INSURGENCY AND ADULT EDUCATION: A REALISTIC APPROACH FOR STABILITY OF NIGERIA

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Abstract
Insurgency and terrorism have significantly destabilised Nigeria, with groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, Ansaru, and the recently emerging Lakurawa exploiting socio-economic vulnerabilities, weak governance, and regional instability. While military interventions have been employed to combat insurgency, a more sustainable approach incorporating adult education is essential. Adult education serves as a tool for reducing illiteracy, fostering civic awareness, and equipping individuals with vocational skills, thereby addressing the root causes of radicalisation and recruitment into terrorist groups. Additionally, it enhances national cohesion by promoting tolerance, critical thinking, and economic empowerment, ultimately reducing susceptibility to extremist ideologies. The study made use of an analytical approach and highlights how adult education can be integrated into counterinsurgency strategies by providing functional education, de-radicalisation programmes, and economic empowerment initiatives. Given the strong link between poverty, unemployment, and insurgency, equipping individuals with marketable skills can deter them from joining extremist groups. Furthermore, adult education fosters political awareness and encourages active citizenship, reducing the appeal of terrorist organisations. To achieve long-term stability, Nigeria must prioritise adult education as a core component of national security policies, ensuring that vulnerable populations are empowered to contribute positively to society.

Keywords: insurgency, adult education, radicalisation, economic empowerment, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria's transition to democracy in May 1999 was accompanied by high expectations of stability and progress. However, the country has since witnessed a surge in violent conflicts, criminal activities, and insurgent movements that have significantly undermined national security. The rise of armed civilian groups with radical ideologies has further exacerbated security challenges, leading to a proliferation of ethno-religious conflicts and acts of terrorism (Onuoha, 2012). Initially, groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), O'Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Arewa People's Congress (APC), Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys, and the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) dominated the security landscape. However, in recent years, Nigeria has witnessed the emergence of more violent extremist groups, notably Boko Haram, Ansaru, 'Kala-Kato,' Ombatse, and most recently, the Lakurawa group (Ma, 2024; Salman, Uthman, & Odeniyi, 2024).

The growing wave of insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria has been fueled by socio-economic inequalities, weak governance, and external influences from jihadist groups operating in the Sahel region. Boko Haram, which gained international notoriety following the abduction of schoolgirls in Chibok in 2014, continues to pose a significant threat despite counter-insurgency efforts by the Nigerian government and its regional allies (This Day Newspaper, 2024). Similarly, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and other militant factions have expanded their operations, exploiting Nigeria's porous borders and political instability in neighboring countries such as Niger and Mali (Achi, 2024).

A particularly concerning development is the resurgence of the Lakurawa group, an armed faction that initially emerged in Northwestern Nigeria in 2017 but was dislodged in 2020. Reports indicate that the group regrouped in December 2023 and has since established operational bases in Sokoto, Kebbi, and Bauchi states (Ma, 2024). The group, believed to have links with terrorist organisations

in the Sahel, has been implicated in acts of terrorism, including kidnapping, cattle rustling, and imposing illegal taxes on local communities (Salman, Uthman, & Odeniyi, 2024). Intelligence reports suggest that Lakurawa exploits economic hardships to recruit vulnerable youths by offering financial incentives (Achi, 2024).

The Nigerian government has recently designated Lakurawa as a terrorist organisation, granting security agencies broader powers to dismantle its operations through arrests, asset seizures, and increased surveillance (This Day Newspaper, 2024). However, the persistence of insurgency in Nigeria shows the need for a multi-faceted approach that combines military action with socio-economic interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of extremism. Additionally, strengthening regional cooperation, particularly with Niger and other Sahelian states, is crucial to curbing the transnational dimensions of terrorism in the region (Achi, 2024). Without decisive and sustained efforts, insurgency and terrorism will continue to undermine peace, stability, and development in Nigeria.

