

Poverty and Terrorism Relapse: Youths Empowerment as a Prevention Strategy in Yobe State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at examining the influence of poverty on terrorism relapse in Yobe State, Nigeria, with a view to provide prevention strategy through youths' empowerment. The study examined role of poverty in fuelling domestic terrorism; find out if youth empowerment can prevent terrorism relapse in Yobe State; and suggest effective youth empowerment policies for fighting poverty in the State. The study adopts Six Cs of Positive Youth Development (PYD) in order to explain the importance of youth empowerment as a prevention strategy for terrorism relapse in the State. After reviewing a body of literature, the study adopted descriptive research design by describing how poverty portends terrorism relapse among youths. The study population included male and female youths of 18 years and above and the target population of the study includes political and traditional leaders, law enforcement agents (Police, NSCDC, DSS, NAPTIP, etc.), representatives of NGOs and CSOs. A total sample of 309 was selected. Questionnaire was the instrument of data collection and quantitative method was used for analysing the data. The study findings reveal that poverty, especially in the form of unemployment, lack of basic needs, and poor economic conditions, significantly contributes to youth vulnerability and recruitment into terrorist groups. Respondents strongly agreed that empowered youths (through skills acquisition and entrepreneurial support) are less likely to relapse into terrorism and are more inclined toward positive societal engagement. Additionally, there is widespread support for government investment in empowerment programs, particularly in rural and conflict-affected communities, and for the inclusion of youths in policy design and implementation. The study concludes that poverty is not only a socioeconomic issue but also a security threat, and addressing it through sustainable youth empowerment programs is vital for achieving long-term peace and development in Yobe State. Based on the findings, the study recommends comprehensive and inclusive empowerment initiatives, integration of poverty reduction into counter-terrorism strategies, participatory policy-making, and the establishment of effective monitoring mechanisms.

Keywords: Poverty, Terrorism Relapse, Youth Empowerment, Yobe State, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Young people can be a force for development if provided with the opportunities they need to thrive. If they are neglected and their needs are not provided, they can become a force for destruction. Many factors have been identified that they led to the rise of Boko Haram on issues ranging from the Nigerian state failure to meet the needs of its citizens, to the parental neglect of their responsibilities which is reflected in the high rate of young boys begging in the streets in the name of *almajirci* and the institutionalization of corruption, among others (Mougombe, 2016; Jamri, 2024). It is not the interest of this study to explore these factors that led to the rise of the sect, but the focus is to isolate poverty as a fuel for terrorism and how youth empowerment will prevent terrorism relapse in Yobe State.

In the country's entire regions—the Northeast, Northwest, South-south and Southwest regions, there violent response by the citizens as the youths agitate to wage peaceful protests, which is reported by the security forces to have political undertone to destabilise the country. Even before this nationwide agitation, many developmental efforts have already been marred by high levels of youth unemployment, poverty, insecurity and violent extremism in the northern Nigeria. It is common in many academic forums for scholars describing the sect to look at it from different facets such as religious, economic, cultural and political views. Be it as it may, the

underlying worries of the states of Nigeria, Cameroon, the Lake Chad Basin and the international community have been the radicalization, mass killings, operational expansion and the links of Boko Haram with dangerous terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Poverty is an evil that leads to various social and political problems, marks financially and bureaucratically weak states. Poor states have rough terrain, and large population, especially the youth as unemployed is the assessment of such violence-prone states. High rate of poverty is an indication of how backwardness is a state and favors recruitment of youth in terrorist groups. All of these characteristics pertain to the Nigerian climate in which Boko Haram operates and most are discussed in this essay (a review of population density being addressed more in terms of urban-rural dichotomy in the interests of brevity (Leach, 2016).

As observed by Mbaye & Bello (2019), empowering local informal institutions, which are more trusted and respected, could bring greater effectiveness in conflict prevention and resolution. Moreover, informal institutions often seek civil solutions in addressing conflicts, such as mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, and negotiation, which are found to yield superior outcomes compared to dysfunctional formal institutions such as courts and police that often cultivate further resentment.

Statement of the Problem

Africa's rapidly growing employment gap has become an emotionally charged issue for economists and policymakers. The issue is exacerbated by a quickly rising youth population, for whom the lack of formal sector jobs means that most turn to informal sector jobs such as domestic work, casual labour, or smallholder farming. As a technology platform for informal sector workers in Kenya, Lynk has harnessed the growth potential of this trend to create one of the largest gig-work platforms (an online resource to match people's skills with needed work) on the continent. Innovative efforts like ours are just the tip of the iceberg. In Africa, gig platforms have the potential to provide a source of consistent work and, with centralized governance and support, a pathway to reduce informality and boost productivity by leapfrogging informal economies (Grunewald 2019).

