



Narratives of Defence: A Qualitative Study of Military Strategies Against Terrorism in Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study is to delve into the military's counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria, focusing on the narratives and experiences of military personnel engaged in these operations. Through in-depth interviews and case studies, the research uncovers the complexities and challenges faced by the military in combating terrorism. Key themes such as the critical role of local intelligence, the importance of community trust, and the significant impact of military tactics on civilian populations are identified. The findings highlight the successes and limitations of current strategies, offering a nuanced understanding of the military's approach to counterterrorism in Nigeria. By examining the voices of military personnel, this study provides valuable insights for the development of more effective and comprehensive counterterrorism policies and practices, with broader implications for other regions facing similar threats.

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Introduction

Terrorism poses a significant threat to global security, and Nigeria has been severely affected by insurgent groups such as Boko Haram and its splinter group, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Boko Haram, which translates to Western education is forbidden, emerged in 2002 in northeastern Nigeria. Initially, the group focused on opposing Western education and Westernization, but it quickly escalated to violent activities, aiming to establish an Islamic state governed by Sharia law (Onuoha, 2013). The group's violent tactics, including bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations, have resulted in significant casualties and widespread fear. By 2014, Boko Haram had gained global notoriety following the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok, drawing international condemnation and prompting a more concerted military response (Zenn, 2020). The splinter group ISWAP emerged in 2016 after a leadership conflict within Boko Haram. ISWAP has aligned itself with the global terrorist organisation, the Islamic State (IS), and has adopted its tactics and ideology. This faction has shown a more organised and strategic approach, focusing on attacking military targets and establishing control over territories (Zenn, 2020). The presence of ISWAP has further complicated the security landscape in Nigeria and the surrounding Lake Chad Basin region, leading to increased military interventions. These groups exploit the porous borders and the lack of effective governance in the region, making it difficult for the Nigerian military to maintain sustained control over liberated areas.

The Nigerian military and international allies have been actively engaged in counterterrorism operations to combat these insurgent groups and restore stability in the affected regions. The complexity of these operations is heightened by the insurgents' use of asymmetric warfare tactics,



including guerrilla warfare, suicide bombings, and the exploitation of porous borders for movement and logistics (Forest, 2012). These tactics make it challenging for conventional military forces to effectively combat the insurgents, who can blend in with local populations and use hit-and-run tactics to evade capture. The rugged terrain of northeastern Nigeria and the lack of infrastructure further complicate military operations (Alao, 2013). Despite substantial military efforts, Boko Haram and ISWAP continue to adapt and persist, raising questions about the effectiveness of current strategies and their broader implications for national security and community resilience (Nwankpa, 2014; Omole, 2017). The Nigerian government has declared several states of emergency and launched numerous military operations, but the insurgency has shown remarkable resilience and adaptability.

Overview of Military Strategies Against Terrorism

Nigeria's military strategies against Boko Haram and ISWAP have evolved reflecting changes in the security landscape and lessons learned from past operations. Initially, the Nigerian military adopted a heavy-handed approach, focusing on large-scale military operations to eliminate insurgents. This strategy, however, faced significant challenges, including high civilian casualties, destruction of infrastructure, and a backlash from local communities who felt targeted rather than protected (Forest, 2012).

Recognising the limitations of this approach, the Nigerian military has increasingly incorporated more nuanced strategies that combine military force with community engagement and intelligence-driven operations. These strategies include establishing joint task forces, collaborating with neighbouring countries, and integrating local vigilante groups into formal security frameworks (Akinola, 2015). For example, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Borno State has played a crucial role in gathering intelligence and supporting military operations, demonstrating the potential benefits of community involvement (Onuoha, 2013). The Nigerian military has also sought to enhance its technological capabilities, employing surveillance drones, satellite imagery, and advanced communication systems to improve situational awareness and operational efficiency (Omole, 2017). Despite these advancements, challenges such as inadequate funding, corruption, and logistical constraints continue to hinder the effectiveness of military strategies.