Historical Context of Insurgency in Nigeria

Insurgency is not a novel phenomenon; it has deep historical roots that stretch back to ancient civilisations and have shaped modern state conflicts (Fafowora 2013; Ngige, Badekale and HammanJoda 2016). Globally, insurgencies have been catalysts for profound political and social changes from the revolutions that reshaped Europe and America to the forceful unifications in 19th-century Germany and Italy, and even to the violent disintegration of empires such as the Habsburg and Ottoman (Fafowora 2013).

Nigeria's own experience with insurgency is intricately tied to its post-colonial history. After gaining independence in 1960, the nation was marked by deep-seated ethnic divisions among its three principal groups the Hausa in the north, the Yoruba in the west, and the Igbo in the southeast. The fragile balance of power was further destabilised by a series of coups in 1966, which not only

exposed the underlying ethnic animosities but also led to targeted violence against the Igbo population in northern Nigeria. In 1967, these tensions culminated in the southeastern region's declaration of independence as the Republic of Biafra (Study of Internal Conflict – Nigerian Civil War (Biafra) 1967–70).

The ensuing Nigerian Civil War was characterised by rapid military engagements, a severe humanitarian crisis, and widespread displacement. Biafra's isolation cut off from essential supplies and international support contributed to catastrophic famine and suffering, while the federal government's military campaign eventually led to the reintegration of the region. Despite a clear military victory by the Nigerian government, the conflict left a legacy of unresolved ethnic divisions and a fragile sense of national identity.

The ramifications of the Nigerian Civil War continue to influence modern insurgencies within Nigeria. The war underscored the challenges of forging a unified national identity in a state with diverse ethnic and regional interests. In the decades following the conflict, the government sought to mitigate future ethnic strife by embedding nationalism in the educational curriculum; however, deep-seated grievances and regional marginalisation persisted (Study of Internal Conflict – Nigerian Civil War (Biafra) 1967–70).

These lingering issues have provided fertile ground for contemporary insurgent groups. Economic deprivation, political exclusion, and systemic corruption conditions that were evident during and after the civil war continue to fuel discontent among marginalised communities (Nwala 2013; Kwanashie 2013). Insurgent groups like Boko Haram have exploited these historical fault lines. Initially emerging from local grievances and a sense of economic and political marginalisation, Boko Haram's ideology of rejecting Western education and modern state institutions reflects long-standing frustrations that can be traced back to the legacy of civil conflict and the challenges of post-colonial nation-building (Fafowora 2013).

Literature review and Theoretical underpinning

This section critically examines relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical studies that provide insights into the nature, causes, and consequences of insurgency in Nigeria. It explores the interplay between ethnic identity, political manipulation, and socio-economic grievances through the lenses of primordialism, instrumentalism, and relative deprivation theory. Additionally, it considers scholarly perspectives on terrorism, national security, and the potential role of adult education as a transformative tool for mitigating conflict and promoting national stability.

Primordialism versus Instrumentalism in Ethnic Conflict

The Primordial Perspective

Advocates of primordialism argue that ethnic identities themselves are the direct source of ethnic conflict. According to this view, ethnic violence is an age-old, "natural" phenomenon stemming from deep, inherent differences in ethnic identities (Esteban, Mayoral and Ray, 2012). This approach draws heavily on the notion of ethnocentrism, which distinguishes sharply between "in-group" and "out-group" members, explaining discriminatory behavior as a manifestation of in-group favoritism. Ethnocentrism not only leads to preferential treatment for one's own group but often coincides with xenophobic attitudes toward outsiders (Pietraszewski, 2021). Proponents believe that such loyalty to one's ethnic group is rooted in myths of shared ancestry or "common blood" (Gat and Yakobson 2013) and notions of intrinsic group virtue and superiority (Pietraszewski, 2021). Consequently, primordialists contend that ethnic identities are fixed and historically embedded, transmitted across generations, and that ethnic conflicts arise primarily from these long-standing, almost "ancient" antipathies, rather than from modern political contestation (Grosby, 2013).

