

Understanding the Root Causes of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: A Perceptual Study

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Abstract

Boko Haram insurgency is the most devastating experience encountered in Nigeria's fourth republic. It is therefore imperative to investigate the root causes of Boko Haram insurgency in the country. To achieve the objective of the study, a total of ninety (90) members of the Joint Task Force (JTF) operating in Maiduguri in Borno State were sampled through the use of a self-structured questionnaire, and key informant interview was conducted for thirty four (34) of them to concretised data generated through the questionnaire. The study discovered that cultural practices ($\bar{x}=3.41$), high rate of illiteracy ($\bar{x}=3.23$), political interests of the elites ($\bar{x}=3.19$), foreign influence ($\bar{x}=3.19$) and bad governance ($\bar{x}=3.11$) were the root causes of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Thus, it was recommended that cultural practices capable of provoking violence should be reviewed and reshaped; leaders should be held accountable for their actions; quality and access education should be provided; activation of citizenship consciousness on leadership issue and Nigeria foreign policy principles concerning her neighbours should be redefined to determine how the country will be looked upon and be looked at in this critical stage of its democratic development.

Key Words: Boko Haram, Insurgency, Root Causes, Joint Task Force.

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1. Introduction

The dynamic and sophisticated operational patterns of terrorist groups permeating different continents of the world have continued to compound the difficulties faced by security agencies, to easily counter terrorism. The patterns of operational mechanisms of terrorist groups are, plausibly, the aperture for the increasing experiences of terrorism related threats, and exponential growth in the act worldwide. As a threat inducing phenomenon, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and the Critical Threats Projects (CTP) (2017) reported that the rise and dominance of ISIS and Al-Qaeda terrorist groups have become an existential threat to the United States of America and Europe. It is worthy to note that terrorist threats are not limited to the USA and Europe; other countries of the world are equally experiencing various threats of terrorism. Research reports have attested to the fact that young people from different continents of the world, such as America, Europe, Asia, and even Africa are scurrying for recruitment into terrorist groups (Wiktorowicz and Amanullah, 2015 and Alarid, 2016). In Africa, for instance, the dynamics and complexities surrounding the operations of terrorists fuelled their viciousness and expansion in terms of recruitment and radicalisation of people. Therefore, for over a decade, African countries have been battling with the challenges and devastating outcomes of different brands of terrorist groups. Somalia, for example, has been battling with the challenges posed by Jamaat al-Tawhid Wal-Jihad; Mali was sparked up by the nefarious activities of coalition Pour la justice de L`Azawad, Jihadist insurgent group, while Janjaweed militia group has been killing thousands of people in Sudan (International Crisis Group, 2017). The last two decades (1999 to 2019) recorded a high incidence of terrorist activities in sub-Saharan Africa. This development was responsible for the occurrences of a number of deaths as well as the displacement of millions of people and destruction of properties worth billions of dollars across Africa. Nigeria, like other African countries, is in a state of crisis, as no part of the country is completely spared from the turbulence of violent

conflicts, since the resumption of democracy in 1999. The crises have assumed regional-based dimensions; the six geopolitical zones are being plagued with different forms of violent conflict in the country. These have led to a surge in the patterns of insecurity presently manifesting in the zones. The resource crisis and kidnapping remain largely unabated in the south zone, while high cases of criminality are prevalent in the southwest zone of the country. The southeast is home to various nationalist agitations, criminality, and kidnappings. Ethnic conflict tinted with religious colouration, farmer-herder conflict and communal violence continued to manifest in the north-central zone, while cattle rustling coupled with armed banditry and farmer-herder conflicts as well as kidnapping are on the increase in the northeast and northwest zones of the country. However, the emergence of Boko Haram in the northeast in 2002 and its consequent transmutation into a violent group in 2009 remain the most lethal, destructive and devastating experience ever witnessed in Nigeria in this century.

