, as evidenced in Nigeria with the highest rate of children that are out of school, which is currently more than 20 million, according the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in its 2022 report, but on the contrary, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) put the figure of the Nigerian children that are out of school in the same period at slightly above 10 million. The divergence in both reports can be attributed to the fact that the data used in the study by UNESCO are those of children between the ages 6 to 18 years, ranging from those in primary one to senior secondary three. While the data used by UBEC are those of children between the ages 6 to 11 years, all of which are still in the primary school, despite the disparity in both reports, Nigeria with any of the reports has been adjudged the country with the highest numbers of children that out of school in the world (Umeh, 2023); with the northern Nigeria topping the list, and also, with north east Nigeria, the epicentre of religious extremism in the country having the highest case with 33 percent of the children in that region declared to be out of school (Abubakar, 2022). A study conducted across six states in Nigeria revealed that high levels of illiteracy is one of the basic factors responsible for religious extremism in Nigeria. For example, in Gombe State, the study ranked illiteracy second out of the sixteen factors listed as causes of religious extremism. Illiteracy was also ranked second out of the presented sixteen factors responsible for religious extremism in Yobe State. In Borno State, illiteracy was listed as the fourth out of the sixteen factors listed as the cause of religious extremism (Mefor, 2014). Another empirical study conducted in Borno State of Nigeria found that 93.2 percent of respondents shared the common view that ignorance of the full teaching of their religion was a major factor responsible for the adoption of extreme religious doctrine by young people (Omonobi & Marama, 2014). In Kano, 75 percent of surveyed respondents were of the view

that illiteracy was responsible for religious extremism (Mefor, 2014).

Similarly, in Kano and Sokoto, both in northern region of Nigeria, 90 percent and 82 percent of respondents, respectively were of the view that ignorance of full teaching of their religion is the reason behind religious radicalization of their youths. Also, a former Governor of Borno State, now the Vice President of Nigeria, Kashim Shettima corroborated the above view, when he lamented that the distortion of the Holy Book by the insurgents was the source of the insecurity that had bedevilled the northern region of the country. (Omonobi & Marama, 2014). The sustenance and exhibition of ignorance of religious teaching which has made the youths vulnerable to radicalisation is caused by the high rate of illiteracy in the country, especially in the northern region of Nigeria (Komolafe, 2012). The above studies observed illiterate people to be amenable and susceptible to easy manipulation sequel to their low level of social and economic deprivation which makes them to lack the capacity and initiative to logically verify the contents of the propagated doctrines and ideologies by extremist movement (Mefor, 2014).

It should be noted that the illiterates and socio-economically deprived persons enlisted into the sect are not those who manufacture the improvised explosive devices (IED), available security reports show that they are used as mere foot soldiers who detonate the explosive devices in designated locations strategically targeted for the purpose. This is an indication of the immense contribution of illiteracy to religious extremism (Mefor, 2014). The above stated facts revealed a strong positive connection between illiteracy and religious extremism. It is in this regard that, Onuoha (2014, p. 7) noted that: *“The poor are unlikely to send their children to school and (so are) likely to be illiterates, unemployed, and thus vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization”*. In addition, an empirical study conducted by

Osewa (2019b cited in Osewa 2019a) found that, *“poverty and illiteracy are the causes of terrorism in Nigeria.”*

As a result of the multidimensional approaches adopted by religious extremists in achieving their parochial aims, they tend to recruit their adherents from social bases beyond the poor and illiterates. For example, Boko Haram basically recruits its members from disenchanting youths, unemployed high school and university graduates, and destitute children, which are mainly drawn from the northern region of Nigeria, with certain insignificant proportion of their numbers recruited from other regions. It also recruits some of its members from the wealthy, educated, and influential members of the society (Onuoha, 2014), although, the educated members of the sect play certain strategic functions that are technical or professional in nature, rather than the roles of foot soldiers, which is the realm of the illiterates and the destitute children recruited into the sect; such roles may include manufacturing of improvised explosive devices (IED), operation of the social media handles, like WhatsApp, face book, you tube, tik tok, X (formally twitter), sending news items to various media outlets as well as attending to virtual interviews with popularly media outlets, and so on.

