

PERCEPTION OF POLICE AND SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PREDICTORS OF FEAR OF TERRORISM IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The media plays an important role on issues of national security and in the context of the challenge of insecurity in Nigeria. Objective of this study was to find out the relationship between social media, perception of police and fear of terrorism. A cross-sectional and correlation designs were used. The statistics were Pearson Product Moment correlation and regression analyses. Participants were 426 persons of 226 males (51.4%) and 200 females (45.5%) with age range 18-65years (M = 33.42, SD = 12.11). Results showed that age, education, social media and ethnic group; as well as perception of police significantly correlated with fear of terrorism. Nigerians with less favorable perception of police showed an increase in their fear of terrorism ($\beta = .110, p < .05$). Recommendations is for the Nigerian police to genuinely abstain from violation of people's rights.*

KEYWORDS: Perception of Police, Sociodemographic, Fear of Terrorism, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

There has been an escalating insecurity and fear of terrorism in Nigeria. Acts of terrorism by the Boko Haram Islamic sect, incidents of kidnapping, Fulani Herdsmen ethnic cleansing, massacring of Christians, and unknown gunmen in Nigeria have become brands of crime that have given a negative identity to Nigeria. Fear of terrorism has become a societal phobia in Nigeria. Direct observations and social media are filled with horrendous news about the Nigerian Police. Nigerians use the social media to criticize the very poor performance and ineffective Nigerian Police's counterterrorism measures. Every demographic class has a particular experience with the Nigerian Police which may be deplorable. One of the general despicable aspects of the Nigerian Police (as well as other Nigerian security agencies/operatives, for instance the military and DSS) is their seemingly aiding and abetting Islamic terrorism in Nigeria.

Nigeria is experiencing incessant terrorists' attacks from different terrorist groups. Even security agencies like the military and Police are perceived as aiding terrorists' organizations like the Fulani Herdsmen.

Terrorists attacks have resulted to deaths, anxiety, depression and trauma associated with witnessing the destruction of lives, properties and the news of a family relation becoming a victim. Boko Haram and other terrorist sects like the Fulani Herdsmen and unknown gunmen have introduced into Nigeria's political and psycho-social life a level of insurgency never witnessed before. Basically, terrorism in Nigeria is associated with Fulani and Islamic ethno-religious jihadism (Nwankwo, 2018).

Terrorism is examined as the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or sub-national groups in order to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience (Krueger & Alan, 2007). Although State agents (Police and Military) can engage in terrorist acts against the people, the term "terrorists" is usually used to describe those who act outside the normal framework of society by engaging in illegal, often lethal and destruction activities that compromises State cohesion and inhabitants' peaceful co-existence (Gallup, 2014).

Terrorist attacks on people, communities, governments and infrastructure have resulted in

tension, internal displacement, panic, and dwindled economic growth and development across the globe (Pew Research Center, 2017). Some terrorist organizations have international ambition while some do not. Some, on the other hand, have territorial ambition and therefore capture territory through force and establish new government-like structures (Nwangwu & Edeh, 2014). Given the growing incidence of terrorism around the globe, terrorism is now generally viewed as a leading global security threat (Pew Research Center, 2017). This has spurred broader thinking about its causes, what it entails, and how it impacts on people and society. However, the complexity of terrorist behavior and the diversity of root causes and objectives make it difficult to answer these questions (Opejobi, 2018).

Statement of the problem

Terrorism in Nigeria is overwhelming. Given the growing incidence of terrorism around the globe, terrorism is now generally viewed as a leading global security threat (Pew Research Center, 2017). This has spurred broader thinking on the social media about its causes, what it entails, and how it impacts on people and the society at large. The Police charged with the responsibility of safe guarding lives and properties have in recent time been stigmatized with being accomplice to these terrorist attacks. Social media is filled with news of Police involvement in terrorism activities. People who are victimized can no longer confide with the Police or report cases of victimization or whereabouts of the perpetrators of these crimes due to fear and prior attitudes of the Police in dealing with such matters. Above all, members of the community cannot freely move about their daily business as a result of fear of terrorism, knowing that the Police plays a less or no role in safeguarding their lives and properties against terror. It is to this effect that the researchers want to ascertain the role of social media and perception of police on fear of terrorism in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

