Terrorism, Insecurity and Youth Criminality in Nigeria: A Critical View from A Criminological Lens

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Abstract:

Objectives: Terrorism is a global social problem that is presently receiving overwhelming attention and concern from all corners. The government, researchers, policymakers, Non-Governmental organizations, and law enforcement are all striving daily to figure a way out of this malady. This is because the impact of terrorism is devastating and destructive. Everyone is in one way or another.

Methods: The study made use of Leonard Berkowitz Frustration Aggression Theory (1989) and Robert Agnew General Strain Theory (GST, 1991) to explain terrorism, insecurity, and criminality in Nigeria. The study employed qualitative study using Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) using the youths as the population or universe.

Results: The study concluded that terrorism is universally abhorred and generally seen as an unlawful, barbaric, and inhuman crime. It is a crime against man and society that must not be allowed to strive because it erodes peace, destroys properties, leads to loss of lives, and stunts growth and development.

Conclusions: It was recommended in this study that the fight against terrorism should be an all-embracing one. Thus, the Government, parents, citizens, and youth must all be proactive in the fight against terrorism via effective strategize.

Keywords: Terrorism; Insecurity; Youth Criminality; Nigeria; Critical; Criminological View.
1 Introduction

Terrorism, insecurity, and youth criminality and its nefarious activities date back to the late 16th and early 17th century when the world was thrown into a state of disarray as a result of man’s inhumanity to man. Terrorist attacks have caused a lot of harm to mankind and deprived him of peace and progress in no little way. Right from September 11th, 2001 when the United States of America Twin Pentagon Building was demolished by the Al-Qaeda suicide bombers; the history of terrorism in the world has been rewritten. Europe has had its share of terrorist attacks in schools, churches, and mosques. In the Arctic and Antarctica, terrorism has shown itself in the violent destruction of lives and properties as it is the case in the Asian continent. In African countries, especially in North Africa, terrorism raised its ugly head in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt raiding properties and killing scores of lives. The menace in East, South, and Central Africa has appeared different as most attacks and invasion wears a political, sadistic, and religious outlook. Whenever there is any terrorist activity in these countries, there is a suspicion of conspiracy of political, ethnic, or religious masterminds. In West African countries, terrorism has to hibernate under the wings of politicians, ethnic bigots, and religious fanatics to unleash mayhem, stagnate the economy and instill subjugation of the government and its citizens as it is in Nigeria, Cameroun, Chad, Niger, and other neighbouring countries within the sub-region. In Nigeria for instance, terrorism has gained fertile ground owing to continuous ethnic rivalries, political boundaries, religious crises, and sensations created by people who are hell-bent on promoting violence to achieve certain selfish and nocturnal benefits. The serial cases of ethnic cleansing, homicides and killings, abduction, kidnapping; rape, armed robbery, highway blockade, and vandalisation of public properties perpetuated by terrorist groups in Nigeria are unwarranted, dehumanizing, thought-provoking as well as retarding to growth and development of the country. Worst still, it is unfathomable and unimaginable that some feeble-minded politicians, religious fanatics, and ethnocentric fellows have concocted this detrimental means to express their sentiment and bias through terrorism. These deadly and senseless acts have been pioneered through killing, kidnapping, vandalism, civil unrest, abduction, rape, armed robbery, highway blockade and assassinations. This situation calls for deep thinking and an immediate way of unmasking the state of affairs and eliminating the elements behind these callous and deliberate acts. This study therefore devotes itself to examining terrorism, insecurity, and youth criminality in Nigeria with a critical view from a criminological lens. This is with the view to fashion out a panacea for this cankerworm eating deep into the moral values of our once peaceful and progressive society.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Globally speaking, terrorism is a burden that all continents, genders, tongues, colour, and creed abhors. At the mention of its name, people quiver at its horror. The September 11th Al Qaeda terrorist attacks in the United States of America is still fresh in our mind owing to its effects in world history. Similar attacks have been meted out in Europe in Schools, churches, mosques, and other public places. In the Arctic and Antarctica, terrorism wears a religious and political face to cause tension, destroy properties, and kill people. In the Asian continent, it is a sorry story of continuous invasion of one area to another by terrorists. In Africa, terrorist attacks have ravaged North Africa in countries like Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt and so on. The same spates of terrorism/crimes have continued to be meted in East, Central, and South Africa leaving the continent is a perpetual state of backwardness, kidnapping, abduction; vandalisation of public properties, worry, cry, and losses. In West Africa, Nigeria has taken the lead in terrorist attacks. From personal experience, at least 10-15 terrorist attacks take place every year with not less than 100 people dead and properties worth billions of Naira destroyed. The Boko Haram, Herders, and Bandits’ nefarious and cruel activities have made life unbearable for people in Northern Nigeria. In Eastern Nigeria, the Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB) and the Bakkassi Boys have continued to issue threats and ultimatums, road blockades, and terror that have led to the loss of lives and destruction of valuable properties. The South-South has been a geopolitical zone cloth with militancy unleashing consternation and terror under the auspices of the Ijaw Youth Forum, Niger Delta Avengers, and Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOOSOP), among others. The activities of this ethnic and sociocultural militia have been proscribed and declared as terrorist groups because of the nature of their operation and consequences. These ethnic and sociocultural groups have maimed, killed, kidnapped, abducted, raped, vandalized, and disrupt peace, growth, and development in so
many instances just to prove a point to the government of the day and press their demands. Very recently, the Kaduna Airport and Railway train were attacked; travelers were abducted and kidnapped. It is no news that the Abuja-Kaduna highway has become a nightmare and misgivings for travelers with fear and uncertainties. Worst still is the fact that law enforcement is helpless, handicapped, perplexed, lost, lacks synergy, and has conspirators/imposters and informants among them that make combating this menace difficult. It is not uncommon to realize that this ethnic and sociocultural militia proscribed and tagged ‘terrorist’ commit atrocities, record and send them to the airways with their faces open. In most cases, they have named popular public figures as their mediator and negotiator with the government. All these consternation have happened continuously over time with the government having little or nothing to do about the situation. In some instances, the Federal Government of Nigeria has called for help from the United States of America, the United Nations, and neighbouring countries and has even formed an inter-boarder antiterrorist joint task force to stampede the menace but all these have not helped in any way. This study is saddled with the responsibility of x-raying terrorism, insecurity, and youth criminality in Nigeria with a critical view from a criminological lens purposeless to understand and find out new and effective measures that can be employed to quell the trepidation called terrorism.