Illiteracy that is highly prevalent in the northern region of Nigeria, and to a lesser extent in the rest part of the country has also contributed in no small measures to the emergence of half-baked Christian and Islamic religious teachers who are ignorant of the true contents of the religious messages they claim to preach. An empirical study conducted in Borno State of Nigeria by (Omonobi & Marama, 2014, cited by Onuoha, 2014) observed that the ignorance of religious teachings is a prime factor responsible for the propagation of extreme religious doctrine, which is further reinforced by the proliferation of sects and the emergence of independent preachers in both Christian and Islamic religions, as well as the increasing dependence on religious preachers rather

than the sacred books of religious instructions. These factors Onuoha (2014) noted make the youths susceptible to religious radicalism, which according to this author are generally rooted on the high prevalence of illiteracy in Nigeria. The author noted that the above religious infractions are only manifestations of high level of illiteracy in the country occasioned by the nonchalant attitude in funding and supervising the education sector by government at all levels. The government at all levels prefer to waste the common wealth of the country on frivolous recurrent expenditures and bureaucracy rather than investing such funds in social and human capital, as well as on infrastructural assets. This prodigal approach to public management was why late Professor Walter Rodney in his cerebral book titled: “How Europe underdeveloped Africa”, lamented that the only sector that thrive in third world countries is administration (Rodney, 1972).

#### **POVERTY AND BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES**

Poverty is an index of lack of development. It is on this note that McNamara (1968, cited in Osewa, 2019a) argued that a country that lacks development is at the same time not secured. In the view of McNamara poverty breeds insecurity. Nigeria is a typical case of the validation of that position, since a strong positive correlation exists between poverty of Nigeria and her extremely high level of insecurity. It is on this bases that the World Bank in 2018, described Nigeria as the poverty capital of the World. Studies conducted in Borno and Kaduna States of Nigeria revealed that the high incidence of the twin problems of unemployment and poverty are the second most important factors responsible for the involvement of youths in religious extremism. Similarly, in Kaduna State of Nigeria, 83 percent of survey respondents were of the view that unemployment and poverty were factors responsible for religious extremism in Nigeria. Also, a research report from Kano, Nigeria found that 92 percent of respondents



concurred that a positive relationship existed between poverty and religious extremism (Komolafe, 2012).

Many scholars have argued that poverty does not lead to religious extremism (Sageman, 2004; Abadie, 2005; Goldstein, 2005; Krueger & Latin, 2008; Butler, n.d.; Gassebner & Luechinger, 2011). Several other scholars view poverty as instrumental to religious extremism (Blomberg & Hess, 2004; Li & Schaub, 2004; Blomberg & Hess, 2005; Bravo & Dias, 2006; Burgoon, 2006; Freytag, Kruger & Meierrieks, 2010; Enders & Hoover, 2012; Enders, Hoover & Sandler, 2016; Kiendrebeogo & Ianchovichina, 2016). A study with the most convincing evidence of the global correlation of poverty and religious extremism have been conducted by (Enders & Hoover, 2012; Enders, Hoover & Sandler, 2016). While alluding to the view of the correlation between poverty and religious extremism, King and Taylor (2011) cited in Chevrier (2017, p. 5) observed that:

*The essential idea is that a potential violent extremist need not be poor himself to be frustrated, angry, and (he/she is) morally outraged by the poverty of those considered part of his/her collective identity group ... it is by this mechanism that vicious poverty and marginalization can be a strong factor contributing to radicalization. Many extremist have expressed their extreme moral outrage over the conditions of their brother Palestinians or Iraq is living thousands of miles away from them. What connects them is their sense of collective identity as Muslims, as part of the umma (Muslim identity group). This sense of collective strain around collective grievances. Group-based feelings of injustice have been shown to reliably predict collective action.*

In a similar trend, findings by Enders and Hoover (2012) conclude that poverty is one major factor that is responsible for domestic terrorism and a small, but significant effect on transnational terrorism. Chevrier (2017) noted that the year 2010, mark the origin of a new wave of terrorism into regions of abject poverty and extreme case of economic deprivation. In a related development, Chevrier (2017, p. 8) opined that: *“the lack of economic opportunities and mobility, poverty, perceptions of economic marginalization, unemployment, underemployment and frustrated aspirations have all contributed to the rise of violent extremism in sub-Saharan Africa.”* The CIA World fact book (CIA, 2016) claimed that 21 of the bottom 25 poorest countries in the world, classified in terms of GDP per capita are in sub-Saharan Africa. Since extreme poverty has been identified as a factor that instigate religious extremism, SSA is reputed for being the recruitment ground for religious extremists. It has been observed that the poorest region of the SSA is more deeply associated with religious extremism than region that are better off economically (Olojo, 2013; Ojielo, Yahya & Bandied, 2017).

