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ANALYSING THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INSECURITY: THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

This work explores the dynamic interplay of theology, ethics, and insecurity in the context of Nigeria. The country, characterised by religious diversity and regional disparities, grapples with multifaceted challenges that impact its social fabric and stability. Theoretical foundations from theological perspectives, such as concepts of justice, peacebuilding, and human dignity, provide a robust framework for ethical considerations in addressing insecurity. Using primary and secondary investigations, this interdisciplinary approach recognises the intertwined nature of religious beliefs, ethical principles, and the complex manifestations of insecurity. The practical application of these principles is crucial in a society where issues like interfaith tensions, economic inequality, and environmental degradation contribute to insecurity. Recommendations include fostering interfaith dialogue, training leaders in ethical practices, empowering communities through education and healthcare, and integrating moral development into formal education.

Keywords: Insecurity, ethics, theology, Nigeria

Introduction

In the modern world, a society's ability to survive socio-economically depends on the safety of its citizens' lives and property. In order to do that, it is the government's duty to ensure that a particular social formation has enough security. Without it, social, economic, religious, and political achievements cannot be attained (Charas, 2015). However, Nigeria is currently grappling with security problems and these cuts through its six geographical regions. People in these areas sleep with one eye open, and the government, which is typically in charge of ensuring the safety of people and property, seems bewildered and incapable of doing something (Emmanuel & Emily, 2019).

In this study, we shall explore the deep relationships among moral values, religious convictions, and the complex terrain of human insecurity. It aims to shed light on how ethics and theology influence how we perceive and react to the complicated problems that different types of insecurity present.

Conceptual Analysis

Insecurity

According to the Encarta dictionary (2009), insecurity is defined as the state of being unsafe or insecure or a state of mind characterised by self-doubt and vulnerability. It can be anything from disturbing situations, mistreatment, and individual fears. Insecurity can cause you to lose trust, feel scared, uneasy, oppressed, lose focus, be devastated, and lose your humanity and according to Adebajoko & Ugwuoke (2014), insecurity is the state of being

vulnerable to terror, threats, risks, molestation, bullying, harassment, and other negative experiences.

Types of Insecurity in Nigeria

In Nigeria, various types of insecurity have been persistent challenges for decades, threatening the stability and well-being of the nation. These insecurities have wide-ranging effects on the country's social, economic, and political landscape.

The Boko Haram insurgency is a radical Islamist group that has been active in the north-eastern Nigeria since 2009. Kukah (2017) opined that they have engaged in acts of terrorism, insurgency, and kidnappings, causing significant instability in the region. Similarly, the conflict between Fulani herdsman and farming communities has resulted in violence, displacement, and loss of lives. The competition for resources, land, and clashes over religious and ethnic differences has fuelled this conflict (Obi, 2017). Also, according to Ibeanu (2014), kidnappings for ransom and banditry have become more prevalent in Nigeria. Criminal groups have abducted individuals, including schoolchildren, for financial gain, causing fear and insecurity.

There are other types of insecurity such as economic insecurity, corruption and environmental insecurity. As asserted by Aigbohkan, (2000), economic challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, and income inequality, contribute to insecurity in Nigeria and these issues can lead to social unrest and crime. Corruption is another type which according to Transparency International (2021) is a pervasive issue in Nigeria and has an impact on insecurity. Corruption weakens governance and institutions, making it difficult to address other security challenges effectively.

In addition, climate change, desertification, and other environmental challenges threaten Nigeria's security, as they can lead to resource scarcity, displacement, and conflict (Adedeji and Adejuwon, 2012). This, in turn, leads to food insecurity.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

Despite its greatness, Nigeria has continued to be a developing country struggling the most frantically to find its feet among the comity of nations due to the prevalence of insecurity and insurgency that have presented enormous challenges to its growth and development. These include:

The Menace of Unemployment and Poverty

Every year, tertiary institutions graduate many students who are unfortunately thrown into the labour market with no hope for job opportunities in sight. Many turn to violent and illegal behaviours like kidnapping, militancy, and armed robbery out of frustration in an attempt to maintain mental and physical composure. Others are easily radicalised because they have been the victims of terrorists. According to Nwagbosa (2012), previous administrations in Nigeria have not implemented policies aimed at lowering poverty and unemployment rates, which are the main contributors to the country's instability.

