Original Paper

Confronting Challenges of Insecurity through Strategic Missions Activities

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Abstract

Insecurity is a universal concern because of its increasing setback in all nations. Africa suffers a lot from the adverse effects of insecurity on the world. For instance, Nigeria, the most populous Black country in the world, has, over the last ten to twelve years, experienced various insecurity challenges. It includes kidnapping, Fulani herders attacks, and armed robbery, which have led to the destruction of lives and properties and fear and panic among the indigenous and settlers (dwellers). Several methods of solving this menace of insecurity have proven over the years to be insufficient as insecurity remains on the increase in some regions worldwide; there is a need to respond to the insecurity problems through the activities of the Church (Christian missions). This report provides a concise missiological response to the insecurity challenges in the contemporary world. This combination of conventional and spiritual methodology in resolving insecurity problems is a vital step to be taken by stakeholders in fighting it. Spiritual input of the Church, such as prayer, Bible study and creating public awareness are parts of the strategic missiological response to the insecurity challenges. Therefore, through the descriptive research method, the writer will elucidate the current trend of insecurity in the world, its causes, and the missiological response to insecurity and draw a logical conclusion.

Keywords

Insecurity challenges, Christian missions, Strategic missions activities

1. Introduction

Insecurity is a global phenomenon that has cut the attention of many agencies and bodies for urgent solutions. Globalisation has made the effects of international and domestic insecurity activities a focus

because every nation of the world is interrelated, and its impact on one country will be felt by the other nations directly or indirectly. African society, known for its communal coexistence, cherishes peaceful living. Insecurity causes grievous damage to people's worldviews. African countries are experiencing new dimensions of insecurity that are sometimes political, economic, and religiously motivated.

For instance, in the past few years, Nigeria experienced the insurgencies of Fulani herders, *Boko Haram*, armed robbery, banditry, and kidnapping that have made life difficult for the general public. Perpetrators hide under the umbrella of unemployment, poverty, hunger, and a host of other reasons (Francis, 2021). The Nigerian government has been responding over the years by developing various security measures to curb the causes of insecurity. Other local, state, and federal government programmes are primarily implemented to reduce the country's insecurity.

There is some measure of success in the national security efforts of upgrading their facilities and recruiting more personnel. However, the present situation demands more than using physical ammunition alone. However, many other disciplines have been researched to provide strategic solutions to the challenges of insecurity in the world. Many such disciplines have yet to achieve the intended goal of curbing insecurity because there is evidence of continuous cases of insecurity in the nations. This paper responds to the world's insecurity issues using missiological approaches. It combines anthropological and theological disciplines. It views the current trends and causes of insecurity in Africa and proposes some Christian missions' responses to them.

Current Trend of Insecurity in Africa

The Nigeria case is a good representation of the current insecurity trends in Africa. The security challenges of Nigeria are majorly internal than external. The internal ones include armed robbery, sea piracy, kidnapping, hostage-taking, ethnic crisis, religious insurgencies, and electoral violence (Isaac, 2018). Insecurity has dramatically affected the development process of the nation.

Troubles, gruesome murders, robberies by violence, rape, cultism, ritual killings, bribery, official corruption, obtaining goods/money by false pretences, high people kidnapping and abductions, and child stealing are common in the urban centre of the country. David Oluwadiya Ashaolu reported the situations of the southern half and northern half of the country as follows:

Violent crime affecting foreigners is a severe problem, especially in Lagos and the country's southern half. Visitors and resident Americans report widespread armed muggings, assaults, burglaries, carjackings, and extortion, often involving violence. Carjackings, roadblock robberies, and armed break-ins often occur, with victims sometimes shot by assailants for no apparent reason. Reports of armed robberies in broad daylight on rural roads in the continent's northern half appear to be increasing. Law enforcement authorities usually respond to crimes slowly, if at all, and provide little or no investigative support to victims (David, 2012).

The report indicates that places are only somewhat secure in the nations. In rural areas, there are continued cla**shes between herders and farmers. Continues violent disputes have existed between** nomadic animal herders and peasant and commercial farmers in Nigeria for many years. The

disagreements over the usage of farmland, water, and grazing routes have been increased by climate change coupled with the spread of the Sahara Desert. Due to the limited farmlands and water, herders move further south, looking for pasture (Gbolahan, 2022). The movement of the herders has led to the death of thousands because of the limited resources.

