



Department of Political Science

Youth Radicalization and Violent Extremism in North-East Nigeria: An Assessment of Risk Factors and Government's Responses

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the problem of youth radicalization and violent extremism in the northeast region of Nigeria. The study aimed to identify and explain the major factors that make these youths in the region vulnerable to the radical ideologies of Boko Haram, how these factors have interacted and resulted in them being sympathetic to terrorism in the region or being actively involved in the act. With these factors in mind, the study also aimed to critically assess the government's non-militarized response to violent extremism in order to ascertain whether or not these factors that have lured the youths into violent extremism in the first place have been taken into consideration in the design and implementation of such programs.

Designed as a case study, the study relies on secondary data for its analysis, and finds that poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, the almajeri system of Islamic education, and strong religious beliefs have been major risk factors for radicalization in the region. Also, findings show that the government's deradicalization programs are flawed in their design and implementation, do not aim to address the root causes of radicalization into extremism, and give preferential treatment to repentant terrorists at the expense of the actual victims. I conclude by arguing that deradicalization in the region is in some way having a counter-effect (serving as an incentive for people to get radicalized into extremism) and also recommend further research on this with a possible comparative focus on other deradicalization programs in the country, past and present.

Key words: Radicalization, Deradicalization, Youths, Boko Haram, Terrorism, Violent Extremist, Disengagement.

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Abbreviations

OSC-Operation Safe Corridor

SIT-Social Identity Theory

CPRLV- Centre for the Prevention Radicalization Leading to Violence

UNDP-United Nations Development Program

UNODC-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

ISWAP-Islamic State in West Africa Province

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of Problem

The Nigerian state has since its independence in October 1960 been engulfed in different forms of conflict and violent extremist movements. Radical movements in the country have included the Maitatsine violent uprising in 1980, the Niger Delta Militants' uprising, and the current Boko Haram terrorist movement (Dim, 2017, 37). This cycle of violent extremism and radicalization have however been more prevalent since the end of military authoritarianism in 1999 (Aghedo and Osumah 2012, 97, Onuoha 2014, 347). The Nigerian state has thus had to combat or even manage different violent radical movements that have in one way or the other not only undermined and posed doubts on the capabilities of the state but have also led to the destruction of properties of inestimable values, brought untold hardship on the populace, as well as the loss of thousands of lives. Dim (2017, 36) and Aghedo and Osumah (201, 97) notes that violent groups in the country have unlawfully employed the threat or actual use of violence to challenge and attack the government, public facilities, and civilians alike, and have in the process not only succeeded in engendering fear but also, undermined national integration, people-centered development, democratic consolidation and by so doing, have succeeded in influencing the decisions of the state and the general public in furtherance of their ideological objectives.

The Boko Haram terrorist group has since 2009 when the group resorted to violent measures against the Nigerian state and its populace become a major force to contend with both in the country and the entire continent of Africa. The group whose operations in the country have mostly been in the northeast region of the country have thus far maintained a very strong hold in Adamawa, Yobe, and Borno states. This region has experienced systematic bombings and kidnapping campaigns by the group (Agbibo 2015, 415) and has thus resulted in thousands of people fleeing the region while leaving their homes and means of livelihood behind.

Despite the government's onslaught on the group since 2013 when the Goodluck Jonathan led administration declared a state of emergency in the region, the group has continued to grow stronger and have thus, continued to strengthen its resolve to impose its will on the Nigerian state (Agbibo 2015, 415).

One major reason the group has continued to wax stronger and expand the scope of its activities both in the north-east region and to other neighboring states in the country like Niger and the FCT, as well as to other regions and countries like the Lake Chad region and the Niger Republic, etc is the relative ease at which the group is able to recruit youths whom they use as foot soldier and executioners of their disastrous plans. The groups' combatant membership mainly draws from dissatisfied, unemployed, and destitute youths in the region who are highly prone to its radical ideologies because of an array of factors that are prevalent, especially in the region but also in the country as a whole (Onuoha 2014, 349). Although, as Onuoha (2014, 349) have noted, the groups' membership, funding, and operational support mechanism also draws from wealthy and influential people both within and outside the region and the country, as well as other local and international actors and individuals that share or are sympathetic to the radical ideologies of the group.

The counter-terrorism approach of the Nigerian state has so far shown to be unable to eradicate or neutralize the Boko Haram terrorist group (Salihu 2021, 22), hence the need to adopt "soft power" measures as an additional (and perhaps more effective) means of achieving this goal. This shift in strategy from kinetic to non-kinetic measures for combating violent extremism in the region led to the introduction of deradicalization programs like: Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) in 2016 that was aimed at deradicalizing, enticing, reorienting, educating, and reintegrating repentant Boko Haram combatants who are mainly youths into society (Salihu, 2021, 23). However, despite the governments' claims of deradicalizing and rehabilitating thousands of youths, and expending millions of tax-payers' monies on such programs, more and more youths in the region have continued to adopt radical ideologies and strengthen the course of the Boko Haram terrorists.

An examination of the researches and publications on youth radicalization as it relates to the terrorist movement in the region (see for instance, Aghedo and Osumah, 2015, Ishaku et' al 2021, and Onuoha 2014) has shown that a lot of focus has been on ways to resolve the Boko Haram and youth radicalization menace, and how the government and other stakeholders can neutralize the uprising (either through kinetic or non-kinetic measures), rather than laying emphasis on the need to address the actual causal factors in the equation. Hence, the need for this research to interrogate and investigate emerging and dominant patterns in the governments' deradicalization programs in order to determine to what such programs take into account the root causes of youth radicalization

in the region. This salient knowledge gap identified in the literature is therefore one that this research practically aims to fill.

1.2 Research Aims and Research Questions

The aim of this study is in two folds. The first is to identify the major factors have provided a fertile ground for the spread, and adoption of radical ideologies, that have fueled terrorism in the northeast region of Nigeria. Secondly, this study aims to dissect and scrutinize the government's deradicalization programs in the region in order to ascertain whether they account for these risk factors. The goal here is to critically examine how and if the deradicalization efforts of the government recognizes and addresses the risk factors for youth radicalization in the region that will be identified from aim number one above.

Al Raffie (2013, 4) has pointed out that the assumption in most literature of terrorism studies that terrorists or extremist movements are the sole agents for radicalization promotion or recruitment, could amount to an attempt to perhaps, ignore the fact that such movements might also be recipients of youths that have had their identity already radicalized. The Social Identity Theory will therefore be used in this study to identify some of the major risk factors of youth radicalization and violent extremism in northeast Nigeria. SIT as developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979 and 1985) will be used as the analytical point of departure for explaining these factors that make radicalization attractive to the youths. This theory is useful for this purpose because of it analytically focuses on the influence of group dynamics and social identity formation in the framing of radical ideologies in the society. This knowledge will undoubtedly be instrumental to the Nigerian government, as well other stakeholders that are actively involved in the fight against youth radicalization and terrorism in the region.

In order to achieve these aims, the following research questions have been formulated to serve as a guide for the overall study:

- 1) What are the major factors that aid the spread and adoption of radical ideologies in the north-east region of Nigeria?
- 2) To what extent are these factors reflected in the government's non-militarized response to violent extremism?

A case study analysis will be used for the purpose of answering these research questions. The study adopts a mixed methodology and therefore uses systematic review method for the selection of secondary sources (journals). The study in addition will use data from media house publication, official reports, policy briefs, etc. Content analysis and descriptive statistics are used for the analysis of collected data. SIT will also be used to explain some of these risk factors, especially as it relates to social identity formations.

1.3 Relevance of the Study

Agbibo (2015, 416) have noted that despite the enormous amount of scholarly attention that the Boko Haram crisis has received, there has barely been any analytical attempt to explain the social dynamics of group identity as a major determinant of youth radicalization in the Nigerian polity. This research will not only contribute to the continuously growing scholarly works on youth radicalization as it pertains to the Boko Haram terrorism in northeast Nigeria but will, through the application of social identity theory (SIT) be one of the pioneering works that analyzes how the construction of social identities in the region has been an important factor in the fanning of Boko Haram's radical ideology.

The investigation and analysis of a multi-facet dimension of youth radicalization in this research are not only a vital one for scientific purposes but also one that is practically relevant for both the fight against the terrorism and the designing and implementation of effective deradicalization program. Since the relative ease at which the Boko Haram group is able to radicalize and conscript youths to wage war against constituted authorities is central to the continuously growing influence of the group (Salihu 2020, 24), this research, as such, becomes central to demystifying the complexities of conscription and radicalization in this context, hence, providing relevant knowledge for addressing the violence that emanates from youth radicalization. This research therefore should not only be able to identify the major factors and patterns that make these recruitments possible, but also, be able to proffer viable solutions that could make for effective deradicalization in the region.

1.4 Delimitation

It is necessary to state here that youth radicalization in northeast Nigeria is used and examined solely in the context of the Boko Haram terrorism in the country. This clarification becomes important, especially since this violent movement is not the only one to have arisen in the country as a whole or even in the northeast region of Nigeria. The topic is therefore discussed solely in line with this particular conflict without focusing for instance, on the current banditry conflict in the northeast and northwest regions of the country that is worsening the humanitarian crisis already created by the terrorism in the region (Barnett and Rufai, 2021).

1.5 Definition of Terms and Clarification of Usage

Radicalization: the process through which an individual or group of individuals adopt revolutionary or extremist views, ideas, and beliefs (Onuoha 2014).

Deradicalization: the process of getting individuals who had adopted revolutionary or extremist ideologies and beliefs to abandon such ideologies and adopt moderate, non-violent beliefs and actions.

Extremism: Extremism, according to Hogg et' al (2013, 408) is a contested term that is represented as a disparagement in societal discourses. The usage of the term "extremism" is relative and context-dependent and is as such accorded a meaning that is dependent on what is considered "normative" and "legal" in the society (PPRCTC 2018). While different people might have different views of what act or action constitutes extremism, the term is usually used to mean a manifestation of violence, cruelty, untold suffering, and death, irrespective of how contestable the cause and justification of such acts might be (Hogg et' al 2013).

Terrorism: The term terrorism is considered emotive and this has made it difficult for researchers in the field to remain neutral in their view and interpretation of the term and the actions those that engage in such acts (Silke 2001, 2). The emotive and sensitive nature of the term "terrorism" therefore is the reason why such questions as what is terrorism? What makes an individual or group a terrorist(s)? what makes an act a terrorist act? etc. to continually elude generally acceptable answers (Silke 2001, 3). According to the FBI's report on Strategic Intelligence Assessment and

Data on Domestic Terrorism (2021), the term is used to mean a criminal, violent or destructive act committed by an individual or group in furtherance of ideological goals both at local and international levels.

For the purpose of this study, the terms “terrorism” and “extremism” (or violent extremism) are used synonymously to mean unlawful acts of violence, inspired by social, political, religious, or ideological goals that are targeted at both the state and civilians. This choice of this usage partly hinges on what Onursal and Kirkpatrick (2021,1094) have described as an increasingly blurred truism in the meaning and usage of both terms.

1.6 Outline

The next chapter of this work (chapter two) will focus on the analytical framework of the study and literature review. It begins with a conceptualization of radicalization. This is followed by an extensive review of related literature on youth radicalization. This will then be followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework of the study, that is, the SIT. Chapter three describes the methodological approach adopted in the study and how it is applied.

Chapter four will begin with a brief history of the Boko Haram terrorist uprising in the northeast region of Nigeria, and the group’s ideological underlining. This section is particularly necessary for the conceptualization of youth radicalization in the region. This will be followed by a discussion of the findings on the causes of youth radicalization in the region from collected data, that is analyzed in line with the theoretical framework of the study and previous studies. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the government’s non-militarized response to extremism in the region. Chapter five contains a discussion of these findings and conclusion.

2 CHAPTER TWO

This chapter contains the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that are used for this study. The chapter begins with a conceptualization of the term “radicalization” and a clarification of how the contested term is used in this study. This is then followed by an exposition of the types and processes of radicalization, and then an extensive review of literature on the risk factors for youth radicalization. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical framework that will be used to explain the main risk factors of youth radicalization in northeast Nigeria-the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979 and 1985).

2.1 Conceptualizing Radicalization.

The concept of radicalization is one that has become very popular, especially with the high wave of home-grown terrorism that is blowing across various countries of the world today. While the problem of home-grown terrorism and violent extremism cannot be considered to be a recent development, the high rate of destruction, bombings, and mass casualties that has come with it in recent times with this phenomenon are such that states have never experienced before (Wilner and Dubouloz 2010, 33). This high wave of violent extremism, hence, now poses a very complex and distinct security challenge to states that are left with the difficult task of battling to neutralize such movements. Violent extremism, thus, operating at both national and transnational levels is mainly associated with socio-political grievances that have not been unilaterally addressed over time, especially at the local levels (Wilner and Dubouloz 2010, 3). This socio-politically motivated extremism, Gunaratan (2007, 39) notes is seldomly constructed in a vacuum, due to the fact that the motivation of individuals has the tendency to be driven ideologically, rather than operationally. Although the formation of extremist ideologies may take time and be done through various mediums, the manifestation of this complex contagion and how it drives violent radicalization among youths can be the most taxing aspect in the fight against homegrown terrorism.

