

## **Mitigating the Influence of Lakurawa Terrorists in Niger State through Community Education.**

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### **Abstract**

Terrorism poses a significant threat to peace and development in Niger State, Nigeria, with the Lakurawa terrorist group gaining influence through social, economic, and ideological channels. This study explores the role of community education as a strategic approach to mitigating the group's impact on vulnerable populations. Drawing on primary and secondary data. The paper examines how community education initiatives can promote awareness, foster resilience, and address the socio-economic factors that enable terrorism to thrive. The highlight the importance of targeted educational programmes that emphasize critical thinking, conflict resolution, and social cohesion. Additionally, collaboration among government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and local communities are identified as a critical factor for success. This paper concludes that while community education is not a standalone solution, it serves as a powerful tool for empowering communities to resist terrorist ideologies and reduce the group's influence in the region.

**Keyword:** Community, Education, Influence, Leveraging, Lakurawa Terrorist Groups

### **Introduction**

Nigeria has been grappling with different security issues of different dimensions. For more than a decade, nearly every geo-political zone of its entire landscape faces the problem of security which ranges from Boko Haram insurgents and jihadist in the north eastern parts of Borno and Adamawa states, to the armed bandits group in the Northwest area and north central Nigeria, to the armed Fulani herdsmen running riots from the south-south volatile region, there is also an altercation of cultism, militancy

and agitation for resources control, activities of the unknown Gunmen as well as the agitation for self-determination in the south east, the separatist agitations, kidnappings, ritual murders, alleged political assassination and booming organ-harvesting (This day, 2024) Yet, in this unpredictable state of tumultuous security challenge, another new terrorist group called “Lakurawa”, has now emerged in the extreme west Nigeria precisely Sokoto and Kebbi state respectively as announced by the Nigeria’s defence spokesperson Edward Buba, on the 7<sup>th</sup> November which was said to have established in the aftermath of the breakdown of military cooperation between Nigeria and Niger republic following the coup in the litter (The African Report, 2024).

The word “Lakurawa” is a Hausa word, connoting “Recruit”. In contrast to the perception from even the Nigeria Defence Headquarters (DHQ), that the group is new and emerged after military coup in Niger. An anecdotal report, had it that the group was formed in Mali sometimes in 2017 and originally prepared to be called Mjahedeen and Ansari respectively, and are known to be an affiliate of AL ’Qaeda, making another jihadist group (This day, 2024).

Lakurawa is a radical violent group with their own Islamic religion who “quote and unquote” claimed to be teaching religion with violent ideology. The group members are mostly non-Nigerian. It is a composition of different nationalist namely Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Cad etc. unleashing havoc to the locals without understanding the Islamic religion and what to do. They preach religion in their ideology to the locals, such as Illela, Tangaza, Gwadu, Bale, and Silima, in Sokoto state and down to some parts of Kebbi State. They have deeply entrenched local communities and gotten accepted by the local due to their possessions of military weapons. They imposed taxes and order payers to take taxes imposed on them to places like Sirami, Kangiwa, Timalimi, and Raka through their agents to other locations (Rufa’i, 2024).

According to Humangle, (2024) Lakurawa terrorist have been in Nigeria for over six years. The criminal group operates in an immersive fashion in different rural areas of

Sokoto state, namely Tangaza, Gudu and Binji. They played on the emotion of desperate victims of Bello Turji banditry havocs. They protected the locals against the loving bandits, thinking that the messiah against the cruelty and brutality of banditry have arrived, in contrast, they are disaster in disguise waiting for time to explodes with more perils.

Today the Lakurawa radical terrorist group have landed fully with their radical ideologies and activities, putting civilians in a more difficult situation. They are now reported to have been doing the worse than the existing rural criminals, killing unarmed villagers, attacking security agents, taxing farmers, herders, and traders as well as imposing radical Islamic rules disputably un-Islamic.