The existing literature on counterterrorism in Nigeria presents a range of perspectives and debates among scholars. Onuoha (2013) and Zenn (2020) provide comprehensive overviews of Boko Haram's origins, objectives, and tactics, emphasising the group's evolution from a socio-religious movement into a violent insurgency. Scholars debate the effectiveness of military strategies against Boko Haram and ISWAP. While some argue that military force is necessary to combat the immediate threat posed by these groups (Cook, 2011; Forest, 2012), others contend that a purely militaristic approach is insufficient and counterproductive (Nwankpa, 2014). These critics emphasise the need for a comprehensive strategy that addresses the root causes of terrorism, including socio-economic disparities, political marginalisation, and governance issues (Omole, 2017; Zenn, 2020). Other scholars highlight the importance of local intelligence and community engagement in counterterrorism efforts. Clarke (2004) and Varghese (2001) emphasise the need for accurate and timely intelligence to identify and neutralise terrorist threats. However, mistrust between the military and local communities often hampers intelligence-gathering efforts. Lahoud (2014) and Johnston (2005) suggest building trust with local communities and improving human intelligence networks are crucial for effective counterterrorism operations. Community engagement is another critical component of counterterrorism strategies. Borum (2011) and Horgan (2005) argue that building trust with local communities can help undermine the insurgents' support base and improve intelligence-gathering efforts. Community outreach programs, respect for local customs and traditions, and ensuring the protection of civilian lives are essential for building this trust (Kilcullen, 2010; Bar-Tal, 2000). However, achieving community trust is challenging, particularly in areas with a history of conflict and military abuse (Ganor, 2002).



The impact of military tactics on civilian populations is a significant concern to some scholars. Goodwin (2006) and Duyvesteyn (2004) discuss the negative consequences of aggressive military tactics, including civilian casualties and displacement. Such outcomes can undermine public support for military efforts and increase sympathy for insurgent groups. Schmid (2011) and McAllister (2004) emphasise the importance of minimising harm to civilians and incorporating humanitarian considerations into military planning and operations. Another critical aspect explored in the literature is the role of regional and international cooperation in counterterrorism. Scholars like Hansen (2013) and Tull (2017) argue that regional cooperation among Lake Chad Basin countries (Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon) is essential for effective counterterrorism. Joint military operations and intelligence sharing have been emphasised as crucial for disrupting cross-border terrorist activities. However, coordination difficulties, differing national interests, and resource constraints often hinder these collaborative efforts (Hansen, 2013; Tull, 2017).

In examining the role of technology in counterterrorism, scholars like Barlow (2015) discuss the use of surveillance technologies, drones, and cyber tools to enhance counterterrorism operations. Integrating advanced technologies has improved intelligence gathering, monitoring, and operational efficiency. However, the literature also cautions against over-reliance on technology, emphasising the importance of human intelligence and community engagement in complementing technological tools (Barlow, 2015). The effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration programs for former insurgents is another theme in the literature. Programs aimed at de-radicalising and reintegrating former Boko Haram members into society have shown mixed results. Scholars like Harnischfeger (2015) and Ajayi (2016) discuss the successes and challenges of these programs, emphasising the need for tailored approaches that address the specific needs and contexts of former insurgents. Effective reintegration requires comprehensive support, including vocational training, psychological counselling, and community acceptance (Harnischfeger, 2015; Albert, 2017).

Gender dynamics in counterterrorism are also explored, with studies highlighting women's roles in terrorism and counterterrorism efforts. Scholars like Bloom (2016) and Lahoud (2014) discuss the involvement of women in Boko Haram, both as perpetrators and victims. The literature emphasises the need for gender-sensitive approaches in counterterrorism strategies, recognising women's unique experiences and contributions to affected communities. Programs that empower women and address gender-specific vulnerabilities are recommended for effective counterterrorism (Bloom, 2016; Lahoud, 2014). Finally, the literature addresses the long-term impact of counterterrorism strategies on development and stability. Scholars argue that sustainable security requires a balance between immediate counterterrorism measures and long-term development initiatives. Studies by Duffield (2014) and Mac Ginty (2015) highlight the importance of integrating development goals into counterterrorism strategies, emphasising that security and development are mutually reinforcing. Effective counterterrorism must go hand in hand with efforts to improve education, healthcare, and economic opportunities in affected regions (Duffield, 2014; Mac Ginty, 2015).