Wilner and Dubouloz (2010, 38) have defined radicalization as “...a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, and where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence”. It involves a process that is both mental and emotional, which builds up, feeds, and prepares the mind of an individual

or group of individuals for actions in pursuant of violent courses. Such actions are usually aimed at challenging or destabilizing a social order or government that these individuals believe has been unjust, unacceptable, suppressive, or derivative over time.

On his part, Sadipo (2013, 4) defines radicalization as the process through which an individual or group of individuals are attracted to and subsequently adopt violent social, religious, or political ideas that not only reject but are determined to undermine and change the status quo, especially contemporary ideas of freedom of choice and expression, and are, as such, read to condone violence, as well as indulging in terrorist activities as a means for achieving their ideological goals. Radicalization, according to the author, is characterized first, by an individuals' or groups' willingness to alter their "self-identification" as an outlet of their accumulated grievances, propelled by not just personal but mostly shared concerns that pertain to issues that are locally prevalent in their environment, but as well as those in the global scenes that they believe needs to be changed or perhaps given more attention.

One thing that these definitions all have in common is the fact that radicalization is a process in itself, that is, it occurs over time and in different stages. Although, there might be varied views as to how these processes play out, it is crystal clear that the end goal of radicalization is the destabilization of a particular social or political order in the society. Ishaku et' al (2021, 4) has pointed out that radicalization and extremism play out in gradual processes but that the rate at which people are willing to spread, and adopt radical ideologies, as well as actively engage in violence for the purpose of destabilizing the status quo is dependent on an interplay of factors in the environment. Such factors that fuel the spread of radicalization in a society, may although, be diverse and play out in different forms and through various mediums, but the rate of vulnerability of the individuals in the society is a central factor to the actual adoption of these ideologies.

At the core of extremist groups' target for radicalization are the youths who are undoubtedly the group that bears the brunt of the perceived or actual injustice and deprivation in the society. The vulnerability of the youths, linked to environmental and societal risks factors, coupled with personal uncertainties and psychological frail interact with other prevalent societal conditions to make these them the main focus of radicalization networks recruitments. Environmental factors that make youths susceptible targets for radicalization include such factors as pressure from family and friends, pressure and expectations from the general society, as well as peer influences that tend

to reinforce and promote extremist views and actions, while societal risks factors that the make youths the most vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups include social exclusions and group polarizations, geopolitical elements, as well as the broader political and ideological narratives that are prevalent in the society or environment at that point time (Cherney et' al 2022, 99). Also, youth susceptibility to radicalization is highly linked to fact that they are usually caught up in “identity crisis”, a continuous struggle for cultural integration and a reoccurring cycle of intergenerational conflict (Cherney et' al 2022, 99, Lynch, 2013).

2.2 Types of Radicalizations

Before examining types of radicalizations and the processes that are involved in the spread, adoption of radical ideologies, and the perpetuation of violence that it occasions, it is paramount to establish the differences, as well as the links between radicalization and violent extremism which are the most frequently used terms in this study. This conceptual clarification becomes particularly necessary here, especially in light of what the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) terms the “definitive ambiguity” and diversity of views on what may constitute radicalization and violent extremism. The notion of radicalization, as already clarified in the preceding section of this chapter, points to a process that involves the conveyance of radical ideas to individuals, who upon the adoption of these extremist ideas and beliefs becomes prone to and willing to condone, support and also perpetrate violence in furtherance of such ideological, religious, political or socio-economic goals (Striengher 2015, 77). Violent extremism on the other hand entails not just the belief or acceptance of radical ideologies but mainly the actual action of supporting or personally engaging in the use of violence for the attainment of these ideological, political, or religious goals (Striengher 2015, 78)

The notion of radicalization above, Striengher (2015) argues, basically suggests that once an individual is exposed to and espouses radical ideas, the natural sequence is for such individual or group of individuals being recruited by a terrorist group or for them to become a violent extremist or “terrorists” on their own. But the extent to which this insinuation is true is quite debatable, especially since radicalization can be manifested in different forms and types as we shall see shortly. Moreover, as Muro (2016, 2) succinctly states his view on this conceptual debate, “not all radicals are terrorists, all terrorists are radicals”. The author cites examples from modern

democratic societies where individuals or groups (like the European “radical movements” of the late 19th and early 20th century) are at liberty to hold and express radical political ideologies that not only tackle the core issues in the system like freedom of the press, redistribution of properties, etc but also push for drastic political and socio-economic reforms. This idea of radicalization is, however, different from violent extremist radicalization, in that the individuals, in this case, are expected to express their ideologies in conformity with the laws of the state, that is, without resorting to the indiscriminate use of violence against civilians or even the state (Ng 2021, 4). This form of radicalization is sometimes referred to as “radicalism” in the literature (European Commission on Radicalization Leading to Acts of Terrorism, 2008)

Haven established this definitive or contextual distinction, it is necessary to state that the two terms “radicalization” and “violent extremism” are used side by side here to mean the adoption of radical ideologies that leads to the use of violence. This is because, as earlier stated in the introductory chapter, the focus of this study is solely on radicalization to leads to terrorism or violent extremism. Radicalization and violent extremism/terrorism are used in this context to symbolize a form or process of radicalization that is solely rooted in violence. While socialization into violence may not necessarily translate into socialization into terrorism or violent extremism, the nature and form of violence that is perpetrated is what makes the difference between ‘ordinary’ violence and violent extremism or terrorism as used here (European Commission on Radicalization Leading to Acts of Terrorism, 2008).

The following are the types of radicalizations as identified by the Centre for the Prevention Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV), (2022) and Doosje et’ al (2016)

Right-Wing Extremism: right-wing extremism is a type of radicalization that is often associated with radical movements like racialism/racism, fascism, and ultranationalism. It involves the radical and violent defense of a group or nation’s ethnic or pseudo-national heritage, usually through hostilities against other racial or ethnic groups, as well as the state authorities.

Politico-Religious Extremism: Politico/religious extremism is a form of radicalization that is associated with a strict political interpretation and defense of religious beliefs and identity that is believed to be under subjugation, mostly from the state through every violent means available to the group.

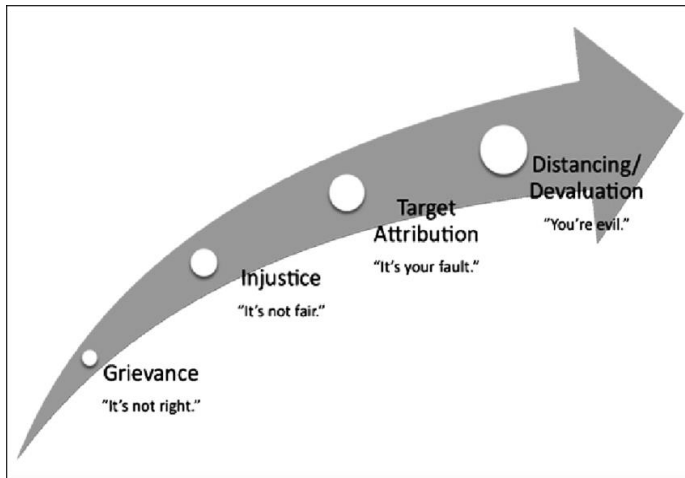
Left-Wing Extremism: left-wing extremism is a type of radicalization that is usually based on an anti-capitalist struggle and a quest for the transformation of the political and economic systems that are believed to be the foundations of social and economic inequalities in society, through the advocacy, support, and use of violence. Examples of left-wing radical groups include Anarchists, Marxist/Leninists, etc.

Single-Issue Extremism: single-issue extremism is a form of radicalization that is motivated by one particular issue, rather than by a combination of issues or grievances. Such issues could be broader on things like the environment, anti-abortion extremism, ultra-individualist or other independent extremist movements. This type of radicalization, partially or wholly ideologically motivated, is usually associated with large-scale violence.

2.3 The Radicalization Process

Even though researchers agree on the fact that violent radicalization is a process in itself, and that the process of radicalization occurs over time and through various mediums, there is no unanimity in the literature and among scholars on what this process looks like or the specific stages that are involved in the radicalization process. This lack of agreement on what constitutes the radicalization process has led to a situation where social scientists and security agencies have proposed and designed different explanatory frameworks that explain how radicalization occurs and the factors that are at play at the different stages of these proposed processes, mostly based on conceptual efforts, rather than empirical evidences (Borum 2011, 37). Some of these frameworks or model for the process of radicalization include the Borum's Four-Stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset (Borum 2003), the Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism (Moghaddam 2005), etc.

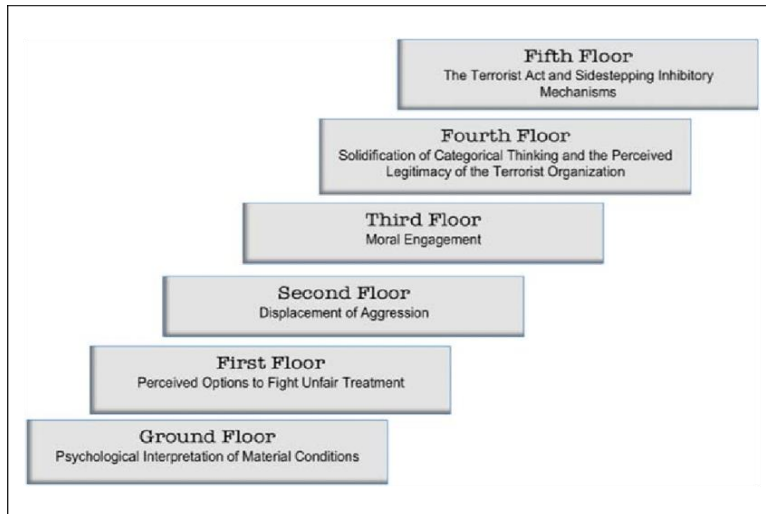
Figure 1: Borum's Four-Stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset. Extracted from Borum (2011)



In an article published in 2003 in the FBI's Law Enforcement Bulletin, Borum, developed a conceptual model that could help understand the mindset of terrorists. This model for understanding the "terrorist mindset" was developed from the author's study and analysis of various extremist groups, and their different ideologies with the aim of establishing common causal factors that interact to foster radicalization in the various extremist groups and how this is transformed to or manifested in actual acts of violence (Borum 2011, 39-40). The model, although, designed as a "heuristic" one (based on trial and error), Borum (2003, 7) has argues will undoubtedly assist investigators and intelligence analysts to understand behavioral patterns and activities of terrorist and their ideas.

The first stage in this model is the grievance stage where individuals or groups identify economic or social patterns that they feel are out of place ("it is not right") and hence would want to change it by creating a perception of the way things should be. It is in this process that such individual(s) with extremist ideas build up to the second stage in the model by framing the grievance state as an injustice ("it is not fair") (Borum 2003, 7-8). The next stage in the model is that of "target attribution". It as this stage that terror minded individuals try to hold someone responsible ("it is your fault") for their perceived injustices and by so doing, creating a target for themselves. Once this is done, the identified target is then labelled as bad "you are evil", as a way of justifying why such target must be met with brute force and violence. (Borum, 2003, 8).

Figure 2: Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism. Adopted from Borum (2011)



Unlike the Borum’s Four-Stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset, Moghaddam on his part, designed a radicalization model that consists of five staircases or floors...*“in order to create a more in-dept understanding of terrorism”* through the metaphoric representation of the various stages of radicalization as staircases that opens the door to higher floors (Moghaddam, 2005, 161). The floors, according to the author represents the stages that individuals go through in the radicalization process until they reach the highest floor. Once the individual has reached this stage of radicalization, they are left with no more choices and the only outcome that is possible is for them to destroy others or/and themselves.

At the ground floor of Moghaddam’s model, individuals are driven by the “psychological interpretation of material conditions” that fuels the desire to attenuate the adversities in the system. This floor is characterized by the presence of a lot of people who suffer from, for instance, poverty and lack of education. Individuals who are able to climb to the first floor are however the ones that develop the “perceived options to fight unfair treatment” by considering possible solutions that could rectify the perceived in justice they suffer. At the second floor, the driving force for the individuals is “displacement of aggression”. This is done directly or indirectly by channeling the individual’s readiness for physical aggression into seeking out avenues to take action or perpetrate violence against the perceived oppressors (Moghaddam, 2005, 162-164).

Individuals who make it to the third floor are driven by the moral justification that their struggle can bring about the “ideal” society through whatever means possible and are thus, “morally disengaged” from society, mostly because of their willingness to engage in acts of violence against

the state, as well as civilians. Floor four on the other hand is characterized by the “solidification of categorical thinking and the perceived legitimacy of the terrorist organization”. At this point, the individual has fully entered into the terrorist organization, obtained the necessary training, gained access to information, etc., and thus, has very little or no opportunity to exist the group alive. The fifth and final floor of the staircase is that of the “terrorist act and sidestepping inhibitory mechanisms terrorism”. At this point, the individuals are psychologically fully embroiled in ingroup activities, not only distance themselves from civilians but also categorize them as an out-group that is not resisting the government and as such have justifiable reasons to label them part of the enemy. Civilians are only exempted from mass destruction at this level only when they are seen or perceived by the terrorist group to actively oppose the “oppressor”, that is, the government (Moghaddam, 2005, 164-166).