In a sorrowful reaction to the trend, father George Ehusanin, the founder of the Psycho-Spiritual Institute (P S I) and executive director of the Lux Terra Leadership Foundation, expressed concerned that the new radical jihadist group will be slowly making Nigeria North West region its strong hold, thereby making the region the epicenter of insecurity, as they have already known with an established killings, kidnappings, and imposing stringent sharia laws upon the locals thereby exacerbating the existing issues, compounding the struggles of poverty and illiteracy that are prevalent in the area. According to this day, (2024), the Lakurawa group who were initially invited or accepted by the local headers and their communities member in Gudu and Tangaza Local Government area of Sokoto State since 2017 to address the growing threats by bandits from Zamfara State have today change from the state of messiah to blue dabbling in compounding the lingering poverty, illiteracy and killings, displacement of locals, kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, Force Labour, Force manage and recruitment of new jobless youth into crime with lucrative stipends of One Million contrast to their soul mate in the syndicate who pay the newly recruited members the sum of ₦10,000. This has created a growing fear in Sokoto, Kebbi, and Niger state as well as the entire northern region of the country.

In View of the above, this paper intends to look at community education as a panacea for reducing the influence of Lkurawa terrorist group in Niger State, Nigeria. This is owing to the fact that, education can go alone way in addressing the root courses of the trend of Lakurawa security challenge and empower the locals who initially perceived the group as messiah and aids as well as alternative to the failing government in the area of security.

### **Community Education for Mitigating Insecurity in Niger State, Nigeria.**

Community education is an undeniable vanguard for revolution across the whole communities of the world. No community grows beyond the arms of its education. Education aids individuals in the society to be able to set standard for their personal development. Illiteracy today have been leading to negativities which have been tying the various region of the country that is leading to the country's stagnation. The classical example relative to this, is how the locals in Sokoto and Kebbi State began to succumb to the Lakurawa's teachings and joining the group as well as contributing to their act. This collaborates with Okafor and TeiBowie, (2023) in Asniebi and Okafor, (2019) who maintain that education helps in the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviours changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevents conflict peacefully, and to create the condition that are conducive to peace whether personal, intrapersonal, inter group, national or at international levels. To get this well established, one can take a look at the northern Nigeria where insecurity is prevalent. It is against the ambiguity, that the northern Nigeria is today becoming synonymous to violent trend that is deeply connected to illiteracy level and poverty in the region. As noted by United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF), on Nigeria's out-of- school children last year, according to the six zone of Nigeria. The report noted that the Northwest Nigeria has a total of 8,044,800 out of school children, the north-east has 5,064,400; the north-central has 2,115,800; the south-west has 1,146,900; the south-south has 431,300; and

the south-east has 240,200 out-of-school children. The report has been creating concern and worry for UNICEF: owing to the fact that Nigeria has the largest number of out of school children in the world. The report indicated that only 63percent of primary school children regularly attend school due to perpetual crisis instead of improvement. If observe clearly, one can easily see a nexus between a low literacy rate and high poverty rate. While Nigeria has the highest number of out of school children globally, and it also has the highest number of poor people in the world. (This day, 2024). Consequently, on June 19, 2023, a report by the punch quoted the world poverty clock as showing that Nigeria had 71 million extremely poor people. This state had prompted UNICEF to advice Nigeria to move up in the human development index and its overall literacy rate must be improve hugely. Additionally, the educational disparity between the south and the north has to be addressed and bridged. As long as all parts of the country don't have literacy rates above 75 percent the well-being of Nigeria as a whole will be negatively affected. Therefore, an aggressive campaign for education and orientation is something that the government must embrace fully (Punch, 2024). However, Nigeria will grow and develop to the fullest as well as overcome its intimidating critical challenges of bribery and corruption, succession problem, political instability unemployment, environmental degradation, health care limitation, dependence on oil, and the most eminent insecurity challenges if community education is granted prominences.

### **Concept of Insecurity**

Insecurity is one of the most glaring and much talked about issue in the Country, that is promoting the concern of Nigerians and the international community. Insecurity connects to state of being insecure, having no safety, being in a state of danger or uncertainty as a result of commotion or disaster. According to Purity and Anigbogu (2019) in Beland (2005) looked at insecurity as the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection from disaster. It is in other word, refers to a state of being exposed to danger, or a situation whereby there is absence of peace

and tranquility. The predominant situation in that situation, is killings, abduction, abuse of right, attacks on every individual it is obtainable in many rural communities of Northwest Nigeria States such as Katsina, Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, Kebbi among others where banditry had turned all blue. This portends that in the state where there is insecurity, all are vulnerable to attack. In effect, there is no certainty of protection or peace. Every individual can fall a victim of attack. The state of insecurity in Nigeria today is rampant. Nigeria is confronted with myriads of security challenges ranging from banditry, Bako haram and sessionist agitations, ritual killings and what not.

