IMPACT OF INSECURITY ON EDUCATION: TIPS FOR INTERNET MEDIA PEACE INTERVENTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Insecurity in Nigeria is causing panic. It is complex and difficult to tackle because it comes in different forms. The paper sees attacks on educational institutions, killings and abduction of school children by insurgency, ethnic and religious militias, bandits and kidnappers as security challenges impeding the progress of the nation. The use of the internet media to spread sentiments of hate is a thing of worry that it addresses. The paper discusses internet media peace education as an intervention program that may be effective and serve as a better option of peace building. The paper concludes that online peace building has not been given enough attention in Nigeria. It recommends online media interactive dialogue, religious peace education programs, peace jingle etc. as the possible panacea.

Keywords: Insecurity, Education, Internet Media and Peace Intervention

Introduction

Nigeria that used to be known as the giant of Africa, a blessed country with abundance of human and natural resources and the promised land of Africans, is becoming a large cemetery. The common ceremony on daily basis in churches, mosques, traditional religious shrines and village/town squares is burial. Towns, villages, offices, high ways, forests, recreational centers, sport gymnasiums, schools, farms and homes are now potential mortuaries. The menace of insecurity is on the educational system. Bombing of institutions of learning and destruction of educational facilities, abduction of school children and students of higher institutions of learning for ransom, are security issues that are paralyzing the educational system of the country. Apart from security measures by the armed forces and police, non-governmental organizations, individuals and religious groups have tailored their efforts towards finding a solution to the security crisis bedeviling the nation. This paper is another attempt to examine and bring out the resources in internet media that could be of help in peace mediation for national development.

Definition of Terms

The paper has some key concepts that need to be clarified in order to put readers in the right perspective. They include; insecurity, education, internet media and peace. Peace. They form the core of the discussion in the paper.

Insecurity

Insecurity is a state of being subject to danger. It is lack of safety for individuals, groups and communities. Insecurity is a condition that exposes people to the danger of death in a particular place or area. It creates fear and panic on the populace. Insecurity could be a product of natural disasters or human activities. In this paper, the insecurity addressed is caused by humans (Obiezu, 2021).

Education

Every society is a collection of individuals with different gifts and abilities. The gifts and abilities of an individual has to be developed and harnessed for the development of the society through a process commonly referred to as education. Education is the total and balanced development of all abilities (mental, physical and emotional) of an individual for his functional survival and effective contribution in a constantly changing society (Ajayi, Oluwa& Oridola, 2019).

Internet or New/Digital Media

Internet or New/Digital media is an interactive two-way communication with users being the active producers of content and information. The internet is considered as a highly interactive mass medium and can be simply defined as the "network of networks" (Edu, 2021). News outlets in the internet include; social networking media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Tumble, LinkedIn, Snap-chat, Pinterest etc), online forums (Quora and Reddit) that serve as websites where the community can comment on, text or discuss a particular topic and Podcasts (a series of sounds focused on a particular topic or theme. We can listen to them on computers or cell phones). Internet or New/Digital media is considered the center of mass media because it has integrated all other types of mass media. It is the media super power today (Edu, 2021).

Peace

Peace is often taken for granted or not valued until its absence is felt in the society. In the negative sense, peace can simply be described as the absence of war. A nation in this sense is referred to as peaceful when its borders are free of violence. On the positive dimension, it consists of all the conditions that contribute to the sustenance of harmony or tranquility in a nation (Rank, 2008).

Insecurity and its Impact on Education in Nigeria

As Europe and some western nations are battling with natural disasters, Nigeria has human disasters to wrestle with. Humans create the insecurity in the polity. In all parts of the country, bloodshed is increasing on a daily basis. Innocent people get trapped and killed due to ethno-religious conflicts, Boko Haram attacks, Farmers/herders clashes, bandits and kidnappers. Sadly, these conflicts often obstruct educational activities that are necessary to the development of every nation.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts

Nigeria though a rich nation in natural resources, has been host to different ethno-religious conflicts (Igbuzor, 2012). These conflicts assumed a massive scale in 1980s and 90s. Today, the conflicts have devalued the social and cultural fabrics of the nation. The gaining of independence in 1960 was accompanied with the birth of new identities seeking relevance in the nation. Few years after independence, military coups and counter coups became the order of the day. At some point, the East of the country demanded self-rule. The

declaration of the Biafra state by Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu led to the Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970. The insecurity that accompanied the war rendered the east of the country unhealthy for human survival. Many school children were recruited both in the Federal and Biafra army to fight the war. Schools and other educational activities were closed down in the east due to the war. The tension created by the war could not allow a free flow of educational activities in the country (Achi, 2021).

