



Historical Review of Terrorism and Out-of-School Children Indoctrination and Radicalization: A Preliminary Investigation into the Child Abuse in the Boko Haram Suicide Bombing in Yobe State

LAWAN JAFARU TAHIR, AISHA ALKALI
Yobe State University, Damaturu, Nigeria

Abstract. This research paper intends to examine how the activities of terrorist cell especially those in West African sub-region initiates under age into their operation. The work looked at the nature of terrorism in Nigeria as to how their network spread to various parts of the country. It is believed most of the origin of the terrorism was influence by foreign ideology with specific target of a common belief. The paper also focused on the formation of the terrorists' cell in Nigeria and how they succeeded by indoctrinating children into the main stream of terrorism for various missions. The research discusses the way and processes those terrorists followed or applied to achieve their objectives. It should be noted that throughout the period of the crisis, particularly in north-eastern Nigeria, there are several cases of attacks by the teenagers in various places with devastating effects on the society. It has been estimated that more 43% of the attacks in Yobe state which is the scope of the research and its surrounding has been attributed to suicide bombing attacks by either young girls or boys who were trained by the insurgents to attack their targets, with emphasis on the child abuse and radicalization, as well as how it affects the growth and development of youth in the society. Other aspect of consideration in the research include factors responsible for the successful enrolment and initiation of the underage into the organization. These factors include: poverty level of the society, materialism, ideological warfare, Islamism or secular radicalism, drugs addiction etc. Recent world report reveals that more than 20,000 people were killed and over two million displaced by the insurgency. Although the crisis has bedeviled almost 60% of the country, northeastern Nigeria was one of the most affected region of this terrible terrorist's act. The overall effects of this indoctrination and radicalization of the youth by these groups have been a tremendous increased rate of crime within the region, hunger and starvation as well as general psychological trauma and fear of the unknown which was brought by the

consequences of the general insecurity. The research also come up with the level of psychological damage done by the terrorists and examine whether the recent de-radicalization centers established by the Nigerian government shall serve its purpose or there is need for more measure to revert the victims back to the normal and official thinking of the decent society.

Keywords: Children, Boko Haram, Indoctrination, Radicalization, Terrorism

1. Introduction

Nigeria has been engulfed with series of attacks by terrorists for almost two decades. This has been largely attributed to child neglect and crass youth underemployment. Even though different scholars have diverse opinion as to the main causes of the problem, one common universally accepted argument is, nothing has been done engage the youthful population of Nigeria in terms of employment or productivity. The youth have been abandoned to survive amidst terrible economic policies.

Terrorism is globally condemned as an act of unconventional measure or retaliation by an individual or groups of individuals who felt aggrieved with has been done particularly some great injustice to done in the past them. Terrorism is an armed uprising in form of guerrilla war, contesting against a government or state that presume to have failed in the system of governance. According to {M. (E. Okem) terrorists are actors who do not belong to any recognized armed forces or who do not adhere to the laws of war and who are therefore regarded as rogue actors.

Ius Gentium, defined the term Terrorism as a situation or condition of revolt against a recognized government that does not reach the proportion of an organized revolutionary government and is not recognized as belligerency. Terrorist is a person who rises in forcible

opposition to lawful authority especially person who engages in armed resistance to a government or to the execution of its law, rebel. (Collins English Dictionary). According to Human Rights Watch, the military recruitment of children under 18 years of age and their use in hostilities occurs in at least 86 countries and territories, with Amnesty International estimating that there are approximately 250,000 children fighting in conflicts worldwide. (K, Lakhani:2016) Taliban commander Qari Hussain when interviewed by Journalist Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, he mentioned:

Although young militants are generally teenagers when asked to carry out suicide attacks, the indoctrination of children often starts at a much younger age. We recruit children as young as five, six and seven years old, emphasizing, "Children are tools to achieve God's will. And whatever comes your way, you sacrifice it. (ibid)

