Peace and Security Education: Critical Factors for National Security and Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The importance of national security in any nation cannot be underestimated. National security is the measure and systems put in place by a nation to secure its citizens and resources from danger and the risk of infiltration, sabotage, subversion or theft, etc. The Nigerian state is faced with a lot of security issues; religious, political and economical. Addressing these challenges has been in the front burner of national dallies. Extant literature has shown that peace and security education is an important panacea for curbing restiveness and insecurity in any society. The Intergroup Contact theory of Gordon W. Allport (1954) is used to explain the variables of the study. This paper aims to examine the role of peace and security education as critical factors for national security and development in Nigeria. The paper adopts historical perspectives. Data are obtained basically from secondary sources and analyzed using content assessment. Issues examine provides the basis for conclusion and suggestions to guide policy action. The paper advocates for peace education as a viable strategy for building national consciousness and peaceful values in Nigerians.

Keywords: *Peace, Security, Religion, Development, Nigeria*

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Background to the Study

No society develops in war. Insecurity in any form, which is the absence of peace and security; historical, religious, ethnic, regional, civil, social, economic, and political leads to conflicts, social disorder and the wanton destruction of lives and property. It affects the development process. Development in this context consists of creating an economy with relevant social, economic and physical infrastructure for business operations and industrial growth, provision of gainful employment, peace environment, functional and useful education, and quality health care for the people and economic opportunities, among other things.

The Nigerian state is currently faced with a lot of insecurity. From the viewpoint of diverse ethnic regions, there are constant ethnic and religious conflicts. This is occasioned by mutual suspicion and distrust among various ethnic groups and the major religions in the country. The different ethnic groups across Nigeria often allege neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry. This often brings about ethnic clashes and religious conflicts. The present administration led by President Muhammed Buhari has blamed the problem on the failure of the past administration. For him, corruption is responsible for governance failure in Nigeria; and insecurity in Nigeria is mainly a function of government failure. Corruption has created massive unemployment in the country, which has, in turn, worsened the insecurity situation in Nigeria. Mismanagement of resources has brought about massive poverty and lack which is also a factor in the insecurity challenges facing the country (Kubiat, 2019).

The recent conflict between herders' men and farmers in the south is as a result of the struggle for resources. Mass unemployment and consequent poverty among Nigerians, especially the youths is a major cause of tension, insecurity and violent crimes in Nigeria. There is an alarming rate of terrorism and this is traceable to religious fanaticism particularly in Islam dominated states of Nigeria. Kubiat (2019) added that the activities of Niger Delta militants in the oil-producing southern part of the country pose a serious threat to the stability and economic health of the region in particular, and Nigeria in general. The security crises in different parts of Nigeria is destroying existing infrastructure and preventing a peaceful environment for the development of further infrastructure, and a safe environment for economic activities by individuals. It has hindered investment as no investor will want to risk investment in an unstable economy. Indeed, no nation can achieve sustainable development in an environment of insecurity.

Several efforts have been employed by the government and international community in addressing the security challenges in Nigeria. However, the problem seems unabated. The thrust of this paper is that peace and security education can help build national values, consciousness and patriotic statesman among citizens. The process is vital that attitudes towards war and violence are transformed and translated into long-term behavioral change which seeks alternative solutions to armed conflict.

Theoretical Framework
Intergroup Contact Theory

The Intergroup Contact Theory is credited to the work of Gordon W. Allport (1954). Allport's theory states that "under appropriate conditions, interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members. If one has the opportunity to communicate with others, they can understand and appreciate different points of views involving their way of life. As a result of new appreciation and understanding, prejudice should diminish". Society is therefore built on interpersonal contact and social relationship. This brings about the absence of prejudice and unhealthy tendencies to create social disorder and crime.

Nigeria is a federal state, with federating multi-lingual states. This diversity is what makes the country unique and different from other nations of the world. Most of the insecurity challenges faced by the country are as a result of the diversity and differences in interest. The consciousness and benefit of intergroup contact are fast eroding. The role of peace education is essential in enhancing intergroup consciousness, especially the positive attitudes toward members of other groups–attitudes achieved in safe environments such as classrooms, schools, workshops, and the like–to all members of the outgroup/ society. Children learn about peace and the need for peace in safe protected environments and then return to a wider society where there is still injustice, asymmetry of power, a hierarchical structure, discrimination, xenophobia, and violence. Therefore, the objective of peace education must be strengthened to enhance the capacity of an individual for critical thinking. This must be made part of the national curriculum, to create values and strengthen nation-building.

The Challenges of Insecurity in Nigeria
The concept of security has been assessed from different perspective. In the context of our discourse, the term is define as the relative freedom which individuals, groups and nations enjoy from danger, risk, or threat of harm, injury, or loss to personnel and/or property. It is the degree of resistance to, or protection from, harm and it applies to any vulnerable and valuable asset, such as a person, dwelling, community, nation, or organization. According to Omoyibo and Akpomera (2013), "security is a concept that is before the state, and the state exists to provide that concept". While to Thomas (1996) maintained that "security is the prime responsibility of the state. The State of insecurity in Nigeria is becoming worrisome and disturbing considering the high rate of killings, bombing, kidnapping, conflicts, wars, and clashes, etc which innocent people fall to the guns of criminals in the country today". In the past recent months, no week passes without a report of unknown gunmen taking human lives in the streets of northern Nigeria and north-east in particular.

The term National Security could be regarded as the measures, facilities, and systems put in place by a nation to secure the life and properties of its citizens and resources from danger and the risk of infiltration, sabotage, subversion, theft or external interference. This is further buttressed in the Nigerian Constitution Section 14(2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution which states that; "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of any government; and the participation by the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with

the provisions of this Constitution". Absence of this provision means insecurity in the state or country as it may refer (Shonholtz, 1998). The Nigerian state is currently faced with serious issues of insecurity and this is affecting the stability and development of the country.

