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Examining Youth's Propensity to Political Violence in Northern Nigeria: a Pilot Study Report

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Abstract

The Northern Nigeria has been experiencing violent conflict ever since the returned of civil rule in 199 ranging from ethno-religious crisis to domestic terrorism. Several studies were conducted in an effort to come to terms with the realities behind this persistence incidence of violence, where factors such as poverty, state failure, unemployment and frustration. However, despite all these studies very little is known about the peculiar environmental factors that makes the Northern Youth particularly more prone to political violence. This is therefore a pilot study which was conducted to explore the socio-cultural and political factors shaping and molding youth's attitude toward violence in a political context. The findings are intended to inform a wider research project which shall assesses the causes of radicalization of the Almajirai demographic cohort into violent extremism in the North-eastern Nigeria. The study generate the data through a cross-sectional survey, the data was collected from 90 respondents who were randomly selected among the Nigerian students in Universiti Utara Malaysia. The data was analyzed and interpreted using Partial Least Square techniques (PLS), with the aid of smartPLS 2.0. Eight research hypotheses were formulated in which 4 were supported 4 were not supported from the result of the pilot study.

Keywords: Youth, Political violence, Terrorism, Insurgency, Nigeria

Introduction

Ever since 2009 the Nigerian state has fallen under the grip of a violent extremist group popularly refer to as Boko Haram, where incidence of domestic terrorism becomes a recurrent decimal particularly in the North-eastern geo-political zones. It is imperative to note that despite offensive military action against them the group seems to be gaining ground for recruiting new members and unleashing more violence on the community in which more than 20,000 people have being killed, about hundred thousand displaced with many business venture such as banks closed down in the affected areas Meagher (2013).

The above scenario can go a long way in creating a serious problems in the country both for economic development and governance, this is because the significance of Foreign investment in enhancing the achievement of sustainable development cannot be over emphasize, as It contributes tremendously in boosting the Gross Domestic Product of a country through the creation of opportunities and means of livelihood such as the jobs creation and the providing large scale products and services in the host nation (Comolli & Neuber, 2015).

It therefore, connote that unfavorable business environment in the north-eastern Nigeria created by the incidence of political violence denied Nigeria this important opportunity by essentially stagnating external resources inflow into the country and not only that the violence has a tendency of consuming a greater percentage of the internal resources by shifting the government focus to the security sector to the detriment of other sectors. In Nigeria it is estimated that about 4.62 trillion naira was spent on security alone since 2010 (Comolli & Neuber, 2015).
Thus, the Government is confronted with an enormous dilemma of where to priorities its expenditure outlets, because when left unattended the violence will gradually developed into a full-pledged civil war with huge threat on the corporate existence of the Nigerian state (Adams & Ogbonnaya, 2014) and when huge resources

are allocated to the security sector its undermine the Government capacity of promoting viable human capital development and other growth and productivity sectors. This undoubtly poses a huge challenge to the dynamic framework of job creation and poverty eradication, which unequivocally constitutes the hallmark of sustainable development (Comolli & Neuber, 2015).

Perhaps sensing this dilemma the current Government of President Muhammadu Buhari gave an ultimatum for the military to flush and finish up the Boko Haram miscreants before January 2016. However, finishing a militant or terrorist does not guarantee the end of terrorism, unless the environmental conditions providing impetus for the grow and support of extremism are identify and uprooted. As research by Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom, (2008), shows about 40 percent of violent conflict tend to reoccur one decade after. This may likely be attributed to the failure to address the factors that resulted to the violence in the first place. For instance, in Nigeria many observers argued that Boko Haram is a precursor to the "mai tatsine" uprising which occurred in the 80s, because the conditions that gave birth to "maitatsine" were not properly address the idea lingers and manifest in different form. This line of argument appear to be viable in the sense that as argued by scholars such as Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996), violence promoters are always presence in society but unless the condition within it is structured in such a way where people respond emotionally in support of their ideas they will ended up as mere voice crying in the wilderness.

Research Objectives

Against the above background, this paper intends to examine socio-political factors responsible for youth involvement in political violence in North-eastern Nigeria. Specifically the study intends to achieve the following objectives:

(1) Examine how bad Governance contribute to youth Radicalization into violence extremism
(2) Examine how economic deprivation makes the youth vulnerable to political violence
(3) Examine how social structure contribute in youth radicalization into violent extremism

Research Methodology

The paper adopted a positivist research paradigm which plans to test hypotheses reflecting cause and effect relationships between variables in line with empirical proofs and evidence (Creswell, 2012). As this is a pilot study the findings from which shall be used to design a wider research project that shall assess the causes of Radicalization of the Almajiri Cohort into violent extremism in North-eastern Nigeria, 90 respondents were randomly selected using a survey questionnaire with five Likert's scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In terms of measurement Bad Governance was measure using Kettani, Gurstein, and El Mahdi, (2009), Group cohesion was measure using Kassimeris and Jackson (2012), Akers and Jensen (2006) was used to measure social learning, Bandura (1996) was used to measured moral disengagement, alienation was measure using Robertson (2012) social control was measure using Hirschi (1986) and finally economic deprivation was measured using Kvedaraite, et al. (2012). All items were modified to suit this study and were chosen based on their Cronbachs Alpha. The result was analyzed using Smart PLS 2 using multiple regression analysis to determine the relationship involve.