This work intends to examine the factors and forces behind the course and causes of one important historical epoch that engulfed one of the West African societies- Nigeria, i.e Terrorism. As a nation, Nigeria has about thirty-six states including federal capital territory. These states have been divided into six different geo-political zones, namely South-South, South-East, South-West, North-West, North-Central and North-East respectively. The purpose of this research is to look at how terrorism beclouded the North-Eastern region in recent years with the emergence of Boko Haram terrorist cell and their systematic approach to indoctrinating children below the age maturity as their agents of destruction through suicide bombing and bomb blast. Historically, it is assumed that terrorist's activities started with the emergence of two global developments. One is the endless crisis between Palestinians and Jews of the Israel which continue to have serious negative impacts on the lives of the Palestine nation. As a result, majority of the people there lost confidence in the global justice and took up arms to defend themselves through guerrilla warfare which to the believe of many political governments of America and Europe is, but terrorists reactionary forces. The second development was after the end of Russian/Afghanistan war which subsequently led to the establishment of the Taliban government. The relation between Afghanistan and the west turned sour to the extent a serious Islamic agitating network known as Al-Qaeda was founded, which was later condemned by the west and America as a terrorist group. It was against this background other agitating movement in Africa south of the Sahara such Al-Shabab, MUJAO, ISWAP, Boko Haram, continue to emerged in the name of Jihad with the view to established Islamic government free from western

ideology and civilization. This research work will therefore discuss how such movement and network penetrated into Nigeria and the various factors that strengthen the consolidation of the terrorists group. Emphasis shall be focus on how teenagers were recruited, radicalized and indoctrinated in order to achieve their targets. The work will inquire on the level of negligence of the society and government particularly in the course of the crisis.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Between 2006 and 2016, various attacks were carried out by the terrorists' cell of Boko Haram and other criminal groups using little boys and girls of underage as their agents, informants and suicide bombers. Why? The attacked was so devastating that many lives were lost and the teenagers carried out the attacks without fear or regrets. Was there any method used to achieve that purpose? What was the method used to succeed in radicalizing and indoctrinating such little kids to convert them into such deadly act? Was there no enough security measure and other reversal method from the side of the government stop such ugly development? What was the ideology used to convince the kids? Was it huge material deception or psychological re-orientation? Was there the influence of drugs to addicts them for the purpose of that mission. The need to carry out a research on this particular issue especially regarding the victimization of the substantial number of children that were wasted during these terrorists' activities which lasted for almost a decade is indeed paramount. There is every justification to critically examine the whole scenario as to how possible measures could be taken to curtail the re-occurrence of such situation.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the various menace associated with Out of School Children in Yobe State metropolis with the view to proffer effective communication approaches that can be used for reforming the system. To achieve this, the following objectives are set to be achieved:

- To determine the menace associated with the indoctrination of out of school children in Yobe state major cities during the Boko Haram crisis.
- To examine the factors behind the radicalization and indoctrination of teenagers by the terrorist's group in Nigeria especially north-eastern region.
- To examine the extent of which the terrorist used teenagers as agents of attack in the insurgency fight.
- To explore effective communication approaches that can be used to reform the indoctrinated children and to eradicate the menace associated with it in Yobe state.

2. Research Methodology

This study has employed mixed research method. The population of this study comprised people from the ages of 20 to 50 years which include both gender from different religions and occupations and professions. The population of the study location was projected by the recent UNDP 2023. The sample size was drawn by using Monkey Survey calculator software, which gave the researcher positive approach level of 93% and thus this research has arrived at 165 people that were administered with questionnaire. At the end, the returned questionnaire which number about 158 were objectively analyzed.

Common causes of Terrorism in a Society

Among the points usually raised is that the system prepares breeding grounds for fanatics to transformed and form terrorists' cell. For instance as observed by Joseph G. (2017), out of school children whose parents have neglected paved a way for terrorism and banditry to emerged going by the difficult lifestyle they undergo during their formative period, which has been full of deprivation, frustration, oppression and lack of education and other basic social amenities they should have provided by the government as legal members of the society.(S Garba:2022) This study analyzes the empirical on-field evidences on the menace associated with Out of School Children who were targeted as part of the terrorists operation in Yobe state. among some of the factors include:

- School drop out
- Parental negligence and dogging of responsibility
- Poverty and hunger in the society
- Absent of Child-care system
- Illiteracy/ignorance
- Materialism

Based on the above causes, the researcher having collected the questionnaire distributed have analyzed and decoded the information and below results were obtained.