1.2 Research Questions

The research posed the following questions:

• What is the effect of the killing of citizens on insecurity in Nigeria?
• What is the influence of kidnapping on youth criminality in Nigeria?
• What is the role of vandalism on insecurity in Nigeria?
• What is the impact of civil unrest on insecurity in Nigeria?
• What is the consequence of abduction on youth criminality in Nigeria?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study seeks as its main objective to examine terrorism, insecurity, and criminality among youth in Nigeria: A critical view from a criminological lens, while the sub-objectives are:

• Assess the effect of killing of citizens on insecurity in Nigeria.
• Investigate the influence of kidnapping on youth criminality in Nigeria.
• Ascertain the role of vandalism on insecurity in Nigeria.
• Examine the impact of civil unrest on insecurity in Nigeria.
• Explore the consequence of abduction on youth criminality in Nigeria.

2 Theoretical Framework

This study made use of Leonard Berkowitz’s Frustration Aggression theory (1989) and Robert Agnew’s General Strain Theory (GST, 1991).

2.1 Leonard Berkowitz’s Frustration Aggression Theory (1989)

The frustration-aggression theory is the work of John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sear and was propounded in 1939. The theory was further developed and expanded by Leonard Berkowitz in 1969. The theory holds people become aggressive due to frustration and blockade to reach their desired goals in life. The earlier proponents assumed that frustration always leads to aggression and aggression is the product of frustration. Two years down the line, Miller and Sear reformulated it to suggest that while frustration creates a need to respond, some form of aggression is one possible outcome. That is frustration may or may not result in aggression. This makes frustration not sufficient but a necessary condition for aggression. It is also believed that negative affect and personal attributes play a major role in whether frustration instigates aggressive behaviour. The theory attempts to explain why people are scapegoats and the cause of violence. According to this theory, frustration is the condition that exists when a goal-response suffers interference; aggression on the other hand is seen as an act whose goal-response is injurious to an organism. It further argued that frustration causes aggression but when the source of the aggression cannot be reached, the aggression gets misplaced on an innocent victim. This theory fits in the
explanation of violence, riots, revolution, and terrorism taking place in Nigeria. This is because the theory sees youth violence as a product of deprivation of some members especially the poor who express their frustration and anger via violence. This theory was used for this study because it has the ability and capacity to explain youth violence like terrorism, riots, revolution, insecurity, and other crimes.