### **The Cause of Insecurity in Nigeria**

Myriads of factors have been attributed to contribute to magnitude of insecurity in Nigeria. Among the leading causes of insecurity in Nigeria are as: Poverty, Porous borders, Poor governance, Illiteracy, Weak security situation, Large ungoverned forest, and religious intolerance

- i. Poverty: The degree at which unemployed youths are roaming about the streets is alarming. These unemployed youth are today engaging themselves in an illegal activity such as kidnapping, robbery, child abduction and all sort of negative activities that are contributing to the mayhems the country is going through today some of these youths are not privilege to employment due to lack of education. This situation is looming many of our youths to crime.
- ii. Porous borders: it's against the ambiguity that Nigeria has a larger border due to large size of mass land. These mass lands are left with borders open or unchecked, thereby creating lea ways for criminal minded from neighbouring countries like Niger, Chad, Mali and what not coming to the country with dangerous weapons and unleashing havocs to the common men as we are seeing from the likes of bandits, Bokoharam, Lakurawas etc.
- iii. Poor governance: Plurality of people managing the affairs of the country are inefficient and corrupt in managing the institutional affairs of the country.

This situation often results to weak leadership, lack of accountability, corruption, inefficient use of resources and inability to implement policies that will positively result to positive challenges in the society.

- iv. Illiteracy: High level of illiteracy often results to insecurity and increase in crime, violence and civil unrest, which disrupts daily life and hinders development, weakens institution, economic stagnation.
- v. Weak security situation: The security architecture in Nigeria is very weak. The securities in the country are often struggling with outdated weapons in their hands in contrast to the ones held by criminals such as bandits, Lakurawa and Boko Haram. These terrorist groups go out for operations with most sophisticated weapons in their large number. This contravenes what is obtainable in many of our police stations, civil defence offices and military base. As vast number of the security personnel are attached to the V.I.Ps and those in offices and checking points are grossly inadequate with outdated weapons. This again contribute in stalking the present havocs in the area of security in the nation.
- vi. Large ungoverned forest: Nigeria is blessed with a very vast land with thick forest that is supportive to the growth and development of rural banditry, Boko Haram, Lakurawa activities as a result of thick forest that is serving as hide outs and caves and streams. This type of situation is what is obtainable today leading to excess of activities of bandits, Lakurawa and boko haramite in places like Borno, Niger, Kebbi Zamfara, Kaduna and Sokoto State respectively. For example, Zamfara state is arguably the Centre of gravity for armed violence in the north. The state is surrounded by large forest area on all sides, with terrorist nests in forest resources and vast wider ness area like Kuyambana forest and local bushes such as Fasgora, Ganda, and Gundumi. This forest extends to the boundaries of Sokoto, Katsina and Kaduna. This extensive forest coverage is a significant factor for successful terror enterprises in the states, which faces similar threat about 30,000 terrorists are

estimated to operate within this forest, utilising the vast ungoverned landscape as bases for their operations, which is presenting significant challenges for ground troops. (Muhammad 2024).

- vii. Religious intolerance: one of the issues of insecurity in Nigeria that is leading to killing and bloodshed in Nigeria, is the problem of religious intolerance. Kaduna State and Jos have an unsavory remark to give against how religions violence affected the States. Religiously intolerance, often leads to insecurity by creating division, fostering violence, undermining human rights and weakening the rule of law and intimately destabilizing society and putting individuals at risk.
- viii. Community Education: is the type of education that centered around programmes and activities designed to meet the educational needs of a community. Community education. According to Akande in Abiona, (2012) community education as an educational programme for the local citizens, community, schools' agencies and institution which geared towards making them active partners in addressing or attending to the education and community. As a community passionate programme, community education aims at creating ways and possibilities for the community to achieve a kind of positive change in no distance of time and also provide avenue through which the community can cope with their problems and their societal problems as well as ease their difficulties and provide a framework for avoiding future challenges. Community education is about vibrant and about changing field. It equips communities with the skills they need to undertake the activities they wish to. It is essentially about educating, redeeming and socialising communities to be out of the yoke of negatives. Community education addresses numerous needs of the individual's families, organisations, and communities, providing an array of academic recreations, health services, employing the common thread of learning, to prepare people of all ages for active and healthy community engagement (Abiona, 2012).