Nonetheless, a case worth mentioning is the high poverty rates in the north east region of Nigeria, which is the highest in comparison to the rest parts of the country. It logically follows that the region has experienced the worst form of religious extremism, such as Boko Haram, (Islamic Province of West Africa, ISWAP) than the other regions within Nigeria, with lower rates of poverty (Olojo, 2013). *“The same relative high levels of underdevelopment and extreme poverty are seen for northern Mali, where al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM) emerged, the Diffa region of Niger (Boko Haran), the far north of Cameroun (Boko Haran), the sahel region in the north of Burkina Faso (AQIM), and the north eastern region of Kenya (al-shabaab)”* (Chevrier, 2017, p. 8).

Previous research showed that poverty leads to conflict, while the newer research has found that conflict creates the circumstances that are conducive for religious extremism (Gassebner & Luechinger, 2011; Policy, 2016). According to Mark Green, a USAID Administrator: *“We look at some of the trouble spots in the world, and while poverty doesn’t cause terrorism, destitution and abject poverty can create the kinds of conditions that drive people to despair. And we know, sadly, that despair is a condition that all too easily is exploited by dangerous influences”* (Green, 2017, p. 3). Abject poverty per se does not directly cause religious extremism, but it creates conditions that can make the local poor people to be susceptible to be recruited by Islamic extremist groups (Chevrier, 2017).

### **ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN NIGERIA: THE PHENOMENON OF BOKO HARAM**

There is no clear account of the origin of Boko Haram, but a common view traced its origin to the year 2002, when Mohammed Yusuf a charismatic Islamic preacher became the head of the organization (Taiwo & Olugbode, 2009). Similarly, another source argued that, Boko Haram was founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, in Borno State, with a philosophy based on Sunni Islam, and which abhors western civilisation, technology and modern science (Itaobong, 2018). The Nigerian intelligence community traced its origin to the establishment of Ahlulsuna wal’jama’ah hijra, or shabaab group (Muslim Youth Organization) by Abubakar Lawan in 1995, in Maiduguri, Borno State (Taiwo & Olugbode, 2009). Prior to the emergence of Mohammed Yusuf as the leader of the group, it has adopted a civil and non-violent posture with several nomenclature, such as, the Muhajirun, Hijrah, Ahlis Sunnah wal Jama’a, Yusufiyah, and Nigerian Taliban (Onuoha, 2014).

Boko Haram attracted global attention in July 2009, when it launched an aggressive campaign against the Nigerian state, a

process that led to the death of 800 persons, comprising civilians, group members, and security personnel. The revolt witnessed an unprecedented massive deployment and operation of security personnel which eventually arrested the situation on July 30, 2009, following the capture and subsequent execution of the charismatic leader of the Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf. In May 2014, the activities of the group once again attracted global attention when it adopted over 200 school girls in an attempt to negotiate an arrangement for a swap of their imprisoned colleagues and the kidnapped school girls (Onuoha, 2014). Since 2009, the group's activities have been based on a revenge mission against politicians, police, and Islamic authorities for the violent suppression by the Nigerian state, which led to the death of their foremost leader (Walker, 2012). The mode of operation of the group has advanced from poorly planned and direct confrontations with security officials to a more sophisticated application of improvised explosive devices, targeted assassinations, ambushes, drive-by shootings, suicide bombings, and kidnappings (Onuoha, 2012). There is no exact claim of the casualties from the Boko Haram attacks, but President Jonathan Goodluck has stated that 12,000 lives were so far lost through their deadly attacks and another 8,000 persons have either been injured or maimed, amidst the displacement of so many others (Wakili & Igidi, 2014).