While there are variations between Moghaddam’s Staircase to Terrorism, Borum’s Four-Stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset, and other models of the radicalization process that have not been discussed here, especially in the area of introduction of more intermediate steps in the process, these models generally leave a lot of similar questions unanswered. These models for instance fail to provide viable answers to such questions as the factors that initiate the radicalization process itself, why individuals with the same or similar characteristics and dwell in the same environment do not become equally radicalized, or when or why individuals decide to take the ultimate step into violent extremism in the radicalization process. Other unanswered questions from these models include whether or not it is possible for the individual to stop this process and possibly get involved again at the same level or on a different level or step, etc. (PPRCTC, 2018). These identifiable weaknesses with models and theories of radicalization make it quite problematic to fully explain terrorism and the processes that build up to it. Hence, the need for the field to embrace more methodologically and empirically strong research and theories (Sike 2001)

Lygre et’ al (2011) in their review of thirty-eight relevant pieces of literature on the processes of radicalization (both those published by Moghadam and other authors) found that there are weak connecting links between what the different frameworks term the stages in the radicalization process. The authors, while pointing out that there is no empirical support for moral engagement in the radicalization process in these frameworks, also argue that there is a lack of evidence that can be related to the lack of displacement of moral engagement and aggression in these models

and that this might be an indication that these processes are irrelevant in relation to violent extremism or terrorism (Lygre et' al 2011, 63, 64). Although, while acknowledging the fact that most of the theories proposed by the Moghaddam model could be supported by empirical evidence, Lygre et' al (2011, 63) question whether this includes an acceptable explanation of the transition between the various steps in the framework.

2.4 Risk Factors for Youth Radicalization

The question of why people get radicalized to violent extremism is, like many issues in the study terrorism, without any clear-cut answers. The European Commission, Expert Group on Violent Radicalization (2008) have noted that *“the general position among researchers and practitioners today is that there is no single cause for radicalization, but rather, a complex mixture of contextual factors on different levels”* This therefore makes it practically difficult to find a single model that can fully integrate or account for all factors and mechanisms leading to radicalization. And for this reason, what one easily finds is a long list of factors that account for peoples' choice to become radicalized.

As Chuang et' al (2018, 128) points out, the tendencies for radicalization to violence might spring up at any age, however, factors and behaviors that are basically consistent with desistance from deviants become manifest during youthful ages. And it is at this age that youths, who may have mostly spent their formative years in disenfranchisement, lacking proper education, societal/family guidance, etc begin to find some belongingness in like-minded individuals who turn out to radicalize them into violence or terrorism.

While there might be some form of clear-cut categorization of factors that causes radicalization in the UNODC (2018) publication, a thorough search of relevant literatures on radicalization and violent extremism would reveal that many scholars do not follow this pattern of categorization. Hence, what one finds is a long list of casual factors, emanating from different scholarly perspectives (see for instance Arlington 2015, Crone 2016, Hogg et' al 2013, Ranstorp 2016, etc). For the purpose of ease of presentation and analysis, and in line with Ranstorp (2016) and Arlington (2015) classifications, the factors that are responsible for youth radicalization will be categorized and discussed under the following subheadings-

2.4.1 Socio-Economic Factors: at the societal and economic levels, a central factor that accounts for youth's alignment to radicalization is social polarization, which is manifested in the forms of inequality, vulnerabilities, and discrimination in the socio-economic conditions in the society (Campelo et' al 2018, 9). Such forms of inequalities, which makes life very difficult for the individual tends to create a situation where the individual begins to question the regards they have for the existing social order. Although the disregard for the existing societal order that stems from socio-economic inequality may not necessarily result in radicalization by itself, such dissatisfaction becomes a strong motivation for radicalization when it crosses paths with violent or extremist ideologies (Campelo et' al 2018, 10). Inequalities and vulnerabilities in the society that trigger radicalization can also be in the forms of structural and household factors that affect a certain segment of the society more than the others (mostly the youths), "*due to the combination of both their relatively lower economic resources and opportunities and unfulfilled aspirations regarding social status*" (UNDP 2020, 12).

Societal transformation in the form of modernization can also account for the radicalization of youths into violence. The perceived abandonment of the moral and civic values of the society in the name of modernization could create a feeling of irresolution that could turn youths in the direction of religious fundamentalism and extremism as a means of challenging the morals and values of the modern society (Khorsrokhavar 2015, cited in Campelo et' al, 2018). Also, an individual's desire for social status and identity, which can vary among different people in the society depending on the prevailing socio-economic requirements can turn out to be a huge source of uncertainty and personal insecurities among individuals, especially in cases where they are struggling or have failed to achieve what might seem to be the minimum levels of social or economic status (Campelo et' al, 2018, 11). Such individuals, in an attempt to enhance their status in the society or migrate from a state of uncertainty and vulnerability to a position where they are not only able to forge their own identity paths but also feel powerful or perhaps feared and respected by other members of the society, can turn to extremist groups who entice them with promises of elevated statuses and respect in the society.

2.4.2 Individual Factors: At the individual level, two of the major factors that account for an individual's susceptibility to recruitment by radical groups and the actual adoption of extremist ideologies are conflict of identity and a lack of meaningful purpose for one's life/feeling of

uncertainty. Duality of identity occurs when an individual chooses to identify with both the supposed oppressed group and the perceived oppressor, that is, the state (or government) that is perceived by the people as derivative and oppressive (Ng 2021, 6). This dual identification occurs as a result of the self-identification placed on the individual by virtue of them being part of an ethnic or racial group, and citizens of the state, to which they owe duties and responsibilities. Ng (2021, 6-7) has pointed out that evidence from previous studies has shown that there is a strong link between a perceived incompatibility of an individual's dual identity and radicalization to violence. Although, as the author puts it, this does not sufficiently explain why aggrieved individuals with identity conflict will choose to sympathize with a violent group with which they share ethnic or racial ties, rather than the state; to whom the individual also feels they owe allegiance.

The feeling of a lack of meaning in life can be a major source of uncertainty in the life of an individual (Doosje et' al 2013, 589). This uncertainty which can be upsetting can be a motivation for radicalization for individuals. Such feelings of uncertainty by individuals can be manifested in their beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, relationships, means of livelihood, their place in the general society, their personal identities, or even in what the future holds for them (Hogg et' al 2013, 411, Doosje et' al, 2013, 590). As Hogg et' al (2013, 412) points out,

... "the most powerful way to reduce uncertainty and protect oneself from the specter of uncertainty is to ground one's beliefs, attitudes, values, and understanding of the world in consensus and repeated exposure to similar other people who share and agree with, and reinforce one's view of the world... it builds a powerful motivation to protect and promote, perhaps at all cost, the ideological integrity, and superiority of one's own views"

The adoption of extreme ideologies can serve to reduce such feelings of uncertainty or lack of meaning in life in that the individual will try to associate with a group that they feel can provide them with answers or solutions to these fears. Uncertainty in this case, therefore, triggers the feeling that an individual's life is absurd and lacking any meaningful purpose, hence, the need to defend one's world views as a way of making sense of their lives (Doosje et' al 2013, 590).

2.4.3 Political Factors: Political frustration in the society manifests itself in different forms and the ultimate outcome of such frustration is the feeling of discrimination, rejection, or unfair treatment in the competition for and allocation of the essential resources of the state when

compared to other individuals or groups (European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalization 2008, 13). Frustration may also arise from the government's inability or refusal to provide the youths with basic amenities, good education, or even employment opportunities (Onuoha 2014). Such feelings of frustration from unequal opportunities, discriminatory practices arising from the government's failure to perform its primary responsibilities to the individual, not only alienate the individual from the society but also, lead to them develop some form of hatred for the government and society in general. While this feeling of frustration might not initially result in violence, it, in the long run, can be used to legitimize the perpetration of violence against a political system that is viewed to have been oppressive over time (European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalization 2008, 13, Moghaddam, 2005, 163).

The perception of a struggle against domination from western countries and their ideologies is another factor that accounts for why individuals align with extremist ideologies. The violent rejection of what is perceived as an attempt to wage war, especially against Islam and Muslims all over the world by the West stems from the belief that the foreign and internal policies of these countries specifically target and promote injustice against Muslims simply because of their faith (Wilner and Dubouloz 2010, 47). Bin Ladin makes this justification when he states that "*the truth is the whole Muslim world is the victim of international terrorism, engineered by America and the United Nations. We are a nation whose sacred symbols have been looted and whose wealth and resources have been plundered. It is normal for us to react against the forces that invade our land*" (Osama bin Laden, interview by John Miller, ABC News, 1998. Cited in Wilner and Dubouloz 2010, 47).

2.4.4 Ideological/Religious Factors: Strong religious beliefs or ideologies are usually used to justify the inequalities in society. These ideologies are usually spread through social and religious in-groups so as to develop a prejudice, disseminate and create acceptance for extremist ideologies (Beelmann 2020, 9). Religious motivations for radicalization to violent extremism as in the case of Islamist extremism, are according to Crone (2016) "politico-religious" rather than being a solely religious process. This is manifested in the form of milieus that is aimed at furthering political ideas that are in line with the Islamic theology that tends to offer a different view of how the state or society should be organized or governed, what is wrong and how to fix it. Religious motivations for radicalization to violence therefore, aims to offer a utopian way of political life in the society.

In Islamist extremism, such politico-religious risk factors could be the view that modern societies are materialistic, licentious, and sinful, democracy is bad and against the Islamic religious tenets, the society is discriminating against and killing Muslims, etc and there is, therefore, the need to remedy this through the only available means-violence (Crone 2016, 595, Lynch 2013, 244-245)

While strong religious beliefs may have been noted to be one of the risk factors of radicalization to violence, Arlington (2015, 12) has pointed out that the classification of “strong religious beliefs” as a risk factor for radicalization might be “overly simplistic and potentially dangerous”. The author argues that strong religious belief only becomes a risk factor for radicalization to violent extremism when it becomes heavily dependent on a second variable or risk factor; “having little knowledge of religion and ideology”. It is therefore the individual’s nuanced understanding that turns strong religious belief into a risk factor in itself.

Exposure to violence is another risk factor for youth radicalization into violence. Individuals who have been exposed to violence, especially during the early years of their life become prone to high risks of depression and empathic deficiencies that leave them vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups. This vulnerability is usually connected to the trauma and alterations in their mental health and well-being that is an impact of their exposure to violence. (Milani, 2017). This exposure also creates in them a self-perpetuating cycle of violence that eventually becomes a key contributor to their pathway to violence. Milani (2017) has noted that exposure to violence can among other things result in an appetite for aggression towards others, increased aggression and aggressive fantasies, decreased nuance for social cohesion appeals, etc.

2.4.5 Cultural/Family Factors: cultural marginalization, which is most times always a prevalent issue in multi-ethnic societies has been identified by many scholars as a risk factor that exposes an individual to the prospects of radicalization to violence (UNODC 2018). Since every individual identifies with a group or section of the society with which they believe they share very similar ties and history when compared to other groups in the society, the tendency is for such individuals to defend their ethnic or cultural group with any available means when they feel they are continually being marginalized or discriminated against by the other ethnic groups in the society. Silke (2001) has pointed out when a cultural group that an individual identifies with is being marginalized or discriminated against, there will always be individuals or groups within the larger community that will be open to the ideas of defending the group, thereby making themselves

available and receptive to extreme ideologies. The extent to which cultural marginalization makes an individual or group prone to radicalization may vary within and among individuals in the same cultural or ethnic group. However, when cultural marginalization is perceived to be at critical levels, the tendency is for some individuals in the marginalized group to lose every form of vested interest in the maintenance of the society (UNODC 2008).

Also, poor family upbringing has been identified as a risk factor for radicalization to extremism. Children who have been brought up with very little or no parental guidance may grow up to become a nuisance in society. The fact that they end up having very little knowledge of proper societal values, education, or a means of livelihood makes them central targets for terrorist groups. These groups already know that such individuals are vulnerable, lack education, and are from very poor homes. They, therefore, are able to easily target and propagate their radical ideas in such individuals and entice them into extremism with meager rewards and the promise of a better life (Onuoha 2014, 6-7).

It should be stated here that the categorization of risk factors for youth radicalization used in this chapter is not definite and has been solely done for the purpose of ease of presentation and discussion. Also, the factors discussed above are far from exhaustive. There are therefore other risk factors for youth radicalization that have not been discussed in this chapter. For instance, mental health issues and emotional instability, high levels of illiteracy, social media, etc.

The proceeding discussion discussions in this section has shown that the risk factors for youth radicalization are broad and that the factors at play at a point in time may depend on the society/environment, the individuals involved, etc. These factors are however, not mutually exclusive, that is, more than one or several risk factors can influence an individual or group of individuals into being radicalized at a point in time. Hence, making it difficult to account for which risk factors that might influence the individual to be more decisive than others.

However, to better understand how these several risk factors for youth radicalization play out, and lead to threats or actual acts of terrorism, it is important to synthesize the radicalization models, findings from empirical researches (literature), available data and theoretical perspectives. One of such theory that has been proven to be useful for the analysis and explanation of how social relations and identity formations can serve as incentives for radicalization and extremism is the SIT by Tajfel and Turner (1979 and 1985).