Religious and political violence associated with a bomb blast and the use of other sophisticated offensive weapons to destroy lives and properties are more common in the northern region than in the country's western region. Since the inception of the crisis, Nigeria's international partners have mentioned that *Boko Haram* cannot be defeated on battlefield strategies alone. They have pinpointed the need for a multidimensional response that can handle the different types of insecurity in the region; these include chronic, corrupt governance, weaknesses in service delivery, and environmental degradation (Saskia, 2019). Many other terrorist activities have been noticeable in the nation, which shows that the activities of *Boko Haram* are still ongoing.

One of the current insecurity trends that threaten Nigerian families is the recurrent kidnapping of school children from their classrooms and boarding houses. A piece of news reported that:

> About 2,000 students have been abducted from their schools since December 2020. Many were only released after thousands of dollars were paid as ransom. Some of the kidnappers are commonly referred to as "bandits". These criminals raid villages, kidnap civilians and burn down houses. Attacks by bandits have forced thousands of people to abandon their houses and seek shelter in other parts of the country (Gbolahan, 2022).

Many Africans live in fear because nations are not entirely safe. Churches have been attacked during worship services. People are getting missing without knowing there were about. The government has tried to solve the issue of insecurity, and there is only a slight improvement (Babagana, 2022). It is essential to know that the reasons for insecurity are complicated and that it takes more than military strategies and engagements to tackle them.

Causes of Insecurity in Africa

Various things lead to global insecurity. The causes are complex, as some of them are interrelated. Below are thirteen cogent reasons for insecurity in Africa.

Poverty: Poverty is the lack of capability to function effectively in society. Multitudes are living in poverty. For instance, Nigeria's hunger level ranks 103 out of the selected 121 countries worldwide (Bertram & Waliat, 2022). It results in increased hunger, an unfortunate health system, crime, corruption, stealing, and kidnapping. Such is the ironic experience of a nation endowed with diverse natural resources and a human population.

Inequality: Inequality implies a concentration of distribution, whether one is considering consumption, income, or some other welfare indicators or attributes. The income inequality between the people in urban and rural areas in Africa is remarkably high, as those who live in the rural regions base all their income on agriculture which is presently not a thriving sector in some countries like Nigeria, where oil has taken over their economy (Chimobi, 2010). They do not invest their resources to acquire skills as

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people in urban areas would, making them more vulnerable to social and economic problems such as violence and corruption.

Unemployment: Unemployment is a significant factor contributing to insecurity in Africa. There is a strong relationship between unemployment and insecurity. As a common adage has it, "an idle man is the devil's workshop". The political leaders can easily have their ways by giving a token to the youth to kill and destroy property. When people are unemployed, their channel of livelihood depletes over time (Ibid, p. 61). The cost of living became high, and the standard of living started decreasing. Due to unemployment, some people start to engage in shady practices to have a reasonable standard of living. Some unemployed youths quickly engage in various crimes of stealing, kidnapping, and fraud.

Corruption: In Africa, corruption is rampant and a pandemic in all government sectors. Corruption has taken over some African leaders, who are obsessed with it because it was demonstrated in their activities. In Africa, "corruption occurs in many forms, and it has contributed immensely to the insecurity and misery of a large segment of the African population" (Ismail, 2010). Lack of trust is prevalent among citizens because anything can go wrong. The corrupt practices of the people have made some individuals believe that everyone in the secular or sacred sectors is corrupted in one way or the other. For instance, many people are in prison because of the offence of others while the real offenders have gone free.

Unstable Economy: While global insecurity has been identified as caused by many factors, Africa's non-diversification of the economy can be seen as a significant factor. For instance, in Nigeria, those in power have practically ignored other sources of income. Today, Nigeria depends heavily on exporting oil, which is why the agitating boys resorted to vandalising oil pipelines in an environment where they can be found. In regions with no oil, the people view the government as irresponsible to their welfare, and they have to take it from the few with money and properties by fraud.

Laziness: Laziness is a common disease that is virtually suffered by many Africans today, especially those from wealthy households. Everyone wants to be comfortable but is not ready to work toward it (Ibid, p. 46), which often leads to greed, where people will do whatever they can to keep their family's wealth. Also, some people view others as more privileged, and they have to take all they can from them by force. The "get rich now" syndrome has affected many African youths, and they find it difficult to patiently wait to go through the process of making genuine wealth.