Boko Haram detest western education and ideologies viewing them as un-Islamic, an act that earned the group the name Boko Haram, which literally connotes "western education is forbidden" (Onuoha, 2014). Although, the group prefers to be addressed by its Islamic name, which is "Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad, which is interpreted as "people committed to the propagation of the prophet's teachings and Jihad". It aims is to substitute the secular nature the Nigerian state for an extreme Islamic nature through the imposition of strict Islamic sharia laws as the legal framework of the country (Onuoha, 2014). The

sustenance of the group and its operation are based on several sources, such as membership dues, contributions from politicians, financial donations from foreign terrorist groups, bank robbery, and collection of ransom from kidnapping. Also, it has derived its funding from levying taxes on the local residents of areas of its control, and threatening certain wealthy individuals to pay them protection fees in order to avert attacks from the group (Onuoha, 2014).

Its history of violence can be specifically traced to its multiple attacks launched against police stations and public buildings and infrastructures on 24 December, 2003, at Geiam and Kanamma towns both in Yobe State (Onuoha, 2014). Consequent upon the attacks, flags of Taliban movement of Afghanistan was hosted on their conquered territory until they were eventually removed by counter-attacks by Nigerian security forces after killing 18 members of the groups, and arresting several others (Suleiman, 2007). The activities of the group became poignantly worrisome in 2004, when some tertiary institutions students in Borno and Yobe states tore their certificates and joined the group. The height of the activities of the group was exhibited on September 24, 2004, by their attacks on the Bama and Gwoza police stations in Borno State, killing several police personnel, and stealing arms and ammunition. The group embarked on sporadic guerrilla attacks on several security formations and infrastructures in some sections of Borno and Yobe States, until July 2009 anti-government violent campaign by the group (Onuoha, 2014).

The July 2009 violent uprising has been attributed to violent shootings of sect members on June 11, 2009, by security operatives engaged in a campaign tagged “operation flush” (Onuoha, 2013, cited in Onuoha, 2014), occasioned by the default of sect members on funeral procession for not wearing a crash helmet. In revenging the attack, the sect members destroyed the Dutsen Tanshi police station on July 26, 2009. This sparked up the

wave of violence and unrest that pervaded Bauchi, Borno, Kano, Katsina, and Yobe States. The uprising ended on July 30, 2009, following the arrest of Mohammed Yusuf, who was subsequently executed extra judicially by the Nigerian police, who based the reason of such action on Yusuf attempt to escape from detention. The action further escalated the insurgency and terrorism perpetuated by the sect against the Nigerian state following the appointment of Abubakar Shekau by the sect to replace Mohammed Yusuf (Onuoha, 2014). Violent Islamic extremists have been launching attacks on several military bases across the north east of Nigeria, notable amongst these attacks is the Metele on 28 November, 2018, which claimed the lives of 200 military personnel (Osewa, 2019a).

The revolt that accompanied the death of the spiritual leader of the Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf led to the death of over 800 people, who comprised mainly of sect members, while hundreds of others were arrested (Onuoha, 2014). Another report stated that the revolt led to the death of over 20,000 people between 2009 to 2016, with the abduction of thousands of women and girls, and children forcefully conscripted into playing the roles of suicide bombers for the group. The crisis has led to 2.1 million people fleeing their homes, while 1.9 million people are internally displaced, and another 200,000 people seeking solace in Chad, Cameroun and Niger Republic (Ocha, 2016, cited in Osewa, 2019a). The above trend illustrates the colossal damage religious extremism has caused Nigeria.

Since the July 2009 revolt, the activities of Boko Haram have become ferocious and decentralised with random spread across several states in the northern region of the country. The group drew global attention when it bombed the United Nations compound in 2011, leading to the death of 23 people (Onuoha, 2014). Following the protracted nature of the Boko Haram insurgency, former president Goodluck Jonathan in January,

2012, declared a state of emergency in 15 local governments across four states in the northern part of Nigeria. At the end of the state of emergency, the security challenges in those regions had not abated. That led to further declaration of state of emergency by President Jonathan, this time, in three most affected states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe in May, 2013 (Onuoha, 2014). The activities of Boko Haram and its sister terrorist organization, the ISWAP has cost Nigeria a great fortune in terms of loss of foreign direct investment, widespread in security, increase in cost of doing business, since every professional handling contract issue in the country, and other individuals of high social standing must be accompanied by either police or military personnel as escort. These activities are cost intensive, and such costs are incorporated into contract agreements, thereby causing general increase in business transactions. It is in regard to this phenomenon that Nigeria was ranked in 2018, as the third most terrorised country in the world by the Global Terrorist Index (GTI) (Sahara Reporters, 2018).