Demographic Information of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-35	55	31.40
35-40	65	37.41
30-above	50	27.10

Source: Field Survey, ,2024

Table 1 provides insight into the age distribution of respondents who took part in the survey. The table

suggested that most of the respondents were between the ages of 35– 40.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	120	65.40
Female	85	45.53

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2, indicates that male gender 110 (59.45) are more than the female respondents 75 (40.54) who took part in the study.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Islam	135	72.97
Christianity	47	25.40
Traditional	3	1.62

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 indicates that majority of the respondents were Muslims followers of Islam (75.67%)while (24.32%) were Christians, traditionalists were only (1.08%).

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Housewife	23	12.43
Students	37	20
Farmer	35	18.91
Public servant	50	27.02
Trader	40	21.62

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 4 sheds insight into occupational distribution of respondents who took part in the study. The table indicated that, majority of the respondents (27.02) were public servants, while 23 (12.43) of the respondents were housewives and they were the least who took part in this study.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by educational qualifications.

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Degree/HND	15	9.72
NCE/OND	35	20.65
Secondary	50	28.41
Primary	30	18.44
Quranic only	23	12.41
None	0	0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Boko Haram Method of Recruitment

Table 5 sheds light on the educational qualification of the respondents. Majority of the respondents 60(32.43%) were secondary Certificate holders while 42 (22.70%) of the respondents were NCE/OND holders, 20(13.51%) have Qur'anic Education only.

Menace Associated with Out of School Children

Table 6: Does Out of School Children system promote laziness?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	145	78.37
No	40	21.62
Not sure	5	2.70

Source: Field Survey

Table 6 shows that majority of the respondents 14(78.37%) were on the view that Out of School Children System promotes laziness. Forty (21.62%) of respondents who took part in the study did not believe that Out of School Children system has promote laziness.

Boko Haram and the Vulnerable out of School Child

Majority of the people that took part in this study were between the ages of 36 to 45 and they were about 39.45%. This age category can be in the parental stage, most of them may be guardians or have their own children hence they are the right people to answer most of the questions regarding the issues of Out of School Children.

However, in this study male respondents were majority, they were about 59.45. % eventhough the gap between the male and female respondents was not much but still the disparity of 19.39% can make significant differences on the results of this study. Moreover, the percentage of women who participate in this study is also encouraging when consider how women were left behind in some social issues in this part of the country.

Religious play a very vital role in the social life of the people of Yobe State Metropolitan Council. As indicated in the Table 3 of this study majority of the respondents who took part in study were Muslims which were about 72.97% and 25.32% of the respondents were Christians while only 1.62% were traditionalists and followers of other believes. The issue of this study has a strong tied with Islamic religion hence there may be sympathy from the Muslims respondents in answering some of this study questions.

Occupational activities are essential aspects of the people of Yobe State, Metropolitan Council. In this study the highest numbers of the respondents were public servants that occupy about 27.02% and followed by the traders which were 21.26% of the respondents. Previous studies have shown that in some areas children that were sent for Out of School Children in the urban centers worked as domestic

servants in the houses of Public Servants or well to do houses in order to get food to eat. Hence the response of Public Servants in this study is very crucial. However, the author has the view that Almajirai usually used the market area where most of the traders are doing their business to conduct their begging activities; therefore, traders have a very crucial role to play on the existence of Almajirai. However, farmers' respondents were 18.91% and may be also benefited from the labour of Almajirai in their farms. In other words, farmers at times used Almajirai as a chief source of labour in their farms. This is also a tradition in some places that Almajirai were used to work in the farms with little pay. Undoubtedly, those who have, opportune to study in tertiary institutions they might be aware that Almajirai were used to serve students for washing their cloths and to Education is fundamental in the social life of the people. As indicated in the tables 4 of this study majority of the respondents have obtained secondary school certificates. This shown that they were literate and they could read and write. In this study there was no single individual respondent that did not attend school. Among the respondents 13.51% have studied Quranic education only. In the view of the author, it is only when people are more enlightened that the issue of Out of School Children will be sanitized and reformed.