Theoretical Framework

The General Strain Theory of Terrorism

The General Strain Theory of Terrorism was developed by Robert Agnew in 2010. According to this theory terrorism is most likely to occur because of the experience of 'collective strains' or strains experienced by the individuals from an identifiable group or collectivity, frequently a race/ethnic, religious, class, political, and/or regional group. Just a little rate of collective strains improves the probability of terrorism, on the other hand. These strains are: High in degree, with civilian citizen casualties; Unjust; and brought about by fundamentally the most powerful others, including complicit civilians, with whom individuals from the strained collectivity have weak ties.

The strain is seen as undeserved, the strain is not in the administration of some greater good. The procedure used to choose whether to perpetrate the strain is unjust. The strain abuses emphatically held social norms or values, particularly those typified in the criminal law. The strain that individuals from the collectivity experience is altogether different from their past treatment in comparative circumstances and/or from the treatment of comparable others (i.e. individuals from the collectivity are liable to oppressive treatment). Collective strains are prone to be seen as unjust first and second conditions are fulfilled or if one of alternate conditions is fulfilled**.**

The above collective strains lead to strong negative emotional states and attributes including resentment, mortification, and sadness which are helpful for terrorism, and the relentless experience of these strains adds to an elevated propensity to experience negative emotional states. Negative emotions make much weight for corrective activity; people feel bad and need to make a move. These emotions likewise lessen the capacity to adapt in a lawful way. Furious people, for instance, are less ready to precisely get to their circumstance and successfully communicate with others. Further, these emotions lower restraints, lessening both the attention to and sympathy toward the outcomes of one's conduct.

The above strains decrease the capacity of those in the strained collectivity to viably utilize such coping methodologies as negotiation, lobbying, protest, appeals to external agencies, for example, the United Nations. Specifically, these strains further debilitate the emotional ties between individuals from the strained collectivity and the sources of strain. They deprived those in the strained collectivity of esteemed belonging, and also the future hope, abandoning them with little to lose on the off chance that they participate in terrorism. They debilitate the conviction that terrorism is not right.

These strains encourage a collective orientation and reaction individuals from the strained collectivity trust they are under genuine threat by all the more powerful others with whom they have weak ties. This does much to encourage an uplifted feeling of collective identity. This identity intensifies the experience of vicarious strains, since we think more about those we nearly relate to. It makes a feeling of 'linked fate', or an 'intense feeling of mindfulness (or acknowledgment) that what happens to the group will likewise influence the individual member' (Simien, 2005: 529). It in this way makes a feeling of commitment to secure others in the collectivity, in any event among those generally cast in the protector role.

In relating the GST theory to youth radicalization into political violence in Nigeria it becomes imperative to note that the country is confronted by chronic unemployment in which 41.6 percent of youth are unemployed (Okafor, 2011). Poverty rate is almost high particularly in the North-East and North-West with 77.7 and 76.3 respectively, so it is never by mere coincidence that these two sub-regions continue to witness high incidence of political violence. Taking into cognizance's the ugly scenario of poverty and unemployment in the North-Eastern Nigeria this study thus try to test the General Strain Theory of Terrorism to determines whether it is applicable in explaining the youth's propensity to political violence in the Region.

Hypotheses Development

Based on the theoretical justifications and prior empirical evidence (e.g. Agnew, 2010), the hypotheses that will guide the conduct of this study have been developed for empirical validation and testing. Ten research hypotheses are therefore developed in line with objectives one, three and four.

Bad Governance and Political Violence

Omololu (2007) observed that the persistent violence and political turmoil in Nigeria are as a result of poor governance and legitimacy crisis, where corruption, manipulations of youth, lack of transparency and accountability gradually create a lack of faith the by the citizens on both the political leaders and the political system. Youth interest and Participation in state affair hence becomes very low as they perceived as irrelevant to their lives. Same sentiment is also shared by other scholars (e.g. Ogundiya, 2010, Uzodike & Maiangwa, 2012, Meagher, 2013, Ewetan & Ese, 2014).

H1: there is a positive relationship between bad governance and the youth propensity to political violence.