### **MANAGEMENT AND POLICY OPTIONS OF THE NIGERIAN STATE**

The way forward in mitigating the violence perpetrated by Boko Haram insurgents and other related Islamists is for the government to be proactive in its ongoing combat – offensive counter – insurgency by adopting a hybrid approach that is based on countering both the military and non-military aspects of the terror-insurgency (Okoli & Lenshie, 2022). The main strategy of curbing the radicalization and recruitment of young men by religious extremists is for the Nigerian government at all levels to monitor and regulate the contents of religious preaching without necessarily encroaching on the freedom of worship of the citizens. The government should embark on skill acquisition programmes, and other programmes geared towards employment creation; establishment of programmes towards mitigating the plight of destitute children; entrenching peace

based education (Onuoha, 2014), that is centred on religious tolerance (Osewa, 2019a) in the nation's school curricula, from primary level to tertiary level of education, in order to entrench social harmony and cohesion, and to abhor social divisiveness and religious segregation; and embarking on vigorous campaign against corruption and abuse of due process in public sector management. The Nigerian government should tackle the various challenges that have made the Nigerian children vulnerable to recruitment by insurgents, and that would in no small measure ameliorate, if not totally eradicate the menace of religious extremism and its multipliers effects (Onuoha, 2014).

Good governance and the provision of basic necessities for a healthy living have been prescribed as a panacea to religious extremism in Nigeria. The Nigerian state should make (adequate provision for social amenities for the enhancement of citizens' livelihood and guaranteed high standard of living for all citizens. The government should prioritize human capital development and welfare of the citizens. Laws should be enacted against religious extremism in the country. Also, the government should embark on creation of greater awareness on education, so as to eradicate illiteracy and ignorance amongst the people. Greater awareness and orientation should be embarked upon by the National orientation agency to discourage people, especially those in the northern region of the country from marrying many wives, especially those they cannot cater for, and be discouraged from marrying underage girls, as well as urging even those with one wife to desist from giving birth to numbers of children they cannot cater for (Osewa, 2019a). It is in this regard that the government through the various local governments' primary health care development authority should strengthen and reinforce the various strategies of educating the citizens on the need for family planning, and giving them professional advice on how to go about it.



Furthermore, the culture prevalent in the northern region of Nigeria whereby male children are sent out to become destitute (Almajiri), in the guise of being tutored some fundamental Islamic principles should be discouraged in its entirety by the Nigerian state, as these sets of children eventually become source of recruitment by religious extremists. In addition, the government at all levels should address the economic problems in the country, such as the eradication of poverty, inequality, creation of employment for the citizenry, especially, the youths, the formulation and effective implementation of citizenship education policy and other policies that will enhance social wellbeing and ensure the attainment of high standard of living for Nigerians (Osewa, 2019a) The Nigerian state should prioritize this option of deploying the strategy of creation of social infrastructure as a panacea for religious extremism and its attendant vices, rather than relying strictly on the coercive and authoritarian instruments of state security institutions. It is in this regard that late Professor Thomas Imobighe lamented that:

*When I hear people calling for more sophisticated weapons for the police to combat the increasing wave of crime in the country, I often feel sorry for this country, because we do not seem to realize that the deviants, we are seeking sophisticated arms to eliminate are the products of our bad policies. Our experience here in Nigeria is a bad manifestation of how easy it is for a self-serving political class to wreck the aspiration of a thriving polity through the mismanagement of its resources (Imobighe, 2006, p.5).*

Several other measure to be adopted by the Nigerian state aimed at addressing the *challenges* of religious extremism have been suggested by Onuoha (2014). These are: Monitor and regulate religious preaching; creation of job opportunities for Nigerian youths; design and deliver a robust programme for destitute children; enhance provision of education and literacy

programmes; promote peace education; improve anticorruption campaign. We shall now examine these items one after the other.