Poor Education System: Education can play a significant role in reducing insecurity. World Bank says education is the fulcrum of development (Ibid, p. 46) because of its potential to promote economic growth and national productivity, including innovation and values democracy and social cohesion. In Africa, the uneducated population accounts for most of the people involved in street violence. Some of the people well exposed to the higher education systems need help solving practical problems that can be relevant to the nation. The educational system that will be productive must teach practical and applicable knowledge and morals.

COVID-19: Along with its direct cost to human lives, COVID-19 has unleashed a worldwide economic disaster whose shock waves continue to spread, putting more lives at risk. Without an adequate global response, the cumulative effects of the pandemic and its economic fallout, armed conflict, and climate change will exact high human and financial costs well into the future (World bank group, 2020). There is increased insecurity after the pandemic. The economic effects of the pandemic have made some citizens lose some finances and struggle to recover at all costs.

Poor Parenting: All the people causing insecurity in the nation are from one family or the other. Many a time, it is a lack of proper home training that result in diverse insecurity vices. When parents are involved in such practices that disturb the peace of a nation, it will be difficult to stop the youths (Oke, 2018). The parents need to play their roles as teachers and guides to make them good examples for a better nation.

Religion: Christianity is known as a religion of peace, and so also is Islam (Paulinus, 2014). However, there has been a severe crisis between these two major religions of the country (Wilson, 2021). Significant tension occurred when the issue of *Sharia* was raised when the country was drafting a new constitution in preparation for a return to civil rule in 1977 (Onimhawo & Ottuh, 2010). For instance, thousands of people have been affected by the activities of the terrorist group called *Boko Haram* in the northeastern part of Nigeria. These religious extremists are known to recruit youths for their activities. Many houses, churches, and properties have been destroyed.

Politics: the country's political system since independence has led to the shedding of blood. Many lives were claimed as the politician used their influence and took advantage of the masses by making them fight each other. The violence and killing in many nations can be traced to some political influences.

Ethnicity: Africa as a nation is a fusion of several nation-states with different ethnic identities. Many of these ethnic groups had maintained loose contact with one another before their union into a nation in 1914 (Isreal, 2021). The regions already had their unique administrative styles, and it was difficult for them to be united. Therefore tension results from the amalgamation.

Confronting Insecurity by Missions Activities

The Church has a definite responsibility to respond and promote national security. Insecurity should not continue unabated in the nation. Christian missions are to influence the nation. Christian missions, which are the Church's activities to evangelise people inside and outside the four walls of the Church, responses can be viewed from two perspectives either to bring about immediate solutions or to develop a strategic plan for future results. These include;

Proclamation of the Gospel

Those who exploit others and become agents of insecurity are primarily the results of their sinful nature, and they need a spiritual transformation that comes through the gospel's effect. Evangelisation touches on the core cause of insecurity. Genuine transformation may start or end with soul conversion because it is the priority. Christ paid the price on Calvary to set all humanity free from all sin, fears, and powers of darkness, but this unfathomable gift can only be obtained through personal faith in Him (Robert,

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1993). The Church needs to reach out with the gospel to all people before they will become agents of insecurity.

Discipleship

Discipleship is the process of bringing believers to maturity. There is little that children can achieve until they are mature. The Christians in some countries are not mature in the faith to bring about global transformation. Some Christians are even known to be involved in atrocities that lead to national insecurity (Forster & Oostenbrink, 2015). The Church must disciple its members to be impactful on the nation. Christ is the world's light, and the more Christians are transformed into His image, the more they shine and secure the nation.

Empowerment

One of the main functions of the Christian missions is to empower the converts to the level that they can become their agents of change (Akinyemi, 2021). The church missionary arm can organise training in economic issues because a lack of awareness hinders self-improvement. Poverty is a significant factor that leads many to engage in activities that lead to national insecurity. If many people know what to do, they will do them and improve their lots without considering other unhealthy engagements, and this should be preferred to doling out charity to the poor. An adage says, "If you gift a man a fish, you feed him a day; but if you train him how to catch fish, you feed him for a lifetime" Churches and Christian organisations can set up banks where poor people can take loans for investments with little or no interest (Adewunmiju, 2022). The Church can form a committee supervised by the church pastor or missions pastor to render financial assistance to people with a practicable small-scale business idea but lacks capital.