While most contemporary political scientists have moved away from strictly primordial views, some scholars, like Tatu Vanhanen, have elaborated on this perspective. In his work *Domestic*

Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Nepotism (1999), Vanhanen argues that widespread ethnic conflict is largely a function of "ethnic nepotism," or the tendency to favor kin over non-kin. He hypothesizes that (a) conflicts of interest emerge from inherent ethnic differences, and (b) the degree of political and social discord in a society increases with its level of ethnic fragmentation. However, Vanhanen himself admits that ethnic heterogeneity alone does not fully explain the occurrence of conflict, acknowledging the significant role of political and socioeconomic factors. This concession bridges his essentialist stance with more nuanced, instrumentalist interpretations.

The Instrumentalist Perspective

In contrast, instrumentalists reject the idea that ethnic identity directly causes conflict. Instead, they argue that violence only ensues when ethnic identities are politicized—when political actors manipulate these identities to secure advantages, often at the expense of other groups. Instrumentalist theorists emphasize that factors such as security concerns (Roe, 2014), socio-economic competition and inequality (Cederman, Gleditsch, & Buhaug, 2013), greed (Fearon & Laitin, 2014), and broader social discontent are critical in triggering conflict. Ethnic identity, from this viewpoint, is malleable and subject to social construction, rather than being an immutable trait. This fluidity undermines the notion of inherent, timeless antagonisms, suggesting instead that ethnic conflict is a variable product of specific political contexts.

Even in deeply divided societies, instrumentalists note that multiple social roles—such as those of businesspeople, officials, and professionals—transcend ethnic affiliations (Hale, 2008). Similarly, contemporary scholars argue that ethnicity alone does not instigate violence; it becomes a factor only when politically mobilized (Varshney, 2009). The application of the "security dilemma" concept from realist theory has been revisited to explain how ethnic groups might militarize in response to perceived threats (Roe, 2014). However, this argument has been critiqued for its limited scope, particularly because ethnic groups typically exist within larger state structures where

governance plays a decisive role. In many sub-Saharan African contexts, for instance, ethnic conflicts are more often driven by repressive government behavior and institutional failures in addressing grievances, rather than by any inherent security dilemma (Straus, 2021). Cases such as the Rwandan genocide and conflicts preceding Sudan's disintegration illustrate how weak state institutions and oppressive regimes can transform ethnic frustrations into violent confrontations.

Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT) explains how individuals or groups react when they perceive a gap between their expectations and their actual circumstances. Ted Robert Gurr (1971) defines relative deprivation as the psychological tension that arises when people believe they are entitled to certain benefits but are unable to attain them. This perceived discrepancy between what people expect based on societal values and what they can realistically achieve creates frustration, which can lead to social unrest, protests, or even violent uprisings (Gurr, 1971).

Gurr (1971) emphasised that the intensity of frustration is directly related to the degree of disparity between value expectations and actual capabilities. When individuals feel they have little or no chance of achieving economic stability, political participation, or social recognition, their dissatisfaction can grow into collective opposition against the state or ruling institutions. Economic downturns, inflation, and political exclusion further aggravate these frustrations, increasing the likelihood of instability. Ethnic identity, according to Gurr, often serves as a strong mobilising force for political opposition, as groups that perceive systemic discrimination or marginalisation may become more radicalised in their demands for change. He argues that in cases of severe deprivation, "the greater the intensity of deprivation, the greater the magnitude of violence" (Gurr, 1971)

This perspective aligns with the frustration-aggression hypothesis, which suggests that when people experience prolonged frustration, they may resort to aggressive actions (Gurr, 1971). In a

political context, if a government fails to meet the expectations of its citizens such as providing security, equitable economic opportunities, or social justice it risks facing resistance movements or even armed conflict. The severity of this response depends on the depth of the perceived deprivation. The greater the sense of loss or exclusion, the more intense the collective response is likely to be (Gurr, 1971)

In addition to economic and political deprivation, relative deprivation can also manifest in social and cultural contexts. Wilkinson (2021) explains that societal insecurity emerges when certain groups feel that their identity, traditions, or way of life is under threat. This perception of insecurity can be fueled by economic hardship, political marginalization, or cultural alienation, ultimately leading to conflict. Stewart (2008) supports this view, stating that economic and political instability intensify societal insecurity and can weaken a state's ability to maintain social cohesion. Wilkinson (2021) further categorizes societal threats into four key types: physical threats (violence and harm), economic threats (loss of resources), threats to rights (imprisonment and restricted freedoms), and threats to social status (discrimination and exclusion).