### **Monitor and Regulate Religious Preaching**

Since it has been observed that independent itinerant preachers are the major sources of the propagation of extreme religious views and doctrines, it is therefore of vital necessity for the government to monitor and regulate religious teachings in the country (Onuoha, 2014). The governments at all levels could take cue from the Gombe State Government, who during the Ramadan of 2013, introduced guidelines agreed upon by Muslim and Christian leaders which was aimed at regulating all preaching and teaching at that period in order to avert crises that may have erupted from religious bodies or sect using strong and offensive language against each other (Onuoha, 2014). This author is in agreement with the view of Onuoha (2014) that a public service agency should be established for the purpose of monitoring religious teaching and indoctrination patterns amongst the various religious bodies in the country, and which would be known as Religious Affairs Regulatory and Monitory Commission (RARMC), and it would consist of representatives of the major religion, state security service, credible civil society organizations, and the media. According to Onuoha (2014, p. 8), *“the commission would be responsible for monitoring and regulating the mode and content of preaching to prevent religious ideologies from misleading young people with false or distorted preaching”*

### **Creation of Job Opportunities for Nigerian Youths**

The government at all levels should embark on poverty alleviation of the citizenry, especially the youths who are more vulnerable to religious extremism, through human capital development and job creation in both the public and private sectors. Vigorous programmes of entrepreneurial development should be

embarked upon and decentralised across the 774 local government areas. Provision for start-up capital should be put in place for would – be entrepreneurs. This should be corroborated with various skills acquisition programmes across the country, alongside the provision of starters pack for those who successfully complete the training programme (Unuoha, 2014).

### **Design and Deliver a Robust Programme for Destitute Children**

The Nigerian state should adequately fund and reposition the National Council for the Welfare of the Destitute (NCWD) to ensure its effective Service delivery. The various civil society groups, religious bodies, and philanthropists should complement the government in the project of eradication of the destitution in the country (Unuoha, 2014). At this juncture, public-private partnerships arrangement should be the priority of the government in order to ensure an effective collaboration between government and several charities, non-profit and donor agencies for the betterment of the poor masses who are voiceless and powerless in the society. It has become obvious that the government of Nigeria has currently failed in its obligation to lift the poor above poverty. So, a participatory approach to governance should be embarked upon by the present political leaders.

### **Enhance Provision of Education and Literacy Programmes**

A former South African President, Nelson Mandela once described education as *“the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”* (Vanguard, 2023). The Nigerian state need to device a counterforce for the drastic reduction and eventual elimination of illiteracy through quality (and affordable) education. This is in line with the view of late Professor Babatunde Fafunwa, that: *“the end objective of education is to produce an individual who is honest, respectful, skilful, cooperative and would conform to the social order”* (Abubakar,

2022). Education has also been described as weapon of liberation from ignorance. Therefore, the government should properly fund education in the country to the United Nations Environmental, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) standard of investing 26 percent of the budgetary appropriation to education sector. In view of the above, governments at all levels should ensure that primary and secondary education are entirely based on free education, while the tertiary level of education should be made affordable and accessible by indigent students in the country. The proposed student loans for indigent students in the nation's tertiary institutions should be designed in such a way as to ensure that it does not lead to astronomical increase in the fees of tertiary institutions as being presently witnessed, and it should also be devoid of stringent mode in terms of access and patronage. The almajiri and other nomadic educational programmes should be designed in such a way as to meet the needs and challenges of modern and contemporary society.

### **Promote Peace Education**

The achievement and sustenance of Nigeria as a nation where peace, unity, and progress would be ensured is predicated on the urgent need of a counterforce to arrest the ugly trend of religious violence, intolerance, and extremism (Abubakar, 2022). The government should ensure that there is peace in the entire country through the inculcation of peace studies and conflict resolution in various schools' curricula. The private sectors, and the civil society groups, as well as various religious bodies should collaborate with the government in the attainment of peace in the country. Also, the state mechanisms for dispute resolution should be well structured and repositioned to ensure justice for all in the process of adjudication. Justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done.