The result of this survey confirms that 78.37% of respondents have agreed that Out of School Children system promote laziness. The system is considered as counter-productive. The system encourages children, adolescence and able-bodied young men to leech on economic system. This ultimately reduces the Gross Per Capital Income (GPCI) with negative neglect on standard of living.

Although 54.05% of respondent in this survey did not confirm that Out of School Children system denies producing future professionals but about 35.67% respondents have agreed that Out of School Children become a serious barrier for producing professionals in Yobe State metropolitan council. Without doubt, the high number of Almajirai in Northern Nigeria in which Yobe State Metropolitan Council inclusive portend a great danger to the development of professionals that will champion the cause of the region and the country in the future. This position has reinforced by Perverz (2005) who concludes that the practice of Out of School Children in Northern Nigeria is denying the region from producing future professionals that would contribute to positive economic development of our nation. Given that the Northern Nigeria is arguably the region that is mostly, in dire need of professionals to champion its economic

transformation, finding solution to Out of School Children in this region is sacrosanct.

The menace associated with Out of School Children is tremendous it includes child neglect among parents. Naja'atu Bala Muhammed a woman activist in northern Nigeria from Kano:

You gave an Islamic scholar 40 children. You did not know him and he did not know you. As parents, you didn't know anything about the shelter and feeding of these children. It is as a result of this some (of them) they become home sexual, some kidnapers and if these children were stolen by ritualists or human organ traders, who will know this. (BBCnews:2022)

The above statement confirms by the result of this study where by about 83.78% of the respondents as indicated in table 8 have agreed that Out of School Children system encourage child's begging which exposes them to all sort of hazards. Moreover, it noted that begging exposes the Almajirai to all manners of environmental hazards which affects them psychologically and instill inferiority complex, dependency, sense of defection and all sorts of negatives psychological feeling and make them vulnerable and susceptible to social vices. They often come in contact with all kind of people and experiences in the society; the good, the bad and the ugly. As juvenile, they can hardly differentiate the right from the wrong. In other words, psychological deficiencies leading to other vices arise from the young people's exposure to the Out of School Children system [26]. However, in the Course of Out of School Children moving from one place to another to seek alms having been neglected by their parents, teachers, society and the government, the children become exposed to danger and susceptible to becoming extremists. Several authors alleged that Out of School Children lifestyle provided a cheap source of man power for terrorists and contributory to the growth of the Boko-Haram security challenges in Nigeria [14,15]. Undoubtedly, in this regard, the present study further confirms that Out of School Children system has provided a breeding ground for terrorist where by about 32.43% of the respondents in table 9 have agreed with this. Although majority of the respondents who were about 44.32% have contrary view but the 32.43% the respondents have established enough evidence that Out of School Children system has provided a breeding ground for recruitment of terrorists in the country. The reason behind the large percentage of those who were not affirmed that Out of School Children is contributing for Boko-Haram might be because this study has taken place in Yobe State Metropolitan Council in which the Out of School

Children issue is almost a culture to the people of the area.

Processes of Indoctrination and Radicalization of Child as terrorist

Radicalization is perceived as a grievances and moral exploitation. Grievances that emanated from human action thus involve violence and norms resulted due to injustice. (Sageman:2008).