The decline of security continued to manifest in different inter-communal clashes in the Nigeria. In 1992, a land dispute between Takad and Ganawuri in Plateau state metamorphosed to an arms conflict. During the thirty years of military rule in Nigeria, the Ogoni land protest in the Niger Delta over the extortion of oil and the alienation of the people from its benefits became burning issue in the nation. Kaduna state wrestled with the Ikulu and Bajju clashes in early 2000s. Taraba state turned to another axis of violence due to the clashes between Kuteb, Jukun and Chamba on the stool of the Ukwe Takum that became vacant in 1996. Shagamu in Lagos state played host to the clash between Yorubas and Hausas on the violation of a Yoruba custom by a prostitute alleged to be from the north in 1996 (Achi, 2021). Plateau state witnessed the Pan/Goemai clashes of 2005 instigated by land ownership, disagreement on chieftaincy and government declaration of Namu development area. These clashes led to death of bread winners and sponsors to some students in institutions of learning. The insecurity created grounded educational activities. Many school children were recruited into ethnic and religious militias. Some schools became refugee and military camps. Hunger, displacement and migration caused by the crises dash away the hope of any educational career of children and young people (Yakubu, 2008).

Ethnic crises were accompanied with religious unrest in different parts of the country. The religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria formerly started in 1962. Muhammadu Marwa (Maitatsine) a Cameroonian by birth became a resident of Kano that year. With a trained militant group of 10000 followers, he unleashed havoc in Kano, Bulumkutu (Maiduguri), Jimeta (Gongola State) and Gombe (Bauchi state) from 1980 to 1985. The religious unrest that was averted with staggering success was the attempt to make Nigeria a member of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) by the Military administration of Babangida in 1986. The OIC saga planted religious sentiments capable of degenerating into crisis between Christians and Muslims in the polity. The kafachan debacle of 1987 was an explosion of such sentiments. Sadly, the violence started in an educational institution, the Kaduna state college of education. A trail of religious unrest emerged and advanced with the Kano 1991 protest against the Christian crusade of Reighard Bonke, the Tafawa Balewa Civil Disturbances of 1991 (Bauchi State), Zangon – Katab clashes of 1992, Sharia Violent Conflicts of 2000, Miss World mayhem of 2002 and Religious Conflicts between Christian and Muslim students in the Institutions of learning from 2002 to 2006 in Kaduna state. Plateau state joined the queue with the Jos crises of 2001 and Yelwa Shendam conflicts of 2002 and 2004. The religious sensitive atmosphere aggravated insecurity in Nigeria with the crises on the Danish Cartoons in 2006. The obstruction of educational activities by these violent skirmishes cannot be overemphasized (Achi, 2021).

Boko Haram Attacks

Boko Haram (Western Education is a sin) – acronym is different from the Arabic name for the organization which is "Sunnis for Dawa (Islamization) and Jihad". The Arabic name indicates that the organization is dedicated to the overthrow of the secular government and establishment of Sharia law (Oby, 2012). Boko Haram attacks started in 2009 (Agbibo,

n.d). The group introduced suicide mission which is strange to Nigerians. Boko Haram's hostility to secular education made it to gain notoriety for its repeated attacks on schools, universities, teachers, administrators and students. The group killed an estimated 2,295 teachers and displaced over 19,000 of them. More than 1,400 schools have been destroyed and about 600,000 children lost access to education in the northeast (GCPEA, 2018). Boko Haram abducted 276 girls from their school in the town of Chibok in 2014. It also abducted 111 girls from Government Girls Science and Technical College in Dapchi, Yobe state in 2018. Five girls were killed, while Leah Sharibu is yet to be released. Approximately about 600 women and girls were abducted from their schools by the group (GCPEA, 2018).

