

THE PERCEPTION OF BOKO HARAM AND DEPRESSION ANXIETY TO STRESS AMONG NORTHERN AND NON-NORTHERN NIGERIANS

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ABSTRACT

The social need for moral consensus and restraint of selfish impulses arose religion. The assumption from the traditional ethical perspective is that these social needs are necessary to address the needs towards peaceful co-existence. However, the emergence of extreme sub-cultural religious groups within the context of the Nigerian society has unleashed terror on the Nigerian state with the intent to curve out an entity, hence, identity. The Boko Haram phenomenon, whose varying perception has caused varying degree of emotional adjustment among Nigerians. Two hundred and fifty four (131 females, 123 males) including 127 non Northerners and 127 Northerners were utilised for this study. The t-test was used to examine two predictions. The first prediction was examined to reveal no significant difference in perception of terrorism of Boko Haram between Northerners and non Northerners, $t(252) = -2.509, p > .05$. The second prediction did not give a significant difference on adjustment to depression anxiety and stress between Northerners and non Northerners, $t(252) = -1.065, p > .05$. It suggests that though Boko Haram as a terrorist group is of northern extraction, perception towards the group and depression anxiety and stress abound and differed among northerners and non northerners.

Key Words: Perception, Boko Haram, Anxiety, Stress, Nigerians.

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is a psychological construct whose conception across ethnics and nationalities is a variable. In the past few decades experiences of the concept of terrorism were rare and witnessed on a small scale of the sense of the word. However, the pace and sophistication of different extreme

insurgent groups have commonly paddled violent aggression and a threat to world peace. For example, the Nigerian experience of the Boko Haram of large scale killings of humans and destruction of properties has attracted world attention, hence, phenomenal to search for the group's motives and anxiety it impact on the populace.

According to North, Nixon,

Shariat, Mallonee, McMillen, Spitznagel and Smith (1999), survivors of the Oklahoma City bombing indicated 45% to have had a Post Disaster Psychiatric Disorder while 34% had a Post Traumatic Syndrome Disorder. In Nigeria, the novel dimension of Boko Haram which has resulted in many deaths is assumed to have negatively affected Nigerians cognitively and emotionally. The insurgents have denied people the freedom of movement, tempered with private and governmental activities, travels, worship and disrupted people's way of life and peace of mind especially in the northern states and central Nigeria.

Different reasons have been advanced on the ideology, motive and emergence of Boko Haram. These include;

- a. Jihadist advancement as derived from its original name of Jama'atu Ahlus Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad Propagate Islamic Culture (BBC, 2009)
- b. Influences of Iranian revolution of 1999 that demanded sharia law to be adopted in Nigeria (strategic comment, 2011).
- c. The North-South divide in the struggle for political power between Christians and Muslims (Johnson, 2011).
- d. To attract attention by government to address underlying problems of unemployment and poverty in the north of a semblance of the Niger Delta struggle of marginalized oil producing states in order to strick a deal (Stearns, 2011).
- e. Groups hijacked by politicians to achieve political and economic gains.

It follows therefore that the attack on United Nation (UN) building in Abuja

appears to have been motivated by domestic grievances anchored on UN's alignment with the Nigerian government. In the whole, it can be deduced that Boko Haram may want government's attention to create a negotiation for a beneficial deal as stated by the Nigerian Senator Mohammed Ali Ndume (Stearns, 2011). However, to better sum up the motives of Boko Haram which are rather multiple, would mean to analyze the history structure and nature of this group.

History, Nature and Structure of Boko Haram

Boko Haram is a northern Nigerian Islamist militant sect that was formed in 2002 in Borno State by a group of persons led by Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf. Its original motive was the propagation of Islam in Nigeria beginning with the adoption of sharia law in Nigeria highly believed to be influenced by Iranian revolution of 1979. Also were activities of sponsored missionaries, otherwise crusaders from Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Libya, Pakistan and other Islamic countries that began in the 1990s to promote Wahhabi doctrine and orthodoxy. That later influenced the adoption of sharia law in twelve (12) northern states of Nigeria between 1999 to 2001.

According to Omipidan (2009b), history has shown that Boko Haram operated under different names and revealed further of how Yusuf Ustaz's father began Boko Haram with Islamic ideology in the 1960s. It was further observed that Yusuf Ustaz claimed to be part of the Shiite (Islamic Society of Nigeria) movement of Ibrahim El Zakzakky and later Jama'atul Tajdidi Islam (JTI) of Abubakar Mujahid that

broke away from the Shiite in the 1990s when Yusuf became its amir (leader) for Borno State (Suleiman, 2009). In a strict sense, the ideology of Boko Haram is complete adherence to Islam in a secular state and revolutionary transformation in approach (Suleiman, 2009).