Gurr (1971) highlights that the failure of the state to meet people's value expectations can lead to widespread discontent and a decline in social stability. When citizens believe they are being deprived of what they rightfully deserve, their frustration intensifies, making political and social upheaval more likely. According to Haggard & Kaufman (2021), societal conditions that raise expectations without simultaneously increasing the ability to fulfill them result in heightened dissatisfaction, which can further destabilize the political environment.

Furthermore, identity is not static; it evolves over time based on social, economic, and political changes. Brubaker (2022) argues that people continuously adapt to shifting circumstances, shaping their perceptions of belonging and entitlement. Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston and McDermott (2009) add that identity influences how individuals and organizations interact, affecting their sense of

inclusion or exclusion within society. In cases where people feel alienated or disadvantaged compared to others, their discontent can escalate, contributing to broader political instability (Haggard & Kaufman, 2021).

Ultimately, RDT underscores the importance of inclusive governance and fair policy-making. While economic growth and modernisation can improve living conditions, they may also heighten social tensions if certain groups feel left behind. Addressing both material deprivation and perceived injustices is crucial for maintaining social stability and preventing conflicts (Gurr, 1971). By understanding these dynamics, policymakers can work toward reducing grievances and fostering a more cohesive society.

The concepts of Primordialism, Instrumentalism, and Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT) provide critical frameworks for analysing insurgency in Nigeria, particularly concerning the country's complex ethnic and religious tensions. Primordialism suggests that ethnic and religious identities are deeply embedded and serve as the primary drivers of conflict. In Nigeria, this is evident in the long-standing tensions between ethnic groups such as the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, as well as between religious communities Muslims in the North and Christians in the South. The Boko Haram insurgency, for instance, can be partially understood through a primordialist lens. Boko Haram's ideology is rooted in a belief that the Nigerian state is corrupt and that Western-style education ("Boko") is sinful ("Haram"), reinforcing an "in-group" versus "out-group" mentality (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006). Similar to primordialist perspectives, Boko Haram's extremist rhetoric often invokes historical grievances and religious identity, framing the conflict as a struggle between Islamic purity and secular governance.

Instrumentalists argue that ethnic and religious divisions do not inherently lead to violence but are instead exploited by political actors for strategic gains. This perspective helps explain how Nigerian politicians and elites have historically manipulated ethnic and religious identities to mobilise

support and suppress opposition. For example, during elections, political leaders often appeal to ethnic loyalties rather than national unity, deepening societal divisions. The rise of ethno-religious militias such as the Niger Delta Avengers, the OPC (Oodua People's Congress), and MASSOB (Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra) aligns with the instrumentalist view that conflicts arise when political grievances are framed in ethnic or religious terms (Salawu 2010).

Furthermore, Boko Haram's leadership has leveraged widespread economic and social grievances to recruit members, particularly among disenfranchised youth in Northern Nigeria, portraying their cause as a battle against systemic marginalisation (Jamila, 2015).

RDT explains that when expectations exceed reality, individuals and groups may resort to violence (Gurr, 1971). In Nigeria, high poverty rates, youth unemployment, and political exclusion have created fertile ground for insurgency. Boko Haram emerged in Borno State, a region suffering from extreme poverty and underdevelopment, where many young people feel alienated from the Nigerian government and economy.

The Niger Delta militancy also illustrates RDT despite being rich in oil, the Niger Delta remains underdeveloped, leading to feelings of economic injustice and deprivation (Saleh, 2011). The frustration-aggression hypothesis (Gurr, 1971) suggests that such socioeconomic frustrations transform into violent rebellion.