Boko Haram has been the most endured phenomenon and serious driver of instability and insecurity after Nigeria's 1967-1970 civil war. The insurgency has claimed lives, destroyed and paralysed economic activities both in rural and urban areas of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States, where it is most active. Since October 2012, Boko Haram has grown even more violent and indiscriminate in its killings, bombings, abductions, kidnappings and wanton destruction of livelihoods. Despite the challenges posed by other insurgent groups like herdsmen, the activities of Boko Haram seem to be more complex and complicated in the sense that its corollary effects have rather been far-reaching. In a study conducted by Mohammed, Alimba, Momodu and Ika (2016), it is reported that all economic, social, governmental activities have been paralysed in the affected areas with deleterious consequences for the living and livelihoods of the people. Equally, the attacks of Boko Haram have caused a grave fall in foreign direct investment (FDI) into Nigeria. The FDI inflow into Nigeria dropped by 21.3 percent in just one year- from \$8.9 billion in 2011 to \$7 billion in 2012 (The World Investment Report (WIR, 2013). This substantial loss in FDI over a short period of time has serious implications for the economic growth of the country. Apart from this, the heinous

activities of Boko Haram have led to the folding up of so many small scale businesses as well as banks. Aside, the loss of jobs occasioned by business closedown, insecurity in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe, has cost the Nigerian economy N1.3trillion (\$6 billion) as a result of the attacks of Boko Haram (Dauda, 2014). As a result of the activities of Boko Haram, the counter-terrorism expenditure has increased, thereby diverting expenditure from other production-related activities to defense-related activities, which are generally considered as less productive (Gaibullov and Sandler, 2011). This can clearly be seen in the patterns of allocation to the Defence Ministry from 2012 to 2014. In 2012, the budgetary allocation to the ministry of Defence was increased from 100 billion nairas in 2010 to 927 billion nairas in 2011 and 1 trillion nairas in 2012. Thus, from 2011 to 2014, the Federal government spent N3.38 trillion in 4 years on security (Leadership Newspaper, 2014). Equally, the educational system is one of the sectors that have suffered greatly from the attacks of Boko Haram. Mohammed *et al*/ (2016) capture the destruction wrought by Boko Haram in the educational system thus:

By 2013, no schooling of any sort was taking place in 22 out of 27 local government areas of Borno State, out of fear of Boko Haram. In 2014, no functional school existed in 7 out of 21 local government areas of Adamawa State and 2 educational zones out of 3 in Yobe State. In fact, in Yobe State, all the schools were relocated to the state capital, Damaturu. In Adamawa State, Boko Haram attacks led to the destruction of 115 schools in 8 local government areas thereby forcing 285,632 students and 8,150 teachers to stop attending schools (p 7).

The attacks on schools have been massive and highly devastating. On the 14th of April of 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped about 279 secondary school girls at Chibok in Borno State, while in Dapchi in Yobe State, 110 female students were abducted at Government Girls Technical College on February 19, 2018 (Alimba, 2018:38). These incidents generated worldwide condemnation, school closure and increase in the number of students that stopped going to schools, thereby further increasing the number of out of school children in the country. The effects of Boko Haram insurgency

have been felt politically, economically, socially, culturally and environmentally in the country. Boko Haram crisis has affected 14.8 million people, and caused 23,461 death, over 5,000 missing persons, 2 million displaced persons and 1.66 trillion nairas economic loss in north-eastern Nigeria (Presidential Committee on the North-East Initiative (PCNI), 2016). The impact of Boko Haram insurgency has been overwhelming as the direct and indirect costs to the nation cannot be tangibly determined because of the complexities surrounding its activities and intractability behaviour. Therefore, to stem its activities in order to pave the way for peace, it is imperative to understand the factors that precipitated the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency. This is because to build peace in the country demands that the root causes of Boko Haram should be understood and critically addressed to ensure its mitigation. As Johan Galtung has rightly observed that for peace building structures to be created in order to promote sustainable peace, there is a need to address the "root causes" of violent conflict and support the indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution. Similarly, Doucey (2011) posited that understanding the root causes of conflict and its psychological dimension is crucial for sustainable peace building. In line with these assertions, suggestions about the causes of Boko Haram insurgency have been divergent and equally vary from one location to the other, making it difficult to have a better perspective of the issues and the extent of relevance for appropriate actions. For instance, researches have shown that the drivers of Boko Haram insurgency have been bad governance, the problem of corruption, unemployment, the resurgence of radical Islam movement, elite manipulations, rising poverty level, economic deprivation, class discrimination, societal injustice and the like (Uadiale, 2012; Olojo, 2013; Mohammed, 2014).