1. To ascertain if social media will predict fear of terrorism among Nigerian selected sample.

2. To determine if perception of Police will predict fear of terrorism among Nigerian selected sample.

Research Questions

1. How will social media predict fear of terrorism among Nigerian selected sample?
2. How will perception of Police predict fear of terrorism among selected Nigerian sample?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frame work

Orthodox terrorism theory: The general findings of this study align with the dictates of Orthodox terrorism theory that symbolically explains the representative acts of terrorism which are to intimidate and frighten. A study by Sun Zu (2016) deciphered that the intention of terrorism is to kill one and threaten tens of thousands. It's a psychological war which aims at to create fear and feeling of insecurity among the citizens owing to the governmental negligence and laissez-faire attitudes. Relatedly, in this study, perception of Police was found to be related to self-reported fear of terrorism.

While some literature has cited that citizens generally have positive perceptions of Police (Benedict et al., 2000; Chermak et al., 2001), enough literature has reported that the public perception of Police tends to be generally negative. Many people perceive Police to be unfair, sometimes abusive and neglects their duties in safeguarding lives and properties (Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011; Fratello, et al 2013; MacAlister, 2011; Nwangwu & Edeh, 2014). Researches have shown that citizens' perceptions of law enforcement continue to influence willingness to cooperate or report crimes (Silver & Miller, 2004; Warner, 2007), particularly for victims who belong to racial/ethnic minority groups (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Hueber et al., 2004).

In Nigeria, the killings by Fulani herdsmen have rampaged most communities displacing them of their farmlands and loss of their major source of livelihood. This is becoming unbearable with the Fulani herdsmen always having their ways leaving the farmers at their mercy. The attacks by Fulani herdsmen and

unknown gunmen is on the upsurge in areas like Anambra (Ihiala & Bridgehead), Imo (Owerri), Ebonyi (Izzi & Ikwo), Benue, Oyo, Kogi, Taraba, Nassarawa States. Again, there are increasing cases of attacks in different parts of the Nigeria (Vanguard, 2021).

The fear of terrorism has been found to induce many undesired psychological states in individuals such as increasing their level of anxiety, depression, insomnia and other mental health problems as well as internal displacements (Vergara, 2016). Events of terrorism may have an extremely harmful impact on the ability to manage normal life, and developmental tasks. This affects the psychological well-being. The Police is charged with the responsibility of protecting lives and properties of the citizens. But the Nigerian Police has had a long time documented history of a complicated relationship with the communities they serve. Since the 1960s, researchers have detailed a variety of factors that may add to negative perceptions of law enforcement agents like the Nigerian Police (Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011; MacAlister, 2011).

Hypotheses

1. Social media will not significantly predict fear of terrorism in Nigeria.
2. Perception of Police will not significantly predict fear of terrorism in Nigeria.

METHOD

Participants: Four hundred and twenty-six (426) participants were selected for this study. The researchers employed a convenience, accidental and snowballing sampling methods. There were 226 males (51.4%) and 200 females (45.5%). Participants had age-range 18 to 65 ($M = 33.42$, $SD = 12.11$). One hundred and thirty-five (135) participants identified as from Igbo ethnic group (30.7%), one hundred and twenty-four (124) participants from Hausa/Fulani ethnic group (28.2%), one hundred and twenty-two (122) participants from Yoruba ethnic group (27.7%), and forty-five (45) others (10.2%) from other minority ethnic groups. Two hundred and forty-one (241) participants identified as Christians (54.8%), One hundred and sixty-eight (168) as Muslims, and Twenty-two (22) identified as

either traditionalists/pagan/others (5.0%). Majority of the participants ($n = 236$) had a secondary school WAEC degree (53.6%), One hundred and three (103) had a university first degree (23.4%), forty-seven (47) had a master's degree (M.sc) (24.4%) and thirty-one (31) (7.0%). Based on the level of income, majority of participants ($n = 147$) (less than N20,000) were identified as lower class or poor (33.4%), 115 (N50,000 to N100,000) participants as upper middle class (26.1%), 69 (N21,000 to N49,000) participants as lower middle class (15.7%), 95 (above N100,000) participants as upper class (21.6%). Again, 192 participants identified as traders (43.6%), 112 identified as public/civil servants (25.5%) and 122 identified as students (27.7%).