Elite Exploitation of Ethnicity and Religious Differences

It is important to bear in mind that Nigeria's varied ethnic composition does not automatically lead to insecurity; rather, political and religious leaders throughout the country occasionally use ethnic sentiments to achieve their selfish ambitions. In this manner,

the elites take advantage of people's minds to sow discord and distrust between various ethnic groups and the main religions in the nation, which contributes to Nigeria's instability.

Corruption

Corruption is poor not because money and profits change hands in an unequal way, and not because of participants' motives, but because it privatises important facets of public life, bypassing representation, discussion and choice processes. Corruption is the cause of Nigeria's high unemployment rate, the lack of electricity that young people and business owners in the country need to operate their enterprises, and the failure of many companies.

Weak Security Apparatus

Nigeria's security apparatus is regarded as having very little manpower and equipment. Both their training and pay are inadequate for security personnel. Consequently, the necessary knowledge is unavailable to address contemporary security threats. It is also extremely concerning how the security forces contribute to Nigeria's efforts to guarantee public safety. Numerous factors, such as corruption, inadequate funding for the police and other security agencies, outdated equipment, the health of the safety personnel, and a lack of staff, can contribute to this weak security system.

Olorisakin (2008) asserts that the police population ratio in Nigeria is 1:450 which falls below the United Nations' standard. This suggests that Nigeria is a seriously under-policed nation, which may help to explain why the police are unable to effectively address crime and security issues.

Impacts of Insecurity

The impact of insecurity on communities in Nigeria is multifaceted and can have far-reaching consequences. Insecurity, whether stemming from terrorism, ethno-religious conflicts, or other sources, affects various aspects of daily life and development. According to UNHCR (2021), insecurity, such as the Boko Haram insurgency and farmer-herder conflicts, has led to the loss of thousands of lives. It has also caused the displacement of millions of people, resulting in internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps and refugee crises. Insecurity disrupts economic activities, particularly in regions affected by conflict. It leads to reduced agricultural productivity, job losses, and a weakened business environment (ICG 2018).

Human Rights Watch (2021) argued that insecurity hampers access to education, as schools become targets for attacks and kidnappings. Many children are forced to stay out of school, which has long-term consequences on human capital development.

There is erosion of social cohesion and trust within communities as it often pits different ethnic or religious groups against each other (Onuoha, 2017). On the other hand, insecurity can disrupt healthcare services and access to medical facilities. This has implications for the health and well-being of the population, especially in conflict-affected areas, including psychological trauma as Ohaeri (2007) puts it, "prolonged exposure to insecurity and violence can lead to psychological trauma, particularly among children and vulnerable populations, affecting their mental health and overall development."

Theological Perspectives on Insecurity

Various theological perspectives have emerged within theodicy. Some propose that suffering is a test of faith or a means of spiritual growth. Others argue that suffering results from human free will and moral choices, which God allows to preserve human autonomy. Additionally, there are theories that maintain that suffering can be redemptive, contributing to a greater good or serving as part of God's divine plan.

Redemption and Suffering: Theological Frameworks to Insecurity

In the realm of theology, two profound and interconnected frameworks for addressing insecurity are redemption and suffering. These theological perspectives offer insight into how individuals and communities find meaning, hope, and solace in the face of life's uncertainties and trials.

Prominent theologians who have explored redemption include Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1997), who wrote extensively on the idea of "costly grace" and the redemptive nature of suffering in "The Cost of Discipleship." At its core, the concept of redemption posits that suffering and insecurity can be transformed into sources of spiritual growth and renewal. It suggests that through a process of redemption, individuals can find healing, restoration, and a deeper connection to the divine. This theological framework is often rooted in the belief that God offers the possibility of salvation and renewal, even in the midst of suffering. The Christian tradition draws heavily on the concept of redemption, particularly in the New Testament. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ are seen as the ultimate acts of redemption, offering the promise of salvation and the transformation of suffering into hope.

On the other hand, Lewis (1940) in works like "The Problem of Pain," examines the theological implications of suffering and the Christian response to it. He noted that suffering is a fundamental aspect of the human experience, and theological perspectives on suffering seek to address its role in the journey of faith and in the face of insecurity. While suffering may be seen as a consequence of sin, it can also be viewed as a means of refining one's character and deepening one's connection to the divine.