Why the identified causes cannot be totally wished away, their gravity and validity cannot be directly ascertained because, in most cases, they are based on ideas communicated through print and visual media, which are not to a large extent, rooted in empiricism. Also, those causes that are based on empirical findings may not truly reflect the perspectives of Boko Haram members, because of the difficulties involved in

getting access to them. Furthermore, those that have directly come in contact with their members may not be opportune to air their opinions via research outcome of this nature, preventing public awareness about understanding the reason why they are involved in the act. Therefore, to fill this gap, the Joint Task Force (JTF) were sampled and interviewed to bring to bear the real causes of Boko Haram insurgency for their long term contact with members of the militant sect. The Joint Task Force (JTF) was the first body set up by the government to address the issue of Boko Haram insurgency. It is evident that members of JTF have come in contact with so many of them by arresting, detaining, and interrogating them to understand what, when and how they get involved in the sect. Therefore, interrogating them will go a long way in making the public to be aware of the underlying factors advancing the involvement of people in Boko Haram. Thus, this study is based on the understanding of the perceptions of members of the Joint Task Force on the root causes of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

2. Problem Analysis and Contextualization of Question:

Following Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, it was envisaged that the internal rivalries hindering the stability and peace of the country will naturally wither away because "democratic practices seek to manage inevitable social conflicts in deeply divided and less conflicted societies alike (Sisk, 2003) and that equity, equality, justice, inclusion, empathy, and tolerance will be greatly promoted, and orderliness will be engendered in order to bring about growth and development in the country. Contrary to these expectations, what is conspicuously seen is a situation in which democracy has retrogressively degenerated into conflict brewing machine, creating a pathway for emitting more problems than envisaged in Nigeria. The point is that the expected dividends of democracy, which the people are hoping for, have been thwarted due to excessive manifestations of violent conflicts in the country. Alimba (2010) posits that since 1999, the violent manifestations of ethno-religious crises have thwarted the developmental efforts of government and have led to massive destruction of properties, killing, maiming, and displacement of people in Nigeria. This has, on a large scale,

prevented the productivity of the democratic system since it was resumed in 1999 in the country. Olusola (2003) vividly captures the patterns and dimensions of conflicts that have been hurting democracy in Nigeria as ethnic rivalry, indigenes/settlers clashes, boundary dispute, political and violence linked to oil production. These conflicts have continued to constitute a recurring destabilising factor and a serious impediment to the survival of democratic transition in the country (Albert, 2001). The attacks of Boko Haram have increased the darts of the already heated polity, throwing up serious security challenges which have hampered the peace and stability of the country. This development accounted for the unproductivity of democracy, which have been in practice virtually for 20 years uninterrupted in Nigeria. In spite of the counterterrorism efforts of the security agencies, the presence of Boko Haram in rural communities is still evident and the perceived degradation of the group seems to have woken up other forms of criminalities such as farmer-herder conflict, banditry, cattle rustling and kidnapping in different parts of the country. Currently, the country seems to be sliding into a serious state of insurrection, and with the increasing challenges of the proliferation of arms, border linkages and poor governance system, full-scale anarchy may evolve. In view of this, it becomes obvious to interrogate the drivers of Boko Haram insurgency through the lens of the Joint Task Force (JTF). The study will go a long way to stimulate understanding which is needed to promote knowledge on how to proactively tackle the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Thus, based on the analysis of the problem, it becomes germane, at this point, to address the question of what are the root causes of Boko Haram insurgency? This question resonates through the current study.