### **Principles of Community Education in Reducing Lakurawa Terrorist Group Activities**

As posited by Abiona, (2012) the principles of community education connote to guides to actions. In community education programmes the activities to be dabble into for purposive community development, must be guided by principles that will be geared towards producing the desired objectives of the community education changes.

Community education can play a significant role in reducing Lakurawa terrorist activities through the following:

**Addressing Root Causes of Terrorism:** one of the root causes of terrorism is poverty and unemployment. Though community education the menace of poverty and unemployment can be reduced through educating communities on job skills, entrepreneurship, and economic opportunities that can reduces the appeal of terrorist recruitment. Moreover, it can also help in teaching critical thinking, religious tolerance, and peace-building that can help in preventing radicalization and promoting Social Cohesion.

**Increasing Awareness & Resilience:** Educating people about how terrorist groups recruit and manipulate prevents them from falling victim. Community education helps in the area of encouraging Whistleblowing & Reporting. When communities understand their role in security, they become more willing to report suspicious activities. Through this trust is built with Law Enforcement and community.

**Providing Alternatives to Violence:** Youth in the community are empower with leadership skills, conflict resolution, and civic engagement which can serve as positive alternatives in rehabilitation and reintegrating the youth form militant activities.

Media & Digital Literacy: Community education can go a long way in helping towards fighting online radicalization, teaching communities how to identify extremist propaganda, helps to stop the spread of terrorist ideologies and promote positive narratives that can help in sharing successful stories and peaceful solutions that can counter extremist messages.

### **Reducing the Influence of Lakurawa Through Community Education**

Informal education: this refers to education that represent the educational activities through which adults acquire some skills, knowledge and dispositions without conscious effort. This type of education is acquired without formal planning and it has examinations. At the end of the training (Paiko, 1997). As stated earlier, the most of the local areas where most of inhabitants are not literates enough that can be easily indoctrinated or radicalize and be initiated into the act. Through informal education programme, the locals can be provided with an alternative narrative through providing or promoting in them critical thinking, peace building and conflict resolution skills, and help them appreciate danger of violence and extremism and understand the peaceful coexistence value. Moreover, through informal education, the ability of this terrorist groups to recruit. Or initiate locals into their activities can be stifle owing to the fact, most of those to be recruited are non-literate in an entrenched poverty. Informal education plays a role of equipping the vulnerable with an empowerment opportunity that can provide them a better sense of purpose and better economic opportunities, building social cohesions amongs the diverse ethnic groups and religions, creating advocacy. The impact of terrorism on communities as well as preparing the citizens to take an active role in their communities and in governance. Informal education also helps in teaching the principles of human rights, justice and the rule of law through informal education can strengthen citizens commitment to democratic values and legal framework.

**Adult Literacy Programmes:** this has to do with an education programme that aims at adult's development not only as individual, but also as a member of his society.

This type of education helps the adult individual to live more effectively in his society.

**Conflict Resolution Training:** it also a form of structured learning process designed to teach individuals or groups how to effectively manage and solve conflict in constructive and win-win manner. It involves providing parties in the training with skills, strategies and tools needed to understand the causes of conflict, communicate more effectively and mutually, beneficial solutions this type of training focuses on understanding the conflict and its understanding causes, communication skills i.e. improving listening and speaking skills to ensure clear and empathetic communication. Problem-solving techniques: encouraging creative approaches to solving disputes, negotiation and mediation; learning how to facilitate discussions and help parties come to agreement, as well as managing emotions to prevent escalation and create a calm environment. This type of programme is beneficial in the context of tension reduction.

**Participation Action Research:** this is where the community engages in research initiatives to explain issues that affect them directly, producing knowledge that reflects their lived experiences. This makes people to make decisions based on their own findings.

**Mutual Aids and Solidarity:** these are both forms of collective action that emphasize cooperation, support and shared responsibilities among individuals or groups, particularly in times of need or adversity.

**Community Gardens and Shared Resources:** this is a practice where members collectively manage gardens that provide food to the community and share the resources quarterly. This practice results in total cooperation.

**Youth and Elder Engagement Programmes:** this is a programme that involves active involvement of young people and older adults in activities, programs, or initiatives that foster inter-generational relationships, knowledge sharing, and mutual

support. The goal of such engagement is to bridge the gap between generations, promote understanding, and build strong, more cohesive communities. It is a beneficial in the context of enhancing problem Solving and innovations, strength and aids social connections and civic engagement and volunteering.it is ident “panacea” solution to complex problem-of lakurawa influence in Niger state Nigeria.