2.5 Social Identity Theory

Theoretical insights into the contexts in which individuals become radicalized to violent extremism is no doubt central the understanding of the everyday reality of the subjects under study, explaining of the factors that leads them into taking such steps, integrating such into scholarly perspectives, and collecting and analyzing data for radicalization and terrorism studies (Strindberg 2020, 12-13). Human beings, being inherently social and sharing ties with other people in the society are bound to develop loyalties, solidarity and empathy, as well as adopt certain narratives from groups with which they share close ties. Such behaviors and standards therefore become an integral part of the individual's social life, especially in relation to who they are in comparison to others, and hence, becomes their social identity (Strindberg 2020,17). SIT as an analytical framework is useful for the understanding and analysis of how such identities emerge and its mobilization powers within groups in the study of radicalization and violent extremism.

The Social Identity Theory, is a classical psychological theory that is associated with the works of Tajfel and Turner (1979 and 1985). The theory grew out of Tajfel and Turner's attempt to explain intergroup behavior and intergroup conflict, and in context to other theoretical approaches that explain group behaviors (for instance, theory of frustration, aggression, and displacement, theory of authoritarian leadership, realistic group theory), attempts to establish a distinction between what the authors call the "two extremes" of social behavior; interpersonal and intergroup behavior (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 34). At the interpersonal levels of social behavior, interactions that determine social behavior within a social group are determined by interpersonal relationships between two or more individuals, without necessarily being affected by the social groups or categories to which they belong respectively. While at the other extreme (intergroup level), social interactions which are usually between two or more individuals or groups of individuals are totally determined and affected by the individual's membership in different social groups, without any form of effect from the interpersonal relationship of the individuals involved in the different groups (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 34). Although the authors point out that such categorization of two extremes might be difficult to find in its "pure" forms in real life, this categorization helps discern and explain the conditions that are responsible for the adoption and manifestation of different social behaviors, especially in the context of intergroup conflicts.

Cognitive categorization in the context of social groups has been used by Tajfel and Turner (1979 and 1985) as a theoretical model to explain perceptions of differences and bias between a group to which an individual belongs and another comparative group. According to Tajfel and Turner (1985, 7), a group is

“a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and membership of it”.

Testing out this paradigm of minimal group effect on social behavior, the authors created two groups based on arbitrary criteria and found that the perceptions of minimal group bias by individuals that belonged to different groups led them *“to form psychological groups, exaggerating the positive qualities of one’s own group, while exaggerating the negative qualities of the out-group, stereotyping, and failure to allocate resources to outgroup members”* (Islam 2014, 1781). Socio-cognitive processes in this context are therefore what create and shape group identities in line with the group’s construction of social realities and perceptions of their social identity, which is a reflection of existing social categories, networks, and groups in the society in which different individuals belong (Korostelina 2007, 2).

The categorization of social identities in a society can be broad and as such, could encompass such large-scale categories as religious groups, ethnic or tribal groups, socio-economic groups, etc. and it is within these social categories that the individual is able to form a social network of communities within the larger society. Such categorization, therefore, enables groups to define and maintain imaginary boundaries between their group and other groups, thereby constituting and instituting norms and values that set them apart from other social groups (Al Raffie 2013, 76). While such norms and values might be viewed as discriminatory by members of the out-group, to the social group that institutes such norms and values, it is what uniquely differentiates them from other groups and defines the system of meaning that they associate with their social identity and the surrounding environment (Stryker et’ al, 2000).

This practice of distinguishing one’s group from another out-group through stereotypic norms and values is what Turner et’ al (1987, 32) describes as the process of “self-categorization”. This cognitive process of self-categorization that groups create for themselves, therefore, serves as a tool through which the individual is able to create and strengthen their social identities by placing

a lot of emphasis on both intra-group similarities and inter-group differences, as a way of instituting group boundaries and setting out blueprints for the individual's identity, as well as expected behavioral patterns that come with membership of such group (Al Raffie, 2013, 77). Social categorization, according to Al

Al Raffie (2013, 78, 79, Mcleod 2019) usually derives from the subconscious and/or conscious attraction to people of similar characteristics, or needs, especially if such people share similar beliefs or are in similar situations with the other individuals (say for instance, if they are also part of a minority group, religious group, or have low socioeconomic status, etc.). Such individuals end up building a network of people that are able to share similar or the same social identity that is sustained through the ability of the individuals that are part of the group to be able to act in accordance to the group norms that have been learned and internalized over time.

SIT premises that once an individual acculturates with the norms of the in-group to which they belong, the tendency is to find negative aspects of the outgroup, as a way of enhancing their own group's self-image/group-image and value (Agbibo 2015, 417). The emphasis here is on the social (or economic) conditions of the members of the ingroup, around which their social identity is constructed and maintained, and the medium through which these members are bound together.

The construction of social identity by members of the in-group therefore leads to the development of three mental processes that drives the "us vs them" mentality within the in-group. These mental processes are- social categorization, social identification, and social comparison (Mcleod 2019). Social categorization involves the grouping of people according to their religion (Christians, Muslims, etc.), skin color (black or white), etc. with the aim of understanding their social environment. Social categorization on the other hand entails the creation of ingroups, ideological support for institutions that support identity, as well as stereotypic perceptions of other groups as a way of reinforcing the identity of one's own group. While social comparison is the mental process of comparing one's own in-group to other groups in the society, especially in relation to the distribution of benefits, status, or achievements in the society (Dim 2017, 42-43).

This comparison of one's ingroup with the outgroup according to Strindberg (2020, 15) does not only affect the individual's disposition and behavior towards the outgroup but also propels the individual or group to explore strategies for the development and acquisition of positive social

identity that would make them feel or have a better sense of relevance in the society, especially in a situation of uncertainty and conflict.

2.5.1 Radicalization/Extremism as a Social Identity Crisis

Although not originally postulated as a ‘theory of terrorism’ or radicalization, the SIT; a theory of social psychology that focuses on the manner in which the membership of a group affects the behavior and perceptions of an individual towards other individuals and groups, has been proven to be very useful for the understanding of interplays of intergroup discrimination and prejudice and how these perceptions and behavior engender conflict/violence (Strindberg 2020, 14).

As earlier pointed out in this study, there are an array of factors that explain the problem of youth radicalization and violent extremism and some of these factors include discrimination, perceptions of injustice, social networks, ties to extremist groups, desire for social status, the desire to correct what is perceived as wrong in the society, etc. (Bond 2014, Borum 2014, Silke, 2001). Some of these factors are clearly tied to human needs for meaning in life, belongingness, and the need to exert one’s identity in a social setting. Ferguson and McAuley (2021, 7) have stated that these needs constitute an essential part of our existence in relation to social groups with which we identify and affiliate. In line with the SIT, the need to maintain group identity and distinguish one’s group from other outgroups can therefore make an individual or group of individuals go to extreme lengths to maintain their identity, exert superiority over other groups (Tajfel and Turner 1979), or correct perceived injustice and discrimination from outgroups, by whatever means necessary. The tendency, therefore, is that when these perceptions of injustice and discrimination become a fraternal or group concern rather than an individual issue, members of the group, who are usually bounded together by strong ideological beliefs, values, and norms, will resort to acting collectively in order to remedy their perceived concerns for the group (Ferguson and McAuley, 2021, 7, 8). Moreover, since group identity is “*a combination of socio-cultural characteristics which individuals share, or are presumed to share, with others on the basis of which one group may be distinguished from others*” (Ikelegbe 2005, 73), the need to protect an ingroup from domination and subjugation from an outgroup can be an incentive for the group members to engage in antisocial behaviors of different kinds.

One basic assumption of the SIT is the rejection of deindividuation-the ideal that once an individual becomes part of a group, such individual abandons the path of rationality and becomes a victim of the collective irrationality of the group (Strindberg 2020, 18). The SIT's position is that despite the fact that the individual is part of a collective, he/she is still able to think and act both as an individual and as a group member. The analytical focus of the SIT, therefore, is on the relationship that exists between the individual and the group and how this fuels radicalization. Berger (2018,117), emphasizes the need to frame the analysis of radicalization at the group level, rather than at individual levels when he states that *“a radicalizing individual will almost always attach him- or herself to the narrative of a group, and it is that collective narrative – rather than entirely private thoughts and ideas – that provides the rationale for his or her evolution toward violent action”*.

Agbibo (2015, 418-419) has also pointed out that terrorist groups or extremist movements like Boko Haram are bounded by a common identity that includes a shared belief, common experience, feelings of marginalization and discrimination, as well as the desire to protect their religious identity that is perceived to be under threat. As such, members of such terrorist groups see themselves as a collective that is bonded together by the psychological process of a collective identity. This feeling of a collective identity is what such groups rely on when spreading their radical ideologies and justifying their perpetration of violence against outgroups or perceived oppressors. The SIT has therefore been used to explain and understand the actions of extremist social groups and the theory has proven to be scientifically applicable in the social analysis of different forms of conflict and in varied contexts (Agbibo 2015, 419).

2.5.2 Criticisms of the Social Identity Theory

Despite the validity and usefulness of the SIT, the theory has been criticized by scholars for having various loopholes. One of such criticism is centered on the fact that the theory is way more explanatory than predictive. This is based on the view that SIT has tended to be more useful in explaining events and why they occurred, after such occurrence, and as such, the theory becomes less reliable in forecasting the occurrence of such behavior or action (Strindberg 2020, 24). Also, the position of the theory on the correlation between commitments to ingroup identification and bias towards the outgroup has been called into question (Philips 2017, Brown 2000, 753). The argument against this position is that ingroup identification may not necessarily lead to bias

towards the outgroup. Moreover, in cases where such bias exists, ingroup identification may not necessarily be the most important factor in that sense, especially since the characteristics of group identification can be dynamic, rather stable as the SIT assumes.

Also, the SIT has been criticized for its assumptions about the submerging of the identity of the individuals who are part of the group into the group's identity. Philips (2017) has pointed out that this is perhaps a deliberate and wrong attempt to replace the traditional notion of individual identity with a vague or ill-defined concept of collective or group identity. This assumption by the SIT, therefore, ignores the fact that groups are characterized by interpersonal relations and that the identity and purpose of the individuals that are part of the group are what defines and foster the group's identity as a collective. This also negates the fact that the process for the formation of social identity is dependent on a combination of factors and not just group designation as the SIT presumes.

Despite these criticisms against the SIT, various scholars (for instance Brown 2000, 747, Strindberg 2020, 23, Moss, 2016, etc) have all noted that the theory has proven to be very important both for controlled experiments and in "real-life" situations. Also, SIT has been noted by these authors to have engendered various research into group relations and has proven to be empirically and analytically useful in not just the field of psychology but in many other fields, including political science. Strindberg (2020, 14) succinctly expresses his view on the usefulness and validity of the SIT when he states that...." *the causes and effects of social identity needs on individual and group behavior have been extensively tested in laboratory settings and in field studies, to the point that SIT hypotheses can be considered scientifically robust*"

The role of a theory (like the SIT) in Social Sciences research is such that cannot be overemphasized. Chijioke et al (2021, 159-161) have noted that a theory plays a different role in research and that these roles include explaining, analyzing, describing, and predicting phenomena in order to aid understanding, link concepts, variables, and hypotheses, as well as provide logicity and clarity to a research subject. The theory thus serves as a guide for understanding the phenomenon under study and for making generalizations based on the findings of the study.

In the application of the SIT to this study, the focus will be on explaining how the prospects or promises of a supposedly distinctive and superior identity by extremist groups like the Boko Haram can serve as a motivation for youths in the northeast region of Nigeria to sympathize and

join the group's terrorist movement and for assessing the extent to which these are reflected in the government's responses. SIT will be used in this study as an explanatory framework for assessing and explaining the puritanical interpretations of religious doctrines that have been used as justifications for violence in the region by terrorists and how this may have served as a motivation for the adoption of radical ideologies by the youths in the region.

CHAPTER 3

3. METHODOLOGY

Chapter three covers the methodological design that has been adopted for this study. The chapter begins with the mapping of the study area and this is followed by an explanation of the research design of the study. This is then followed by an explanation of the criteria that have been adopted for the selection of quantitative and qualitative data and the approach that has been adopted for the analysis of the collected data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations that to the methodology adopted for the study.

3.1 Research Design

The function of the research design in a social science study is to ensure that the identified problem that is being studied is addressed and analyzed effectively through evidence-based and logically unambiguous methods of collecting and analyzing data (De Vaus 2001).

This study is designed as a case study of youth radicalization in the northeast region of Nigeria, and in relation the Boko Haram terrorist movement in the region. The goal of the case study design here is to be able to, as much as possible carry out an in-depth study and analysis of youth radicalization, not in a broader sense (that is, not in relation to all or other extremist movements in the country) but case-specifically, the terrorist movement in the region. The case specific analysis will be used to analyze the reasons why the youths in the region get radicalized into extremism, and the shed light on how these identified factors are reflected in the government's responses to extremism in the region.