The democratically elected government of President Tinubu and the national assemblies, as well as the executive governors supposed to dispel civilians' mistrust of their political institutions, which emanates from the government's failure to deal with numerous economic and security challenges as the removal of fuel subsidy has increased the rate of poverty and unemployment in the country. A good regime must deal fully with corruption and impunity, as well as address pervasive poverty, high levels of material deprivation, and political and economic marginalization. It must also be understood that the foundation of an effective way to fight terrorism and other security threats in Yobe State and the entire Nigeria is to promote political and economic inclusiveness, as well as the protection of human rights (Mbaku, 2019). In the current economic crises therefore, youth empowerment can go a long way in preventing terrorism relapse in Yobe State.

As noted by Isa, Muhammad, Geidam & Grema (2021), youth may wage a terrorist campaign as a response to sheer injustice and as an expression of discomfort due to unemployment, inequality and poverty. This has been emphasized by a number of other scholars, security experts and independent researchers. For instance, Adebayo (2013), Perouse de Montclos (2014), Mukhtar *et al.* (2015) have studied the nexus between unemployment, poverty and crime of varying kinds, including terrorism. In addition, multi-ethnicity, failed governance and injustice in resource control are considered as other causes of the youth radicalisation in Nigeria (Olateju, 2013). However, the researcher observed that no previous study sought to examine the extent to which poverty fuels terrorism among youths and provide effective policies for preventing terrorism relapse.

In view of the above, the present study is designed to investigate how poverty portends terrorist relapse among youths. It also proposes some empowerment policies as strategies for prevention of such relapse in Yobe State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine role of poverty in fuelling domestic terrorism;
2. To find out if youth empowerment can prevent terrorism relapse in Yobe State; and
3. To suggest effective youth empowerment policies for fighting poverty in the State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews relevant literature on the subject matter of poverty and terrorism relapse. Key terms are clarified and each of the study objectives is examined in relation to the existing body of literature.

Conceptual Clarifications

Poverty

Definitions of poverty really matter. They set the standards by which we determine whether the incomes and living conditions of the poorest in society are acceptable or not. Definitions of poverty are also important, as they influence the way interventions and policies addressing poverty are shaped. Despite this, there is ambiguity as to how the term ‘poverty’ is used and as a result, a range of definitions exists, influenced by different disciplinary approaches, world views and ideologies (Handley et al., 2009).

Historically, poverty has been defined in monetary terms, using income or consumption levels. In order to be able to compare poverty levels across countries and over time, those that live below a given level of income – the poverty line – are classified as poor. Over the last decades, this economic definition of poverty has been complemented by other approaches to conceptualise poverty: basic needs approach, capabilities approach, human development approach and multidimensional poverty approach (Odi, 2016). In summary, poverty is the deprivation of many sorts, such as lack of financial means to solve personal needs, social exclusion, political marginalisation and educational backwardness or illiteracy.

Youth

The term “youth” is a contested concept. It is defined using biological, psychological, socio-cultural and political approaches but the most common method of defining the concept across these areas is the emphasis being placed on age. For instance, the political/legal connotation sees youth as an individual who by virtue of age (18 years) is eligible for voting and other constitutional rights and/or responsibilities. There are definitions of youth that focused on the economic life of the individual as evident in person’s preparation for, and engagement with, pay work, thereby becoming economically independent; anyone in the labour force fell within the category of youth population. Some definitions make use of age bracket with no specific reference to biological, psychological, political or economic factor (Mukhtar *et al.* 2015).

UNESCO, one of the offshoots of the UN, adopts a rather flexible approach to the definition of the term. For instance, it bases the definition of youth on the African Youth Charter’s benchmark, which states that, “youth” means every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years but also accentuates on an increase or decrease of these figures to fit the regional and cultural standards of the various African countries. In other words, UNESCO (at cited in Mukhtar *et al.* 2015) uses the different definitions of youth depending on the context of a country’s youth strategy. In view of this, age is the easiest way to define youth with special attention paid on education and employment. It is important to note that the demand for employment poses a great challenge to the youth, families and the society in general.