Boko Haram uses schools for military purposes. This made parents and their children to be afraid of their safety. "As of May 2017, a U.N agency reported that Nigerian government forces were using 17 schools for military purposes" (GCPEA, 2018). The presence of armed forces near a school can make it a target of retaliatory attacks, increasing the risks to children and teachers (GCPEA, 2018). In Borno state, schools were closed at all levels in 22 out of the 27 local governments' areas for a minimum of two years. "With this gridlock on education, children are more vulnerable to becoming trapped in a cycle of poverty" (Waller, 2017).

Farmers/Herders Clashes

The current clashes of Fulani herders and their host communities date back to 2012. In Delta state that year, one Mr. Benjamin was killed by herders. In Benue, Inoli, Ologba, Olegeje, Olegogboche, Olegede, Adana, Inminy and Abugbe communities in Agatu were attacked on 29 February 2013. Another attack took place in Agatu Local Government Area on February 2016, killing 500 and displacing 7000 people. People in Jalingo (Taraba state) were attacked on 15 June, 2019. A similar one took place on the residence of Tudiri and Janibanibu communities in Ardo Kola Local Government Area in Taraba state on 16 and 17 June, 2019, leaving 10 people death (Ngwoke and Ituma, 2020).

The conflict reached an alarming level in 2017 when 1000 people were killed in more than 50 clashes. In this year, "as fireworks were lighting up the skies to usher in the New year across the world, gunfire was echoing out in Nigeria's Benue state. On this night alone, 73 people were killed and hundreds were injured after herdsmen unleashed terror in two local government areas mostly populated by farmers" (Ajola, 2018).

A 2017 Global Terrorism index report said that over 2,500 deaths were recorded between 2012 and 2016 in sub – Saharan Africa with majority of the deaths recorded in Nigeria. And while there were 67 clashes between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria between 2007 and 2011, there were 716 clashes between 2012 and 2018 (Ajola, 2018).

The orgy of Herders/Farmers clashes led to the death of not less than 35 people and abduction of over 58 in attacks in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna state on January 6, 2020. Another attack took place on March 2020, leading to the death of 51 people. In the South – West of the country, attacks in Arimogija, Ose council Area of Ondo state claimed three people in March, 2020. Uwheru community in Delta state was attacked, destroying farm-lands on 13 February, 2020. Nimbo community in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu state was attacked on 25 April 2016, leading to the death of over 40 persons, burning of 11 houses and destruction of vehicles (Ngwoke and Ituma, 2020). The clashes have turned many schools into migrant camps. Tens of thousands of children have been pushed out of school by the violence (Unah, 2018).

Banditry/Kidnapping

As the northeast is tormented by Boko Haram, the northwest is harassed by the onslaught of banditry and kidnapping. One of the worst heat institutions is the educational sector. In February 17, 2021, twenty-seven boys and their teachers were kidnapped form a school in Kagara, Niger state (Orjinmo, 2021). In May 2021, 136 children were kidnapped from an Islamic Seminary, Niger state (Reuters, 2021). Gunmen abducted 39 students from the Federal College of forestry Mechanization, Kaduna in 11 March 2021 (Sotunde, 2021). in 20 April 2021, armed men attacked Green Field University in Kaduna state, murdered six people and abducted and later release 14 of the students (Bori, 2021). In March 2021, nearly 300 students from government Girls Science Secondary School in Jangebe, Zamfara state were abducted (Orjinmo, 2021). In June, at least 80 pupils and five teachers were abducted from Federal Government College, Birnin Yawuri, Kebbi state (Reuters, 2021). "More than 700 people have been abducted from schools in northwest Nigeria since December in a rash of kidnappings for ransom in the volatile region" (Sotunde, 2021). "Amnesty international reports more than 600 schools have been shut down in at least six states in Nigeria's north where education have been shaky" (Obiezu, 2021).

Internet Media and Escalation of Insecurity

The internet is masses controlled media. It is difficult to manipulate or censor it. It can escalate conflicts when used to spread sentiments that breed anger (Pantograph, 2020). As more and more people move online, individuals and groups have found new niches to play out their sentiments of hate and discrimination. The internet networks have reinforced their views and goad them to violence. "Social media platforms also offer actors the opportunity to publicize their acts" (Laub, 2019). Religion seems to be the scaffolding for the orchestration of such violence across the world. The united states of America have been battling with internal violent activities related to religion acrimony. The Charleston Church shooter that killed nine black clergy and worshipers in June 2015 was inspired by online self-directed learning. The circulation of whites' supremacy theories online and on the social media influenced the man to carry out violence against the blacks. The 2018 Pittsburgh Synagogue shooter was a participant in online racist indoctrination. The propaganda that Jews want to bring to the US immigrants that will edged out the Whites population moved the man to carry out the killing of the eleven worshippers at a refugee – themed Shabbat service (Laub, 2019).