### **The idea of leveraging; a solution complex problem of Lakurawa influence in Niger state, Nigeria**

The term leveraging refers to the universal remedy that is believe to address a particular complex challenge. In the context of social and political charges, the l deal of leveraging is of tem viewed skeptically owing to the fact that such problems tend to be deeply entrenched, with multiple contributing factors. However, community-based solutions such as education can be argued to act as Tran’s formative panacea, providing a pathway to address issues that seems intractable.

In the case of Lakurawa influence in Niger State, Nigeria, where traditional and sometimes controversial practices may undermine local development, community education can indeed serve as a leveraging factor by addressing the root causes and the long-term consequences of such problems.

### **Role of Community Education in Managing Lakurawa Influences in Niger State, Nigeria**

- 1. Promoting awareness and understanding:** through community education people get to appreciate the fact that Lakurawa is a terrorist group with entrenched religious beliefs that is neither Qur’anic or biblical. That is not align with modem development goals community education can help raise awareness of the people providing deeper understanding of their origins, impact and potential danger. By educating the community, people can critically engage with these influences, recognizing both their histories.

2. **Encouraging critical thoughts and local solutions:** community education encourages critical thinking, members of the community are empowered to analyze their circumstances more rationally and develop local solutions. For instance, community education can encourage a shift from dependence on external influences, which may be tied to the Lakurawa phenomenon, to self-reliance and autonomy. Community members who are educated are better equipped to negotiate with external forces, demand accountability from leaders, and implement locally relevant solutions to issues that have been exacerbated by the Lakurawa influence.
3. **Empowering women and marginalised group:** these are also individuals that are at the prone of manipulation. In other words, these group may be disproportionately affected by the Lakurawa group. Through education these group are offered powerful tool for empowerment, in Niger State rural communities of Nigeria. Education can help them challenge harmful practices and become active participants in shaping their future.
4. **Promoting sustainable develop:** education is un derivable a convers tone of sustainable development. through teaching the ruralizes about the benefits of sustainable practices in firmly, business and give niece it can offer them alternatives to the tricks of Lakurawa manipulation influence. In Niger state, where most of ruralizes are farmers and banditry have already affected their forming exercise sitting without much to do, productive can serve as a catalyst for change, teaching people how to balance tradition with modernity. Educated communities are better equipped to understand the global economy, environmental concerns, and health challenges leading to move informed decisions that benefit all members of the society.
5. **Building community and collective action:** through education communities can be made to come together to learn, they often develop a sense of unity and shared purpose. In the case of Lakurawa terrorist group influence education

can serve as a means of collective empowerment, where community members are no longer passive recipients of external influence but active participants in decision making. By promoting education at the community level, local stakeholders can organize more effectively and work together to resist any harmful practices associated with lakurawa ideology.

- 6. Ensuring long-term change:** the challenges of dealing with Lakurawa, banditry and their likes, is not a something that can be reading or quickly health with by external intervening. Community education offers the possibility of long term-transformation, as it provides individual with the knowledge, they need to address challenges overtime. Education enables generational change, as each cohort passes down its newly acquired knowledge to the next. In this way, the benefits of community education can ripple through generations, ensuring lasting solution to the problems, that Lakurawa influence may perpetual

## **Conclusion**

Community education could serve as panacea for the complex social and cultural issues related to Lakurawa influence in Niger state. It offers a powerful and long lasting solution. By addressing the root causes of entrenched ideogram provide people with critical tools of analysing and adapting as well as fostering unity and empowerment within the community. Community education can be transformative force for positive change. Through the lens of community education, Niger State can become a well-informed, resilient and self-reliant society capable of addressing the challenge that could be posed by Lakurawa and their kinds in future.

## Suggestions

Based on the said, this paper suggests the following:

- Strengthening of community-based education programmes in Niger state through the establishment, promotion of educational programs that aims at entailing critical through
  - Implementing peace education initiatives
  - Promoting youth engagement and empowerment
  - Community sensitization and awareness campaigning
  - Strengthen religions and traditional leaders 'role in education
  - Support for community-drive educational infester
  - Promote social inclusion through education
- Fostering resilience: community education's role in reducing Lakurawa extremism

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