Instruments: One of the instruments used were **Perception of Police Scale (POPS)**. Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS) is an instrument designed by Nadal and Davidoff (2015) to measure perceptions of Police and Police bias. The Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS) included twelve statements that measure an individual's attitudes toward Police and was divided into subscales based on the factorization of the scale, (1) General Attitudes toward Police, and (2) Perceptions of Bias. The scale reported a Cronbach's alpha of .92 overall, and .91 for Subscale 1 (General Attitudes toward Police) and .87 for Subscale 2 (Perceptions of Bias). Using the Perception of Police Scale, the researchers assessed the different community's perceptions of the Police, particularly examining views of individuals from historically marginalized groups and impacts of Police interaction on psychological processes, emotional and mental health outcomes. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agree with each statement (on a Likert scale from 1- 5, with a score of 1 being "I strongly agree" and a score of 5 being "I strongly disagree"). Sample items included: "Police protect me"; "Police are friendly"; "Police treat people fairly"; and "Police do not discriminate." Higher scores indicate less favorable perceptions of the police, while lower scores indicate more favorable perceptions of the police.

The second instrument used was **Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale (TCS)**. Terrorism catastrophe (TC) is measured using the terrorism catastrophizing scale (TCS) (Sinclair & LoCicero, 2007) which consists of 13 items. Using a 5-point Likert scale anchored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), participants indicated how accurately each item described their thoughts and feelings about terrorism based on their experiences. Item examples included, "I have difficulty keeping the threat of terrorism out of my mind," and, "I worry that terrorism will only get worse as time passes." Possible overall scores range 13–65: Items 5 and 11 was reversely scored. Higher scores indicated higher fear of terrorism. The TCS has high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.85$), and high test-retest reliability ($\alpha = 0.89$; Sinclair & LoCicero, 2007).

Procedures: All the measures in this study were administered both online and by physical contact with the participants. Snowballing, convenience and accidental sampling methods were used. Participants were presented with an informed consent form that was attached at the front page of these instruments which described an overview

of the study and discussed the benefits of the study. By continuing on to the next page of the survey, participants showed their understanding of the form and approved their consent to be part of the study. Secondly, participants were given the instruments in the following order: The Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS), followed by the Terrorism catastrophizing scale (TCS). For the participants whom the researchers met one on one, each instrument administration session lasted 20-27 minutes and participants were debriefed after the completion of their session with an appreciation from the researchers to the participants for participating in the study.

Research Design and Statistics: The research is a survey which employed a predictive correlation research design. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to analyze the collected data from the participants. The rationale behind using the hierarchical multiple regression analysis was first to determine the total amount of variance explained by the predictor variable. A second purpose was to determine the amount of unique variance explained by certain sets of predictors like the demographic variables over and above other predictor (Keith, 2006).

RESULTS

Table 1.1: Descriptive statistics and correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	.47	.50	1									
2. Age	33.4	12.1	.02	1								
3. Education level	.72	.95	0.1	.59**	1							
4. Occupation	2.0	.74	.33**	-.45**	-.19**	1						
5. Income	2.3	1.1	-.32**	.69**	.65**	-.57**	1					
6. Ethnic group	2.2	.98	.01	-.12*	.01	.15**	-.08	1				
7. Religion	.49	.59	-.18**	.11*	-.15**	-.20**	.04	-.51**	1			
8. Social media	2.4	1.2	.31**	.67**	.64**	.65**	.47*	.07	.03	1		
9. Perc. of Police	43.1	10.7	.04	.07	.07	-.09	.12*	.16**	-.00	.23**	1	
10. Fear of terror	48.7	12.0	.03	-.14**	-.11*	.04	-.07	.17**	-.08	.27**	.12*	1

Note: All measures were coded in the same direction, higher scores indicate higher levels of that construct. Social media, Gender, occupation, income level, education level, religion, and ethnic grouping were coded (0 = male and 1 = female, 1 = trader 2 = public/civil servant 3 = student, 1 = less than 20, 2 = 21000- 49000, 3 = 50000 to 100000, 4 = above 100000, 1 = Waec 2 = B.sc 3 = M.sc 4 = Ph.D, 1 = Christianity 2 = Islam 3 = Traditional/others, 1 = Hausa 2 = Yoruba 3 = Igbo 4 = other minority groups, 1 = twitter 2 = facebook, 3 = whatsapp, 4 = Youtube). * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 1.1. The bivariate correlation matrix revealed several significant associations between the variables measured in this study. There were also several differences among the variables measured. Age was significantly and

negatively correlated with fear of terrorism ($r = -.15$), and positively correlated with educational level ($r = .59$) and income level ($r = .69$). The combined monthly income of the participants was significantly correlated with all the other variables (age ($r = .69$), gender ($r = .32$),

education level ($r = .65$), occupation ($r = .57$) and perception of police ($r = .12$), except for ethnic group, religion and fear of terrorism. Social media usage significantly correlated with age ($r = .67$), gender ($r = .31$), education level ($r = .64$), occupation ($r = .65$), income ($r = .47$), perception of police ($r = .23$) and fear of terrorism ($r = .27$).