Additionally, Fulani-Hausa herder-farmer clashes can be analysed through RDT, as climate change and economic pressures have heightened competition over land resources, increasing tensions between predominantly Muslim Fulani herders and Christian farming communities.

Understanding Nigerian insurgency requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates primordialist, instrumentalist, and relative deprivation perspectives. While ethnic and religious identities provide a foundation for conflict, political manipulation and socio-economic grievances

act as catalysts. Effective counterinsurgency strategies must address underlying economic inequalities, promote inclusive governance, and dismantle the political incentives for ethnic and religious divisions.

Insurgency

Insurgency is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. The United States Department of Defense (2007) characterises it as a coordinated effort to undermine an established government through covert tactics and armed resistance (Hellesen, 2008). This definition implies that insurgents resort to unlawful methods to accomplish objectives that may be political, religious, social, or ideological in nature. The primary aim of insurgency is to challenge and displace a ruling authority, often to gain control over power, resources, or political influence (Siegel, 2007).

Furthermore, the U.S. Counter-Insurgency Initiative (2009) describes insurgency as the strategic deployment of subversion and violence to destabilise or seize political control over a region. Insurgent movements seek to replace or weaken government authority by exerting control over populations and resources. Their tactics typically include guerrilla warfare, terrorism, coercion, propaganda, and political mobilisation. Instead of engaging in direct combat with government forces, insurgents focus on undermining state legitimacy, thereby making it difficult for authorities to govern effectively. The overarching strategy is to diminish state influence while simultaneously expanding insurgent control.

Terrorism

Ekaterina (2008) defines terrorism as a violent strategy that targets civilians and relies on asymmetrical confrontations against a stronger adversary, such as a government or a coalition of states. Chomsky (2001) describes terrorism as the use of force and coercion directed at populations to achieve political, religious, or ideological goals. The U.S. State Department defines it as deliberate, politically motivated violence against non-combatants, carried out by sub-national

groups or covert agents to shape public perception and influence political outcomes (Isyaku, 2013).

Similarly, the United Nations (1992) characterises terrorism as a repeated pattern of violent acts that induce fear and are executed by individuals, groups, or state actors for political, criminal, or ideological purposes. Unlike targeted assassinations, terrorist actions often seek to create widespread psychological impact beyond the immediate victims (Siegel, 2007).

International terrorism, as described by Lesser (1999) in United Nations (2018), involves perpetrators crossing national boundaries to carry out attacks. These attacks may be directed at diplomatic missions, government entities, schools, international organisations, or public infrastructure. Terrorists may also engage in hijacking planes and ships to further their objectives. Ultimately, terrorism functions as a coercive tool aimed at achieving political, religious, social, or economic objectives through fear and intimidation.

According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID, 2011), individuals involved in violent extremism are often driven by perceptions of injustice and breaches in the social contract between governments and citizens. These grievances are shaped by ideological and cultural factors rather than purely material conditions (Price & Morris, 2011). Some researchers have suggested that those drawn to extremist activities are often influenced by strong ideological convictions (USAID, 2009). While religious or ideological justifications may be used, underlying factors such as power struggles and resource competition play significant roles. Scholars emphasise the impact of socioeconomic conditions, group dynamics, and perceived injustices in fueling radicalisation and violent extremism (Price & Morris, 2011).

Security

Francis (2005) defines security as a state of protection that ensures freedom from fear, anxiety, danger, oppression, and economic deprivation (as cited in Alli, 2010). Imobighe (1990) in Attoh (2018) describes security as the absence of threats that could undermine a nation's ability to

safeguard its sovereignty, promote its values, and advance its lawful interests. Zabadi (2005) further explains that security involves protecting individuals and assets from threats such as physical harm, criminal activity, and economic instability. This concept extends to the survival of the state and its responsibility to maintain order and protect its citizens.

The concept of national security is particularly significant. Held (1998) defines national security as the use of military force to protect national interests. It is a state of safety where national values and institutions remain protected from threats. In essence, national security involves safeguarding a nation's sovereignty from external and internal threats while ensuring its strategic objectives are met in the global arena.