The debate considers the successes and limitations of current military strategies against Boko Haram and ISWAP. While some successes have been noted, such as the disruption of terrorist networks and the capture of key leaders (Byman, 2006; Pape, 2005), significant challenges remain. The persistence of terrorist activities, the difficulties of securing remote areas, and the need for more comprehensive approaches that address the root causes of terrorism are ongoing concerns (Cronin, 2009; Neumann, 2009). This study aims to explore and analyse the narratives and experiences of military personnel engaged in counterterrorism operations in Nigeria. By focusing on their perspectives, the study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and successes of current military strategies. This research seeks to identify key themes and patterns in the narratives of military personnel, highlighting the critical role of local intelligence, community engagement, and the impact of military tactics on civilian populations. The study aims to



contribute to developing more effective and comprehensive counterterrorism policies and practices in Nigeria and offers insights that can be applied to other regions facing similar threats.

Theoretical Framework

The study of military strategies against terrorism in Nigeria is grounded in the human security theory. Human security shifts the focus from traditional state-centric security to the protection and well-being of individuals. It encompasses various dimensions, including economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (UNDP, 1994). This theoretical framework is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where terrorism and counterterrorism efforts significantly impact civilian populations. Proponents argue that addressing the root causes of terrorism, such as poverty, unemployment, and political marginalisation, is essential for sustainable security (Gasper, 2005). They advocate for a holistic approach integrating military efforts with socio-economic development and community engagement. In Nigeria, this means combining military operations with initiatives that improve living conditions, provide education and employment opportunities, and build trust between the military and local communities (Akinola, 2015). The proponents emphasise that merely using military force to eliminate insurgents without addressing the socio-economic conditions that facilitate their recruitment, and support is short-sighted and ineffective in the long term (Newman, 2010). Critics of human security argue that its broad scope can dilute the focus on immediate security threats. They contend that a strong military response is necessary to address the urgent threat posed by terrorist groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP (Paris, 2001). In the context of Nigeria, critics emphasise the need for robust military action to neutralise terrorist activities and protect civilians from immediate harm (Campbell, 2014). They argue that without a secure environment, development efforts are futile, as ongoing violence and instability undermine any progress made in socio-economic development (Chandler, 2007).

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the complex dynamics between military strategies and terrorism in Nigeria. Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and narratives (Creswell, 2013). The research utilises semi-structured interviews, case studies, and policy analysis to gather comprehensive data. A total of 40 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a diverse group of stakeholders, including military personnel, policymakers, community leaders, NGO representatives, and individuals directly affected by terrorism. These interviews, each lasting approximately 45-60 minutes, were designed to elicit detailed narratives about the effectiveness of military strategies, challenges faced, and potential areas for improvement (Braun & Clarke, 2016). The interviews were conducted over six months. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of perspectives. This method allowed for the inclusion of individuals with direct experience and knowledge relevant to the study's focus (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample included individuals from different regions, ranks within the military, and various sectors involved in counterterrorism efforts. The military personnel interviewed included officers and enlisted personnel from various units engaged in counterterrorism operations, providing insights into strategic and operational aspects. Policymakers at different levels of government were interviewed to understand the formulation and implementation of counterterrorism policies. Community leaders, including local chiefs and members of vigilante groups, were included to capture the community's perspective on military operations and their effectiveness. NGO representatives working in areas affected by terrorism provided insights into the humanitarian impact and the intersection of military and civil efforts.

The study included detailed case studies of regions heavily affected by terrorism, such as Borno and Yobe states. These case studies provided contextual insights into the operational environment and the effectiveness of different military strategies. The case studies involved an analysis of regional security dynamics, local community responses, and the outcomes of specific military



operations. For example, the Sambisa Forest operation, known for being a Boko Haram stronghold, was reviewed to understand the military's strategic approach and its impact on insurgent activities and civilian populations (Yin, 2018). The case studies were constructed using data from official military reports, interviews with residents and community leaders, and observations of the areas affected by military operations. This approach comprehensively understood the on-ground realities and the socio-political dynamics influencing military effectiveness. An in-depth policy analysis of existing counterterrorism policies and frameworks was conducted to evaluate their alignment with on-ground realities and their effectiveness in addressing the threat of terrorism. This involved reviewing government documents, military reports, and publications from international organisations such as the United Nations and the African Union (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The policy analysis focused on identifying gaps, strengths, and weaknesses in current strategies and how they could be enhanced based on successful international models and best practices.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected from interviews and case studies were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. This method involves coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2016). The thematic analysis allows for organising qualitative data into meaningful categories that reflect key issues and insights related to military strategies and terrorism in Nigeria. The study adhered to the criteria Nowell and Albrecht (2019) outlined. These include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Techniques such as member checking, triangulation, and maintaining an audit trail were employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