The ethnic group the participants belonged to represented by whether the participants were originally from the Hausa ethnic group, Yoruba ethnic group, Igbo ethnic group and other minority ethnic groups was significantly and positively correlated with their perception of Police ($r = .16$) and fear of terrorism ($r = .17$). The relation from their mean scores

demonstrated that participants from other minority ethnic groups have more fear of terrorism ($x = 53.00$), followed by the Igbos ($x = 51.64$), the Hausas' ($x = 47.85$) and finally the Yoruba ($x = 44.72$). Education level also had a negative significant correlation with fear of terrorism ($r = -.11$), which connotes that the higher one goes in education the lower the perceived fear of terrorism. Finally, participants' perception of Police reported a positive significant correlation with fear of terrorism ($r = .12$) which entails that the less favorable perception of police by the participants the more the fear of terrorism activities.

Table 1.2: Hierarchical Multiple Regression analyses

Model Summary			Change Statistics							
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	R Square	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
1	.252 ^a	.064	.048	.064	.064	4.053	8	418	.000	
2	.273 ^b	.075	.057	.011	.011	5.046	1	417	.025	

Hierarchical Multiple Regression analyses of table 1.2 were used to examine the amount of variance in Nigerians' fear of terrorism explained by their perception of Police and other demographic variables like age, gender, education level, income level, occupation, religion, ethnic group and social media usage. A two-step hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted. At the first step of the regression process, the dependent variable (DV-fear of terrorism) was regressed onto all the demographic and control variables (age, gender, education level, income level, occupation, ethnic group, religion, social media). In the second and final step of the regression process, the dependent variable (DV- fear of terrorism) was regressed onto the main independent variable (perception of Police).

The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 1.2. The entry of the first block of eight background variables (i.e., gender, age, education level, income level, occupation, religion, ethnic group, social media) resulted in a statistically significant increase in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .064$, $F(7, 418) = 4.053$, $p < .001$). That is approximately 6% of the variance in the participants' fear of terrorism was explained by the eight demographic variables. In the second step, perception of Police measure was entered into the regression model. It also resulted in a statistically significant increase in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .011$, $F(1, 417) = 5.046$, $p < .05$). Approximately 1% additional variance in the participants' fear of terrorism was explained by their perception of Police.

Table 1.3
Hierarchical Multiple Analyses predicting fear of terrorism
Fear of terrorism

Predictor variables	β B Step 1	β B Step 2
Step 1		
Gender	-.018	-.034
Age	-.224**	-.224**
Education level	.185*	.190*
Occupation	-.071	-.065
Income	-.076	-.096
Ethnic group	.176**	.149**
Religion	.047	.033
Social media	.164**	.122**
Step 2		
Perception of police		.110*
R^2	.064***	.075*
ΔR^2	.064***	.011*

B indicates the standardized regression coefficient. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The perception of Police score of the participants was a significant predictor of the participants' fear of terrorism, with a standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .110$, $p < .001$). Holding all the other variables constant, for an additional unit in a participants' perception of Police score, their fear of terrorism increased by .11 units. As compared with participants who had a less favorable perception of the Police, participants with high favorable perception of Police reported less fear of terrorism activities while the ones with less favorable perception of Police reported higher fear of terrorism.

In addition, age was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.224$, $p < .05$) of fear of terrorism. Hence, Young participants in this study reported more fear of terrorism than did old aged participants, after controlling for other variables. Also, education level of the participants was a significant predictor of fear of terrorism, albeit negatively ($\beta = .190$, $p < .01$). Participants who had their Ph.D degrees were less afraid of terrorism than participants who had their Waec and M.sc degrees respectively, participants with university first degree reported a higher fear of terrorism compared to other educational qualification. Furthermore, social media was a significant predictor of fear of terrorism ($\beta = .164$, $p < .01$). Twitter and Facebook users reported more fear of terrorism than YouTube and WhatsApp users through their mean scores.