New Zealand played host to a similar kind of violence in 2019. A fear of non-whites replacing the whites made many of their patriots and racist to become restless. This situation led to the 2019 New Zealand Mosque shootings. In the violence, forty-nine Muslims were murdered in their prayer ground. The perpetrators even sought to broadcast the attack on YouTube (Laub, 2019). A similar racist related violence was expressed in Myanmar. The military leaders and Buddhist nationalists used the internet media to slue and demonize the Rohingya Muslim minority during a campaign of ethnic cleansing. "Though Rohingya comprised perhaps 2 percent of the population, ethno nationalists claimed that Rohingya would soon supplant the Buddhist majority" (Laub, 2019).

Since 2014, India has been suffering the harassment of a group known as "Lynch Mobs". The lynch mob's violence in many cases is inspired by rumors from WhatSAPP groups. Such violence has been on the increase with the coming into power of the Hindu – Nationalist Bhairaitiya Janata Party in 2014. In Sri Lanka, violence inspired by Rumor spread online has been meted on Tamil Muslim minority. "During a spade of violence in March 2018, the government blocked access to Facebook and WhatSAPP, as well as the

messaging app Viber, for a week, saying that Facebook has not been sufficiently responsive during the emergency" (Laub, 2019). Autocratic governments see the internet media as the worst technological innovation that came with the 21st century. It is people centered, as such, subject to so many abuses. It issometimes identified with rumor mongering, fake news, exaggeration of conflict related issues and hate speeches to fuel existing sentiments. "A Burmese Monk self – titled himself the "Burmese Bin Ladin" to fuel racism and hatred on social media forums like YouTube and Facebook. He spread anti-Muslim sentiments and blaming Middle Eastern forces for providing local Muslims with financial, military and technical ability to attack Buddhists" (Madzima, 2013). Sometime people in the internet "spread unfounded rumors, half-truths, and can also be used to mobilize people to commit acts of violence" (Junne, 2013).

The internet media "may foster the formation and strengthening of like – minded people, and add to the fragmentation of opinions and views rather than building compromises" (Makinen and Kuira, 2008). In Kenyan election conflict of 2007, "many bloggers took sides and the discussion could be ethnically tense. Similarly, while SMS has been a powerful tool for good during and after the elections, it was used to spread rumors and messages laden with ethnic hatred. It was reported that SMS predicted attacks and called recipients to act on the basis of their ethnicity. People also received anonymous calls or flyers threatening" (Makinen and Kuira, 2008). In Nigeria, "Expression of ethnic and religious sentiments in the new (social) media has led to some inter-ethnic, inter-religious disputes and crisis in the northern part of the country" (Uzuegbunam and Omenugha, 2018). Gory pictures and videos of threats, murder, and bombings from Boko Haram are turning the country into a state of anarchy (Uzuegbunam and Omenugha, 2018).

Internet Media intervention Insecurity

The media outlet that is raising noise in the world today is the internet. It is sometimes conceived as a breeding ground for violence. However, it is undeniably a resource for peace mediation. Internet media serves the purpose of peace building by countering false information and enhancing interaction among people (Pantograph, 2020). Today, every conflict often ends up assuming a global dimension due to media publicity. The internet media that has a large coverage can be of help in reaching people with peace decisions and jingles in different parts of the world. Facebook has a large coverage of subscribers. With about "1.06 billion monthly active users and 680 million users as of February 2013" (Madzima, 2013). "Google + has 343 million active users, twitter pulls 500 million, and there are 800 You Tube million users generating 4 billion news per day" (Madzima, 2013). Internet media can serve as an instrument for changing perception on ethnicity, attitudes and for enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding. "Thus it can bridge the divide between ethnic groups that wouldn't otherwise communicate with one another" (Madzima, 2013).