Economic deprivation and Almajirai vulnerability to political violence

There is a considerable body of theories and empirical evidence linking economic conditions to violence and crime either directly or through some intervening forces where theories such as the social disorganization theory (Kornhauser, 1978), Strain theory (Agnew, 2010), opportunity theory (Miethe, Hughes & McDowell, 1991), the economic theory of crime (Posner, 1985), subcultural theories (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967) and the relative deprivation theory all argued that economic deprivation can lead to crime and deviant behavior such as violence. Also recent empirical studies shows that countries with high rate of poverty, unemployment and inequality experience high level of instability and conflict than those countries with lower poverty and inequality rate (Piazza, 2006, Rao, 2015).

Drawing from the above theoretical positions and empirical evidence the following hypotheses are thus developed to answer research question three thereby achieving to the research objective associated with it:
H2: There is a positive relationship between material deprivation and youth propensity to political violence.

H3: there is positive relationship between lack of job opportunities and youth propensity to political violence.

Social structures and Almajirai vulnerability to political violence

Theories such as the General Strain theory of Terrorism (Agnew, 2010) and the social theory of deviance (Taylor, Walton & Young, 2013), suggest that social factors such as group cohesion, reduced social control, alienation, moral disengagement and social learning of terrorism plays important role in determining youth participation in anti-social behaviors. In same vein reviewed of empirical evidence by Akers & Jensen, (2006) social learning is very important in explaining deviance behavior by youth. Another study by Rodgers (2001) revealed how moral disengagement and social learning contributed to deviant behavior. In yet another study by Ross (1996) social learning is seen as contributing to opposition and political terrorism. Joshi (2003) also revealed that exposure to terrorism by children eventually transformed them into terrorist. Perliger and Pedahzur, (2011) suggest that social network influence terrorism behavior. Poor social control was also revealed to be a determinant factor in terrorism and deviance behavior (Mythen & Walklate, 2006). Researchers such as Hoffman (1994), Ginges (1997), Atran (2003),) and Forst (2009), revealed how alienation plays role in involvement in act of terrorism and other political violence. Moral disengagement was also seen by researchers as a contributing factor to involvement in political violence (McAlister, Bandura & Owen, 2006,). Group cohesion was also observed as a contributing factor in youth partaking in political violence (Atran, 2003, Fellman, & Wright, 2014).
Against the above theoretical and empirical evidences the following hypotheses were therefore developed:

H4: there is a positive relation between reduced social control and youth propensity to political violence
H5: There is a positive relationship between social cohesion and youth propensity to political violence
H6: There is a positive relationship between alienation and youth propensity to political violence.
H7: There is a positive relationship between moral disengagement and youth propensity to political violence
H8: There is positive relationship between social learning of terrorism and youth propensity to political violence.

Analysis and Result

Partial least square technique (PLS) with the aid of smartPLS 2.0 was utilized in analyzing the data generated for the pilot study.

Measurement model

The measurement model consists of relationships among the latent variables and their (item) indicators. It is necessary to first establish construct validity for the measurement model before assessing the structural model for hypothesis testing. Construct validity concerns the extent to which the indicators reflect their underlying constructs (latent variables). Items in the measurement model need to demonstrate sufficient convergent and discriminant validity as a condition for establishing construct validity. As recommended by Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson (2006), factor loadings, composite reliability and average variance extracted

(AVE) were used to assess convergent validity. Table 1 lists the indicator loadings/weights, reliabilities and AVE for all the items listed in the model.

Table 1 Loadings/weights, reliabilities and AVE for all the items listed in the model.

constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE	Composite Reliability
Alienation	ALN 3	0.779737	0.699942	0.874682
	ALN 4	0.883841		
	ALN 5	0.843007		
Governance	GOV 1	0.740189	0.588004	0.810513
	GOV 2	0.79829		
	GOV 7	0.760832		
Social control	CTRL1	0.739959	0.634513	0.775572
	CTRL 3	0.849403		
Deprivation	DEP 4	0.768067	0.588941	0.7413
	DEP 5	0.766782		
Group norms	GRP 3	0.813646	0.597731	0.816523
	GRP 4	0.766822		
	GRP 5	0.736993		
Moral disengagement	MRL 1	0.854323	0.686964	0.916408
	MRL 2	0.791119		
	MRL 3	0.856181		
	MRL 4	0.812906		
	MRL 5	0.827783		
Opportunity	OPP 3	0.797276	0.658819	0.852502
	OPP 4	0.863593		
	OPP 5	0.771373		
social learning	SOC 1	0.819115	0.604173	0.859136
	SOC 2	0.759806		
	SOC 3	0.772418		
	SOC 4	0.75618		
Propensity to violence	PRO 2	0.721185	0.619437	0.829508
	PRO 6	0.802102		
	PRO 7	0.833567		