3. Methodology:

This study is descriptive survey research. Survey research is a type of design that aims at collecting data from targeted individuals, groups, institutions through the use of questionnaires or interviews in order to gather data with the motive of drawing inferences after analyzing it. The targeted population of this study was made up of members of Joint Task Force (JTF), practically operating at Maiduguri in Borno State, the epicenter

of Boko Haram insurgency. Through the use of purposive sampling technique, which is based on availability and years of operating in the conflict theater, 90 (ninety) of its members were sampled. A self-structured questionnaire and Key Informant Interviews (KII) were used to gather information from members of JTF selected for the study. The questionnaire was structured into two sections. Section A elicited information on the respondents' demographic details, while section B was based on the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency. The researchers consulted three specialists in the areas of peace and conflict studies at the Centre for Peace and Security Studies to review the items of the questionnaire. Thus, the questionnaire was designed in a four-level Likert rating scale of strongly agree (SA); Agree (A); strongly disagree (SD) and disagree (D) and was validated through content and face validity. The questionnaire was administered directly to members of the JTF selected for the study. Similarly, the key informant interview was conducted with a guide on the factors that triggered the insurgency. Therefore, the primary source of data collection was used for the study. The collected data were analysed through frequency counts, percentage and standard deviation. To determine the mean score for decision rule in the study, 3.0 margins were adopted rather than 2.5 margins because of the critical nature of the subject being studied. Therefore, items with a mean score greater or equal to 3.0 were regarded as a strong factor and considered as agreed. While, the items with a mean score lower than 3.0 were considered as weak factors and seen as disagreed. The data obtained through key informant interviews was qualitatively analyzed.

4. Results and Discussions:

The table presented below and the subsequent discussions that follow represent the result of the study.

4.1. Research Question:

What are the root causes of Boko Haram Insurgency in the northeast?

Table 1: Root Causes of Boko Haram Insurgency

S/No	Item	SA	A	SD	D	$\bar{x}$	Std.	Remark
1	Boko Haram was sparked off as a result of the political interests of the elites	23 (25.6)	62 (68.9)	4 (4.4)	1 (1.1)	3.19	0.559	A
2	Weak institutions encouraged the formation of the Boko Haram insurgency.	14 (15.6)	50 (55.6)	22 (24.4)	4 (4.4)	2.82	0.743	D
3	Unemployment among the teeming youths contributed to the emergence of Boko Haram.	10 (11.1)	56 (62.2)	20 (22.2)	4 (4.4)	2.80	0.690	D
4	High rate of illiteracy is also a root cause of Boko Haram	27 (30.0)	57 (63.3)	6 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	3.23	0.562	A
5	Corruption is one of the factors responsible for formation of Boko Haram	11 (12.2)	66 (73.3)	7 (7.8)	6 (6.7)	2.91	0.681	D
6	Boko Haram insurgency was fueled by religious intolerance/bigotry	12 (13.3)	56 (62.3)	18 (20.0)	4 (4.4)	2.84	0.701	D
7	Bad governance is also a major cause of Boko Haram insurgency	16 (17.8)	69 (76.7)	4 (4.4)	1 (1.1)	3.11	0.507	A
8	Foreign influence contributed greatly to the formation of Boko Haram	33 (36.7)	45 (50.0)	8 (8.9)	4 (4.4)	3.19	0.777	A
9	Cultural practice is one of the factors that prompted the emergence of Boko Haram	58 (64.4)	15 (16.7)	13 (14.4)	4 (4.4)	3.41	0.890	A

Table 1 revealed the perceived responses of members of the Joint Task Force on the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency. The mean score of respondents that agreed that the Boko Haram was sparked off as a result of political interest of the elites was ($\bar{x}=3.19$). The mean score of ($\bar{x}=2.82$) was obtained for responses in respect of the fact that weak institutions encouraged the formation of the Boko Haram insurgency. The respondents that indicated that unemployment among the teeming youth contributed to the emergence of Boko Haram, recorded a mean of ($\bar{x}=2.80$). High rate of illiteracy ($\bar{x}=3.23$) was considered by the respondents as contributing to root cause of the Boko Haram insurgency. The respondents that indicated that corruption is one of the factors responsible for the formation of Boko Haram recorded the mean of ($\bar{x}=2.91$). The respondents that agreed that the Boko Haram insurgency was fueled by religious intolerance/bigotry got a mean of ($\bar{x}=2.84$). Bad governance ($\bar{x}=3.11$) was equally considered by the respondents as a major cause of Boko Haram insurgency. Foreign influence ($\bar{x}=3.19$) was perceived by the respondents as contributing greatly to the formation of Boko Haram insurgency, while cultural practices ($\bar{x}=3.41$) was also indicated by the respondents as being one of the factors that prompted the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency in the country. Therefore, going by the score margin for decision rule and the degree of the weight of the mean of items, factors such as

cultural practices, high rate of illiteracy, political interests of the elites, foreign influence and bad governance were discovered as the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