Terrorism

Before attempting the analysis of the effective strategies for Nigerian government to come up with policies and interventions for empowering youths and prevent terrorism relapse, it will be important to briefly define the concept of terrorism. The term terrorism has nowadays catches on people’s everyday language, but when the need to define it arises, “nobody has been able to provide an exact definition of the subject” (White, 2002:3), because the nature of terrorism is in perpetual changes over the history. In the same period, violent activity by a given group might be seen a terrorism, but be justified as a liberation if performed by another group. As a result, terrorist act of one group can be legally justified by another group and one group’s *terror* is another group’s *hero*. The word terrorism is derived from *Terrere*, which means “to make tremble” in Latin. Hermon (2009:7) defined the concept as “the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends”. After proving that sociologists have inherent definitional problems in their attempt to

conceptualize key social and political terms, Gibbs (2012:64) defined terrorism is illegal violence or threatened violence directed against human or nonhuman objects”. For Gibbs, comprehensive definition of terrorism is possible using some parameters.

Poverty as a Fuel for Terrorism

Humphreys (2002) and others have reviewed the role of poverty on conflict, particularly civil wars. While Nigeria's wealth in oil and natural gas has certainly contributed to organized conflict in the past, it is not as clearly connected to the rise of the Boko Haram conflict as it is to, for example, the revived hostilities occurring in the Niger Delta as of 2016. Nor does Boko Haram have clear political objectives such as separation or reform within the national government (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Insurgencies are a common byproduct of the neoliberal reforms associated with attempts to improve economic efficiency (Humphreys, 2002) but Boko Haram did not result from any such government attempts, at least in an immediate or identifiable way. Consistent marginalization of the northeast region has led to a desperate economic base for the insurgency, however. The economic imbalance is therefore certainly a consideration. The links between labor markets and political violence are often not clear.

Their relations cannot be examined without reference to other economic activity and indeed other political characteristics altogether. Northeastern instability ultimately cannot be understood without the political, social, cultural, and ethnic context of which this study hopes to provide an outline (Leach, 2016). Fearon and Laitin's review of conditions under which insurgencies are likely to form relates directly to the Nigerian experience regarding Boko Haram. The radical Islamic sect (Boko Haram) has been in existence since 1995. The group was then known, in the local dialect, as *Ahlu Sunna Wal jama al hijra*. It is, therefore, worthwhile to present in brief the historical evolution of Boko Haram. Boko Haram has witnessed changes at the helm of its leadership, name and tactics (Mhajirun, Yusufiyah sect changed to current name Boko Haram, purporting that “western education is sin.”) This follows on the philosophies of Orthodox Islam. The leadership of the sect has also changed over time. It is believed the radical Islamic sect took its leadership root from Abubakar Lawan who abandoned the group and travelled to Saudi Arabia to pursue further studies at the University of Medina (Eyituoyo, 2013).

Thereafter, the leadership was controlled by Muhamed Yusuf killed while in detention in 2009, and then went to the current leader, Abubarkah Shekau. While it has been acknowledged that the attention of many scholars has been focused on the cause and scope of Boko Haram as limited to Nigeria, it is important to note that both the methodology and operation of the group has gone beyond the Nigerian borders with a potential to emerge as a threat to the peace and security of the global community if effective measures are not taken. (Mougombe, 2016). Africa's rapidly growing employment gap has become an emotionally charged issue for economists and policymakers. The issue is exacerbated by a quickly rising youth population, for whom the lack of formal sector jobs means that most turn to informal sector jobs such as domestic work, casual labor, or smallholder farming. As a technology platform for informal sector workers in Kenya, Lynk has harnessed the growth potential of this trend to create one of the largest gig-work platforms (an online resource to match people's skills with needed work) on the continent. Innovative efforts like ours are just the tip of the iceberg. In Africa, gig platforms have the potential to provide a source of consistent work and, with centralized governance and support, a pathway to reduce informality and boost productivity by leapfrogging informal economies (Grunewald, 2019).

As the name suggests, the informal economy is marred by uncertainty, a lack of social protections, and massive inefficiencies around productivity and income growth. In Kenya, for example, where hundreds of thousands of people work in carpentry and joinery, most workers only have access to and training in manual hand tools. Rather than investing to make the sector competitive, the government's most notable interventions in the past year have been to cripple the sector with a ban on logging and a substantial tax on alternative materials. In spite of their growing importance as an engine of employment, most informal activities are still seen as an adversary by national governments (Grunewald, 2019). Meanwhile, in other parts of the world, technology platforms that operate as non-traditional employers are rapidly growing. In the United States, where proliferations of platforms like Uber, Lyft, and Airbnb has led to the rise of the gig economy. This global best practice for youth empowerment should be adopted in Nigeria in order to divert the attention of youths from violent extremism and terrorism.