There is a growing concern about the alarming rate of insecurity in Nigeria. It is more disturbing with the death rates in the Northern region of the country. According to the World Bank (2001), the region "occupies about 70% of the landmass of the country; it also has the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the country". Similarly, the report added that the region "has the lowest rate of child enrolment in schools, the highest number of unemployed young people in the country, highest levels of poverty as compared to the other parts of the country. Base on this, the region is faced with challenges of security of lives and property and has remained a major issue today". These problems include inter-ethnic and inter¬religious conflict, insurgency and terrorism such as the Boko-Haram among others.

Reference is made to Boko-Haram insurgency and other terrorist acts that have taken over some parts of Nigeria, particularly the north-east. The case of the kidnapping of Chibok girls from their schools in Borno state has remained a national and international concern. Others include the killings and slaughtering of students in their dormitories in Buni-Yadi and Potiskum all in Yobe State and later the kidnapping and abduction of other women and children from their homes and communities. "Due to these criminalities and terrorist activities, so many local government areas in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe are lost to the Boko-Haram and remained under their control for almost two years from 2013-early to the second quarter of 2015" (Temple, 2013). Extant literature shows that the case is not so different now.

Temple, (2013), reiterated that "the indices that measure human development are by far poorer in the 19 northern states of Nigeria compared with the rest of the country ranging from the girl-child education to the Almajiri system, from women empowerment to the economic viability of states, from an immediate marshal plan ¬like attempt at addressing the areas in conflict to how to create cooperation between states and groups". This has resulted in untold killings in the region and another part of the country.

In other parts of the country, Salawu (2010) noted that there are challenges of herdsmen killing, armed robbery, and kidnapping. There is an emerging problem by herdsmen killing and this has created serious tension in the country. Kidnapping becomes a daily threat in the south part of the country. Almost daily, there are cases of taking a person away against the person's will, usually for ransom. Today, people are getting kidnapped almost daily across the region, through so many criminal and terrorist activities (Innocent, 2012)

By the day, the security situation in Nigeria grows worst. Several factors are responsible for this social menace. Some of them are religious differences, unemployment, pervasive poverty, systemic and political corruption, porous borders, terrorism, weak security system and struggle for economic resources. The effect of insecurity in Nigeria is far-reaching. Some of which include,

i. Dislocation and displacement of people
ii. Social tensions and a new pattern of settlements which encourages muslins/christians divisions
iii. Heightens crime rates and hostility between "indigenes" and "settlers"
iv. Dislocation and disruption of family and communal life
v. Vulnerability to rape, child abuse, neglect, disease, and sickness, especially in children
vi. Widespread hunger and poverty in the polity, etc.

Effort as addressing insecurity in Nigeria has attracted international and joint federal-states government cooperation but much is still desired. While stakeholders at all levels are concerned about these challenges; kidnapping, insurgency and terrorism activities like Boko-Haram, ethnic, religious and tribal leaders, the role of peace and security education may be significant in creating national consciousness among citizens.

Peace Education and its Impact on Addressing Insecurity in Nigeria
The term "Peace education" encompasses the key concepts of peace and education. Peace, used in its positive sense involves the development of a society in which, except for the absence of direct violence, there is no structural violence, inequality or social injustice. Education, on the other hand, is the process of systematic institutionalized transmission of knowledge and skills, as well as of basic values and norms that are accepted in a certain society, the concept of peace is less clearly defined.

According to Aspeslagh (1996), peace education "seeks to help students and indeed the general public acquires skills for nonviolent conflict resolution and to reinforce these skills for active and responsible action in the society for the promotion of the values of peace". The thrust of peace education is the acquisition of values, the right knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment. Dugan and Carey (1996) added that peace education activities promote the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help people either to prevent the occurrence of conflict, resolve conflicts peacefully, or create social conditions conducive to peace.

Folger, Baruch, and Robert (1994) stated that "core values of nonviolence and social justice are central to peace education. Nonviolence is manifested through values such as respect for human rights, freedom, and trust. Social justice is realized by principles of equality, responsibility, and solidarity. To achieve these ideals, peace education programmes across the world address a wide range of themes". Sidanius and Pratto (1999) mentioned that these include nonviolence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, disarmament, gender equality, human rights, environmental responsibility, history, communication skills, coexistence, and international understanding and tolerance of diversity. This is significant in driving national consciousness and development in the Nigerian state.

Salomon and Nevo (2002) explained that peace education can be delivered to people of all ages, in both formal and informal settings. Programmes exist at local, national, and international levels, and in times of peace, conflict, and post-conflict. To create public

dialogue different factions of society are often brought together in peace education programmes – these typically include civil society groups, schools, tribal leaders and the media. "Yet due to the many areas covered by peace education, initiatives are primarily determined by culture and context, as well as by the projects' scopes and objectives". This is true in a multi-lingual society like Nigeria. The peace education programme can be driven through ethnic languages and cultural arts. The aim is to build a sense of oneness and peace among the various ethnic nationalities in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Peace education and peacebuilding and security are therefore intrinsically linked. International and national initiatives and actions for peacebuilding include education as one of its important components. It is a process of socialization and consciousness building. For the Nigerian state, peacebuilding can be achieved through sustainable educational strategies. Mention must be made on the federal government initiative by introducing national values in the school curriculum at all levels. A lot more must be done informally through the media and cultural means and arts. Peace education is the key to national development. It is much more vital in curbing the challenges of insecurity currently weakening the threshold of national security.

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