The last individual predictor of fear of

terrorism was the ethnic group that a participant belonged to ($\beta = .149$, $p < .001$). Participants from the minority ethnic group reported higher fear of terrorism, followed by the participants from the Igbo ethnic group, and then followed by Hausa ethnic group. The Yoruba ethnic group reported a less fear of terrorism compared to the participants from the other ethnic groups. Other individual predictors (gender, income level, occupation and religion) were not significant.

The major findings from the hierarchical multiple regression analyses indicated that an individual's perception of Police was predictive of their fear of terrorism. In addition, other contextual variables, such as social media, age, ethnic group and education level were also predictive of Nigeria inhabitants' fear of terrorism.

DISCUSSION

This research exposes us to a better understanding of the relationship between perception of Police and fear of terrorism as well as the roles of some demographic contexts like age, gender, education level, and occupation, level of income, ethnic group and religion in predicting fear of terrorism. The major objective of this study was to examine the relationship between perception of Police and fear of terrorism. The major findings from both the correlational analyses and the hierarchical multiple regressions in this study support the core theoretical rationale of Orthodox terrorism

theory, especially with respect to the construct of fear of terrorism.

The pattern observed in the bivariate correlations among the contextual variables suggests that age, ethnic group and education level of participants, significantly correlated with the indicated participants fear of terrorism. Specifically, Younger participants reported having more fear of terrorism than did their older counterparts. Participants who had their Ph.D degrees were less afraid of terrorism than participants who had their Waec and M.sc degrees respectively. Participants with university first degree reported a higher fear of terrorism compared to other educational qualification levels. Participants from the minority ethnic group reported higher fear of terrorism, followed by the participants from the Igbo ethnic group, and then followed by Hausa ethnic group. The Yoruba ethnic group reported a less fear of terrorism compared to the participants from the other ethnic groups. In addition, the major predictive variables (perception of Police) displayed a significant association with fear of terrorism. Participants with high favorable perception of Police reported less fear of terrorism activities while the ones with less favorable perception of Police reported higher fear of terrorism.

The findings from the hierarchical multiple regressions confirm that individuals' perceptions of Police play an important role in their perceived fear of terrorism as it pertains to security and peace keeping. As Huebner, Schaferand and Bynum (2004) pointed out that citizens' satisfaction (or lack thereof) with their contacts with the Police remained a significant predictor of their broader perceptions of Police services and their overall protection and security against crimes or external harm.

In addition, the foundation of every fear lies in the perceived inability of the significant trusted ones not giving their best towards enhancing and upholding peace, safeguarding lives and securing properties (Huebner et al., 2004). The results of this study indicate that perception of Police among Nigerians is predictive of their fear of terrorism. In other words, Nigerians who have less favorable perception of Police report having more fear of

terrorism. This is to say that the citizens feeling of unsafe may possibly affect their perception of Police in safeguarding their lives and properties in a time like this with much terrorist activities in the nation. A study by Wents and Schlimgen (2012) posits that increased perceived safety resulted in a more favourable perception of Police.

Based on the perceived fear of terrorism in Nigeria, the hope, trust and belief people have on Police diminish. Reisig and Parks (2000) buttressed in their prior research that citizens' dissatisfaction with either voluntary or involuntary Police contacts was associated with less positive perceptions of the Police. As such when people perceive the Police as less favourable in handling the situation of terrorist attacks and in the maintenance of absolute peace, security and order in the nation the fear of terrorism becomes inevitable.

Implication of the study

1. The findings of the study will ever be very useful in counterterrorism operations. The Police and other counterterrorism operatives will use the findings in making necessary performance adjustment.

Limitations of the study

1. First, the participants who filled the instruments through the online snow balling survey might not have given accurate data owing to the fact that they were not briefed or debriefed personally by the researchers about the study.

Conclusion

Police should be able to effectively prevent crime, professionally investigate violations, timely help the public that are facing or about to experience immediate danger, thwart, arrest, and persecute criminals (especially terrorists). This will sustain public order. Very unfortunately, the Nigerian Police has failed woefully in achieving the aforesaid noble security goals. Thus, there is absolute lack of trust on the Nigerian Police, to the extent that the Nigerian Police is seen as agents of terrorism.

Recommendations

1. There is the need for the Nigerian Police to engage in a comprehensive performance overhauling for better. This improve the perception the public have about the Nigerian Police

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