Effective Youth Empowerment Policies for Fighting Poverty

The nature of ‘policy’ is richly ambiguous - it can refer, amongst many other things, to a general field of government activity, a set of proposals or measures taken, or a programme for action. The term ‘social policy’ is no exception. It refers to a set of measures and approaches that government and other public organisations have adopted to maintain or change people’s well-being. Some social policies are policies for society: governments commonly support or seek to change however, the primary focus of social policy, which is primarily a response to needs and circumstances where people need support and protection. Some of the responses; some political; some communal, and some with the well-being of individuals and households. The most characteristic social policies concern health care, education, pensions and cash support. These can all have an effect on social relationships, but the idea that they are principally concerned with such relationships is a distortion of perspective. They are policies to protect and support people (Spicker, 2023).

Social policy is often said to be concerned with ‘welfare’, but it is not about welfare in its most general sense - it has little to do with love, or emotions, or indeed with many of the good things in life. It is concerned with many issues that are social, but not with broadcasting, religion or leisure. The central focus of social policy lies in responses to needs and the circumstances where welfare is liable to be impaired - problems such as poverty, disability, sickness and old age (Spicker, 2023). Social protection, which generally embraces both the principle of collective action to cover a range of contingencies, and the provision of services to deal with needs - because the existence of such services is part of offering security. Social protection is necessary for welfare, both because it provides for needs which impair welfare, and because without it people become insecure. Although social protection is necessary for welfare, it is far from sufficient in Nigeria. The conditions for welfare include the satisfaction of physical and material needs, the scope to satisfy aspirations, social and economic rights, basic security and economic development. Social protection is a necessary means of securing what is there; it is not an adequate substitute for what is not (Spicker, 2023).

According to Grunewald (2019), Africa’s rapidly growing employment gap has become an emotionally charged issue for economists and policymakers. The issue is exacerbated by a quickly rising youth population, for whom the lack of formal sector jobs means that most turn to informal sector jobs such as domestic work, casual labour, or smallholder farming. As a technology platform for informal sector workers in Kenya, Lynk has harnessed the growth potential of this trend to create one of the largest gig-work platforms (an online resource to match people’s skills with needed work) on the continent. Innovative efforts like ours are just the tip of the iceberg. In Africa, gig platforms have the potential to provide a source of consistent work and, with centralized governance and support, a pathway to reduce informality and boost productivity by leapfrogging informal economies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopts Six (6) Cs, of Positive Youth Development (PYD) in order to explain the importance of youth empowerment as a prevention strategy for terrorism relapse in Yobe State. Positive Youth Development is an approach to supporting youth, which believes that all young people can develop positively and provides avenues for this to occur. Youth programs are seen as a key vehicle to facilitate PYD. Programs taking this approach broadly include skill building opportunities, positive relationships and opportunities for leadership and empowerment. The six Cs of Positive Youth Development, include competence, confidence, connection, caring, character and contribution (Mercier, Powell, Langdon-Pole, Finau, Hicks, Bouchier, Hampton, 2018).

Competence refers to a sense of capability in specific areas such as social, academic, cognitive and vocational. Confidence refers to a global sense of self-efficacy and self-worth. Connection refers to positive and reciprocal relationships with peers, family, school and community. Character refers to morality, integrity and adherence to societal and cultural norms. Caring refers to sympathy and empathy towards others. It is suggested that these outcomes lead to youth contributing to civil society, enhancing both the community and their own ongoing development. This is referred to as the sixth C of Contribution.

Positive Youth Development is a well-known and well-researched model as it has been undertaken in other developed societies. The model will equally work in redirecting youths’ energy from violence to peace advocacy and community service in Yobe State. This is possible if leaders will adopt principles of PYD. Rather than using

the youths as political thugs and instruments of violent extremism; the leaders will change the youths to become agents of development. As population of young people increases, we have to make sure that they have access to education (both Islamic and Western). From school, the youth should be prepared for work, in either formal or informal sectors. They have to be politically engaged, but with decency, integrity, altruism and moral uprightness.

METHODOLOGY

Background of the Study Area

The research is proposed to be conducted in Yobe State, Nigeria. Based on the national head count, the population of Yobe State stood at 2.5 million (CENSUS, 2006). The State is strategically located in the far north eastern part of Nigeria carved out of the old Borno State in 27th August, 1991 by the then Military administration of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. The state shares international boundary with the Republic of Niger to the North (YSG Diary, 2010; & YBS Gazette, 2013). Within the country, it shares borders with Jigawa and Bauchi States to the West, Borno State to the East as well as Gombe and Borno to the South.