### **Improve Anti-corruption Campaign**

The prevalence of the earlier mentioned factors that gave rise to religious extremism can be adduced to the problem of bad political leadership brought about by the menace of corruption which has adversely affected progress and development of the country. It is in this regard that government of the Nigerian state should strengthen and re-strategize the fight against corruption and abuse of due process in the public sector in line with the standard international best practices, and to ensure an effective political and bureaucratic leadership in the country.

## CONCLUSION

Religion has been defined by a foremost sociologist, Emile Durkheim as, “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things” (Abubakar, 2022). Extremism is the imposition of an individual or group’s beliefs, values, and ideologies over others through coercion in order to curtail civil and human rights (Schmidt, 2014, cited in Hassan, Khattack, Quresin & Igbal, 2022). Religious extremism, therefore, results from individuals’ rejection of the ideologies and beliefs of others whose interpretation is different from their own interpretation. The phenomenon of religious extremism is not restricted to any region, it is a common phenomenon (Rizvi, 1993, cited in Hassan, et al., 2021), but occurring in different magnitude.

Religious extremism in Nigeria, which has overtly manifested in the form of Boko Haram insurgency has been attributed to high incidence of poverty and illiteracy in the country occasioned by the gross irresponsibility of the Nigerian political elite, since they assumed political leadership on Nigeria’s Independence Day in 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960. Their failure to develop the key sectors of the economy, such as the social and human capital, as well as the physical infrastructures, and so on, has dire consequences, such as the massive pool of uninformed and unlearned people which have become the characteristic feature of Nigeria in recent times. These uninformed masses that are the products of bad policies of

successive political regimes in the country both past military and civilian regimes, eventually become instruments in the hands of the egocentric elites who have no other agenda for the nation, but to weaponised illiteracy, poverty, and religion for the achievement of their selfish goals.

This paper concludes that poverty does not directly lead to religious extremism, but it creates conditions that makes people to be susceptible and vulnerable to recruitment by religious extremists. Another way poverty can also contribute to religious extremism is that even those persons who belong to a particular religion, and who have a high socio-economic standard do tend to reacts violently if they witnessed the poverty and deprivation of their religious colleagues. They could result to religious extremism all in a bid to grant economic freedom to their colleagues through launching attacks on the perceived oppressor of their compatriots.

Illiteracy has also been identified as a case of religious extremism, since it leads to the emergence of religious preachers who due to low level of education do not really comprehend the basic tenets of their religious doctrines as espoused in their religious books, so, they go about preaching wrong messages and misinforming their listeners. These activities of these half-baked religious instructors could be quite disastrous. Also, illiteracy exhibited by most people in Nigeria tend to deprive them of the capacity for logical reasoning, which means they have no ability to logically process the information passed on to them by religious preachers, such as the itinerant and independent preachers. So, these illiterate people who lack the requisite skill to carry out logical reasoning with respect to the preachers' message fall prey to the preachers' deceitful religious messages that are cooked up ignorantly or deliberated designed to manipulate the listeners for the satisfaction of their selfish end.

This paper found that terrorism is the height or the advanced stage of religious extremism, such as the activities of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, ISWAP, and other emerging violent groups who are all clamouring for the substitution of Nigeria' secular government with an Islamic Republic like that which is obtainable in Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and so on, irrespective of the mixed nature of the country and multi-religious and multi-ethnic nature of its people.

The paper examined several policy options for putting an end to the menace of religious extremism, and its attendant consequences. These are; monitoring and regulating religious preaching; creation of job opportunities for Nigerian youth; design and delivery of a robust programme for destitute children; enhance provision of education and literacy programmes, and so on. It is the view of this author that if the various policy options listed in this paper would be judiciously implemented by the Nigerian state, and supported with the requisite political will and expertise, Nigeria shall be a country to be reckoned with in the comity of nations, and would truly stand out as the true giant of Africa. The paper concluded with several policy implications of the study, such as curbing illiteracy and poverty through public policy, drastic cut down in cost of governance, reformation of the various anti-corruption agencies and assigning the National Judicial Commission (NJC) to be responsible for appointing the heads of the agencies, drastic reduction in unemployment through both formal and informal education, as well as citizens' empowerment, amongst others.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- In line with the above analysis of Boko Haram insurgency, the Federal Government in collaboration with the state governments through their Ministries of Education should formulate policies aimed at registering all religious schools in the country, and setting a standard for their teaching

curriculum and the quality of teachers to be employed in those institutions. This is to ensure that the curriculum is devoid of elements of radicalism, and teachers with leftist and radicalist inclinations are excluded from such schools.