5. Discussion of Findings:

The findings of the study are discussed as follow:

5.1. Cultural Practices:

The cultural practice was discovered as the major factor responsible for the development of the Boko Haram insurgency. Cultural practices are unwritten long time practices or values that govern society in terms of how people should behave and conduct their activities in a particular context. Cultural practices vary from one society to the other and they are highly dynamic and attract punishment when violated. They significantly influence the attitudes and behaviours of people and dictate the way things should be done in a society. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) maintains that cultural practices are “values and beliefs held by members of a community for periods often spanning generations”. The document further reveals that every social grouping in the world has specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs, some of which are beneficial to all members, while others are harmful to a specific group, such as women. Thus, cultural practices can be positive as well as negative in nature, and so can either contribute to the development or regression of society. Those cultural practices that are negative and retrogressive can serve as ferocious instigators of violent conflict and acts of terrorism. According to Nader and Danieli (2005), cultural issues play a dominant role in the emergence of terrorism, reactions to terrorism, and recovery from terrorism. They further noted that cultural issues play an important part in the hatred and violence that led to September 11 and to other acts of terrorism. Similarly, Peterka-Benton and Benton (2014) posit that act of terrorism is strongly correlated with the individual’s cultural orientation to collective values. These ideas are consistent with Huntington’s thesis of the clash of civilizations which potent the deadly role of culture in causing great divisions among humankind and be the dominating source of conflict. Thus, cultural practices are a potent buffer to acts of terrorism. Therefore, the question is what cultural practices

aided the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeastern part of Nigeria? Mohammed (2014) captures some of these practices that fuelled the development of Boko Haram in Nigeria thus:

in times of crisis and uncertainty, Muslim societies naturally react in religious terms. Indeed, Mohammed Yusuf's evangelism began in the form of a Muslim social movement: catering for orphans, widows, and the vulnerable. The excluded, especially the almajirai (itinerant students) who had flocked in large numbers to the urban areas owing to rural destitution, became a ready pool for recruitment and mobilisation. In difficult times, the vulnerable and excluded can be easily mobilised, especially by a movement such as Boko Haram, which preaches the brotherhood of all Muslims while attacking a system that has evidently excluded them as irreligious (p.23)

Given this observation, it can be deduced that religious radicalism/fundamentalism, almajiri system, and exclusion practices are the major cultural practices that are conducive for the emergence and growth of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. On the issue of religious radicalism, it is crucial to note that the practice of radical Islam is not new in northern Nigeria. However, the introduction of Sharia in the aftermath of the return to democratic governance in 1999, poignantly led to steady growth in radicalism among Muslims, especially in northern Nigeria. The introduction of Sharia law, with a full range of criminal law punishments, in Zamfara State and its whirlwind adoption by eleven other northern Nigerian states since 2000 accelerated the pace of radicalisation (Mohammed, 2014). This development thickened the agitation for total Islamisation of the country through strict application of Shariah law. The adoption and operation of the strict Shariah laws by Muslim organisations in Borno and the Yobe States evolved into a Sharia crisis in the year 2000, having political outlook and claiming thousands of lives in the country (Harnischfeger, 2014). Consequently, the Boko Haram group seized the unrest in the States to gather its earliest momentum which places the sect on the front burner of political space in Borno State in particular and in Muslim communities within