2.2 Robert Agnew’s General Strain Theory (GST) 1991

General Strain Theory was propounded by Robert Agnew (1991). General Strain Theory is an offshoot of the social strain theory. The theory assumes that people engage in deviant/criminal behaviour as a result of strain. General Strain Theory also explains the causes of terrorism that will bring about general insecurity and other criminalities. General strain theory (GST) states that strains increase the likelihood of crime, particularly strains that are high in magnitude, are seen as unjust, are associated with low social control, and create some pressure or incentive for criminal coping. Examples include parental rejection, criminal victimization, a desperate need for money, and discrimination. These strains increase crime for several reasons; most notably, they lead to a range of negative emotions, which create pressure for corrective action. Crime is one possible response. Crime may be used to reduce or escape from strains (e.g., theft to obtain money, running away to escape abusive parents), seek revenge against the source of strain or related targets, or alleviate negative emotions (e.g., through illicit drug use). A range of factors, however, influence the response to strains.

Concerning the present study, strain showcases itself in the form of socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, underemployment, and deprivation that may cause an individual to seek other means through violence like terrorism and insecurity to either show one’s frustration or for survival. The theory has been criticized for explaining only lower-class crimes. It has been accused of not having the capacity to cover or explain white-collar crimes.

3 Methodology

The study employed qualitative study using Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) using the youths as the population. Purposive sampling techniques were used in selecting participants for the study. Two (2) interviewees each were randomly selected from the six (6) geopolitical zones to get twelve (12) participants for the study. Two (2) sets of eight (8) participants of males and females respectively were used for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The data generated were analyzed using manual content and ethnographic summaries.

4 Findings and Discussion of Results

The findings from the Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were presented thus:

4.1 What is the effect of killing of citizens on insecurity in Nigeria?

Interviewees from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) unanimously observed that apart from killings terrorism has brought untold hardship, fear, pain, torture, and disorganized families and homes. They noted that insecurity looms in every part of the country where terrorism is present. They concluded that killings, insecurity, and other effects occasioned by terrorism must be brought to a standstill and jettisoned immediately.

A participant argued that the killing of citizens in terrorist attacks often leads to loss of manpower, creates fear and tension, scares investors as well as hinders growth and development in the society. She further argued that terrorism has caused a lot of harm and limited Nigerian society from maximizing its human and natural resources. She believed that if terrorism was not contended immediately, Nigeria would soon go to oblivion.

It was the view of another participant that killings of citizens due to terrorism encouraged insecurity because it leads to deaths and torture, destruction of homes and separation of families, breeds other crimes, and hinders development. He noted that there is nothing good about terrorism other than its capacity to breed fear, torture, and insecurity.

One of the participants observed that the effect of killing citizens on insecurity in Nigeria includes death, torture/trauma; destruction of valuable properties, separation of people from their homelands and families,
scaring investors and development partners, and creating tension and civil unrest amongst others. She added that development cannot thrive in such an environment.

A participant opined that the killing of citizens breeds insecurity in so many ways. He thought that once a family member is killed, the family is hurt and thrown into a state of mourning, fear, torture, and pain. Most often forced relocation becomes unavoidable. He noted that apart from deaths, a lot of things go wrong when there is no conducive environment. In an atmosphere of chaos, vandalism, and other anomalies; the society is likely to be in anarchy, lawlessness, and jeopardy. This in itself is a form of death laced with insecurity.

Another participant argued that terrorism has only succeeded in creating crises, crimes, insecurity, and pain. The people in Northern Nigeria are living in perpetual fear and have been reduced to walking corpses. No one sleeps with two eyes closed in that part of the country. Does anyone still need a soothsayer in such a situation to tell them that killing citizens in the name of terrorism is bad and promotes insensitivity and insecurity?

It was reported by another participant that at the mention of terrorism; killing of citizens and insecurity and imminent. He observed how else one would explain the act of reckless maiming and brutal killing without insecurity. Life in Nigeria is a living hell and it is made worse by terrorism and it is not leaving its trademark of sorrow, tears, and blood.

4.2 What is the influence of kidnapping on youth criminality in Nigeria?

The FGD interviewees reported that kidnapping breeds criminalities in that it makes relatives pursue both honest and dishonest means to raise the required conditions for the release of their family member. To this end, crimes like fraud, extortion, prostitution, perjury, armed robbery, assassination, forgery, and impersonation amongst others are engaged in.

A participant noted that kidnapping influences youth criminality in many ways: he believed that kidnapping brings about fear and insecurity that exposes both the people and society to further victimization if nothing is done fast. In an atmosphere filled with kidnapping and all the terror associated with it; people are raped, killed, waylaid as well as deprived of their lives and property. This will also bring sorrow and brew anarchy that may plunge the society into disarray.