The Book of Job in the Bible is a profound exploration of human suffering and the quest for meaning in the midst of adversity. Job's story raises questions about the relationship between suffering, God's providence, and human understanding.

Interfaith and Interreligious Dialogue

Interfaith and interreligious dialogue represent theological perspectives that focus on fostering understanding, cooperation, and peace among diverse religious traditions. In the context of insecurity, these frameworks offer pathways to addressing conflicts, promoting tolerance, and finding common ground among communities with different beliefs.

Scholars like Kung submitted that interfaith dialogue encourages open and respectful communication between individuals and communities of various religious backgrounds. It acknowledges the theological and cultural diversity of humanity while emphasising shared values and aspirations. While interfaith dialogue is not confined to any particular religion, the Christian tradition is represented through passages like the Great Commandment (Mark 12:28-31) that emphasise the love of God and neighbour. Mentioning further, Smith (1991) opines that interreligious dialogue expands the conversation to encompass broader discussions between religious traditions. It aims to foster mutual respect, cooperation, and shared efforts in addressing common challenges, including insecurity and conflicts.

Similar to interfaith dialogue, interreligious dialogue is not confined to a single religious tradition, but it aligns with the call for peace and reconciliation found in many religious texts. Interfaith and interreligious dialogue initiatives often involve meetings, seminars, and collaborative projects among representatives of different religious communities. These dialogues aim to promote understanding, cooperation, and the identification of shared values, particularly in response to issues like religious conflicts, humanitarian crises, and social injustices.

Review of Ethical Dilemmas in Times of Insecurity in Nigeria

Ethical dilemmas in times of insecurity in Nigeria are complex and multifaceted, often stemming from the challenging social, political, and economic conditions in the country.

Ethical Dilemmas in Security Forces: The military is structured in a way that officers are expected to attend mandatory Young Officers Courses of their various Corps and arms of service after being commissioned into the military. These courses are fashioned to provide professional orientation for newly commissioned officers in order to provide them with an effective onboarding. This is not so for non-commissioned officers of the military who can be placed on essential or personal duties as soon as they arrive their units. Such duties include domestic responsibilities for senior officers, guard duties at various posts within the barracks, road blocks and patrols outside the barracks, and special assignments involving engagements with other law enforcement agencies and the civilian community. This means that they either get exposed to a form of regimental duties or domestic responsibilities without proper orientation into the military. This, however, does not preclude commissioned officers that are given an early orientation, from unethical behaviour. Some of them join the military as a means of livelihood, and not necessarily because of the passion they have for the military. As such, considering the lapses in the selection process of military personnel where no background checks on their criminal records are verified, a person with criminal records or inclinations may be enlisted into the military as a commissioned or non-commissioned officer after a potential recruit or cadet makes false declarations of unsoiled criminal records.

For those who are sent for duties with paramilitary organisations such as the police and other law enforcement agencies, it takes firm resolve to remain ethical. Most of these operations involve the prevention of illegal activities such as bunkering, importation of contraband, and covert or open security operations to prevent banditry, kidnapping and terrorism. In most cases, the paramilitary personnel indoctrinate the military into corrupt practices that they are well established in, and because of the financial benefits that come with the protection of criminals, the military becomes part of the corrupt structure. They lobby senior military officers in positions of authority to sustain their deployments in such “juicy” duty posts in exchange for financial gains widely called “returns”. This has become the focus of a lot of military men and women in Nigeria. They mostly want to be deployed to operational locations where they can make illegal wealth and ensure their sustenance in such locations is guaranteed. Corrupt military personnel deployed in locations where there is terrorism and banditry are more daring in terms of their disloyalty. They have been known to provide intelligence reports that ensure their colleagues are ambushed and killed (Aljazeera, 2014).

In the past, military formations have been run over by terrorists, and sophisticated weapons and accessories have been carted away. These were easy operations carried out by terrorists who had intelligence reports on how vulnerable those formations were. Of course, the reasons for divulging such information to terrorists are not far-fetched. Investigations proved that one of the reasons for such betrayal was the fact that some military officers with mutual ideological beliefs with the terrorists were being sympathetic to their course, while the other reason was primarily greed and thirst for illicit wealth (Ibekwe, 2015).