Nigeria, a country formed through the amalgamation of diverse ethnic and cultural groups under British colonial rule, remains a multi-ethnic state with over 300 distinct identities (Ojo, 2006). These ethnic and religious differences have played a significant role in shaping social and political interactions. While the national motto promotes "unity in diversity," historical tensions and competing interests among various groups have posed governance challenges.

The country has experienced several uprisings, insurgencies, and conflicts rooted in its complex ethnic and religious landscape. Notable instances of violent conflicts include the Tiv-Jukun/Fulani clashes (2003), the Gwantu crisis (2001), and the Yoruba political violence (1960–1966). Other conflicts include the Nigerian Civil War, the 2011 post-election crisis, the Maitatsine riots of the 1980s, and the Yan Tatsine uprisings. Additionally, Nigeria has witnessed ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna, Kano, and Plateau states, along with the persistent Boko Haram insurgency. These events highlight the ongoing security challenges stemming from Nigeria's socio-political diversity.

Meaning, Purpose, and Objectives of Adult Education

Education serves as a vital instrument for personal and societal development, equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for meaningful participation in society. Adult

education is a specialised aspect of education aimed at addressing the learning needs of adults who may have missed formal education opportunities or require continuous learning for self-improvement and societal engagement (Ayantunji, 2023). It includes various forms of formal, non-formal, and informal learning programs designed to enhance literacy, vocational skills, and civic participation (Olajide & Ayantunji, 2016).

Adult education plays a significant role in reducing illiteracy, improving employability, and fostering national development. It empowers individuals by equipping them with essential skills that enhance productivity, economic self-sufficiency, and social responsibility (Nzeneri, 2010). Furthermore, it promotes lifelong learning, ensuring that adults remain relevant in an evolving society by adapting to technological, social, and economic changes (Nnazor, 2005). Despite challenges such as inadequate funding and accessibility, adult education remains a crucial tool for societal transformation.

Objectives of Adult Education

The National Policy on Education (NPE) recognises adult education as a fundamental aspect of national development and outlines specific objectives aimed at improving literacy, vocational skills, and civic participation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013; 2021). These objectives include:

1. **Eradication of Illiteracy**: One of the primary goals of adult education, as stated in the NPE, is to reduce the rate of illiteracy among adults by providing basic education and literacy programs. This ensures that all citizens can read, write, and comprehend essential information for daily life.

2. **Equipping Adults with Vocational and Professional Skills**: The policy emphasises the need to provide functional education that enhances employability and self-reliance. Through vocational training, adults can acquire practical skills that enable them to contribute to the economy and improve their standard of living.

3. **Promotion of Lifelong Learning and Continuing Education**: The NPE advocates for continuous education opportunities that allow individuals to upgrade their skills, knowledge, and competencies, enabling them to adapt to societal and technological changes.

4. **Civic and Political Awareness**: Adult education is essential for fostering an informed citizenry. The NPE highlights the role of adult education in promoting civic responsibility, political participation, and awareness of rights and duties, ensuring active engagement in democratic processes.

5. **Poverty Reduction and National Development**: By equipping adults with relevant skills, adult education helps reduce unemployment and poverty. The policy aligns with the national goal of economic empowerment, as educated adults contribute to increased productivity and sustainable development.

6. **Improvement of Health and Family Life Education**: The NPE also emphasises the importance of adult education in promoting health awareness, family planning, and overall well-being. Educated adults make informed decisions that improve their quality of life and contribute to public health.

7. **Integration of Marginalised Groups**: The policy aims to ensure inclusivity by extending educational opportunities to marginalised populations, including rural dwellers, women, persons with disabilities, and disadvantaged groups. This fosters social equity and national cohesion.