Like the larger Nigerian society, Yobe State is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural State. It is historically diverse and rich in cultural heritage. The major ethnic groups in the state include the Kanuri/Manga, Fulani, Ngizim, Bolewa, Bade, Kare-Kare, Hausa, Ngamo, Babur/Maga and several other ethnic groups from different parts of the country. Most of the people are peasant farmers which the main reason why guinea corn, ground nuts, beans; maize, millet, wheat, and rice are produced in commercial quantities. A significant number of the inhabitants also engaged in trading, fishing, livestock and animal rearing. The state has the largest cattle market located at Potiskum town which makes it the supplier of livestock in the country. Traditionally, the people are known for the world-famous durbar usually organized on important occasions like turbanning ceremonies of traditional rulers as well as honouring august visitors (Fartua, & Palmer, 1970). It is important to point out that, nature has endowed Yobe State with diverse economic potentials such as Diatomite, Limestone, Kaolin, Quartz, Gypsum, Gum-Arabic, and Potash. The capital of the Yobe State is positioned at Damaturu. The name Yobe was derived from River Yobe an important geographical feature in the state. It has seventeen (17) Local Government Areas which all together covers an estimated area of 47,153 square kilometres.

Recently, Yobe State was recovering from security challenges, coupled with economic issues. The major security challenge in the region is associated with the activities of Boko Haram sect, a group that resulted in the death of more than thirty thousand (30,000) people and the displacement of more than two million people in the entire north-eastern Nigeria. Despite efforts at deradicalizing Boko Haram insurgents, there are reports that the repented youths have been relapsing to the terrorism, which is associated with lack of sustainable source of income, poverty and unemployment.

Research Design

The study is descriptive research design. It will describe how poverty portends terrorism relapse among youths. It also proposes some empowerment policies as strategies for prevention of such relapse in Yobe State, Nigeria. Both primary and secondary data will be used. For the primary data, quantitative data was collected through questionnaire. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

Population

The study population will include male and female youths of 18 years and above in Yobe State, Nigeria. The target population of the study will also include political and traditional leaders, law enforcement agents (Police, NSCDC, DSS, NAPTIP, etc), representatives of NGOs and CSOs. .

Sample Size

Because the populations of Yobe State are too large to cover in this research work, a total of 309 respondents were selected for quantitative data; they were distributed with a questionnaire.

Sampling Methods

The sampling technique for selecting the respondents was multi-stage sampling. In the initial stage, probability sampling using cluster sampling was used to divide the Yobe State into three (3); Yobe Zone A Senatorial district, Zone B Senatorial district and Zone C Senatorial district, each constituting a cluster. In the second stage, 1 Local Government Area, where activities of the *Boko Haram* took, place was selected using purposive sampling from each Senatorial district; making a total of 3 LGAs. In the third stage, 3 political wards were selected from each LGA using simple random sampling technique. To do this, simple lottery method was employed, i.e. the names of the political wards of a LGA were written in pieces of papers and folded properly. The folded pieces of papers were inserted into a container (say a jug or a cap) and then shake it well to mix them up. 3 pieces of papers were picked randomly. This gave 9 political wards at hand. In the fourth stage, 1 location was also randomly selected from each area using similar procedure used in the third stage (simple random sampling). This gave 9 locations. In the fifth stage, one street was selected from each location using the same method used in the third and fourth stages. In the sixth stage, 34 households, from which 1 respondent was given questionnaire, was selected from each street using simple random sampling. That is, 309.

Source of Data

The data collection will be sourced from primary and secondary data. The primary data was quantitative. Hence questionnaire was employed. The secondary data was generated from text-books, newspapers, journal articles, magazines, conference proceedings, etc.

Data Collecting Instruments

The instrument of data collection was questionnaire. Literature/desk review will also be used in conceptual and theoretical framework.

Method of Data Analysis

The study adopted quantitative method in analyzing the data collected. This is because the questionnaire guide could best be analysed using the quantitative technique.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The instrument employed for the data collection was questionnaire. The data collected were presented in tabular form and interpreted. A total of 309 questionnaires were administered to the respondents but only 288 questionnaires were retrieved. Thus, the analysis is based on the 288 questionnaires.

Section A: Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section deals with the personal, socio-economic and demographic information of the respondents.