Education

By the salt metaphor, Jesus says Christians can influence and keep society from deteriorating socially and culturally (Tim, 2013). Christians need to have a perspective that they have something to give to assist the world. Knowledge is a key to liberating people from fear of insecurity (David, 2006). The churches need to formally and informally educate the public to be literate and develop security skills, such as alertness, verbal and non-verbal communication, and fitness. The Church can organise seminars and conferences that will be aired through radio, television, and other social media in languages the locals can comprehend. The Church can also build mission schools at all levels, nursery, primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, with the primary motive of transforming the nation.

Leadership Development

The world needs visionary leaders that are people of integrity. The Church must encourage its members who want to be involved in politics or any leadership position in the nation. Christians should be enabled to take up leadership positions at all levels of society (Dion. and Johann. 4). The Church can have special prayers for such individuals during the worship service to demonstrate their recognition. Transparency and justice must reign in the nation if insecurity is to be reduced.

Counselling and Awareness of Personal Responsibility

Developing a counselling strategy for people living in insecurity demands special skills and training. The counsellor needs to demonstrate empathy, compassion, and unconditional positive regard, ask questions about the things they do not understand and listen to the responses to those questions (Louisa, Margaret, & Victoria, 2017). The counsellors must be able to use specifically person-centred and relational approaches and, at the same time, recognise client strengths and empowerment (Madeline, Clark, Colleen, Linda, Lena, & Hannah, 2020). To be competent in poverty counselling, the counsellor must be an excellent advocate. Counsellors can advocate with or on their client's behalf by assisting them with problem-solving and finding resources, increasing client access, and challenging poverty stereotypes (Clark, Delaney, Waters, Salpietro, and Tippett, 98).

The counsellor should be able to give biblical principles on security management to the clients. The Church should be sensitive to the security challenges of its environment. The Church should alert the members on any ongoing security challenge in the community. Also, the Church can organise seminars and invite security personnel to discuss some good security skills under national laws and regulations.

Philanthropic Gesture

The Church must be interested in or concerned for national security and demonstrate philanthropic gestures to transform it. It must criticise prophetically the unjust social-economic structures that lead to insecurity (Amos 5:24) (Olutayo, 15). They must take aside the general public and call on rulers to fulfil their God-given role of caring for the citizens. The Church should have a plan for people affected by insecurity who cannot afford education, healthcare, and foodstuff. The Church's demonstration of giving should not devalue the people but encourage them by making it private and compassionate.

Promotion of Justices and Peace

The Church is to be a voice for the voiceless. Some individuals are benefiting from the insecurity condition of the nation. From this point of view, insecurity is the by-product of oppression and exploitation (Amaluche, 2000). Any program confronting national insecurity that does not entail a plan to confront the root causes of poverty, injustice, and oppression may be an investment in futility.

Prayer and spiritual Warfare

Spiritual warfare is the fight against the forces of darkness or evil (Eph 5), and prayer is the communication with God (*Lesson Four, What is prayer*? 2022), which is one of the forms to engage in it (Josh. 1:3, 11, 15, Matt. 4:11, Mk 3: 27, 1 Pt. 5:8-9). Prayer is a call to war and a call to rest (Elizabeth, 1998). The Christian Church, throughout the ages, has found itself involved in a spiritual struggle against sin, evil, and injustice, both at an individual level and concerning the structures and forces in human society (Erwin, 2010). These evil forces are identified as Satan and his demons. They are portrayed as the causative agents of all evils, including insecurity.

Raising Godly Children

The family institution affects the nations of the world. The expression of a nation is primarily the expression of the families. Parents are to train their children in fear of God so that such children can

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influence their friends in society rather than the other way around. Raising godly children demands total commitment from the parents (Samuel, 2020). The people causing insecurity in the nations are the products of families that have failed the nations.

2. Conclusion

Insecurity is a significant problem in contemporary society. The trends of insecurity worldwide are alarming as it affects the rich and the poor. The unique roles of the Church through its missionary activities are a viable response to the challenges of insecurity in the nation. Christian missions address the causes of global insecurity and provide strategic means to prevent it. The Christian missions' response that will be effective will transform both Christians and the entire world. The transformation agents needed for global security are leaders, individuals, families, and societies, and the gospel of Christ is the anchor on which they can be effective. Christians can bring about an end to insecurity by being peacemakers.

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