Table 2 Square root of AVE and Latent Variable correlations

Construct	Alienation	Governance	Deprivation	Group Norms	Moral Disengagement	opportunity	propensity	social control	social learning
Alienation	**0.836625364**								
Governance	0.229255	**0.766814189**							
Deprivation	0.15524	-0.01369	**0.767424915**						
Group Norms	0.270715	0.06833	0.294419	**0.773130649**					
Moral Disengagement	0.409687	0.067632	0.365229	0.439264	**0.828832914**				
opportunity	0.443615	0.150975	0.211366	0.125831	0.274552	**0.81167666**			
propensity	0.397617	0.409179	0.408131	0.302378	0.40347	0.323055	**0.787043201**		
social control	0.147028	0.07072	0.266672	0.349456	0.193011	0.028698	0.353082	**0.796563243**	
social learning	0.327885	0.073655	0.150038	0.435053	0.46291	0.321263	0.139013	0.06233	**0.777285662**

The interpretation of internal consistency reliability using composite reliability coefficient was based on the rule of thumb by Bagozzi and Yi (1988) and Hair et al (2011), who suggest that composite reliability coefficient should at least be .70 as shown from the above the composite reliability of each latent construct has reached the minimum acceptable level indicating adequate internal consistency.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity refers to the extent to which items truly represent the intended latent construct and indeed correlate with other measures of same construct. As suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981) convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each latent construct. As can be seen from the above table AVE was achieved as the minimum acceptable level is .50.

Discriminant Validity

This refers to the extent to which a particular latent construct is different from other construct (Duarte & Raposo, 2010). In this study discriminant validity was determined by comparing the correlation among the latent construct with square roots of AVE. as indicated from the table below, the square root of the AVE were all greater than the correlations among latent constructs, indicating adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3 Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta Value	Std. Error	T Value	P Value	Decision
H1	Alienation -> propensity	0.143	0.101	1.412	0.079	Not supported
H2	Bad governance -> propensity	0.338	0.081	4.226	1.414	supported
H3	Deprivation -> propensity	0.242	0.086	2.802	0.002	supported
H4	Group cohesion -> propensity	0.061	0.113	0.537	0.283	Not supported
H5	Moral disengagement -> propensity	0.199	0.112	1.777	0.038	supported
H6	Opportunity -> propensity	0.135	0.105	1.283	0.1	Not supported
H7	Social control -> propensity	0.188	0.082	2.281	0.011	supported
H8	Social learning -> propensity	-0.143	0.142	1.004	0.157	Not supported

Assessment of Effect Size

Effect size indicates the relative effect of a particular exogenous latent variable on endogenous latent variable in the R-square (Chin, 1998). It is calculated as the increase in R-square of the latent variable to which the path is connected, relative to the latent variable's proportion of unexplained variance (Chin, 1998). Table 4 below shows the respective effect size of the latent variables of the structural model.

Table 4

f2 Effect Size

Endogenous	Exogenous	R-Squared Included	R-Squared Excluded	f-squared	Effect size
Propensity to Violence	Alienation	0.484	0.471	0.0252	Small
	Bad Governance	0.484	0.377	0.2074	Medium
	Deprivation	0.484	0.443	0.0795	Small
	Group Cohesion	0.484	0.482	0.0039	None
	Moral Disengagement	0.484	0.458	0.0504	Small
	Opportunity	0.484	0.468	0.031	Small
	Social control	0.484	0.456	0.0543	Small
	Social learning	0.484	0.47	0.0271	Small

As indicated from the above table the effect size for bad governance is medium, while group cohesion has no effect and alienation, deprivation, moral disengagement, opportunity, social control and social learning all have small effect size.

Assessment of Predictive Relevance

This study applied Stone-Geisser's test of predictive relevance of the research model using blindfolding procedure (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). Predictive relevance is usually used as a supplementary assessment of goodness-of-fit in partial least Square modeling (Duarte & Raposo, 2010).

Table 5

Redundancy Q2 Value

Total	SSO	SSE	1- SSE/SSO
Propensity to Violence	270	204.5848	0.242279

As shown in table 5 above, the cross-validation redundancy measure Q2 for all endogenous latent variables were above zero, indicating relevance of the model (Chin, 1998; Henseler, 2009).

Conclusion

Though is a pilot study, but the work has in general parlance provide additional evidence to the growing body of knowledge concerning the linkage between collective strain and terrorism, especially as the hypotheses related to Bad governance, deprivation, moral disengagement and social control were all supported this shows that the General Strain Theory of Terrorism is relevant in explaining the youth's propensity to political violence in Northern Nigeria.

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