The systematic scoping review will be adopted for the collection and analysis of data relevant to this study. Systematic review involves a "systematic and explicit" method for identifying, selecting, and critically analyzing data from previous studies that are relevant to one's study through carefully formulated research questions and a methodological selection of relevant materials (Chapman 2021, 1-2). For the purpose of answering the research questions, a protocol is specifically developed to serve as a selection guide in the search for, inclusion, or exclusion of data for the studies. Such criteria could be the date of publication or collection of data, the method used for the collection of such data, the population of the studies, as well as the relevance of such data to one's research questions (Chapman 2021, 1).

This method will be used solely for the selection of journals/articles that will be used as secondary sources, alongside data from media, and official statistical reports. The quantitative and qualitative data will be obtained from literature, print media, academic journals, and previous surveys. Other sources of data will be official statistical reports from such sources as the UNDP, The World Bank, ACAPS, as well as the (Nigerian) National Bureau for Statistics, etc. Data from previous studies (researches and journals) will be gotten through an intensive search from reliable academic sources like Umea Universitet Library Catalog and Taylor and Francis Online.

3.2 Study Area

This study's case area is in the northeast region of Nigeria comprising Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe states. Of these five states in the northeast region of the country, Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states have been the hub of the activities of Boko Haram both in terms of attacks from the group, and recruitment of fighters (Brechenmacher 2019). Hence, the need to focus mostly on these states in the comparative analysis of data.

Appendix 1 shows the archives of sources used in the analysis

Appendix 2 shows the map of Nigeria highlighting the northeast region

Appendix 3 show the systematic review protocol that was used for the selection of articles

3.3 Eligibility and Selection Criteria

In the selection of journals that were used as sources of data for this study, the systematic review method has been adopted and in addition to ensuring the reliability of the sources, only journals and publications that have been peer-reviewed were selected. At the initial stage, selection criteria were broad and extensive, as a way of ensuring that as many relevant and reliable materials were gotten, although the search was limited to a specific time frame and peer-reviewed journals/articles only. The time frame for the selection was 2011 till date (this was set at the initial stage of the search process) and the key words used for the search included, youth radicalization in northeast Nigeria, Boko Haram terrorism, and insurgency/crisis in northeast Nigeria. Initial combined hits

from these sources was 5,526 hits. Hence the need to begin the process of narrowing it down to a realistic number, based on their relevance to the study.

The screening criteria involved search for topics relevant to the study, studies that focus on the motivations for radicalization/terrorism, and studies that focus on the northeast or northern region of the country. Relevant quantitative data from official websites of the Nigerian Federal Bureau of Statistics, UNDP, etc were also selected based on their relevance to the issues discussed in this study.

Policy documents and online publications from media houses serve as the main sources of the qualitative data used for analysis in this study. This includes local and foreign media like the Vanguard, Punch, and BBC. Media sources were selected firstly, based on the popularity of the media source (although, this might not necessarily translate to reliability), as well as on their relevance to this study. Part of the screening process for this type of such therefore included a focus on interviews in the media with former Boko Haram combatants, aggrieved youths, or members of radical religious or political movements in the northeast region of Nigeria. Attention was paid to publications where interviewees discuss their motivations for joining the extremist movements, the conditions that necessitated such, as well as their views and concerns about the government's deradicalization programs. The assessment of the government's responses was based on information available in online medias, policy documents, and speeches by government officials that are involved in these programs.

3.4 Data Analysis

Two methods were used for the analysis of collected data in this study. For the quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used for the analysis. This will be useful for the purpose of highlighting information in the dataset, and for finding potential links between the variables in the data set. For the qualitative data, content analysis has been adopted as the method of analysis. The analysis of qualitative data from media houses will also help to take note of dominant themes, subjects or words, especially those that may be related to notions or feelings of deprivation, affirmity, in-group favoritism, as well as social identification and comparison. Attention is therefore, paid to discussions or analysis of such factors as education, political alienation, religion, and other risk

factors for youth radicalization that have been discussed in the literature review section. And the presence of such in the collected data will be used as the analytical base for the application of the SIT as a framework for explaining youth radicalization to violence in the area under study. The role of the SIT here is to help explain and possibly establish links between the risk factors that will be identified, the youths' desires for a social identity, and how terrorists feed off this.

3.5 Methodological Limitations

The key limitation to this study is the unavailability of reliable and reliable data on youth radicalization in northeast Nigeria. Since this study borders on radicalization and violent extremism/terrorism, a limiting factor to the study has been what Silke (2001, 2) has described as the extreme difficulty to access information in terrorism and extremism research. This difficulty, according to the author is due to such factors as the clandestine nature of such organizations, the unavailability of reliable data on such groups, dearth of primary data in the field, as well as research biases that are occasioned by the sensitive and emotional nature of the topic. These difficulties play out in this study in the form of lack of data on for instance, the number of youths that have been radicalized by Boko Haram over a period of time or even the number of fighters in their ranks.

Another limitation to this study is time constraints. Since the study has to be completed within a specified timeframe, I have had to make the scope of the study narrower than originally intended. I also believe the study would have benefited more from primary data rather than relying entirely on secondary data sources. One idea would be to conduct a field survey in the region. This is, however, impossible for me as this study is done from Sweden. Moreover, even if I had to means to conduct a field survey in the region, the fact that the region is highly volatile also would have made me not take up this option for security reasons.

While the use of secondary data in this study is no doubt useful, it must be stated that the use of these sources is not without its drawbacks. One major challenge for this study in this sense is that these sources do not (mostly) directly address or ask the same questions as this study. The effect of this is that, specific responses to questions that could have been gotten from primary sources like interviews are unviable. At best, what is therefore extracted from these media sources are parts

or components that possibly relates to or approximates to the research questions. This no doubt has made data analysis for this study quite hectic. Also, the credibility of data in these sources, especially media sources may be biased and polarized, especially when they only appear on print media.

CHAPTER 4

This chapter begins with a brief history of the Boko Haram terrorist movement in Nigeria. The chapter then proceeds with a discussion of the reasons why youths in the northeast region of Nigeria become radicalized, and join or become sympathetic to the group's terrorist activities. The analysis is done in line with the secondary data that has been collected, as well as based on findings from literature and the SIT framework that has been discussed in previous chapters. It concludes with a critical analysis of the deradicalization programs in the region with the aim of highlighting the extent to which they account for the identified risk factors.

4.1 History of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria

The terrorist group Boko Haram is otherwise known as Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad (meaning congregation of the people of tradition for proselytism and jihad), has been at been responsible for a series of attacks on civilians, military formations, schools, health facilities, etc. (Aloa 2013, 129). The Boko Haram uprising in Nigeria is noted to have started sometime in 2009 with a pattern of civil disturbances, riots, and eventually, violent uprising that seemed familiar in not just the northeast region but the country as a whole. Boko Haram is an Islamic group that is seeking to transform, especially the northeast region into an Islamic state with the aim of infusing and enforcing strict Islamic law in the northeast region. The group's activity initially started with the spreading of Islamic ideologies before a series of events that led to the group's change of tactics- taking up arms and violence (Adesoji 2010, 96).

The group as it is at the moment is thought to have started in the 2000s as a small Sunni Islamic group pushing for strict interpretation and implementation of sharia laws. The group's initial leadership is believed to have been using peaceful means to drive their quest home (Dim 2017, 38-39). This approach was however to change later as the sect now sees violence as the only means of driving their quest home. According to Salisu et al (2015, 225)

After the 2009 uprising, the activities of the sect were slow. The violent re-emergence of the group in 2010 came up with a new tactic that includes bombing, kidnapping, attacking Islamic clerics, mosques and churches in the country. Nigeria witnessed the first suicide bombing in police headquarters and the United Nation's building in Abuja. The activities of the sect escalated when on 14th April 2014 the sect kidnapped 250 students from Government Girl's College in Chibok in Borno state. Also, Boko Haram and Ansaru were designated as

foreign terrorist organizations (FTO) by the United States Security Department in 2013. Ansaru was the Boko Haram faction that earlier in 2013 kidnapped and executed 7 foreigners who were working with international construction companies. Subsequently, the UN committee on Al-Qaeda sanction blacklisted the group on 22nd May, 2014 as one of the world's terrorist organizations. The UN listing entry describes Boko Haram as an affiliate of the Al-Qaeda and also as one of the organizations of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

The group's change of approach, from a peaceful to an extreme one started after the death of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, who is believed to have been extra-judicially killed by members of the Nigerian security forces while he was held in one of their detention facilities, for engaging in protests with the group. Although, as Onuoha (2011, 139-140) has pointed out, Boko Haram's transition to violent extremism had actually begun under the leadership of Yusuf, these extremist tendencies did not metamorphose into terrorism until after his death, when Abubakar Shekau took over the leadership of the group.

Since the Boko Haram terrorism began in 2009, the group's acts of terrorism are believed to have led to the death of over 35,000 civilians and members of the north-east region of Nigeria, led to the destruction of properties of inestimable values, the devastation of communities in the region, as well as the displacement of over three million people. Terrorism in the northeast region of Nigeria has also, among other things, plunged millions of people into extreme poverty, bloated government spending on security and defense, as well as the destruction of basic amenities in the region (Bukarti, 2022).

The terrorist activities of the group reach beyond the northeast region of Nigeria and the country as a whole. The group has been able to transcend the national borders of Nigeria and expand into international terrorist networks that enable it to recruit from Nigeria and the Sahara region as a whole, provide high-level training to members, as well as have access to modern and high-tech weapons, some of which are even more sophisticated than what the Nigerian security forces have in their arsenal (Salisu et al 2015).

4.1.1 Ideological Underlining of the Boko Haram Terrorism

The name, Boko Haram, is said to mean "Western Education is Forbidden" or "Western Education is a Sin" (Elden 2014, 415). This glosses the group's belief that western values and civilization are a source of evil in the society and that it is through these values that an elite or privileged class in

the society who do not care about the poor or the welfare of the society but are rather interested in enriching themselves through corrupt practices, and at the expense of the general populace. This claim of being against western civilization and values and science is, however, ironic since the group is continuously using the knowledge and products of western civilization both in their everyday life as individuals and as a medium for spreading their extremist ideologies, as well as for the perpetration of their terrorist acts (Walker 2012, 8).

It is noteworthy to state that the radical ideologies of the Boko Haram terrorist group do not solely rest on an outright rejection of Western civilization/education. The group, like other radical groups that have emerged in the northern region of Nigeria in the past, seeks to reject all forms of secular authority, with the goal of establishing a Nigerian state (or a state or region within the state) that is strictly governed through Sharia law, as was the case in the whole northern region of Nigeria before the arrival of the colonial masters (Waldek and Jayasekara 2011, 170). The group's ideology, therefore, rests on the need to reintroduce strict interpretation and application of the Sharia law, an outright rejection of the state's powers. The group also situates its "Islamic" terrorist ideologies in line with that of similar groups in Iraq, Palestine, and Afghanistan and has in the past been publicly offered "brotherly" support and training by al-Qaeda (The Jihad and Terrorist Threat Monitor, 2010). Waldek and Jayasekara (2011, 171) have noted that the ideological foundations of the group, coupled with the ease at which they are able to appeal to the vulnerable that share at least some of the beliefs and grievances to join their cause, and its links to other global terrorist networks are indications that the group would be around for a very long time.

The youths, who no doubt make up the fighting forces of the group are exposed to an array of risk factors that makes them susceptible to extremist ideologies and eventual recruitment by the group for terrorism. Although these factors might be wide and play out in different forms, some are more central to having a general understanding of why youths in the region become radicalized into extremism.

4.2 What are the Major Factors that Aid the Spread and Adoption of Radical Ideologies in the North-East Region of Nigeria?

4.2.1 Poverty: From the review of the selected articles for this study, it is evident that poverty is no doubt an endemic problem in as a whole Africa and Nigeria in particular. The UNDP report of 2019 ranked Nigeria 158 among 189 countries in its human development index, and top, behind India in the list of top ten countries with multidimensional poverty. In 2018, Nigeria was also declared the poverty capital of the world with about 86.9 million people living in extreme poverty representing about 50% of the total population (Kazeem, 2018). In 2019, an estimated 40% of Nigerians (83 million people) lived below the poverty line of 137,430naira (The World Bank, 2020). More so, there exists a sharp economic inequality between the south and northern regions of the country, and poverty in the northeast and northwest of the country is estimated to be about 40% higher than in the southwest (Meagher, 2014).

Olojo (2013, 6) affirmed the role of poverty in rendering youths in the North East vulnerable to radicalization into the Boko Haram terrorist movement when he stated that....