Rather than proscribing internet media activities, they could be transformed into peace building exercises. The Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDGAF) is helping "young people run peace programs and intercultural activities, such as organizing multiethnic youth festivals, using social media to promote peace and tolerance and discouraging hate speech in social media" (Madzima, 2013). MDGAF is funding workshops for young people to change their perception and attitudes that generated the Macedonians and Albanians clashes in 2001 via the social media. Through the social media monitoring technology developed by iHUB, the violence that threatened the Kenyan election in 2013 was controlled. The technology fostered civic participation, transparency and accountability (Madzima, 2013).

Internet media has fared well in checkmating domestic violence in the world than the mainstream media. "The international global campaign themed "One Billion Rising" on the social media got a mass gathering of over 200 countries to put an end to domestic violence" (Madzima, 2013). The key to effective action lies in the ordinary citizens, the change makers at the grassroots. Engaging and making them aware of the power of social media is a step towards transforming communities and curbing violence (Madzima, 2013). During crisis, the internet media "especially mobile phone technology, have provided new opportunities to collect data from many different localities and to aggregate these data to provide a real time overview of local development." Also it provides "unique opportunities for individuals to articulate their opinion get their voices heard and draw public attention to issues that need to be addressed" (Junne, 2013). At a hot phase of a crisis, internet media can be used to keep contact with relatives, warn people not to enter dangerous zones, rescue people and reunite families dispersed by the conflict (Junne, 2013).

In the Kenyan 2007 post-election conflict, the internet media was highly instrumental to the peace process that later on restored the country to normalcy.

> The social media offered narratives by "citizen reporters" and digital activities that were more diverse than the views presented in the mainstream media, and represented grassroots reactions during the crisis. While the international media only scratched the surface of what was happening, and the traditional media partly resigned to censorship due to fears of repression, the social media acted offered swifter, more subjective, and more detailed coverage during a fast moving and changing situation" (Makinen and Kuira, 2008).

The Ushahidi – website that was launched helped a lot. "Ushahidi.com is a tool for people who had witnessed acts of violence in Kenya after the election to report them. The website shows the incidents on a map of the country, and the site also accepts SMS – delivered reports about ongoing events" (Makinen and Kuira, 2008).

Conclusion

From the discussion so far, it is evident that insecurity creates uncertainty about the future of Nigeria. As such, it is important to present the following as conclusion from the study.

i.   Insecurity is difficult to handle in Nigeria because it comes up from time to time in different forms.

ii.   The conflicts reviewed indicate that education is always one of the major casualties of insecurity. This reality counts against the development of Nigeria as a nation.

iii. The inability of the measures taken by the government, non-governmental organization and religious bodies to produce the desired result in checking the menace of insecurity call for the use of alternative means.

iv.   Human interaction is today is majorly in the internet media. Therefore, it provides as good ground for mediation. A resource that Nigeria is yet to fully tapped and harnessed for peace building.

Recommendations

Considering the pressing needs of security for national development in Nigeria, it suffices to make the following recommendations as the way forward.

i.   Religion is highly significant in the lives of people in Nigeria. What and how it

is taught matters a lot in curbing insecurity or promoting insecurity. Religious educators should create internet media platforms for moral instructions on the value of human life and the dangers posed by insecurity in the country.

ii. Good moral education has the capacity of producing God fearing and loyal citizens, which may not be achieved in the Churches and Mosques because of sectarianism that feeds on division. Therefore, religious educators in the educational system should explore the online resources to educate Nigerians on the importance of peaceful co-existence towards the development of the nation.

iii. Critics often blame the insecurity in the nation on the failure of governance. Those in government are the products of the nation's educational system. It means there is the need for a review of the educational system in order to produce functional leaders that will secure the nation and protect its educational system.

iv. Sectarianism in Christianity and Islam makes it difficult for uniformity of teaching on peace in each religion. This is partly responsible for violence carried out in the name of religion. The educational system that has a religious curriculum that centers on peaceful co-existence should organize and air online programs on interactive dialogue for peace. This will educate the populace and reduce the ignorance that makes people to go into violence in the name of God.

Government, Non-governmental and religious bodies should invest on training experts in online media peace mediation. Since the internet has been used for escalation of insecurity, its constructive use by such experts may hopefully promote the peace that is needed for the thriving of Nigeria's educational and national development.

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