Table 1.1: Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

S/N	Variables	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	197	68.4
		Female	91	31.6
		Total	288	100
2.	Age	18-27	101	35.1
		28-37	78	27.1
		38-47	67	23.3
		48-57	17	5.9
		58 and above	25	8.6
		Total	288	100

3.	Marital Status	Single	183	63.5
		Married	84	29.2
		Divorced	15	5.2
		Widowed	06	2.1
		Total	288	100
5.	Educational Qualification	No formal education	27	9.4
		Quranic education	34	11.8
		Primary education	18	6.2
		Secondary education	70	24.3
		OND/NCE	52	18.1
		First Degree/HND	66	22.9
		Postgraduate	21	7.3
		Total	288	100
8.	Occupation	Civil Servant	126	43.8
		Student (western education)	44	15.3
		Student (Quranic education)	14	4.9
		Traders/Farmers	94	32.5
		Others	10	3.5
		Total	288	100
9	Monthly Income	No income	78	27.1
		N10,000-N29,999	45	15.6
		N30,000 – N49,999	54	18.8
		N50,000 –N69,999	48	16.7
		N70,000-N89,999	39	13.5
		N90,000-and above	24	8.3
		Total	288	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The demographic profile of the respondents, as presented in Table 1.1, reflects diverse characteristics crucial for poverty and its influence on terrorism in Yobe State, Nigeria. A majority of respondents are male (68.4%), aligning with Jamri's (2021) observation that terrorism and insurgency often have a distinct gender dimension. The age distribution indicates a significant representation of younger individuals, with 35.1% between 18-27 years, suggesting a youthful demographic, which is consistent with the broader Nigerian population structure (Ibrahim and Mukhtar, 2017). The high percentage of younger respondents could reflect the increased vulnerability of younger individuals to joining terrorist groups in Yobe State.

Marital status shows that more than half of the respondents are singles (63.5%), followed by married individuals (29.2%). This demographic spread is important as it represents varied social responsibilities and life experiences, which might influence their perceptions and experiences, as different marital statuses could have different socio-economic and security concerns (Asuquo, 2009). The educational qualifications provide insights into family obligations and literacy levels, both of which are significant factors in understanding societal issues. A larger family size might impact the economic pressure and thereby influence the relapse of terrorism. Educational levels, with a notable percentage having secondary education (24.3%) and higher education (22.9% combined for OND/NCE, First Degree/HND, and Postgraduate), suggest a relatively educated sample, which could mean a more informed and critical understanding the poverty and terrorism.

Occupationally, the respondents are diverse, with a significant proportion being civil servants (43.8%), followed by farmers/traders (32.5%). This indicates more potentially more educated segment of the population and awareness of poverty and terrorism. Also, the diversity in occupations, including farming and business, provides varied socioeconomic perspectives, which is crucial in understanding the why poverty leads to lingering terrorism in the study area.

Lastly, income levels, with 27.1% having no income and a substantial number earning N30,000 – N49,999, highlight the economic backdrop of the respondents, which is crucial as poverty is an factor often connected

with terrorism and, by extension, security issues. This is corroborated by the findings of Jamri (2024), who identified poverty as one of the remote causes of almajirai and direct factor responsible for Boko Haram and other security challenges in Yobe State.

Section B: The Role of Poverty in Fuelling Domestic Terrorism This section addresses objective one of the study, which is the role of poverty in fuelling domestic terrorism in Yobe State.

Interpretation Key: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

Table 1.2: The Role of Poverty in Fuelling Domestic Terrorism

S/N	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Lack of basic needs pushes some youths into joining terrorist groups	142 (49.3%)	96 (33.3%)	22 (7.6%)	18 (6.3%)	10 (3.5%)
2	Unemployment is a major factor leading to youth involvement in terrorism	158 (54.9%)	82 (28.5%)	24 (8.3%)	14 (4.9%)	10 (3.5%)
3	Poor economic conditions in communities contribute to terrorism relapse	135 (46.9%)	90 (31.3%)	30 (10.4%)	20 (6.9%)	13 (4.5%)
4	Youths from poor backgrounds are more vulnerable to terrorist recruitment	148 (51.4%)	92 (31.9%)	20 (6.9%)	18 (6.3%)	10 (3.5%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1.2 above presents data on the role of poverty in fuelling domestic terrorism in Yobe State. The responses indicate that a strong majority of the 288 respondents agree that poverty-related factors play a significant role in driving domestic terrorism. For example, around 49–55% strongly agreed with statements linking unmet basic needs, high unemployment, poor economic conditions, and the vulnerability of impoverished youths to terrorist recruitment. This consensus is supported by additional 28–33% who simply “agree” with the statements. In combination, about 80–90% of respondents (using the “SA” and “A” categories) perceive poverty as a core factor in terrorism relapse. The smaller percentages noted in the Neutral and Disagree categories suggest that while there may be some divergence in opinions, the overwhelming view in the study area supports the argument that socioeconomic hardships substantially fuel domestic terrorism. That is why Mbaku (2019) stated that the effective way to fight terrorism and other security threats in Nigeria is to promote economic inclusiveness, as well as the protection of human rights.