In summary, lack of professional orientation causes dearth of knowledge of the principles and rules of engagement, and also provides a reason for military men and women caught in the web feigning ignorance. One of the elements influencing organisational effectiveness is orientation and reorientation. For such organisations, handbooks are produced for personnel to get familiar with their teams and environments, their roles and their policies, as well as penalties expected in cases where personnel err, or benefits when they excel. The military is a highly regimental organisation and should portray its administrative and operational effectiveness by taking a queue in this practice.

Corruption: Corruption is one element that can be found embedded in all the factors responsible for the dilemma being discussed. This itself appears to be the major cause of the dilemma, and should be examined with keen interest. Although this has been in existence for as long as the word has been existing, discussions on the Nigerian military's corruption that have fuelled violence and insecurity, will be viewed from 2007. During the Goodluck Jonathan administration, weapons and other equipment were required for the military to contain the spread of insurgency in Nigeria. However, these weapons and equipment were never purchased although financial allocations were made, and money collected for the transactions. The failure to purchase of these weapons led to the death of over twenty thousand people (including military men), over two million displaced people, and over seventy-five thousand orphaned children (Vanguard, 2016). In all, hundreds of millions of dollars and billions of naira were lost to corrupt military chiefs and political office holders in this scam against the nation and its people.

The committee on the audit of defence equipment procurement in the armed forces between 2007 and 2015 reported that over 13 billion naira meant for weapons procurement was unaccounted for during this period. This led to the arrest and prosecution of military chiefs that served under the Jonathan administration (Ejekwonyilo, 2021). Unfortunately, till this day, nothing has been heard on the outcome of these investigations and prosecution of the perpetrators.

In 2022, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) also acknowledged that corruption by the military was responsible for the degeneration of security in the country. In another instance, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) informed the public that massive looting by senior military officers have weakened the military, demoralised frontline troops, and has prolonged the war on terror and banditry. In 2021, the Commission charged a former Chief of Army Staff and two other army generals for purported embezzlement of thirteen billion naira approved for arms purchase. In 2020, a former General Officer Commanding a Division of the Nigerian Army was also found guilty of corruption, prosecuted, and was recommended for a dishonourable discharge from military service. The court martial found him guilty of diversion of funds set aside for military operations against bandits and terrorists. Over 135

million Naira was recovered from him and was returned to the Nigerian Army (Punch, 2022).

Apart from the diversion of funds for military equipment and weapons, some corrupt soldiers have also been found selling weapons and ammunitions to terrorists. This may be as a result of their poor welfare conditions at operation theatres, as in the past, there were allegations made by soldiers indicating that senior officers diverted funds meant for their feeding, while they wallowed in hunger and lack of healthy drinking water and other supplies (Nwezeh, 2021). The sales of weapons and ammunition may also be as a result of quest for wealth as many soldiers also see their deployment to operation theatres as an opportunity to accrue wealth in any way possible.

Transparency International also recognised that corruption is worsening the conflicts and is a huge trigger of insecurity in Nigeria as over the last 10 years, corrupt elites have profited from the conflict in the northeast and other parts of Nigeria, driving the nation to a crisis point (Solomon, 2017).

Human Rights Abuses

In times of insecurity, there have been concerns about human rights abuses by both state security forces and non-state actors. These abuses may include extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and torture. As documented by Amnesty International (2023), there are human rights situation on the ground in Nigeria. For example: Journalists and digital activists continue to face harassment, threats, and attacks from state authorities for peacefully expressing critical opinions. During the 2023 general elections, 42 journalists suffered attacks and harassment, including being beaten and denied access to information, while covering the elections.

In March 2023, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) sanctioned twenty-five broadcasting stations over the coverage of the 2023 elections. On 10 May 2023, a Federal High Court in Abuja declared the ban unlawful.

In an attempt to silence civil society organisations, the Non-Governmental Organisation Regulations Bill was reintroduced in the House of Representatives on July 27, 2022.

On 5 April 2022 in Kano, Mubarak Bala, president of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, was sentenced to 24 years' imprisonment over Facebook posts which allegedly insulted Prophet Muhammad.