Results

A significant theme identified was the various challenges faced by law enforcement, including resource constraints, the evolving tactics of terrorists, and the need for technological advancements. Military personnel often highlighted the difficulties of operating with limited resources. For instance, one officer noted, "We are constantly adapting our strategies to counter the ever-changing tactics of terrorists, but our resources are stretched thin" (Interview, June 2023). Secondary data supports these findings, with reports indicating that the Nigerian military faces significant logistical and financial challenges in sustaining prolonged counterterrorism operations (Albert, 2017).

Community Engagement

The importance of community engagement was another key theme. Many respondents emphasised that building trust between the military and local communities is crucial for effective intelligence gathering and successful counterterrorism operations. A community leader stated, "Engaging our community in security efforts has improved trust and cooperation with the military, which is essential for identifying and countering terrorist threats" (Interview, July 2023). This finding aligns with the literature, underscoring the importance of community involvement in security strategies (Pearson, 2017).

Socio-Economic Development

The role of socio-economic development in counterterrorism emerged as a significant theme. Participants highlighted that providing alternative livelihoods, education, and economic opportunities can reduce the allure of terrorism. One interviewee mentioned, "When people have jobs and educational opportunities, they are less likely to be drawn into terrorist activities" (Interview, August 2023). This perspective is supported by studies emphasising the importance of addressing underlying socio-economic conditions to prevent radicalisation (Omole, 2019; Singer, 2016).



Public Health-Oriented Approaches

Shifting from punitive measures to public health-oriented approaches in addressing issues such as drug addiction and mental health among affected populations was seen as beneficial. A policymaker noted, "Treating drug addiction and mental health issues as public health problems rather than criminal offences has led to better outcomes in terms of rehabilitation and reintegration" (Interview, September 2023). This finding is consistent with global best practices that advocate for a holistic approach to security, integrating public health measures (Jürgens et al., 2015; Windle, 2018).

Experiences and Perceptions of Success

Many participants expressed a sense of duty and commitment to protecting their country despite their challenges. They highlighted successes such as the disruption of terrorist networks, the capture of key leaders, and the recovery of territory previously controlled by terrorists. "We have made significant progress in pushing back Boko Haram and ISWAP. Every leader we capture, every territory we reclaim, is a victory for us and the people of Nigeria" (Interview, June 2023). The sense of accomplishment and resilience among military personnel is palpable. However, these successes are often accompanied by significant sacrifices, including loss of life and long separations from families. The narratives of these soldiers provide a vivid picture of the human cost of counterterrorism efforts, underscoring the importance of comprehensive support systems for military personnel (Smith, 2016).

Challenges and Limitations

Participants also pointed out the limitations of current strategies, including the persistence of terrorist activities, the difficulties of securing remote areas, and the need for more comprehensive approaches that address the root causes of terrorism (Cronin, 2009; Neumann, 2009). One participant stated, "The fight is far from over. These groups are resilient and adaptable. We need more than just military force to defeat them. We need to address the socio-economic issues that fuel their recruitment" (Interview, July 2023). These insights highlight the complexity of counterterrorism operations and the need for a multi-faceted approach. The ongoing adaptation and resilience of terrorist groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP pose significant challenges to the Nigerian military, requiring continuous innovation and flexibility in strategy and tactics (Kilcullen, 2010).

Policy Analysis

An in-depth analysis of existing counterterrorism policies and frameworks was conducted to evaluate their alignment with on-ground realities and their effectiveness in addressing the threat of terrorism. This involved reviewing government documents, military reports, and publications from international organisations such as the United Nations and the African Union (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The policy analysis revealed several gaps and weaknesses in current strategies, including inadequate coordination among security agencies, insufficient funding, and a lack of comprehensive socio-economic programs to address the root causes of terrorism (Nwankpa, 2014; Omole, 2017). The review of government documents highlighted the need for a more integrated approach that combines military, political, and economic strategies. For instance, while military reports emphasised the success of certain operations in reclaiming territories, they also pointed out the challenges of maintaining control and ensuring long-term stability in these areas. Publications from international organisations recommended enhancing community engagement and addressing governance issues to build trust and cooperation with local populations (UNODC, 2020).