and outside Nigeria. With its welfare packages, youths enlisted into the group as its radical Islamic ideology, sharia, and fundamental Islam worldview were sharpened and promoted. This is the reason why Thurston (2016) posited that Boko Haram has roots in the religious landscape of Northern Nigeria and in intellectual currents connecting Northern Nigeria to the Middle East. The almajiri system boosted the growth of Boko Haram through recruitment into the group. According to Harnischfeger (2014), for those who join Boko Haram, an almajiri background is not a stigma; it does not hinder them making it to the top. The group's founder Yusuf, like its present leader Shekau, started as an almajiri, but made an impressive career by diligently acquiring Islamic knowledge. The survival and growth of Boko Haram was firmly rooted in the almajiri practices existing for decades in northern Nigeria. The almajiri are young, homeless, poor, neglected and maltreated children seen roaming the streets begging for food and alms (Babangida, 1993). They are young boys who leave their parents and homelands, mostly drift from rural areas to urban centers looking for where they can learn and gain knowledge in Qur'anic education. The problem is that while acquiring the education, they take into begging, roaming the streets in search of what they will eat. This makes them to become vulnerable. There are an estimated 9.5 million almajiri children on the streets begging for alms in the northern part of Nigeria (Elechi and Yekorgha, 2013). The large pool of the almajirai and urban unemployed were conducive to the emergence of Boko Haram (Mohammed, 2014).

5.2. High rate of illiteracy:

Extant studies on terrorism have shown that there is a positive correlation between lack of education and involvement in acts of terrorism (Berrebi, 2007 and Lee, 2011). In Nigeria, the connection between illiteracy and violent conflict, especially acts of terrorism seem to be obvious. For instance, illiteracy is a major factor replicated in research works as fostering the recruitment of young people into Boko Haram in the northeast (Mbasua, Muhammad and Abia 2016; and Torbjörnsson and Jonsson, 2017). The rate of literacy in the geopolitical zones is illustrated below in Table 2:

Table 2: Selected Indicators of Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria

Indicator	North Central	North East	North West	South Central	South East	South West
2015 Population (Million)*	27	24	46	21	27	36
Population Density(000/km2)	0.7	0.4	1.3	2.9	1.8	3.9
Average Household size	6	8	7	4	5	4
Literacy rate (%)	58	51	56	81	82	85
Average Poverty rate (%)	66	76	75	57	53	50

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2016);*adapted from World Bank (2017) and 2006 National Census Ratio

Table 2 revealed the fact that the literacy rate of the northeast geopolitical zone is the lowest in Nigeria. The literacy rate of the northeast was 51%, indicating that it was the lowest among the zones. This is an indication of the probability of high illiteracy level in the northeast, when compared with other zones in the country. The former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, once lamented in an international symposium for the launching of African initiative for education, peace and development, that the low level of education in Northeast Nigeria was responsible for insurgency. He added that the insurgents were able to penetrate the region due to the level of education in the area. He went ahead to compare the level of literacy between the geopolitical zones in Nigeria, and said that while the South West, as at 2010, had 77.9 percent of literacy, South East achieved 66.8 and the North East had only 18.1 percent. On the level of literacy among women within the same period, Obasanjo said the South West had achieved 79.9 percent; South East, 69.6 percent and North East only 15.4 per cent (Daily News, 2015). In support of the above findings, the key informant interview conducted revealed that:

Boko haram insurgents found it easier to penetrate the northeast because of the literacy level of the region. Although, there are other factors that facilitated the widespread and acceptance of Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria and these factors are psychological factors: the erstwhile leader of the group (Boko Haram) Yusuf took advantage of the level of

illiteracy of the people to easily manipulate them through religious teaching and indoctrination.

Also, the Daily Trust (2011) reported that the Nigeria Education Data Survey 2010 presented by the National Population Commission indicated that “the North-east and North-west zones of Nigeria have the highest percentage of children who have never attended school, the lowest literacy rates and the highest percentage of children not able to read”. These factors are likely going to make them vulnerable and easily lured to join the sect.