Section C: Youth Empowerment Policies for Fighting Poverty

This section addresses objective two in the study, i.e. the essence of youth empowerment policies for fighting poverty in Yobe State.

Table 1.3: Youth Empowerment Policies for Fighting Poverty in Yobe State

S/N	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Empowerment programs reduce the likelihood of youth rejoining terrorists	130 (45.1%)	100 (34.7%)	28 (9.7%)	20 (6.9%)	10 (3.5%)
2	Skills acquisition helps youths become self-reliant and less radicalized	142 (49.3%)	94 (32.6%)	24 (8.3%)	18 (6.3%)	10 (3.5%)
3	Empowered youths are more likely to resist terrorist influence	138 (47.9%)	98 (34.0%)	26 (9.0%)	16 (5.6%)	10 (3.5%)
4	Youth empowerment contributes to long-term peace and security	145 (50.3%)	91 (31.6%)	25 (8.7%)	17 (5.9%)	10 (3.5%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1.3 presents data on the essence of youth empowerment policies for fighting poverty in Yobe State. For the empowerment dimension, nearly half of the respondents (ranging from 45% to 50% strongly agreeing) assert that empowerment programs can effectively deter youths from rejoining terrorist groups. Similarly, high proportions also agreed (around 32–34% in the “A” category) that skills acquisition leads to self-reliance and therefore reduces radicalization. This implies that over 75–80% of respondents lean toward believing that youth empowerment initiatives (both in terms of practical skills and broader social empowerment) are fundamental in preventing a relapse into terrorism. The relative consistency of these proportions across the four questions reinforces the notion that there is a strong community belief in the capacity of empowerment programs to create a more resilient youth population. In line with the above finding, UNICEF (2022) and Jamri (2024) reported that poverty and deprivations are more pronounced in northern Nigeria and rural areas.

Section D: Effective Youth Empowerment Policies for Fighting Poverty in Yobe State

This section addresses objective three in the study. It assessed the impact of effective youth empowerment policies for fighting poverty in Yobe State.

Table 1.4: Effective Youth Empowerment Policies for Fighting Poverty in Yobe State

S/N	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Government should invest more in youth vocational and entrepreneurship training	155 (53.8%)	90 (31.3%)	20 (6.9%)	13 (4.5%)	10 (3.5%)
2	Youths should be involved in designing and implementing empowerment policies	138 (47.9%)	98 (34.0%)	28 (9.7%)	14 (4.9%)	10 (3.5%)
3	Regular monitoring of empowerment programs improves their effectiveness	132 (45.8%)	100 (34.7%)	30 (10.4%)	16 (5.6%)	10 (3.5%)
4	Youth empowerment should target rural and vulnerable communities specifically	148 (51.4%)	92 (31.9%)	22 (7.6%)	16 (5.6%)	10 (3.5%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

When evaluating policy measures, as witnessed in Table 1.4, the respondents again show robust support. Over 50% strongly agreed that investment in vocational and entrepreneurship training is essential, while an additional 31–34% agreed, making a combined favorable response rate that exceeds 80% in favor of proactive government intervention. Similarly, involving youths in policy design, and regular monitoring of such programs, garnered strong to moderate affirmative responses (with approximately 47–50% strongly agreeing and another 31–34% agreeing). This outcome indicates that respondents not only recognize the importance of youth empowerment but also believe that such initiatives should be thoughtfully targeted- especially toward rural and vulnerable communities- to maximize the impact on poverty alleviation and, by extension, reduce vulnerability to extremist influences.

Across all three tables (1.1 to 1.4), the data present a consistent narrative: a significant majority of the sample agreed that poverty fuels terrorism and that effective, targeted youth empowerment strategies can mitigate this effect and prevent terrorism relapse. The consistently high “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” responses point to a clear perception among respondents that addressing socioeconomic challenges (through empowerment initiatives) is necessary for long-term peace and security in Yobe State. These insights could be valuable for policymakers and stakeholders aiming to develop tailored interventions that address both economic deprivation and the risk of radicalisation. As noted by Spicker (2023), social policies concern health care, education, pensions and cash support are policies to protect and support people

CONCLUSION

This study has critically examined the interplay between poverty and terrorism relapse in Yobe State, Nigeria, with a particular focus on youth empowerment as a strategic tool for prevention. The findings reveal a strong and consistent perception among respondents that poverty is a major driver of domestic terrorism in the region. The inability of many youths to meet their basic needs, coupled with high levels of unemployment and poor

economic conditions, significantly contributes to their vulnerability to recruitment by terrorist groups. These socioeconomic challenges create a fertile ground for radicalization, especially in a post-conflict environment like Yobe State, where many communities are still struggling with the effects of insurgency and underdevelopment.