However, in numerous armed conflicts all over the world, children continue to be used as weapons of war. According to Human Rights Watch, terrorist's recruitment of children under 18 years of age and their use in hostilities occurs in at least 86 countries and territories, with Amnesty International estimating that there are approximately 250,000 children fighting in conflicts worldwide. (opp cit)

In Nigeria especially Boko Haram troubled area, a significant number of suicide bombers were children between 12 and 18 years of age. Although according J Tahir, young militants are generally teenagers when asked to carry out suicide attacks, the indoctrination of children often starts at a much younger age. (L J Tahir: 2018).

However, below are some of the identified factors that facilitated the recruitment, indoctrination and radicalization of children in Yobe state.

Role of Traditional Islamic School (Tsangaya)

Wider argument has strongly condemned the attitude of local Islamic school in the way the tutors handle the students, in fact the actual number of madrassas (religious schools) in Northern Nigeria or even the scope of the research is not known precisely even by the government. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, "Experts say there is no credible information for the number of unregistered madrassas, but estimates of registered madrassas range from twelve thousand to twenty thousand in northern part of the country. (NCAOS: 2024) When looking at the numbers of children who attend Tsangaya school in the country, it is not an exaggerated when one concludes the system prepares ground for the terrorists to easily lured the children into the cell with all what the school could not offer them. The factor behind this easy access to the children was the vulnerability of low-income families that almost give up their children to then larger society through the weak and greedy tutor as the last alternative to the child survival.

Children at a young age are deeply vulnerable, malleable and impressionable, traits often manipulated

by group leaders in conflicts throughout the world to indoctrinate child soldiers. (Ibid) According to Azhar Hussain, a consultant with various international organizations on madrasa enhancement in Pakistan, the curriculum in these Tsangaya schools is focused on religion especially science Quran only, and rarely incorporates other fields that ultimately foster critical thinking and analysis. In many of these school, students are also not allowed to watch television or read any western materials not prescribed by their tutors and are “severely reprimanded based on the teaching and instruction of their teachers. This research therefore discovered that indoctrination is therefore use as an important tool in radicalizing those children. There was absent of wider interpretation of Islam.

Financial inducement.

In 2013, US Institute of peace commission, a study clean foundation in Nigeria had examined factors responsible for youth radicalization or recruitment into armed group. The field research which selected affected areas revealed financial crisis which brought wide spread poverty and growing population of destitute children led Boko Haram to exploit the situation and paid them 5000 naira which was equivalent to 30 Dollars then as a mean of seducing them to achieve their target on enemy. It is clear that poverty level in Yobe state is below the development index by UNDP. For Instance. Percent of population living on less than poverty thresholds as at 2012 which was the peak of book Haram crisis in Yobe state was 59.0% (\$2.15), and 99.2% when Dollar was (\$6.85). (Wikipedia :2014) going by this economically terrible condition, it is pertinent Boko haram should have upper hand in the recruitment of vulnerable child.

Social support as a beacon of hope

The emergence of such children on the street as beggars and out of scholl children gave room for the terrorists to exploit the social anachronism in the country. Probably the newly established commission for Almajiri and out of school children was an attempt to curtail the menace of child indoctrination and radicalization by the Boko Haram and other terrorists’ cell. In north-eastern part of the country, the percentages of out of school children between the ages (6-15) are as follows: Bauchi 55.7%, Borno 54.2%, Gombe 48%, Taraba 28.8%, Adamawa 21.7% and Yobe which is the case study of the research has 62.9%. (NNPI:2022). It is also buttressed that children were not only economic actors, beginning apprenticeship at the age of 12 or younger, but they

were also use as political agents, often initiating resistance and uprisings. (Yakubu M. J:2016)

Moral decadence of the system

Common thins that makes society amoral include rampant rape, stealing, violence, drug abuse, pornography etc. however, the consequences of all these moral decadences include: underdevelopment, collapse of the family, disintegration of communities, lack of religious faith and general widespread of insecurity. (A Safadekan: 2016) Yobe state has found itself in such social mess prior to the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency. The debut of such terrorist’s organization thus easily exploited the vulnerability of such moral collapse which made it easier for recruitment, indoctrination and radicalization a common thing in the one decade of the terrible insurgency.

