



Public Perception on the Influence of De-radicalisation and Reintegration of the Repentant Boko Haram in North East Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the public perception of the de-radicalisation and the reintegration of the repentant Boko Haram members in Nigeria. The survey design was adopted for the study, a total of 300 participants received questionnaires electronically and directly, and 292 returned validly. The data was analyzed using inferential statistics. Hypothesis one showed a significant positive perception of the respondent's knowledge of de-radicalization and effective reintegration ($X^2(1) = 4.830, P < 0.05$). Furthermore, hypothesis two did not yield any significant age difference in the perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria ($F(3, 289) = 0.619, P > 0.05$). Hypothesis three analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents' perception of de-radicalisation ($t(290) = -4.244, P < 0.05$). In conclusion, the program has been deemed relevant and recommended that monitoring and evaluation from the start should be a priority in the management, especially for women and children returnees.

Keywords: Public Perception; De-radicalisation; Reintegration and Repentant Boko Haram

Introduction

De-radicalisation is a long and complex process in people with extreme political, social or religious extremism to accept and reverse radicalization, however, but the concept can be vague and subjective in its meaning [1,2]. The de-radicalisation program's constitution was in part by design and in the claim as a reflection of the dynamics of conflict and the lack of 'ripeness' or readiness to negotiate disengagement [3]. The focus on encouraging defectors instead of collective disengagement (which tends to involve reintegrating active former combatants) can be understood in the context of unsuccessful attempts by the previous Nigerian government to engage in negotiations and offer an amnesty to the Boko Haram leadership.

According to Porta and La Free, there are two aspects of de-radicalization process that are frequently ignored or confused [4]. The "de-radicalization of attitudes and beliefs" was addressed in one section, while the process of leaving violent groups and reintegrating into other social groups was addressed in another section.

The state may have changed its mind on the value of non-military tactics because it realized that the war model had not only failed to reduce violence but also increased the number of fatalities in conflict zones (and drew growing criticism).

Vocational training is vital for economic empowerment for its clients and gives them hope for their future in their communities.

The program is based on the premise that clients are less likely to rejoin Boko Haram if they have employment possibilities. A lot of the members who joined Boko Haram, if they had employment are less likely to join. Many of the members joined this movement when they were young, so they never got the chance to learn marketable skills. Participants get basic literacy, numeracy, and civic education instruction to help them better understand how governments function and to teach people how to participate in the political system and direct their complaints to the relevant authorities. Most clients receive support for the trauma they have endured as Boko Haram members due to experiencing or seeing horrible acts. They are offered therapies such as psychotherapy, psycho-spiritual counselling, art-therapy interventions, social treatment, drug-use intervention, and recreation [5]. There are weekly psychotherapy sessions for clients suffering from psychological and emotional disturbances. Various experts assist the clients in dealing with drug addiction issues.

Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) holds that no factor can be handled in isolation, experts focusing on the three crucial aspects of ideology, grievances, and trauma, typically conduct separate sessions but work closely together to reinforce each other elements. In the same case, the specialists occasionally collaborate simultaneously. One anxious patient, for instance, who was experiencing nightmares after killing his mother, pleaded with the expert, "will Allah ever forgive me after such a horrific crime?" [5]. In this instance, treating the trauma and the religious worldview is necessary. While psychologists can help with the anxiety, the issue of God, forgiveness and redemption needs to be addressed by a cleric. In circumstances like this, the religious leaders (Imams) and the psychologists collaborate to get the desired outcome.

When we evaluate the backgrounds and personalities likely to make up the majority of the foot soldiers, Kobrin asserts that the emergence of Boko Haram will become clearer [6]. These people are students and pupils learning the Quran known as "Almajarai", the majority of who have no known homes or relatives; however, their only known friends and parents are those of their fellow groups with whom they underwent the same radical Quranic indoctrination, and their Quranic teacher (Malam) who are their guardians, and whose commands must be obeyed without question due to the authority they wield and the punishments that await disobedience.