One participant said kidnapping invites criminalities to some extent. She noticed that as people are afraid of being kidnapped, their lives are being monitored and this gives them away to robbery, rape, assassination, fraud, and theft. This is because insecurity breeds terrorism and crime and vice versa. The participant argued that terrorism, insecurity, and criminality are all products of a failed political and economic system like Nigeria. To him, terrorism is a monster to be dreaded and curtailed as soon as possible.

It was a participant’s view that kidnapping influences crimes like theft, armed robbery, cybercrime, rape, and fraud to facilitate the release of their relatives. Criminality is every inch linked to terrorism because terrorism itself is a crime.

A participant admitted that kidnapping encourages prostitution, lying, stealing, armed robbery, and other economic crimes because relatives will be desperate to secure the release of their loved ones who have been taken hostage. By that desperation, they can do anything within their reach. In that desperate situation, anything including crime goes just perfectly well.

Another participant wondered why she should be asked a self-explanatory question. She believed that when a loved one is kidnapped or taken hostage, relatives rally around to raise a ransom and save or secure the release of their loved relative. Sometimes, the kidnapped victim is taken as bait for negotiation or ransom purposes. For any purpose that kidnapping is done, it helps to encourage criminalities like rape, prostitution, armed robbery, fraud, and theft. He noted that kidnapping is a product of criminal activities.

It was observed by a participant that kidnapping influences crimes such as extortion, fraud, blackmail, cybercrime, armed robbery, forgery, prostitution, and theft. The fact that a family member or close relative is forcefully taken (kidnapped) will make other family members do the unthinkable to rescue the victim. It is at this stage that family members resort to crime as an avenue to save the helpless victim.

4.3 What is the role of vandalism on insecurity in Nigeria?

Interviewees from the FGD session agreed that vandalism plays a role in insecurity and the role is a negative one. They agreed that while vandalism is the act of destruction of public and private properties, it leaves
people and society in fear, horror, pain, chaos, and disorder that may propel them to run around helplessly. To them, terrorist attack often comes with vandalization of properties and these properties that are destroyed are either private or publicly owned. The destruction of these properties leads to pain, torture, anxiety, fear, and a sense of non-fulfillment. This exactly is what insecurity stands for.

A participant said vandalism heightened insecurity and criminality. Most times in circumstances of vandalism insecurity looms. He noted that Nigerian youth terrorism is engulfed with vandalism and destruction of public and private properties. To him, vandalism gives way to fear, tension, chaos, and insecurity is bound to dwell in that atmosphere.

It was perceived by participants that vandalism endears insecurity in our society. He noted that terrorism enhanced the vandalisation of valuable properties which is always the beginning of crises and violence. When this happens, the tendency for people’s movement to be restricted (imposed curfew), the streets to become horrified, fear to be visible, streets to be lonely and harm to be inflicted on helpless victims is high. These then are the indices of insecurity that are predisposed under terrorism and consternation in Nigeria.

A participant argued that the vandalisation of public and private property has a role to play in bringing insecurity to the forebear. She observed that when properties are destroyed, it may lead to loss of lives, civil unrest, and imposed curfew. This is the picture of insecurity brought about by vandalism and terrorism.

In a view expressed by a participant, opined that vandalism is a highway to insecurity because it broadens the chances of the people and the society being wrapped in fear and insecurity. To him, vandalism is the act of destruction of property and this act instills fear, tension, lawlessness, and disorder typically describes insecurity.

Another participant concurred that vandalism leads to insecurity in that, once there is a situation where people’s properties are publicly destroyed, there is bound to be fear, tension, anarchy thus insecurity.

4.4 What is the impact of civil unrest on insecurity in Nigeria?

The FGD interviewees observed with dismay that terrorism has put this country in a pitiable state of civil unrest and insecurity. They argued that civil unrest has a severe impact on insecurity whereby people and the entire society live in fear of the unknown. They uphold that civil unrest makes everyone lose faith in government policies and their chances of survival. When no one feels safe and protected, they are rather unsecured. They concluded that civil unrest habours insecurity in totality and always plunge into criminality.

One of the participants believes that terrorism brings about civil unrest which further enhances insecurity. She noted with dismay that, the Nigerian terrorism story is a sad one. It puts citizens on their toes. Safety is everyone’s watchword in Nigeria because the country is no longer at ease, people are looking out for survival and getting away from fear anxiety, and anarchy.

A participant observed that terrorism launches the society into civil unrest and in the atmosphere of civil unrest lies terror, horror, vandalism, pain, anarchy, and loss of fundamental human rights. Here everyone becomes insecure as a result of the happenings.