5.3. Political interests of the elites:

The role of the elites in the growth of the country has been viewed with mixed feelings, which is due to their behaviours and attitudes towards public resources. Since 1999 when democracy was restored in the country, the elites have been selfishly driven. This is obvious in the ways public tangible goods and funds meant for societal use are distributed and spent, basically only for their family members and at most friends. Public goods are often diverted to graciously meet personal needs and they can do anything possible to achieve and defend their interests. Researches on Boko Haram insurgency poignantly attest to this fact. For instance, Thurston (2016) opines that dissatisfied Northern elites sponsored Boko Haram in order to make the North ungovernable and derail Jonathan’s presidency. Hence, he calls for the investigation of the involvement of political elites in sponsoring the early Boko Haram. Also, Boko Haram’s ability to maneuver and stage-manage the force of religion in achieving its objectives appears to be dangerously reinforced by the influence of political interests and elites (Olojo, 2013). Therefore, it is clear that the emergence, survival and antecedents of Boko Haram are entrenched in the political behaviours and activities of the elites. Thus, Mbah, Nwangwu and Edeh (2017) also opine that the emergence and escalation of the Boko Haram insurgency are rooted in elite politics. A major cord that binds the political elites together is their interests, which are defined by who gets what, how and when concerning the state power for the fulfillment of their interests and services of their family members. The elites can create anything possible to reinforce

and sustain their interests at the detriment of the general welfare and interest of the people. Based on this, it can be justifiably argued that most of the armed groups operating in the land, including Boko Haram were conscientiously or unconsciously formed or are the backdrop of the struggle for state resources and power by the political elites. The key informant interview conducted showed that:

elitism, inherent capitalist tendencies of the elites, lack of morality, selfish interest and compromise of the political elites motivated by greediness at the detriment of Nigerian citizenry are the foremost factors that caused Boko Haram insurgency.

Equally, 94.5% of the respondents agreed to the fact that the elites are part and parcel of the engineering process that hatched the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

5.4. Foreign influence:

The impact of foreign influence in promoting religious radicalism is not a recent development in Nigeria. Therefore, Boko Haram cannot be divulged from external influence. The crux of the matter is that the idea of radical Islam is rooted in foreign orientations and its antecedents are driven by external strains. Kyari Mohammed captures the linkage between Boko Haram and foreign influence more pronouncedly in this form:

The drivers of radicalisation of Islamic groups include both internal and external developments. Although the grievances of Boko Haram are largely local, its major influences have been foreign. The influential scholar that most shaped the thinking of Mohammed Yusuf was Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah. The basic message of radical Islam, whether in the Middle East, North Africa, or northern Nigeria, is the same: it is the duty of Muslims to revolt against and change apostate rulers and governments in order to help re-establish a proper Islamic state (2014:

The point is that the idea of radical Islam is influenced basically as a result of external antecedents. Equally, the leadership at a point is exposed to external orientations,

which helps to solidify the movement in terms of logistic support. The report from this study's key informant interviews indicated that

The main reason or cause of Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast in Nigeria was the wind of foreign influence in disguise. The wind practically effectual in the sense that the leadership of Boko Haram had external training and equally being offered logistic supports when necessary to help in the propagation of the message as expected in the country.

Currently, external influence is one of the major pillars contributing to the sustenance of Boko Haram insurgency in the country. The militant sect has gone ahead to the link itself with other terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Apart from this, there is the impression that Boko Haram is being funded by some regional and international organizations, despite the roles played by domestic personalities in its growth in Nigeria.

5.5. Bad governance:

The lingering issue of governance in this democratic dispensation is a pointer to the leadership problem which has assumed the pedestal of a national question in Nigeria. It is a worrisome issue, even before the restoration of democracy in 1999 in Nigeria. This was a cardinal issue when the military ruled the country for a very long time. The return to a democratic system brought some air of relieve to the people, with the hope that there would be a change in the attitudes and behaviours of the leaders. What exists today is a situation in which the governance process seems as the major organ through which violent conflicts and other structural problems such as poverty, corruption and unemployment among others are inflicted into the polity. Kukah (2012) observes that those who govern (politicians) have over the years led to the collapse of public morality and injustice. These social maladies are the fallout of the failure of governance process in Nigeria. Thus, Boko Haram is purely the knock-on effect of poor governance in the country. First, these social maladies created by political leaders are considered as the

drivers of Boko Haram insurgency. This perhaps is why Mustapha (2002) asserts that Boko Haram is the symptom of the failure of democratic governance. Second, the governance process consciously or unconsciously sustained the terrorist group due to their covert agendas. The key informant interviews carried out revealed that:

A constant reproduction of pool of unemployed youths, problem poverty and corruption, injustice, inequality, illiteracy, and exclusion as well as weak institutions which are the consequences of poor governance fundamentally resulted in the emergence of Boko Haram.