In the words of Audu and Bryson, one of the campaign promises of Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 was the will and determination to fight Boko Haram [7]. The president continued the declaration of amnesty to willing members of Boko Haram, which his predecessor started. The president further reiterated his commitment when he said, "We are ready to rehabilitate and integrate such repentant members into the larger society" [7]. Boko Haram members were then faced with various challenges, such as a reduction in their supplies due to enforced measures at the borders, and division within the Boko Haram sect. As a result, some members started turning themselves into military. The government started exploring ways to encourage Boko Haram members to surrender, which resulted in the setting up of OPSC. "The OPSC program started with a nine-man committee that worked out the modalities for implementing its mandate, including developing a de-radicalisation program framework. This committee engaged national and international experts and studied existing de-radicalisation programs in countries like Colombia, Saudi Arabia, and Somalia" [7]. The lessons learnt from other similar programs were to be incorporated into OPSC and the Kuje Correctional Centre program via international partnerships with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

The committee was involved in the shaping of OPSC program, but the involvement of the committee in the program declined with time. There was little or no consultation with experts from other relevant fields both local and abroad. There is little knowledge about the program now. Analysis and advice from external sources could help to improve the operation safe corridor program. The efficiency of the military approach in ending terrorism has increasingly been questioned. "Based on wide-ranging experiences in different countries, it has been discovered that the military approach has contributed more to the atmosphere of violence arising from terrorism and caused extensive human rights violations" [8-10]. Therefore, non-military strategies were advocated to curb the problem of rising levels of insurgency and terrorism. The non-military strategies include amnesty, political negotiations, disengagement, de-radicalisation, and reintegration [11,12]. Radicalisation of individuals and groups due to their ideology plays a significant role in their involvement in terrorism. Therefore de-radicalisation is a vital non-military strategy to combat terrorism [13]. De-radicalisation is one of the objectives of Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor program in addition to the reintegration and rehabilitation of defectors of Boko Haram [14].

A statement credited to Alhaji Baba I Bashiru, Chairman of People Democratic Party (PDP), Borno State, published by Daily Trust newspaper on 23rd November 2011, described the proposed origin of Boko Haram. He was quoted to have said, "the Yusufiyya Movement, better known as Boko Haram, came to prominence in Borno when it helped to bring Governor Ali Modu Sheriff to power in 2003, and the current trouble began when it fell out with him". Alhaji Bashiru explained that "When Ali Sheriff was working to snatch Borno State from then-Governor Mala Kachallah, he entered into a pact with the Yusufiyya Movement with a promise to implement Shari'a rule in Borno State, after becoming the governor, Sheriff created a Ministry of Religious Affairs and appointed Alhaji BujiFoi, who was Yusufiyya's national secretary, as its first commissioner" [6]. This revelation showed the ideology behind the conflict and subsequent happenings.

Boko Haram "is a radical Islamic based religious sect that came into existence in 2002 and operates in some states of Northern Nigeria, namely Borno with its capital city in Maiduguri; Yobe with Capital City Damaturu; Bauchi with Capital City in Bauchi; and Gombe with Capital City in Gombe. The sect, which is known by the name Yusufiyya's movement, is officially known among members as 'Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad' translated to mean people committed to the propagation of Prophet's Teaching and Jihad, but popularly called 'Boko Haram' because of their detest for western style of education regarded as corrupted by all form of evils, immorality, and indecency. The sect advocates as an alternative to the British form of education, a Sharia system with strict Islamic laws" [15].

Statement of the problem

There is general mistrust of the government by members of the communities and other organisations. The distrust includes the non-military efforts of combating terrorism by providing non-punishable measures such as rehabilitation and de-radicalisation of groups considered as "low-risk" women, children, and male defectors that have repented through the Operation Safe Corridor program. There was a general misconception that the program was aimed at providing amnesty for all. The lack of transparency in the program further fuelled the misconception. There are few opportunities for the administration to dispel these misconceptions because the initiative has been maintained shrouded in secret. The program is bitterly hated and frequently rejected by community

members from the north-east and elsewhere because they see it as risky, top-down, insincere, and opaque. Critics accuse it, along with other leniency policies in Nigeria, of coopting militants and other risky people. Additionally, many perceive it as a tool for the government to sidestep its duty to defend communities and provide for their needs. It is viewed as unfair to those who resisted or were displaced and dangerous to communities [14]. Community members from Boko Haram affected areas and several journalists have publicly stated that they do not wish to allow either Boko Haram fighters or people who lived under their rule back, as indicated in the work of Felbab-Brown [14]. The regularity of rejection of those associated with Boko Haram in any way and the extreme distrust of returnees appear in many surveys and focus group studies [16].