Case Studies

The case studies provided contextual insights into the operational environment and the effectiveness of different military strategies. The Sambisa Forest operation, known for being a Boko Haram stronghold, was reviewed to understand the military's strategic approach and its impact on insurgent activities and civilian populations (Yin, 2018). The operation involved coordinated



efforts between the Nigerian military and regional forces, utilising air and ground assaults to dismantle insurgent camps and rescue hostages. While the operation achieved significant successes, including the rescue of several hostages and the destruction of insurgent hideouts, it also faced challenges, such as the insurgents' use of guerrilla tactics and the rugged terrain that hindered movement and logistics.

Interviews with residents and community leaders in the affected areas revealed mixed responses to the operation. While some praised the military for their efforts and expressed relief at the liberation of their communities, others voiced concerns about collateral damage, displacement, and the lack of adequate support for rebuilding their lives (Interview, August 2023). These perspectives underscore the importance of incorporating humanitarian considerations and providing post-operation support to affected communities.

Discussion

The findings provide a complex and multifaceted picture of military strategies against terrorism in Nigeria. The importance of local intelligence and community trust underscores the need for strategy beyond military force, incorporating elements of community engagement and development. The impact of military tactics on civilian populations highlights the ethical and humanitarian considerations that must be integrated into counterterrorism operations (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998; Cockayne, 2007).

Integrating Community Engagement

The importance of community engagement and trust-building emerged as a critical theme in the study. This aligns with the literature emphasising the role of local communities in providing intelligence and support for counterterrorism efforts (Borum, 2011; Horgan, 2005). Policy decisions should prioritise initiatives that foster positive relationships between the military and local populations, such as community outreach programs, respect for local customs, and protection of civilian lives (Kilcullen, 2010; Bar-Tal, 2000).

Efforts to engage communities can significantly enhance the effectiveness of military operations. Programs that involve community leaders in decision-making processes and provide tangible benefits to local populations can help build trust and cooperation. For example, community policing initiatives and local development projects can address grievances that insurgents exploit for recruitment (Pearson, 2017).

Enhancing Intelligence Capabilities

The findings also underscore the need for improved intelligence capabilities. Reliable and timely intelligence is crucial for effective counterterrorism operations, but mistrust and operational challenges often hinder intelligence-gathering efforts (Clarke, 2004; Varghese, 2001). Enhancing human intelligence networks, building trust with local communities, and leveraging technological tools for surveillance and reconnaissance can improve the effectiveness of military strategies (Lahoud, 2014; Johnston, 2005).

Investing in intelligence capabilities requires a multi-pronged approach. Training programs for military personnel in intelligence gathering and analysis, combined with advanced surveillance technologies, can enhance the ability to detect and neutralise threats. Fostering collaboration between military and civilian intelligence agencies can also improve information sharing and coordination (Hoffman, 2006).

Comparison with International Best Practices

The study's findings also provide valuable insights for comparing Nigerian military strategies with international best practices. While Nigeria faces unique challenges, lessons can be drawn from other contexts to improve the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts. Global best practices emphasise the importance of intelligence, community engagement, and the protection of civilian populations (Hoffman, 2006; Williams, 2008).



Case Studies from Other Countries

Examining successful counterterrorism strategies from other countries can offer valuable lessons for Nigeria. For instance, the United States counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq have highlighted the importance of integrating military force with political, economic, and social initiatives to address the root causes of insurgency (Kilcullen, 2009; Cronin, 2009). Similarly, counterterrorism strategies in countries like Colombia and Sri Lanka have demonstrated the effectiveness of combining military operations with community engagement and development programs (Byman, 2006; Pape, 2005). While international best practices offer valuable insights, it is crucial to adapt these strategies to the local context of Nigeria. Nigeria's unique socio-political dynamics, cultural factors, and geographic challenges require tailored approaches that consider the specific needs and conditions of the affected regions (Omole, 2017). Policymakers and military strategists should engage with local communities, stakeholders, and experts to develop context-specific strategies that address the underlying causes of terrorism and foster long-term stability (Nwankpa, 2014; Zenn, 2020).