Impact of child terrorism on a society

The overall discussion of this research work has found the consequences of activities so drastically that fanaticism has become part of the behavioral attitude of the children especially when it come religious teachings and interpretations. In addition to that, the child usually become too upset on a simple interaction with believe that the society has offended him. (L J Tahir: 2018).

There is also a risk of PTSD and post-traumatic stress symptoms, behavioral and emotional symptoms. Psychosomatic symptoms etc. these usually manifest after post-indoctrination and during the de-radicalization moment which is being manage by psycho-therapy experts.

Another impact of child terrorism is becoming an agent of Societal Destruction. Most of the suicide bombing and Bomb detonation are carried out by the radicalized and trained children leading to heavy loss of lives and property. During the Boko haram period an estimated forty-eight suicide bombing were said to have taken place in Yobe state between 2012 and 2017 delivered by children below the ages of fifteen. (A Salisu: 2015) the most devastating impact of such action is family disintegration, with virtually long-term rehabilitation or sometimes even no rehabilitation at all. This has created bitter experience by the kids which shall have impact on them for several years.

Psychological fear, xenophobia, fearlessness to kill or destroy other communities or hostile to stranger whose appearance in the society maybe positive. Aggression and curious against people around them for violent

approach all clear manifestation of consequences of child indoctrination by the terrorist's cell.

Finally, the negative impact of this action is general underdevelopment of various aspects of life such as market uncertainty, with financial crisis and absent of investor both within and outside the country. For instance, one the greatest cattle market in West Africa (Potiskum) had lost billions of naira due to several attacks and bomb blast by the terrorists. In fact, there was complete absent of tourism because of fear of unknown.

Conclusion

From so far what has been identified in the course of the above research on child indoctrination, it is pertinent to note that several factors as mentioned above have contributed the easy access to the vulnerable child by the Boko Haram terrorists. Among them include negligence of the parents, failure of the system, poor household training, poverty and lack of proper religious interpretations. The field work carried out and the questionnaire distributed have shown the different categories of opinion related to the problem which has been tabulated for intellectual consumption. Finally impact and implication of child indoctrination and radicalization has been outlined which in a nutshell affect the socio-economic development of a society. The only way out is to follow as mentioned by Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 39.

"State parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of, any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery or reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect, and dignity of the child".

References

- Adebayo, A. (2013), "Social factors effecting Crime Prevention and control in Nigeria." *International Journal of Applied Sociology* 3(4).
- Baimu, E. (2013), "Children, International Protection," in *Max Planck Encyclopaedia of Public International Law*, Rüdiger Wolfrum, Ed.
- 22 Nigeria, *Child's Right Act*, LFN CAP 50, 2004.
- Kalsoon, L. (2010), "Indoctrinating Children: the making of Pakistan Suicide Bombers." <http://etc.westpoint.edu/> Volume 3 Issue 6
- Lawan J. T. (2018) "Social and Economic repercussions of Boko Haram Insurgency in North-eastern Nigeria: A Case Study of Yobe State. 2009-2016." A *PhD Thesis submitted to the Department of History University of Bark Al Rudah Republic of Sudan*.
- Marc S. (2008), "A strategy for fighting International Islamist Terrorists." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. Volume 618 Issue 1*.
- NNPI 2022 # The Cable index.
- Olasola, B. A. (2022), "Ensuring the right of the Child in the Boko Haram Insurgency: The Province of UNICEF's Complimentary Mandate under International Law." *Indonesian Journal of International Law Volume 19. Number 1*.
- Sofadekan, A. (2016), Moral Decadence and its Socio-economic Implication on the Nigerian society. *Nigeria Journal of Social Studies. Volume XIX (1)*
- U. S. Institute of Peace Commission 2013 Report.
- UNICEF Role in Promoting and Supporting the Convention on the Right of the Child," UNICEF, accessed 22 July 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/unicef-role>.
- Yakubu, M.J. (2016), "Child Insurgency in West Africa: the Boko Haram example in Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon." *Journal of Governance and Development. Volume 5. No. 2*