The ongoing issue of low government trust makes it more difficult to reconcile the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and those who lived under Boko Haram's authority. IDPs frequently wish to return home but are hesitant to do so because of concern that their safety won't be guaranteed from Boko Haram. However, some IDPs also think they are being held in jail since the government will not let them leave the camps [14]. Many argue that the victims of terrorism and internally IDPs should be taken care of first before considering leniency or reintegration of former Boko Haram members.

A look at the above gaps that various researchers have noted regarding the acceptability of the operation safe corridor, de-radicalisation, and reintegration program by the federal government has necessitated this research work.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the perception of the public on the influence of de-radicalisation towards effective reintegration of the repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria.
- To determine age difference in perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria.
- To determine gender difference in perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria.

Research questions

- What is the perception of the public on the influence of de-radicalisation towards effective reintegration of the repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria?
- What is the age difference in perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria?
- What is the gender difference in perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria?

Materials and Methods

Design

The study adopts a survey research as it historically involves extensive population-based data collection. The primary purpose of this survey research was to obtain information describing the characteristics of a large sample of individuals of interest relatively quickly. The information was obtained from individuals and groups through cross sectional survey.

Participants

In the bid to involve individuals that are not ignorant of the subject matter of de-radicalisation and reintegration, the participants comprised of military personnel, paramilitary personnel, police officers, prison officers, judicial officers, and a good number of civilians. Their demographic factors will be described.

Sample size/sample technique

The sample size and sampling technique that was employed in this study was convenient sampling technique. Three hundred (300) military personnel, paramilitary personnel, police officers, prison officers, judicial officers, and a good number of civilians in some selected parts of Northern Nigeria were selected using a convenience sampling technique. They were both male and female from the ages of 20 years and above.

Instrument

The instrument used for gathering data was a questionnaire specifically designed to collect information on the subject matter of de-radicalisation and reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members in Nigeria. The self-administered questionnaire has 23 questions divided into four sections, A-D. The first section had the

participant's bio-data, while the second section was designed to understand the participant's knowledge of radicalism as it pertains to the Boko Haram sect. It is a 6 item questions with five response options ranging from 5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Natural (N), 2 = Disagree (D) to 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD).

The third part was concerned with the participant's perception of the de-radicalisation and reintegration program, and the last section seeks the participant's opinion on the challenges the program faces. It is also a 5 item questionnaire with five response options ranging from 5 = strongly agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Natural (N), 2 = Disagree (D), to 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD). The fourth part was designed to measure different challenges facing the de-radicalisation & reintegration programme. It is a 6 item questionnaire with five response options ranging from 5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Natural (N), 2 = Disagree (D) to 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD).

Procedure

Before the main study, the researcher obtained permission from the authorities where the research was conducted. Thereafter, we sought the assistance of one of them from each setting who assisted in distributing and retrieving the questionnaires. The study's objective was disclosed to the participants, and those who gave full consent participated in the study. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select the participants. This method encourages greater cooperation from participants and reduces their motivation to falsely report their attitudes. The most important claim made for convenience sampling is that it yields more valid point estimates of sensitive behaviour. In the course of this research, it is the intention of the researcher to extract information from respondents using a well-detailed questionnaire to get their perception and satisfaction level to the de-radicalisation and reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members into the society. The data that were collected were analysed using appropriate statistical tools.

Statistical technique used

The data collated in this study were analysed and interpreted using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations to describe the participant's perception of de-radicalisation and reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members in Nigeria. The data were further analysed using inferential statistics for the test of Hypotheses. Chi-Square test was used to test the perception of

the public on de-radicalisation and effective reintegration, and Independent Sample-t-test was used to test the difference between gender, age and perception of de-radicalisation. A total of 300 participants received questionnaires electronically and directly, and 292 of them participants and a response rate of 97.33% were recorded. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data using SPSS version 22.0.