The Nigerian government declared on June 4, 2021, that Twitter was banned in Nigeria. On January 13, 2022, the ban was lifted following a seven-month period. The ban was ruled illegal by the ECOWAS Court on July 14, 2022.

As part of the #EndSARS movement, thousands of people were protesting police brutality on October 20, 2020, at the Lekki toll gate and Alausa, Lagos, when the Nigerian army and police killed at least 12 peaceful protestors. More than 40 protestors for #EndSARS who were detained in October 2020 are still being held in jail.

In October 2021, Kaduna state authorities demolished over 500 structures in Graceland community, Zaria. In February 2022, Rivers state authorities forcibly evicted 60,000 residents of waterfront communities from their homes in Diobu, Port Harcourt. Despite the FCT and 35 states having domesticated the VAPP Act, violence against women and girls remains pervasive. The Nigeria police recorded 717 incidents of rape between

January and May 2020. In its 2020 annual report, the National Human Rights Commission reported 11,200 cases of rape.

Nigeria has failed in its responsibility to protect people from various abuses committed by Boko Haram and Islamic States West African Province (ISWAP) as well as unknown gunmen; who killed at least 6,907 people, abducted 6,157, and forcibly transferred or internally displaced at least 2,000 in 2022.

Applying Theology and Ethics in Solving Insecurity in Nigeria

In the context of Nigeria, the application of theology, ethics, and addressing insecurity is deeply intertwined with the country's diverse religious, cultural, and social landscape. Here are some ways in which theology and ethics intersect with issues of insecurity in Nigeria:

Religious Identity and Conflict Resolution: Nigeria is characterized by religious diversity, with a significant Muslim population in the north and a predominantly Christian population in the south. Theological perspectives play a crucial role in shaping individual and communal identities. Ethical principles derived from religious teachings can be applied to promote interfaith dialogue, understanding, and conflict resolution in regions where religious tensions contribute to insecurity.

Social Justice and Economic Inequality: Ethical principles embedded in theological teachings can inform discussions on social justice and economic inequality. The preferential option for the poor, a concept found in Christian social ethics, can inspire initiatives that address poverty and economic disparities, contributing to the reduction of social tensions and insecurity.

Peace-making and Reconciliation: Theological principles of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace are essential in addressing various forms of insecurity, including inter-ethnic and religious conflicts. Religious leaders can play a vital role in promoting peace-building efforts and fostering a culture of tolerance and understanding.

Human Dignity and Security: Theological anthropology, which explores the nature and dignity of human beings, can inform ethical considerations regarding the protection of human rights. This includes addressing issues such as gender-based violence, human trafficking, and other forms of injustice that undermine individual and community security.

Conclusion

The exploration of the intersection of theology, ethics, and insecurity provides a comprehensive understanding of how religious and ethical principles can contribute to addressing complex challenges in Nigeria. By examining theological foundations, ethical frameworks, and their practical applications, we recognise the potential for positive change and the promotion of security in various aspects of Nigerian society.

Theoretical insights from theological perspectives, such as the importance of social justice, peace-building, and human dignity, offer valuable guidance for ethical considerations in the face of insecurity. This interdisciplinary approach recognises the interconnectedness of religious beliefs, ethical principles, and the multifaceted nature of insecurity.

In Nigeria, where religious diversity and regional disparities often contribute to tensions, the integration of theological and ethical perspectives can serve as a unifying force. By emphasising shared values, promoting interfaith dialogue, and addressing root causes of insecurity, there is an opportunity to foster a more harmonious and resilient society.

Recommendations

The researchers, therefore, recommend the following: Encourage and support interfaith initiatives that bring together religious leaders from diverse traditions to promote understanding, tolerance, and collaboration. This can reduce religious-based tensions and conflicts.

Implement programs to train leaders, both in religious institutions and the government, in ethical leadership practices. This includes promoting transparency, accountability, and a commitment to social justice to address issues such as corruption and economic inequality.

Support and expand community-based initiatives that align with ethical and theological principles. These programs can include education, healthcare, and economic development projects that empower communities and enhance their resilience to insecurity.

Integrate ethical and theological education into the formal curriculum at various educational levels. Emphasise values such as empathy, compassion, and respect for diversity to nurture a morally responsible and socially conscious citizenry

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