The key informant interview in this study aligns with Cook (2011) who avers that these violent uprisings in Nigeria are ultimately due to the fall out of frustration with corruption and then attendant social malaise of poverty and unemployment. It is paramount to draw attention to the fact that 94.5% of the respondents agreed that bad governance is a major factor responsible for the creation of Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast in Nigeria. The point is well buttressed by Meagher (2014) that poor governance and rampant corruption have pushed these social and religious tensions to the breaking point. Right from when Nigerians gained independence, bad governance has been the bane to the progress and growth of the country. Achebe (1983) rightly points out this very long time ago that there is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or air or anything else, but that Nigeria is simply and squarely suffering from a failure of leadership. The ways leadership failure is manifesting in Nigeria is frightening and disheartening to the point that no level is practically free from this malady of bad governance.

6. Conclusion:

Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999 brought hope and optimism that the good days lay ahead in Nigeria. This hope became a mirage with the advent of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Apart from the fact that the insurgency claimed over 100,000 lives, over 2 million people were displaced as its consequences. Specifically, economic activities were destroyed, further impoverishing a zone already considered as

being poor in the country. However, since 2016, the scale of atrocities of Boko Haram has drastically reduced due to the counterterrorism efforts of the security agencies and volunteer local security organizations such as hunters and vigilantes. To further concretize these efforts, it is imperative to understand the factors that triggered the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency, so that it can be tackled head-on from both kinetic and non-kinetic angles for proactive mitigation. In view of this, the drivers of Boko Haram insurgency were investigated in order to bring to bear what are its root causes. Available researches on this subject attest to the fact that there are numerous factors responsible for the emergence of Boko Haram. However, this study discovered that the issues that trigger the Boko Haram insurgency are cultural practices, the political interest of the elites, weak institutions, unemployment, high rate of illiteracy, corruption, religious intolerance, bad governance, and foreign influence. Conversely, a critical perusal of these triggering factors revealed that the root causes of Boko Haram insurgency are cultural practices, high rate of illiteracy, political interest of the elites, foreign influence, and bad governance. These factors are critical in that they are interwoven with religious and ethnic cleavages of the region, making it complicated to untangle. Thus, cultural practices of the people were highlighted as the major cause of the insurgency, and this is a serious one because the practices of almajiri, radical Islam are issues that should be given priority attention as well as the governance processes that often usher in people into power in Nigeria. The point is that these root causes are entangled in governance and equally reinforces the process. Therefore, as the root causes are explored, it is believed that policymakers should act to ensure that the volume of violent conflicts being experienced are halted in order to galvanize the productivity of democracy in Nigeria. In view of this, the followings recommendations become imperative:

- (i) The cultural practices that are conducive to violence in the northeast and Nigeria in general should be revisited and reviewed. This will help to create a sense of focus and determination on how to reshape them for peace and stability to be promoted in the country.

(ii) The issue of governance should be given priority attention, right from its starting point to the conclusion. The attention should be proactive to the extent that those involved should be seriously held accountable for whatever they do. Stiff penalty should be meted out on leaders who forget their onus at the detriment of the people.

(iii) Quality and access education should be absolutely provided in the northeast, Nigeria. The government should provide learning facilities as well as ensuring that teachers are paid promptly to encourage them to be more productive in their jobs. Equally, private-partnership in the provision of education should be encouraged and systematic in order to overcome the barriers to quality and access education in the country.

(iv) The citizens should rise to the challenges of leadership. This will help to tame the political elites in the ways they govern. The citizen should rise up to their responsibilities, so they design how things should be done in the country.

(v) The foreign policy of the country should be adjusted or tightened to ensure that external influence or factors are critically tackled. They will go a long way to determine how the country will be looked upon and be looked at in this critical stage of its democratic development.

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