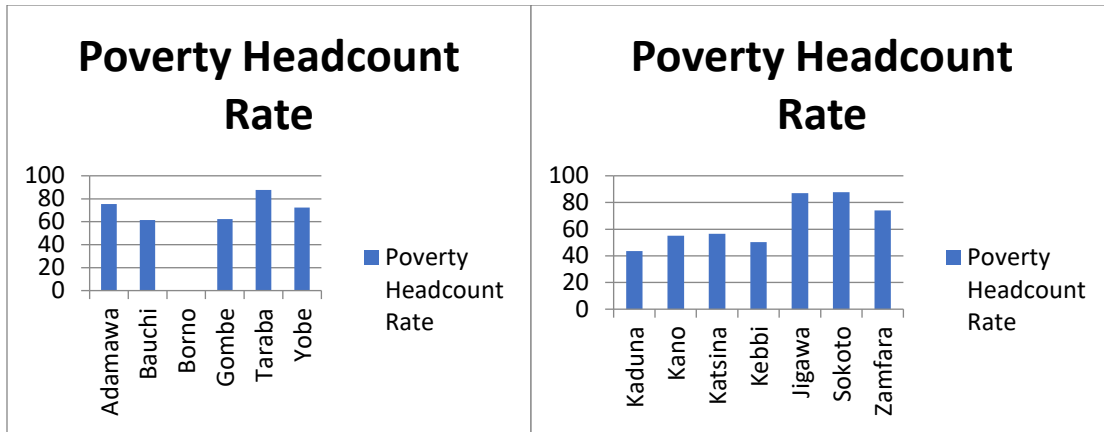
“One significant factor that has stimulated the drive towards violent extremism, recruitment and support for Boko Haram is economic deprivation. Abject poverty and economic dislocation of livelihoods have drastically reduced the options of many young Nigerians in the northern region. In May 2013, the Nigerian government released dozens of women and teenagers previously detained as relatives of suspected Boko Haram members. Among the youths were individuals who confessed to previously accepting payments of 5,000 Nigerian Naira from Boko Haram militants, who in turn provided them with kegs of fuel to set schools ablaze in Maiduguri, Borno State. This is indicative of the economic desperation expressed by thousands of youths who have been rendered vulnerable by the shortcomings of Nigeria’s leadership over several decades”

The differences in poverty rate among states in the different geo-political zones of the country are demonstrated in the figures below according to 2019 report of the National Bureau of Statistics.

Poverty Rate in Nigeria by Geo-Political Zone 2019

Figure 1: North East

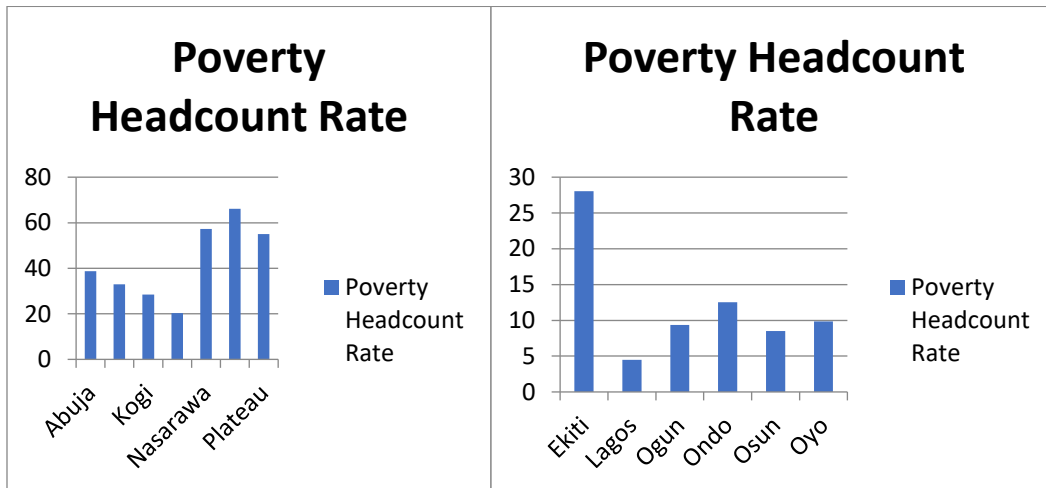
Figure 2: North West



Source; National Bureau of Statistics (2019)

Figure 3: North Central

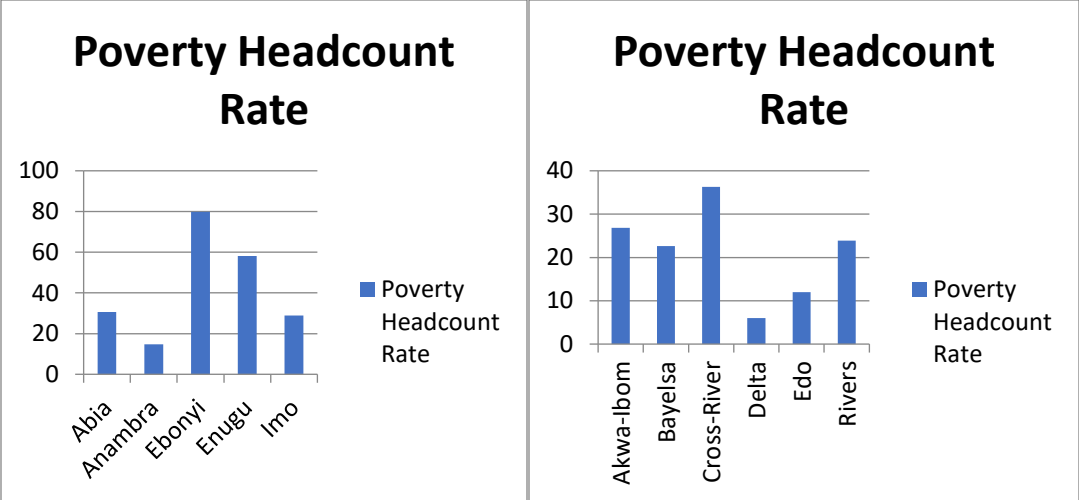
Figure 4: South West



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2019)

Figure 5: South East

Figure 6: South South



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2019)

The figures above show the differences in poverty headcount rates among states in the six geopolitical zones in the country. From the figures, one clearly notices a stark difference in poverty rates between the northern states and the south with the Northeast and Northwest recording the highest rate of poverty. Accordingly, the states with the highest poverty rate in each region are Taraba in the North East (87.72), Sokoto in the North West (87.73), Nasarawa in the North Central (57.30), Ekiti in the South West (28.04), Ebonyi in the South East (79.76) and Cross Rivers in the South-South (36.29). Despite the exclusion of Borno state from the statistics, a North East state (Taraba) almost equals Sokoto in the poverty rate. From a calculation of the average rate of poverty for each region based on the figures above- North East (71.86), North West (64.84), North Central (42.70), South West (12.12), South East (42.45), and South-South (21.27). This is a clear indication that poverty is very highest in the Northeast followed by the Northwest when compared to the other regions in the country. These figures therefore, provides evidence to support the general assumption that youth vulnerability to radicalization and terrorism in the Northeast region of the Nigeria can be traced to pervasive and endemic poverty that is ravaging the region.

To affirm the above statistics, Sasu (2022) has noted that: In 2019, the Nigerian states of Sokoto and Taraba had the largest percentage of people living below the poverty line. The lowest poverty rates were recorded in the South and South-Western states. In Lagos, this figure equaled 4.5 percent, representing the lowest rate in the country.

4.2.2 Unemployment: Poverty as it were is caused by unemployment which incapacitates individuals economically, socially, and even psychologically. Based on a study in Borno State,

Monguno (2013, 31) reported the critical role that unemployment plays in radicalization and terrorism among youths in that state.

“The causal factors of youth extremism and possibly its manifestation into religious violence is multifarious and differ from person to person. Based on observations of the happenings in Northern Nigeria, 17 different factors that cut across economic, social, political, cultural, and other factors were identified and tested on a five-point Likert scale. For ease of analysis, only the response ‘very much’ and ‘Much’ which sum up respondents’ opinions for each factor were interpreted as shown on Table 4. In line with the preceding discussions, the economic factor appeared to be the most important factor perceived to underlie religious extremism in Borno State. Thus 72% of respondents identified unemployment and poverty among youths as the raison d’etre for extremism in the state, which also appeared number one in the ranking of”

Discussing the unemployment situation in the Northeast region prior to the Boko Haram insurgency, Avis (2020, 7) noted that.

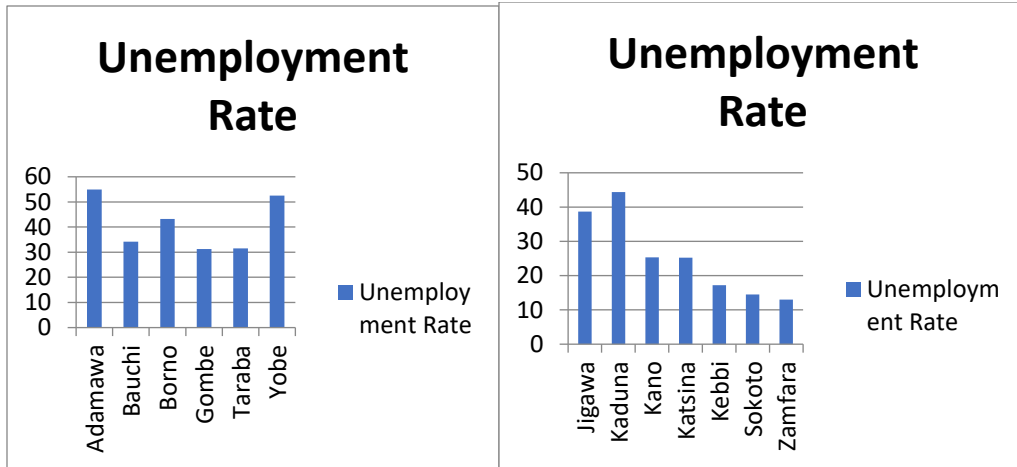
Prior to the crisis productive jobs were fewer in the northeast and have become scarcer during the crisis. Labor force participation was concentrated in agricultural activities (43%) and the largely informal, non-agricultural sector (39%). With the onset of the conflict, the proportion of labor participation in agriculture has reduced to 27% in 2012-2013, reflecting that the continuing conflict has limited access to land for crops and livestock, and has curtailed agricultural activities significantly. People in the region resorted to a range of income generation activities, with unpaid household activities doubling from 11% (2010-2011) to 22% (2012-2013), indirectly capturing a large increase in de facto unemployment”

A vast majority of the youths in the region who are vulnerable and attracted to Boko Haram before becoming radicalized into violent extremism were unemployed (Kamta et’ al, 2020). Many of these youths join Boko Haram so as to take advantage of the financial benefits that are available for being a member of the terrorist group since they have no means of livelihood. Unemployment no doubt breeds frustration and a sense of alienation leading to a disenchantment of the individual with the society. The current method for determining unemployment rate in Nigeria is based on the labor force excluding those who are self-employed. The figures below reveal unemployment rate in Nigeria by geo-political zone according to the NEW Nigeria methodology.

Unemployment Rate in Nigeria by Geo-Political Zone 2020

Figure 7: North East

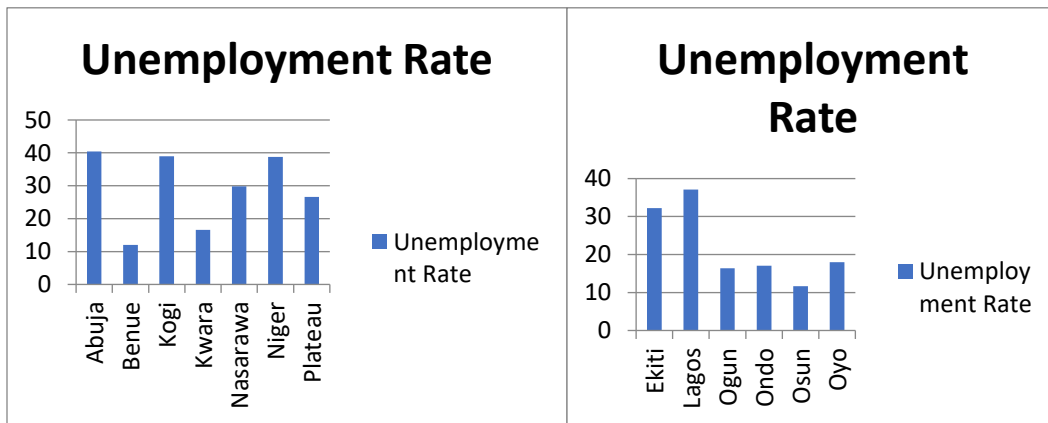
Figure 8: North West



Source: Sasu (2022)

Figure 9: North Central

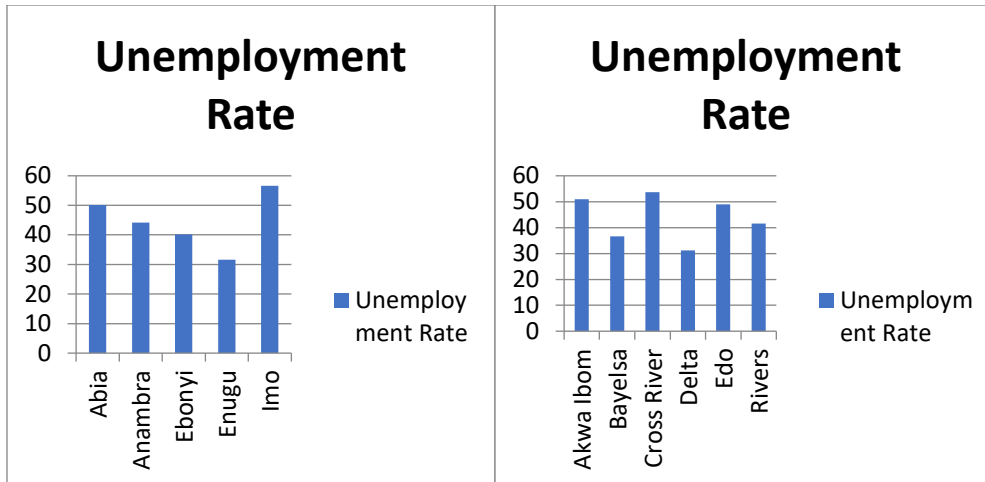
Figure 10: South West



Source: Sasu (2022)

Figure 11: South East

Figure 12: South South



Source: Sasu (2022)

The figures above show the unemployment rate in Nigeria in the states in each geo-political zone. The state with the highest rate of unemployment in the Northeast (Adamawa, 54.89%), in the Northwest (Kaduna, 44.35%), in the North-Central (Abuja, 40.4%), in the South West (Lagos, 37.14%), in the South East (Imo, 56.64%) and in the South-south (Cross River, 53.65%). From these figures, Adamawa which is one of the states in the North East has the second highest modal figure after Imo from this Southeast. This indicates a high unemployment rate in the region. Calculating the Average unemployment rates based on the figure above are; North East (41.29%), North West (25.5%), North Central (29.02%), South West (22.07%), South East (44.54%) and the South South (43.85%). This shows that the North East is one of the three regions with the highest average rate of unemployment in the country. It clearly shows that unemployment in the Northeast region is high almost nearing the situation in the Southeast and South-South where violent militant activities have been recorded in the past few years and till date. This is an indication of the role that unemployment plays in the vulnerability of youth to radicalization and terrorist allurements.