On this background it was assumed that violent Islamic indoctrinations of earlier groups in which Yusuf belonged, prepared him for the leadership role he played in Boko Haram. Alli (2009) and Soboyede (2009) in separate terms stated that Yusuf would have had connection with Al-Qaeda's camp training where Boko Haram may have acquired arms through their linkages with fundamentalist groups around the world.

According to Berkowitz (1968, 1981, 1995), arm possessions are cues that prime hostile thoughts, since guns do not only permit violence, but stimulate it as well. The violent aggression by Boko Haram therefore is informed by their capacity to attack derived by the confidence in the possession of arms that gives them irresistible temptation to do so.

Motivations to be aggressive came from rewards of experiences of others who were observed to be financially settled and offer themselves as suicide bombers, believing they will go to heaven when they die on a jihadist mission. The financial reward is physical and heavenly reward is spiritual, thereby drawing some of their reasons to agree on economic and religious grounds. This view presupposes that aggression is learned.

The social learning theory of Bandura (1997) asserts that we learn aggression not only by experiencing its pay offs but also by observing others act

and noting the consequences. In other words, Bandura (1979) has observed that every day life exposes us to aggressive models in the family, subculture and mass media.

Even though Boko Haram is a functional group, just like all other groups, they exist fundamentally to help members attain goals that would be unattainable otherwise. According to Blumer (1948), groups are oriented in different directions because of special interests. However, the nature of Boko Haram as a militia, comparable to defunct militia groups of the Niger Delta militia groups was a struggle against neglect of the region's been underdeveloped and reparation to balance for the 50% derivation some states had enjoyed in time past as leading producers of certain minerals or cash crops. While Boko Haram is concerned with forceful propagation of Islamic values and beliefs found to be antithetical to secular values like Nigeria. The Niger Delta struggle was social in approach while Boko Haram's is subjective, against the state, Moslems of others sects and non-Moslems.

Considering that Boko Haram as a group with certain ends to achieve, has a structure. The avowed ends that it wants to achieve are what motivate its members and as such, take on organizational properties which create certain relationships among them. Boko Haram's structure means that their members are involved in the assignment of different functions.

There are different elements embodied in the concept of structure. They are; status, norms and communication pattern. Status implies that Boko Haram members have functions and hierarchical positions. For example,

Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf was the founder and leader of the group and his deputy Abubakar bin Mohammad Shekau who has now assumed leadership of the group with the demise of the founder, is typical of a status clause in a structure. The over 300 fighters, according to Strategic Comment (2011), are their foot soldiers; the elites as their sponsors; clerics as their spiritual advisers; professionals as their scientists/technocrats, and students as well as other members, as followers or supporters.

A group norm as an element of the structure of a group exists in a functional group like Boko Haram considering that groups are role systems and a role as a specialized norm applicable to a person occupying a given status (i.e position). A group norm is considered to be that expectancy regarding the appropriate behaviour of members within a given facet of group activity. In such group activities within Boko Haram, some members undertake more active roles than others. It is by existing norms that suicide bombers exhibit some behaviour expectations to hit their targets with accuracy. There are observed differences indicating more active roles some members play as a result of status.

The communication element of a structure surrounds the question of who communicates with whom. Boko Haram has a website with which it communicates with the outside world. It has internal and external communication systems. Particular members are however, more involved in the group's communication network than others. The group's nature being informal, secret and anti state, has enable communication to be exclusively designed to trusted few.

The operations of Boko Haram

have involved notable attacks on the United Nations' Building in Abuja on August 22, 2011, the 2012 Christmas day bombing of the Catholic Church at Madalla, Niger State, the December 24th bombing in Jos, Plateau State of Nigeria which claimed over 80 lives and the bomb explosion in a motor park on 26th January 2012 in Kano State (Okpaga, Chijioke and Innocent, 2012). The sect also claimed responsibility for the deadly attacks in Riyom and Barkin Ladi in Plateau State that in one occasion, led to the death of two law makers, Senator Gyang Dantong and Hon Gyang Fulani and several others at a mass burial (Mukhtar, 2012). The recent and most alarming is the abduction of about 275 Chibok girls from their school in Borno State. This singular act was worst and has received international condemnation as making Boko Haram the most violent and heartless group in the world.

Statistics has shown that in Nigeria, Boko Haram has killed over three thousand Nigerians and destroyed properties worth billions of naira. The consequences of Boko Haram's activities are a threat to individuals and national security in the country. It was on this premise that it was hypothesized that first, northerners and non northerners in the country would differ on their perception towards the group, and second that northerners and non- northerners would differ on their depression anxiety to stress on Boko Haram. The predictions were at .05 level of confidence.