Adult education, as outlined in the NPE, serves as a catalyst for personal empowerment, economic growth, and national development. By addressing literacy, vocational skills, civic engagement, and lifelong learning, it contributes to building an informed and productive society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Insurgency and Adult Education: A Realistic Approach for Stability in Nigeria

Nigeria's persistent insurgency and security crises have severely impacted national stability, governance, and development. Insurgent groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, Ansaru, and the recently emerging Lakurawa have capitalised on socio-economic vulnerabilities, weak governance, and regional instability to sustain their operations (Onuoha, 2012; Ma, 2024). While military interventions have attempted to curb these threats, a more sustainable approach that incorporates adult education as a countermeasure is essential. Adult education offers a realistic pathway to addressing the root causes of insurgency by fostering literacy, civic awareness, economic empowerment, and social cohesion.

The Role of Adult Education in Addressing Insurgency

Adult education plays a crucial role in reducing the vulnerabilities that fuel insurgency. It empowers individuals with literacy, vocational skills, and critical thinking abilities that can counter radicalisation and recruitment by terrorist groups (Nzeneri, 2010). The rise of Boko Haram, for instance, has been linked to widespread illiteracy and socio-economic deprivation, particularly in northern Nigeria (Achi, 2024). Many individuals recruited into extremist organisations come from marginalised communities with limited access to education and economic opportunities.

By equipping adults with functional education, vocational skills, and civic knowledge, adult education reduces unemployment and poverty, thereby weakening the socio-economic factors that drive individuals toward insurgency (Nnazor, 2005). Additionally, civic education fosters a sense of national identity and discourages ethno-religious divisions that insurgent groups often exploit (Kwanashie, 2013).

Adult Education and the De-Radicalisation Process

Radical ideologies thrive where ignorance and misinformation prevail. Insurgent groups such as Boko Haram have manipulated religious and ideological narratives to justify violence and recruit

followers. Adult education, through literacy programs and religious reorientation, can challenge these narratives by promoting critical thinking and alternative perspectives (Saleh, 2011).

Furthermore, re-integrating former insurgents into society is a crucial challenge in Nigeria's counterinsurgency efforts. Many ex-militants struggle to find employment and social acceptance after disengaging from terrorist organisations. Adult education programs tailored to rehabilitation, vocational training, and social integration can provide sustainable reintegration pathways, reducing the likelihood of recidivism into extremist activities (Nzeneri, 2010).

Economic Empowerment and Security through Adult Education

One of the major driving forces behind insurgency in Nigeria is economic deprivation (Gurr, 1971). Insurgent groups exploit economic hardship by offering financial incentives to vulnerable populations, particularly young people in regions with high unemployment (Achi, 2024). Adult education, particularly through vocational training and entrepreneurship programs, equips individuals with skills that enhance employability and economic self-sufficiency (Olajide & Ayantunji, 2016).

The success of the Niger Delta amnesty program, which integrated skills acquisition training into the rehabilitation process for ex-militants, highlights the potential of adult education in mitigating insurgency. By providing alternative means of livelihood, adult education can deter individuals from engaging in criminal or insurgent activities (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

National Cohesion and Civic Awareness

Nigeria's insurgency crisis is deeply rooted in ethno-religious and regional tensions, which have been exploited by extremist groups (Ma, 2024). Adult education plays a pivotal role in fostering national unity by promoting civic responsibility, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. Educational initiatives that emphasise national identity and cultural understanding help bridge divisions between different ethnic and religious groups, countering the polarisation that fuels insurgency.

Additionally, adult education enhances political participation and governance by empowering citizens to demand accountability and resist political manipulation. When communities are educated about their rights and responsibilities, they are less susceptible to being used as tools for political violence and insurgency (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Conclusion

Military interventions alone cannot eradicate insurgency in Nigeria. A holistic approach that incorporates adult education is necessary to address the root causes of radicalisation, economic deprivation, and social disintegration. By enhancing literacy, economic empowerment, civic engagement, and de-radicalisation efforts, adult education provides a sustainable solution for national stability. To achieve long-term peace, the Nigerian government must prioritise policies that integrate adult education into national security strategies, ensuring that vulnerable populations are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to resist extremist ideologies and contribute positively to society.

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