4.2.3 Illiteracy: The literacy level of members of any given society plays a vital role in their enlightenment, fostering freedom from mediocrity, boosting individual's life chances in terms of employment opportunities and other societal goods. Lack of formal education no doubt predisposes individuals to joblessness and poverty and an easy enticement into deviant groups, especially radical/extreme groups. In the Northeastern region, illiteracy rate is high and it renders the youth susceptible to extremist propaganda and ideologies resulting to them identifying with

such groups and getting radicalized into terrorism. This fact has been emphasized by Kamta et’ al (2020, 99) when they argued that...

“The correlation between education and poverty cannot be dismissed. Statistics on employment in Nigeria show categorization of unemployed persons on the basis of age groups, educational qualifications and occupation (Danaan, 2018). Unemployment according to Danaan (2018), has a strong correlation with poverty. This may explain the fact that in northeast, northcentral and northwest Nigeria where education rates are very low, the poverty rate is higher (JICA, 2011). With regards to the analysis, it is safe to assume that the rate of poverty in a region at least for the Nigerian case, is a function of the education attendance ratio”

Using enrolment data into senior secondary school as an explanatory variable, the table below shows the differences in enrolment among the six geo-political zones as recorded by the National Bureau of Statistics 2019.

Table 1: Enrolment into Senior Secondary School by Geo-Political Zone in Nigeria 2013/2014

Geo-Political Zone	Number of Students Enrolled
North Central	811,752
North East	334,558
North West	765,707
South East	709,324
South South	756,677
South West	914,471
Total	4,292,489

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2019)

From the above tables, the North-Central had 811,752 students enrolled into senior secondary school. The Northeast enrolled 334,558 students, Northwest enrolled 765,707 students, Southeast enrolled 709,324 students, South-South enrolled 756,677 students while the South West enrolled 914,471 students. This implies that the Southwest had the highest number of students enrolled while the Northeast had the least enrollment. This is an indication of the disadvantage position of the Northeast region in education ranking and the high level of illiteracy that is ravaging the region rendering the youth in that region more vulnerable to deceptions presented by extremists in their teachings aiding the radicalization of the youth.

4.2.4 The Almajiri System: Youth radicalization and terrorism in northeast Nigeria is, among other things, compounded by the almajiri system of education/tutelage practiced in the region. The almajiri system is an old practice in Northern Nigeria where children are sent out to learn under the tutelage of an Islamic teacher in order to acquire Islamic knowledge. The practice has become a problem considering the ratio of almajiri to the Islamic teachers, a situation where about 4,000 almajiri were under the tutelage of one Islamic teacher who has no capacity to cater for them other than sending them out to beg for alms. This practice has therefore, contributed to youth bulges in the region. It was estimated that as at 2012, there were about 9.5 million almajiri in northern Nigeria with about 50% of them domiciled in the Northeastern states, which is the hotbed of Boko Haram terrorist activities. These almajiris also constitute the largest population of out-of-school children in the country (Aghedo & Eke, 2013, 99). The social and economic condition of the almajiri is unpalatable that they constitute a ready-made army for extremist groups who easily radicalize them.

In their assessment of the security implications of the almajiris, Aghedo and Eke (2013, 106-107) reported the confession of almajiris arrested for their connection with Boko-Haram.

“Furthermore, confessions of children arrested in connection with Boko Haram terrorism provide insight into the vulnerability and radicalization that lead them into violence. Some of the 35 children released in May 2013 confessed to be almajirai. One of them admitted that they were paid about \$30 each by some politicians and rebel leaders to spy on troops, vandalise property and maim and kill non-muslims: “We were given a keg of petrol by our bosses to set some schools ablaze, which we did within Maiduguri and we were paid #5,000”.
.... “We were taken to Damaturu. We watched out for the soldiers at their units and reported back to them [BH]. We were reporting when soldiers were at ease or enjoying themselves and when they were off guard, and we were paid for doing that” (Alli, 2013, 4, Quoted by Aghedo and Eke 2013, 108).

4.2.5 Religious Beliefs: Youth radicalization and violent extremism in northeast Nigeria have had its roots in the Islamic religious beliefs and fundamentalistic ideologies. Strong religious ideologies have therefore not only been at the forefront of the radicalization of the youth in the region into the Boko haram terrorist group but also other cases of violence and extremism. Recent events that led to the burning to death of a student of the Shehu Shagari College of education, Sokoto for “blasphemy against Islam” by her fellow students (Vanguard 2022) shows the length that the youths are willing to go to defend their Islamic religious beliefs and ideologies. Members

and the leadership of the Boko Haram terrorist group have used the notion of Islam being under attack from the west and other religious groups to appeal to the conscience of people within and outside the region to sympathize and join their extremist movement. Abubakar Shekau in one of his many speeches clearly exemplifies this when he states:

“..... either you are with us, I mean, we are Muslims who are following solid footsteps, or you are with Obama, Francois Hollande, George Bush, Clinton,any unbeliever kill! Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill.... this war is against Christians, I mean Christians generally” (The New York Times, 2014)

This strong religious belief, perhaps founded in ignorance and propelled by other risk factors like unemployment, lack of formal education, etc. is what Boko Haram has mostly relied on to lure youths into their ranks. These allurements have been based on the promises of an Islamic welfare state that is governed strictly through Sharia laws and the ability/avenue to defend their “beloved” religion from every form of domination. While these ideologies may have been propagated and spread through Quranic teachings, it is however, noteworthy to state that strong religious beliefs as a risk factor for youth radicalization into violence have been aided by an array of other factors. De Montclos (2018, 871) succinctly advances this perspective when he points out that

“...there is not enough evidence to draw a socioeconomic profile of Boko Haram members and prove that Quranic students made up the bulk of the recruits of Mohamed Yusuf and his successors. According to surveys conducted in 2016 with former insurgents in displaced people camps within Nigeria, the majority (56%) of the respondents had not finished secondary school and 10% had not received any form of education. Among the 51 suspects interviewed in the prisons of Koutoukalé and Kollo in the Republic of Niger in early 2015, the number of those who had attended primary government school was the same as those who had attended Quranic schools. It should also be noted that 15 of them had never been to school at all”.

4.3 Risk Factors for Youth Radicalization into Terrorism in northeast Nigeria: A SIT Perspective

The application of the SIT to radicalization and violent extremism in northeast Nigeria is based on different research findings that identity is very key to the understanding the radicalization of people culminating in violent and terrorist acts all over the world (Al Raffie, 2013, 68). The youth’s quest

for identity that gives them a sense of self-esteem and a sense of belonging in a state of alienation provides the basis for the vulnerability of individuals to embracing radical ideas that are appealing and alluring. According to Aghedo et.al (2017), individuals and groups will seek to assert identities that give them self-esteem when they are faced with threats of legitimacy, stability, and uncertainty. These threats have been, and continue to be present in the Nigerian polity, due to the failure of the state to be all-inclusive both in terms of governance and the allocation of benefits among its citizenries. The youths in the Northeast are socially, economically, and politically alienated and thus, view the secular state as illegitimate, unable to provide or guarantee a certain future for the teeming youth and as such, the need for them to take solace in extremist groups and ideas that promise the establishment of an Islamic state where their future will be guaranteed. This situation explains the vulnerability, voluntary acceptance and affiliation of youths to extremist groups like Boko Haram in the region, thereby, making them easily radicalized by these groups. Membership of religious extremist groups clearly offers these youths a lot of benefits which the state had failed to provide as explained earlier, encouraging them to adhere to the extremist doctrines meant to radicalize them.

Also, the extremist groups in a bid to radicalize the youths often paint a threatening picture of the secular state and other religious groups and beliefs to the sanctity, purity, and existence of the Islamic religion, creating a collective distinct religious identity for the youths. The creation of a distinct religious identity aid radicalization and create anger and bitterness in the individual youth against out-groups, spurning violent and terrorist acts. The vital role of played by such religious identity was emphasized by Wright (2015, 78) ...

“To summarize, if religious identity is central to the identity of religious terrorists and the religious identity is salient, threats may be perceived as more relevant to the activated and important identity, resulting in increased anger and more support for retaliatory or confrontational interactions.....an aggregation of these reactions in large groups has the potential to be particularly devastating”.

Also, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and inability to cope with modern technology and globalization could create a sense of alienation, and social and economic exclusion which can, in turn, lead to anger and a sense of injustice as well as an existential threat to the teeming youths in the northeast region of Nigeria. These conditions, one can rightly argue, have laid the foundations for youths’ allurements into accepting extremists’ ideologies that promise a utopia of Islamic society in which their future is assured with a lot of benefits that the secular non-Islamic society

cannot offer (Kharroub, 2015). Self-identification of the individual youth with extremist ideology and their radicalization through indoctrination creates a collective social identity that spurs terrorism. Thus, the radicalization of youths leads to an uncompromising cognitive dissonance marked by an absolute claim to truth in opposition to other beliefs and ideologies engendering violence and terrorist attacks (Al Raffie, 2013, 72).

4.4 To what Extent are these Factors Reflected in the Government's Non-Militarized Response to Violent Extremism?

The fight against Boko-Haram terrorist activities has witnessed success and failure in the different spheres due to the successful and poor implementation of some of the policies developed by the government to tackle the insurgency. The government has used both military and non-military tactics to deal with the menace over the years which have recorded some successes and failures. To foster a successful campaign against Boko Haram terrorism the government took steps such as the creation of the Counter-Terrorism Centre (CTC), harmonization of existing criminal laws, the promulgation of the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011, bilateral and multilateral agreements with regional and global organizations, establishment of Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit in Abuja, Civilian Joint Task Force, Multi-National Joint Task Force among others (Ojelade, 2018, 4). Despite the efforts of the government, Boko Haram has become more brazen in its operation and even cooperating with ISWAP to carry out terrorist attacks on both the Nigerian state and neighboring states. Some members and affiliates of Boko Haram voluntarily and captured have however surrendered after realizing the risk and consequences of their actions. This opened the eyes of the government to the fact that the radicalization of youths particularly in the North East has been responsible for the continuity of Boko Haram attacks. Thus, the need to deradicalize surrendered and capture Boko Haram members. Deradicalization is a process, program, and technique of reversing the process of radicalization that members of an extremist group had passed through (Bukarti & Bryson, 2019). The necessity for de-radicalization has become more obvious in the past two years as thousands of youths lured into Boko Haram have pulled out. Between August and October 2021, over 5,000 Boko Haram recruits surrendered and more have been recorded since then (Onapajo & Ozden, 2020, 479). Since the radicalization of youths by extremist groups is a function of the inculcation of extremist ideology, it is therefore, pertinent to understand

that de-radicalization is a potent means of combating terrorism and preventing its spread (Onapajo & Ozden, 2020, 479).

In an effort to combat this social menace, the Nigerian government had in 2016 established the Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) in Gombe to handle the deradicalization of low risk, repentant Boko Haram members. And also established a rehabilitation center in Maiduguri to cater to children, women, and the elderly associated with Boko Haram (Brechenmacher, 2018). The guiding principle underlying the deradicalization programs of the government are Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) which culminated in the adoption of an Action Plan for Demobilization, Disassociation, Reintegration, and Reconciliation in conjunction with the International Organization on Migration in December 2017 (Brechenmacher 2018; Felbab-Brown, 2018). The implementation of the OSC has however been greeted by controversy, particularly over the criteria for differentiating those with high risk and those with low-security risk. Those with high risk were to remain in military custody while those with low risk were to be subjected to the OSC. To deradicalize the men subjected to the OSC, religious re-education, psychosocial support, basic education, and vocational training are the basic processes they undergo (Brechenmacher, 2018; The Conversation, 2021).

The implementation of the OSC involved 13 key government institutions which Onapajo & Ozden (2020, 12) highlighted below.