- The governments at all levels should deploy every available means and resources to drastically reduce illiteracy to the barest minimum through massive investment in quality education at all levels, in order to build the logical mind set of the people, so as to overcome any trait of vulnerability which would have made them susceptible to the distorted and extreme Islamic radicalism propagated by Boko Haram insurgents and other unconventional movements.
- In view of the above, there should be a reasonable reduction and cut down in the bogus cost of governance at all levels of government, so as to make more funds available for the education and poverty alleviation in the country. As a follow up from the above, legislatures at all levels of government should be placed on part-time, without fixed monthly salaries but they should only be paid sitting allowances. Also, all their dressing allowances, numerous political aides and assistance, payment of overseas travelling estacode for personal and unofficial trips, as well as. other related bogus and wasteful allowances should be abolished. The excess money recovered from this reform should be plough back to the social sector of the economy. More so, such reforms would de-incentivise the struggle for legislative positions by making it less attractive to those who would desire such positions just for the sake of what they stand to benefit. This would also paved the way for men and women of professionalism, integrity, probity and accountability to emerge as legislators in the country.
- The government should embark on a massive drive towards combating poverty in the country, as this would go a long way



in fortifying the people from being susceptible to indoctrination into extreme radical ideology, such as those propagated by Boko Haram insurgents. In view of the above, all existing poverty alleviation agencies and programmes should be reformed and repositioned for a better and more effective service delivery.

- There is a general consensus that no nation can achieve meaningful development without first achieving the provision of quality and affordable education to all her citizens. In the light of the above, the government at all levels should adhere to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended minimum of 26% of Third World countries annual budget to the education sector. This would go a long way in producing citizens whose minds are well cultivated and are logical in thinking, as well as productive in every of their endeavours. These attributes if achieved would go a long way in insulating the Nigerian youths from falling prey to the intrigues of Boko Haram indoctrination and recruitment as well as enlistment into other related non-conformist groups.
- The government should deploy every relevant machinery to aggressively combat unemployment in the country, as it has been identified as one major factor responsible for easy recruitment of adherents by Boko Haram insurgents. There is the popular saying that, “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop”, which implies that the higher the rate of unemployment, the higher also will be the rate of recruitment of thousands of youths into joining radical and extremist movements, like the Boko Haram. So, in tackling the menace of unemployment, the government should in addition to the provision of formal education, also, make provision of vocational education, as well as, deployment of funds to revitalize all technical schools in the country. Furthermore,

structures and frameworks should be put in place to assist those who have completed these vocational programmes with starters pack in order not to get them frustrated and discouraged, a trend that might in turn discourage others from participating in such programmes. Similarly, the government should address all issues and challenges that have led to the reversal of foreign direct investment in the country in recent times. The major challenges to be addressed in this regard is the restoration of a stable and reliable electric power and combating insecurity and other crucial matters ancillary thereto.

- In Nigeria, corruption is one major obstacle to the achievement of national security and sustainable development. Therefore, both political, economic and bureaucratic corruption should be curbed at all levels of government. It is in this regard that the various anti-corruption agencies should be strategized for optimum service delivery. Also, these agencies must be truly independent. One way of achieving this is to ensure that the agencies are not funded through the executive, but their funding should be charged on the consolidated revenue fund. Similarly, the president must no longer exercise the right to appoint the heads and members of any of the anti-corruption agencies, but these functions should be assigned to the National Judicial Commission (NJC) subject to the verification of the short listed candidates for the agencies by Department of State Services (DSS), and the approval of the National Assembly. The public opinion about such candidates should also, be considered before the final appointment of the candidates, which implies that there must be adequate media coverage of the entire process in order to stimulate public participation in the process.

- The power of removal of the heads or members of any anti-corruption agencies should no longer be reposed on the president but on the House of Representatives.

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