Another participant admitted that civil unrest is a feature of terrorism in Nigeria and it is capable of giving birth to insecurity. She argued further that terrorism; civil unrest and insecurity are intertwined and are capable of influencing each other.

It was observed that civil unrest impacts insecurity. He is of the view that civil unrest is wrapped in security and both are prone to negative acts like crime. No wonder both of them are a product of terrorism.

One of the participants said there is just a thin line separating civil unrest from insecurity. He believed that terrorism has a way of tickling fear, anxiety, pain, and uproar whenever it unleashes its horror on helpless victims. This scene is what typically describes the thin line or separation. It is almost impossible to see the differentiation.

Another participant opined that the impact of civil unrest on insecurity in Nigeria includes chaos, fear, anxiety, and lawlessness. Civil unrest puts people and society in a state of insecurity when there is no stability, peace, order, and effective law. To her, all that is required is to ensure effective law, law enforcement, and a society full of visionary leadership for terrorism to disappear. When this happens, there would not be civil unrest and insecurity occasioned by terrorism.
4.5 What is the consequence of abduction on youth criminality in Nigeria?

The FGD interviewees anchored their thoughts on the view that abduction has a consequence on youth criminality. They believed that when family and friends see their loved ones being held captive, they would not just fold their hands and watch the victim suffer or be tortured to death. They have to do what they have to do and these include legal and illegal acts. Loved ones will fight, steal, rob; kill, forge, extort, revenge, and avenge their loved one abduction if they have the means.

It was the view of one of the participants that abduction has consequences for youth criminality. This is because the abductee, family, and friends face untold hardship, pain, trauma, and torture at the hands of the culprits. The culprits put them through a protracted series of horror and terror that leaves them no choice but to play along or try to outsmart the culprit to rescue their family member or friend. In such a situation, there is a high propensity for illegal or shrouded deals to be transacted for the release of their loved one. Most people will do anything that is required to secure the release.

One participant noted that abduction simply connotes the unlawful carrying away of a person for any reason. He believed that terrorists abduct their victims to use them as bait to negotiate with the government for their desires, for sexual pleasure, or marriage. When abduction takes place just like in the case of kidnapping, family members and the government do bidding most times with the culprits. This bidding/negotiation always goes with illegalities and criminalities that may even lead to loss of lives, vandalism of public properties, and other losses.

A participant contended that abduction brings about crimes like rape, deaths, vandalism of public and private properties, fraud, forgery and revenge. It is clear that terrorism leads to abduction and the link between abduction and youth criminality is a direct one.

It was viewed by a participant that, abducting a person will lead to crimes like rape, vandalism, forgery, fraud, extortion, armed robbery, deaths, and an attempt or the will to revenge or avenge what someone you suspect did to a friend or relative and this that may compound or complicate issues. He said in plain terms that abduction breeds crimes.

Another participant opined that abduction has a consequence on youth criminality. When a friend or family member is abducted, their friends or family members try to do something and salvage the situation most times. This attempt does not always end well because an eye for an eye leaves the whole society blind. Attempting to revenge or avenge, fight, fraud, extort, revolt, or engage in any antisocial or criminal model to rescue an abductee is unlawful and criminal.

A participant observed that abductee’s families and friends go through a lot when their loved one is abducted and this condition makes them yield to undue pressure to indulge in illegal acts like fraud, extortion, forgery; fighting, killing, vandalism, and causing civil unrest. This may not go well and it holds looming danger.

5 Conclusion

Terrorism is universally abhorred and seen as an unlawful, barbaric, and inhuman crime. It is a crime against man and society that must not be allowed to strive because it erodes peace, destroys properties, leads to loss of lives, and impedes growth and development.

5.1 Recommendations

This study recommends the following measures to curtail terrorism, insecurity, and criminality among Nigerian youth:

- Government policies must be purposeful and action-oriented. This will bring about faith in the government of the day as well as drive industrialization, growth, and development.
- Parents must realize that children are a gift and a burden and that only they can truly raise them to become reasonable and useful citizens. This will reduce the level of deviance and criminality among Nigerian youth.
- Senior and responsible citizens must join hands with the government to ensure that good policies are made and implemented to the later to create a society worthy of safety, growth, and development.
Youth must demonstrate their maturity, creativity, and readiness to serve by engaging in developmental processes like inventions and discoveries. This will bring about a breakthrough and turnaround for the society rather than indulging in violence will create insecurity, encourage other criminal activities, and discourage investment as well as growth and development.

Finally, this study recommends implementation procedures for counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism by working closely with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

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