METHOD DESIGN

An independent group design was used for the study. They first group was made of northerners while the second was

non-northerners. The independent variable was perception, while the dependent variable was depression anxiety.

PARTICIPANTS

Two hundred and fifty four (254) participants from Jos metropolis took part in the research. Out of the total participants were 127 northerners and 127 non-northerners involving 131 females and 123 males who are either undergraduate students of the University of Jos or other people (Muslims/Christians) working or unemployed within the Jos Metropolis.

INSTRUMENT

The research used a questionnaire which is made up of three sections. Section A is a scale on perception of terrorism questionnaire short form (PTQ-SF) which was developed by Sinclair & Locicero (2004). Section B is the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale – 21 (DASS-21) which was developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995). Section C consists of demographic variables such as gender, age, ethnic origin, marital status, religion and occupation.

PROCEDURE

Consent to participate in the research was sought directly from participants who were contacted among students of the university of Jos workers and non workers within Jos Metropolis, in Plateau State of Nigeria. They were appropriately informed about the purpose of the research, assured of the confidentiality of any information provided and that they were not under compulsion to participate. All participants were told that they could withdraw their

participation at any time they wish to without any penalties or consequences. They were also informed of the need to feel free, be relaxed and to answer the question without concern for wrong or right answers.

The questionnaires were then administered to the participants with necessary explanation to ensure clarity on each item. Each questionnaire was completed within 20 -30 minutes of administration and was repeated until a total of 254 questionnaires were administered and returned. The respondents were thanked for their cooperation and were once more assured of the confidentiality of their responses which were strictly for academic purpose.

RESULT

Two hypotheses were examined in the research. The first hypothesis which states that “non – Indigenous northerners would have a significant negative perception on Boko Haram than indigenous northerners” was examined using the t - test and result was not significant, $t(252) = -2.509$, $p > .05$. Hypothesis two which states that “there would be a significant difference on adjustment to depression anxiety and stress between northerners and non northerners was not significant, $t(252) = -1.065$, $p > .05$. The marginal difference observed in the mean scores has a significant difference. Although there were differences in their mean scores but the differences were statistically not significant. The null hypothesis of no significant difference on perception and depression anxiety amongst northerners and non northerners holds. Their statement does not however mean that issues of perception and depression

anxiety to stress with respect to Boko Haram does not exist. It can be deduced however, that perception and depression

anxiety to stress does not differ amongst northerners and non northerners.

Table 1: Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics on Hypothesis One

Group	N	Mean(X)	SD	DF	Cal t	Critical t	P
Northerners	127	2.5354	.53147	252	-2.509	0.0065	NS
Non Northerners	127	2.7156	.61590				

Table 2: Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics on Hypothesis Two

Group	N	Mean(X)	SD	DF	Cal t	Critical t	P
Northerners	127	2.0569	1.28229	252	-1.065	0.144	NS
Non Northerners	127	2.2290	1.29237				

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results that examined the first and second hypotheses have provided support for the rejection of the two hypotheses stated in this study. An outcome of this result: $t(252) = -2.509$, $p > .05$, shows that there was no significant difference on the perception of extremist's group, Boko Haram, by northerners and non-northerners.

Similarly, findings indicate that there is no significant difference on depression anxiety to stress between northerners and non-northerners, $t(252) = -1.065$, $p > .05$. Therefore the first and second hypotheses are rejected.

Though there were no differences on examining the independent and dependent variables, would not suggest that northerners and non-northerners did not hold negative perception on Boko Haram as well as depression anxiety to stress from violent activities of the group. Results from their means on tables one and two indicate no differences on t-statistics when scores of the two treatment means were compared.

These findings are not entirely out of line with past findings. Survey data has

provided strong support toward economic depression rather than that of the human system. For example, research by Chen (2003), has revealed the experiences of economic distress from insurgency than of the human system. In other words, there seem to be no study that has indicated depression in people, resulting from violent activities of insurgents.

In a more generalized study, Ellison (1991) rather considered religious involvement and subjective well being of people. Ellison (1991) arrived at a conclusion that people's religious involvement has a general implication on one's well being. It can therefore be extracted that even though these studies vary a little from that of Ellison (1991), its contrariness interest psychologists on issues of Boko Haram's activities towards psychological well being.

In conclusion, this study would suggest that even though northerners and non-northerners did not differ on their perception of Boko Haram or the issue of depression anxiety to stress, does not mean that measures of the independent and dependent variables are entirely not experienced by Nigerians. As such, it is

recommended that further research across northern and southern states be considered with a very large representative sample(s).

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