Results and Discussion

Data presentation

Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages of the demographic characteristics. One hundred and fifty-four respondents 154 {52.7%} are males and 138{43.7%} are females. Furthermore, 192{65.8%} of the respondent are in the age range (20-29) years, 30-39 years (N = 66, 22.6%), 40-49years (N = 22, 7.5%), 50 above (N = 12, 4.1%), Education qualifications: OND (N = 11, 3.8%), HND (N = 20, 6.8%), B.sc (N = 192, 65.8%), Msc (N = 63, 21.6%), Organisation: Civilian (N = 235, 80.5%), Military (N = 10,3.4%), Paramilitary (N = 7, 2.4%), Police (N = 19, 6.5%), Judicial Officer (N = 12, 4.1), and Correctional Staff (N = 9, 3.1%).

Data analysis and results

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis one stated that, there will be a significance perception of the public on the influence of de-radicalisation towards effective reintegration of the repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using Chi-Square test as shown in table 2.

Demographic variables		Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	154	52.7
	Female	138	47.3
	Total	292	100%
Age	20-29	192	65.8
	30-39	66	22.6
	40-49	22	7.5
	50 and Above	12	4.1
	Total	292	100%
	OND	11	3.8
	HND	20	6.8
Educational Status	BSC	192	65.8
	MSC	63	21.6
	Total	292	100%
	Civilian	235	80.5
	Military	10	3.4
Organisation	Paramilitary	7	2.4
	Police	19	6.5
	Judicial Officer	12	4.1
	Prison Officer	9	3.1
	Total	292	100%

Table 1: Frequency and Percentages of the Characteristics of Participants.

Variables	Crime Control		TOTAL	X ²	SIG.
	Ineffective	Effective			
Knowledge of Deradicalisation	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)		
Positive	35(16.6)	91(43.1)	125(59.7)	4.830	0.028
Negative	36(17.1)	49(23.2)	85(40.3)		
Total	71(33.6)	140(66.4)	211(100)		

Table 2: Public Perception of De- radicalisation towards Effective Reintegration.

Sig. Level: P < .05, df = 1.

Table 2 presents the summary of the Chi-Square test of respondents' perception of de-radicalisation and effective reintegration. The result revealed that 124 (59.7%) of

respondents displayed positive knowledge of de-radicalisation, of which 91(43.1%) believed it in effective reintegration while 35(16.6%) displayed positive knowledge of de-radicalisation with

ineffective reintegration. Also, the result reveals that 85(40.3%) of the respondents displayed negative knowledge of de-radicalisation, of which 49(23.2%) believed in effective reintegration while 36(17.1%) displayed negative knowledge of de-radicalisation and ineffective reintegration. Generally, the result revealed that 66.4% indicate effective reintegration while 33.6% indicate ineffective reintegration. Further analysis revealed a significant $X^2(1) = 4.830$, $P < 0.05$ positive perception of the respondents' knowledge of de-radicalisation and effective reintegration. The hypothesis is not rejected.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis two stated that there is a significant age difference in the perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using Independent Sample t-test in tables 3 and 4.

Age Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
20-29 years	192	18.81	6.063
30-39 years	66	20.39	7.903
40-49 years	22	20.07	7.211
50 years above	12	19.29	10.329
Total	292	19.63	7.533

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria.

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of the perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria. The results revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of participants across age groups, as indicated in table 4. Participants between ages 30-39 years have mean scores above 19.63 for perceived influence of de-radicalisation. Meanwhile, the difference was insignificant.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	105.878	3	35.293	.619	.603
Within Groups	13001.979	289	57.026		
Total	13107.858	292			

Table 4: Summary of ANOVA Results on Age and De-radicalisation.

Table 4 shows the summary results of the analysis of variance where it revealed that it is not statistically significant; $F(3, 289) = 0.619$, $P > 0.05$. Also, indicating that the mean difference among the participants reveal insignificant difference in the perceived de-radicalisation across the age of participants. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis three stated that there is a significant gender difference in the perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using Independent Sample t-test in table 5.

Gender	N	X	SD	Df	T	P
Male	154	9.20	2.678	290	-4.244	.000
Female	138	10.71	2.423			

Table 5: Summary Results of the Difference between Male and Female Respodents' Perception of De-radicalisation.