Equally significant is the respondents' belief in the power of youth empowerment programs to prevent terrorism relapse. The majority of participants strongly agreed that vocational training, skills acquisition, and entrepreneurial opportunities not only foster self-reliance among youths but also reduce their susceptibility to extremist ideologies. Empowered youths are more likely to contribute positively to society and resist the lure of violence and radicalism. The evidence suggests that there is a clear link between the socioeconomic stability of young people and the sustainability of peace and security in the state. Furthermore, the study finds that for youth empowerment initiatives to be truly effective, they must be grounded in sound policies that are inclusive, participatory, and tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable. The respondents support increased government investment in youth development, community-based programming, and active involvement of young people in policy design and implementation. Regular monitoring and evaluation of such programs are also considered critical to ensure their success and sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered with a view to awaken policymakers to play a pivotal role in preventing terrorism relapse and building a peaceful, productive, and resilient youth population in Yobe State:

1. Government and development partners should design and implement well-structured empowerment programs that focus on vocational training, entrepreneurship, digital skills, and small-scale business support to reduce youth unemployment and poverty.
2. Anti-terrorism policies in Yobe State should go beyond military responses to include socioeconomic interventions such as food security, education, access to basic health services, and economic empowerment, especially in vulnerable and high-risk communities.
3. Young people should not only be beneficiaries but also active participants in designing, implementing, and evaluating empowerment and peacebuilding initiatives. This participatory approach ensures programs meet their real needs and strengthens their sense of ownership and commitment.
4. Empowerment programs should be tailored to the unique challenges of rural and post-insurgency communities, where poverty and risk of relapse into terrorism are more severe. Such targeting can reduce the appeal of extremist groups and rebuild trust in the government.
5. Establish strong systems to monitor and evaluate youth empowerment and poverty reduction programs. This will help assess impact, ensure accountability, and enable timely adjustment of strategies to maximize effectiveness and sustainability.
6. The state government should collaborate with private sector actors, NGOs, and international organizations to mobilize resources, technical expertise, and innovation in implementing scalable and sustainable youth empowerment programs across the state.

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APPENDIX

Appendix I

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

YOBE STATE UNIVERSITY

QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE FOR THE PUBLIC

Dear Respondent,

I am a researcher conducting a study on “Poverty and Terrorism Relapse: Youths Empowerment as a Prevention Strategy in Yobe State, Nigeria.” This questionnaire is strictly for academic purposes. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. The information you provide will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. No part of your identity will be disclosed. By continuing with this questionnaire, you agree to participate willingly.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Prof. Bukar Jamri

Section A: Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

S/N	Variables	Options	Response
1.	Gender	Male	
		Female	
		Total	
2.	Age	18-27	
		28-37	
		38-47	
		48-57	
		58 and above	
		Total	
3.	Marital Status	Single	
		Married	
		Divorced	
		Widowed	
		Total	
5.	Educational Qualification	No formal education	
		Quranic education	
		Primary education	
		Secondary education	
		OND/NCE	
		First Degree/HND	
		Postgraduate	
		Total	
8.	Occupation	Civil Servant	
		Student (western education)	
		Student (Quranic education)	
		Traders/Farmers	
		Others	
		Total	

9	Monthly Income	No income	
		N10,000-N29,999	
		N30,000 – N49,999	
		N50,000 –N69,999	
		N70,000-N89,999	
		N90,000-and above	

Section B: The Role of Poverty in Fuelling Domestic Terrorism

Interpretation Key: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

S/N	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
10.	Lack of basic needs pushes some youths into joining terrorist groups					
11	Unemployment is a major factor leading to youth involvement in terrorism					
12	Poor economic conditions in communities contribute to terrorism relapse					
13	Youths from poor backgrounds are more vulnerable to terrorist recruitment					

Section C: Youth Empowerment Policies for Fighting Poverty

S/N	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
14	Empowerment programs reduce the likelihood of youth rejoining terrorists					
15	Skills acquisition helps youths become self-reliant and less radicalized					
16	Empowered youths are more likely to resist terrorist influence					
17	Youth empowerment contributes to long-term peace and security					

Section D: Effective Youth Empowerment Policies for Fighting Poverty in Yobe State

S/N	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
17	Government should invest more in youth vocational and entrepreneurship training					
18	Youths should be involved in designing and implementing empowerment policies					
19	Regular monitoring of empowerment programs improves their effectiveness					
20	Youth empowerment should target rural and vulnerable communities specifically					

Thank you.