“In 2017, the government re-introduced a deradicalization program to improve upon the previous program, code-named Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC). The OPSC is designed as a multi-sector approach involving 13 key government agencies (including the Office of the National Security Adviser, the Nigerian Prisons Service, Nigerian Police Force, Department of Security Services, Nigerian Immigration Service, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, National Emergency Management Agency, National Identity Management Commission, Armed Forces, National Orientation Agency, National Youth Service Corp, National Directorate of Employment and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps) to deradicalize, rehabilitate, and reintegrate defectors”

Meanwhile, repentant Boko Haram members with high risks and those captured during military operations kept in prisons are also provided put through the deradicalization program (Felbab-Brown, 2018). Generally, Nigeria has three basic deradicalization programs for ex-Boko Haram members as summarized by Campbell (2020, paragraph 2) below.

“Currently, Nigeria has three deradicalization programs that support Boko Haram defectors. The Prison Program works with militants convicted of violent

extremist offenses or those on or awaiting trial. During the program, Imams teach classes on non-violent interpretations of Islam, and other program staff provide vocational training so that, when inmates fulfill their prison terms, they can reenter society with less risk of reverting to terrorism. Second, the Yellow Ribbon Initiative supports women and children associated with Boko Haram by providing psychosocial therapy and reintegration programs. Finally, Operation Safe Corridor, launched by the Nigerian military in 2015, works with Boko Haram defectors by addressing extremist ideology and providing them with trauma counseling. Two thousand members of Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa People (ISWAP) have defected through Operation Safe Corridor since its inception”

A more comprehensive description of the three deradicalization program has been provided by Bukarti and Bryson (2019) as shown in table two below.

Table 2: Nigeria Deradicalization Program for Repentant Boko Haram Members

	Prison Program	Yellow Ribbon Initiative	Operation Safe Corridor
Location	Kuje Prison, Abuja	Communities in Borno	Temporary facilities in Gombe state
Organiser	Nigerian Government	NEEM Foundation	Nigerian Government
Year Established	2014	2017	2016
Participants	Fighters convicted of extremist activities and awaiting trial inmates.	Women, children and young people associated with Boko Haram	Surrendered Boko Haram Combatants
Duration	Depends on time spent in custody	One year	In theory, sixteen weeks but in practice, one year
Program Philosophy	Combating religious ideology and offering vocational training	Providing Psychosocial, behavioral and reintegration training	Combating religious ideology, grievances and trauma

The success of the implementation of these programs depends on their ability to address the vital issues that predisposed the youth to radicalization in the first place and other conditions associated with them. Some major issues with these deradicalization programs, especially the OSC have been its lack of transparency, lack of formal structures, and the fear that the repentant Boko Haram members might still be a security risk to their communities. This situation has resulted in the rejection of those that were released for reintegration by their communities as members of the communities have no information about how well they have been de-radicalized and rehabilitated due to the secrecy in the implementation of the programs (Felbab-Brown, 2020). The lack of transparency in the way the programs are run has created concerns about the extent of economic empowerment of these people in terms of training which has created a general distrust in the implementation of the program. Aside from this, a very important issue to be considered in the program is the time frame for the completion. To have a proper deradicalization, basic education, and vocational training that is capable of helping the subject avoid being trapped in unemployment and poverty as well as illiteracy, the one-year timeframe is no doubt too short for the attainment of these goals. This kind of program need not be rushed because the radicalization process itself is gradual and to correct it within a very short time is very risky.

Also, the programs do not involve educational institutions that can provide proper literacy programs and this has cast doubt on the capability of the program implementers to achieve reasonable literacy. Educational bodies together with social workers and educational psychologists would help in designing proper education programs that will help to meet their literacy needs as well as reliable vocational training. Also, a major controversy surrounding this program is the assumption by the organizers and implementors that everyone who escapes from the group was a member. This has resulted in situation where civilians who manage to escape adoption are made to undergo the same deradicalization procedures as their kidnappers (repentant combatants). A social worker who works with OSC points this out when she states that....*“Only few were members. Majority were victims of circumstances. They were in their villages and were captured and forced into the bush,”*(Bamas 2020)

More so, the deradicalization and rehabilitation programs cannot yield expected outcomes if the victims are not rehabilitated and the youth in the general public in the northeast are left to wallow in abject poverty and unemployment. Moreover, the program has not considered the almajiri

system of Islamic education that serves as a source of recruits to Boko Haram and other extremist groups as well as the many unemployed youths in the Northeast to prevent the continuous supply of disgruntled and disenchanted manpower for radicalization and terrorist activities. There are no proper programs to address the literacy and employment needs of the youths in the region and this has jeopardized the envisioned success of counter-radicalization and counter-terrorism efforts of the government.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Discussion

The analysis of the major factors that aid the spread and adoption of radical ideologies in the northeast region of Nigeria from secondary data sources has shown that five major factors have been contributing to the susceptibility of youths in the region to the allurements of the Boko Haram terrorist movement. These five major factors identified in this study include poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, the almajiri system practiced in the region, and strong religious beliefs.

Data from the poverty headcount rate has shown the northeast region has the highest poverty headcount average rate (71.86) when compared to the other regions in the country. This, no doubt is a disturbing statistical representation of the ratio of people living below the poverty line (of USD1 per day) in the region, compared to the total population. It, therefore, will not be surprising to see the youths that live under such conditions to resort to whatever means they find in a quest to meet their basic needs, including joining extremist groups. Also, the Boko Haram group, being aware of such prevailing conditions, therefore, sees it as an avenue to entice these youths either by offering them meager sums to hatch the group's evil plots, allowing these youths to engage in unlawful enterprises of their own under the watch and protection of the group, as well as using these conditions as a rallying ideology to make these youths believe they have a common enemy, the state, which has failed in its responsibility to provide these youths with the platform or means necessary for them to escape their poverty.

Also, with the majority of the youths in the region lacking formal education and being unemployed, the Boko Haram group is faced with the seemingly easy task of getting these youths into their ranks and convincing them to do their biddings. The high levels of ignorance, occasioned by high levels of illiteracy, and unemployment in the region means that the region has a large population of individuals who lack the required education, skills, and means of livelihood to survive by themselves. The group, by targeting unemployed youths for recruitment, in some ways is benefitting from the conditions they have contributed to. The group has through its activities in the region destroyed the means of livelihood of these youths, as well as educational facilities (Vanguard 2014), and has as such contributed greatly to the problems of unemployment in the region.

The Almajiri system of education which is practiced in the region and other northern states in the country on its part contributes to this social problem. Apart from the social vices that this system occasions, religious indoctrination is no doubt carried out at this level. What is however noteworthy is that religious indoctrination and strong religious beliefs may not have necessarily been a strong enough motivation for these youths to join the terrorist group in the region. Although the group's foundation is based on Islam and the desire for a state that is governed based on a strict interpretation of Sharia Laws (Onuoha 2014), such ideology may have been propelled by a combination of an array of factors, including a feeling of alienation from the Nigerian state. It is no secret that in such a situation, "oppressed" people will have the tendency to seek solace in their religious beliefs, and as such become vulnerable to religious manipulations. No wonder Karl Marx (1843) opined that "*religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature,the opium of the people*"

To combat violent extremism in the region it is necessary for the government to first and foremost, address these risk factors that make the youth susceptible to violent extremism. However, the critical assessment of the government's non-militarized response to extremism in the region has shown that deradicalization programs and efforts are not designed to address these factors. Instead, the government has focused on deradicalizing and rehabilitating repentant terrorists, and sending them back to society to face the same conditions that lured them into extremism in the first place. The government's inability to address the root causes of this social problem has thus resulted in a situation where these deradicalization programs have yielded very little or no results.

Moreover, the OSC deradicalization program's focus on resensitization, training and economic resettlement of repentant terrorists could be having an unintended effect that makes extremism more attractive to these youths. The prospects of getting a better life than they had before joining Boko Haram after going through this program can therefore be an "incentifying" factor for radicalization. This was the same approach that was adopted in the Niger Delta Militants Amnesty program that ended up making former warlords very rich and powerful, while the issues they were fighting for in their communities remained unaddressed. Although, as Major-General BM Shafa, coordinator of the program, has stated, OSC "*is not an amnesty program*" (Bamas 2020). As much as this statement might be true in principle, one is inclined to believe that the two programs are alike in more ways than one and that OSC might perhaps be doomed to have the same outcome as the latter.

Finally, another major issue with the government's deradicalization programs is the fact that these repentant terrorists seem to be receiving better attention from the authorities than the actual victims. Perhaps the government should put a lot of focus on reconciliation, community healing, and economic empowerment of these victims. Without these, societies will continue to distrust and frustrate every effort to reintegrate these deradicalized terrorists into society.

5.2 Conclusion

The problem of youth radicalization and violent extremism in northeast Nigeria and the country as a whole is one that has continued to defy both mitigation, abatement, and eradication strategies and policies by the Nigerian government and stakeholders alike. The challenges with addressing radicalization and terrorism in the northeast region of Nigeria partly boils down to the lack of adequate knowledge by policymakers and implementors on the major or most pressing factors that make these youths vulnerable to the allurements of terrorist groups like Boko Haram, as well as a lack of in-depth knowledge on the influence of people's quest for social identities and how this affects their affinity to such group. This study has thus, found that strong religious beliefs, poverty, illiteracy, the almajiri system of Islamic education, and unemployment are the major factors that are the youths in the region vulnerable to radicalization into terrorism. Also, these factors, viewed from the SIT perspective, explains these youths' desire to belong to a group like Boko Harm that not only gives them a sense of collective identity but also portrays them as an ingroup that is out to collective fight against the injustices, deprivation, and subjugation they have been subjected to by the outgroup (in this case, the Nigerian government, other religious groups, etc). The framing of the group's ideologies along these lines thus, makes it easy to elicit sympathy and commitment from these youths who already lack education, employment, and a good means of livelihood.

It is important to note here that all of these major factors that have been found to be responsible for the susceptibility of the youths in the region to the radical ideologies of the Boko Haram terrorist group all point to the continuous failures of the Nigerian government in its responsibilities to its citizenry. While it could be argued that strong religious beliefs as a risk factor, for instance, do not have any bearings on state failures, it is noteworthy to state that it is the prevailing bad socio-economic realities in that society that tend to push individuals to seek solace in their faith, thereby, exposing them to radical religious teachings.

What is, however, more disturbing is the fact that the government's deradicalization effort in the region has so far been unable to yield the desired results. Despite the government's claims and rehabilitating thousands, Boko Haram has obviously continued to wax stronger and this is undoubtedly, a result of the ease at which they are able to recruit youths. These deradicalization programs have been found in this study, to not take into consideration the reasons why these youths are vulnerable to terrorists' allurements in the first place into account in their design and implementation. Hence, deradicalization programs like the OSC in the region may actually be serving as an incentive for people to become radicalized into extremism and reap the economic benefits of going through deradicalization afterward. In line with this, further research is needed to examine how deradicalization programs in Nigeria are yielding counter effects. Such research would possibly focus on a comparative analysis of previous or other current extremist movements in the country, the government's non-kinetic responses, and its effects in order to establish the patterns of counter effects.

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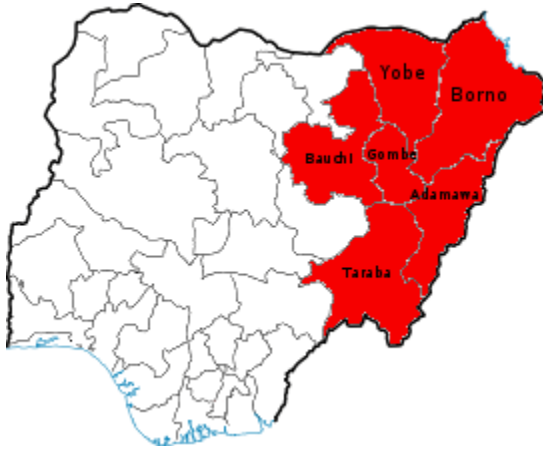
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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Archives of Sources

<i>Risk Factors for Youth Radicalization in Northeast Nigeria</i>	<i>Number of Sources</i>	
	<i>Journals</i>	<i>Others</i>
Poverty	1	6
Unemployment	2	3
Illiteracy	1	1
Almajiri System	1	-
Religious Beliefs	1	2

Appendix 2: Map of Nigeria highlighting the northeast region



Source: en.wikipedia.org

Identification

Source1: Umea University Library
a)youth radicalization in northeast Nigeria =186 hits
b)Boko Haram terrorism=2,203 hits
c)insurgency/crisis in northeast Nigeria=1,288 hits
Total=3,667

Sum
5,526

Source 2: Taylor and Francis Online
a)youth radicalization in northeast Nigeria =110 hits
b)Boko Haram terrorism=1,374 hits
c)insurgency/crisis in northeast Nigeria=375 hits
Total =1,859

Screening

Screening Criteria
1) focus on the northeast/northern region
2 = motivations for terrorism/extremism
3 =Boko Haram ideologies and recruitment
Total Hits Selected=141

Records excluded:
5,385 hits

Eligibility

Elimination of duplication, Scanning of abstracts to determine relevance to the study.

Records excluded:
136

Included

Included studies: 5

Olojo, 2013

Aghedo and Eke, 2013

Avis, 2020

Kamta et' al, 2020

De Montclos, 2018