$t(290) = -4.244, P < 0.05.$

Table 5 shows the summary results of the independent sample t-test, where the mean and standard deviation scores of male ($X = 9.20$; $SD = 2.678$) and female ($X = 10.71$; $SD = 2.423$). Furthermore, the analysis revealed a statistically significant, $t(290) = -4.244$, $P < 0.05$ difference between male and female respondents' perception of de-radicalisation. The hypothesis is not rejected.

Discussion

To investigate if de-radicalisation and reintegration of repentant Boko Haram Members will effectively be a means to counter Terrorism in Nigeria, it has been shown from the results of the analysis that de-radicalization will be effective means of curbing terrorism in Nigeria. However, there is mixed opinion about the subject. As far as hypotheses are concerned, the study has established a positive perception of the public on de-radicalisation towards effective reintegration in Nigeria. The first hypothesis states that there will be a significant positive perception of the public on de-radicalisation towards effective reintegration in Nigeria. The hypothesis was tested with Chi- Square test and the result revealed a statistically significant positive perception of the public on de-radicalisation towards effective reintegration in Nigeria. In other words, there is a statistically significant positive perception of the public on de-radicalisation towards effective reintegration in Nigeria.

This is in support of one of the main strategies in this area used by the Jonathan administration was the setting up of the Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North in 2013, which was tasked with engaging with Boko Haram leaders and working towards disarmament of their members [17]. The failure of these attempts partially reflects lack of readiness to collectively disengage within the movement, particularly among the more committed members [17]. Thus the focus of the voluntary de-radicalisation program targeted reintegrating followers but not the more 'hard-core' committed members of Boko Haram responsible for mass atrocities [18]. It attracted defectors who were coerced, pressured or circumstantially motivated into joining, less committed to the tactics of Abubakar Shekau's Boko Haram or lured by the prospect of escaping imprisonment [19], the article argues that this specific type of former combatant places them into different social relations from those former combatants who may be more ideologically committed or more deeply embedded in the respective group. In a conceptual sense, understanding the type of social ties that former combatants are re-integrated into has consequences for de-radicalization programs.

This study's second hypothesis states that, "There is a significant difference in age difference in perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria. Independent sample T-test was used to test the hypothesis. The result from the test revealed there was no significant difference in age and perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria. The tests' result is not supported by past research [20,21], which all indicated a significant difference in the participant's age in relation to the de-radicalisation outcome. They found that age of the individual influences de-radicalisation, as younger adults between the ages of 18-24 are less likely to experience de-radicalisation compared to older adults between the ages of 55-65 years who are more likely to experience de-radicalisation. The outcome of this tested hypothesis showed no significant difference in age and de-radicalisation. However, as explained in the previous paragraph, age difference does influence or has a significant difference in de-radicalisation. The reason for the present finding, therefore, could be attributed to the fact that the bulk of participants who participated in the study were all young adults and hence responded to the questionnaire in a similar pattern. Hence, there was no significant age difference regarding de-radicalisation.

The third hypothesis stated that there is a significant gender difference in the perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria. The result of the study established a significant gender difference in the perceived influence of de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members on counter Terrorism in Nigeria, which is hypothesis three, thereby, accepting the hypothesis. This study's findings are supported by the fact that social and cognitive psychologists' inquiries into the causes and extent of psychological gender differences often involve interdisciplinary research that goes beyond straightforward comparisons between the sexes [22]. According to cognitive psychologists, the discrepancies between males and females are apparently caused by innate biological differences such as the differences in steroidal gonadal hormones [23], hereditary disparity [24] and the cognitive capacity gap [25]. On the other hand, social psychologists frequently concentrate on social construction theories, where the significance of societal role distinctions for males and females gives an explanation for the observed differences between the sexes [26].

Conclusion

This study focused on the Operation Safe Corridor scenario to describe Nigeria's de-radicalization strategy (OPSC). The well-planned OPSC program aims to address ideology, grievances, trauma, and of its customers' needs, including those for medical care, education, and job training. A number of OPSC's strengths should serve as global best practices, but there are some crucial areas where the program can improve. Although thousands of Boko Haram suspects are in jail, many cannot be found guilty due to a lack of sufficient evidence. While holding these individuals in detention for an indefinite period cannot be justified, releasing them could be risky due to their potential for self-help and their potential to be quickly re-enlisted by Boko Haram. Thus, the OPSC may be the best path to peace but must be further improved in the areas highlighted above.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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