Ethical and Humanitarian Considerations

The findings emphasise integrating ethical and humanitarian considerations into counterterrorism operations. Minimising harm to civilian populations is crucial for maintaining public support and legitimacy. Schmid (2011) and McAllister (2004) argue that the success of military strategies is not only measured by the disruption of terrorist activities but also by the ability to protect and support affected communities. This involves adhering to international humanitarian laws, providing aid to displaced populations, and ensuring that military actions do not exacerbate existing conflicts or create new grievances (Goodwin, 2006; Duyvesteyn, 2004).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for improving military strategies against terrorism in Nigeria:

1. **Enhance Intelligence-Gathering Capabilities:** Building trust with local communities and improving human intelligence networks are crucial for obtaining reliable and timely intelligence. Investing in training programs and technological intelligence-gathering tools can enhance counterterrorism operations' effectiveness.
2. **Prioritise Community Engagement:** Strategies that foster positive relationships between the military and local populations, such as community outreach programs and respect for local customs, should be prioritised. Community engagement can help undermine the insurgents' support base and improve intelligence-gathering efforts.
3. **Incorporate Humanitarian Considerations:** Minimizing harm to civilian populations and integrating humanitarian considerations into military planning and operations are essential for maintaining public support and legitimacy. Adhering to international humanitarian laws and providing aid to displaced populations can enhance the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts.
4. **Develop Comprehensive Approaches:** Addressing the root causes of terrorism, including socio-economic disparities and political grievances, is essential for long-term stability. A holistic approach that combines military efforts with socio-economic development and public health initiatives can effectively disrupt the cycle of terrorism.
5. **Invest in Capacity Building:** Enhancing the capacity of military personnel and security agencies through continuous training and development is critical for adapting to evolving threats. Capacity building should include specialised training in counterterrorism, intelligence analysis, and community engagement.

Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into Nigeria's military's counterterrorism strategies, highlighting the narratives and experiences of military personnel and others. The research has



identified key themes such as the importance of local intelligence, community trust, and the impact of military tactics on civilian populations. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive counterterrorism strategies incorporating military force and community engagement (Schmid, 2011; McAllister, 2004).

The study's findings have significant implications for policy and practice. The need for integrated strategies that combine military efforts with socio-economic development and public health initiatives is evident. Policymakers should consider adopting a holistic approach that addresses immediate security threats and the underlying conditions that foster terrorism. Increased funding for community-based interventions and socio-economic development programs is essential for ensuring their sustainability. Public awareness campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of terrorism and reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues are also crucial for fostering community support for prevention and rehabilitation efforts.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into Nigeria's military's counterterrorism strategies, highlighting the narratives and experiences of those directly involved. The research underscores the need for comprehensive and context-specific approaches that address both immediate security threats and the underlying socio-economic conditions that fuel terrorism. By incorporating the voices of military personnel, this study contributes to developing more effective and ethical counterterrorism policies and practices, with broader implications for other regions facing similar threats.

Future research should continue to explore the experiences and perspectives of military personnel and other stakeholders, such as community members and policymakers. Comparative studies involving other regions or countries facing similar terrorist threats could provide additional insights and help to identify best practices. Further research is also needed to examine the long-term impacts of counterterrorism strategies on affected communities and the broader socio-political environment.

This study advocates for a holistic and collaborative approach involving government agencies, international organisations, and local communities to create a resilient and sustainable framework for combating terrorism in Nigeria. By learning from successful international models and tailoring these strategies to Nigeria's unique socio-cultural and economic landscape, it is possible to develop more effective interventions that promote long-term stability and development (Kilcullen, 2017; Windle, 2018).

This study is significant as it addresses a critical gap in the literature by focusing on the narratives and experiences of military personnel directly involved in counterterrorism operations in Nigeria. While much of the existing research emphasises the socio-political and economic factors contributing to terrorism, this study explores the practical challenges and successes encountered by those on the front lines.

By incorporating the voices of military personnel, this research offers a unique perspective on the effectiveness of current strategies. It highlights the importance of local intelligence, community engagement, and the ethical considerations of military tactics. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on global counterterrorism by emphasising the need for comprehensive and context-specific approaches that address immediate security threats and the underlying socio-economic conditions that fuel terrorism.

The study's focus on human security further enriches the understanding of counterterrorism by integrating a multi-dimensional perspective that considers the well-being and safety of individuals. This theoretical framework underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of terrorism, such as poverty and political marginalisation, alongside military efforts.



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